CHAPTER VII

FIRST AFGHAN WAR

1. British attitude towards Russia.

At the beginning of the period under review, both Sindh and the Panjáb were independent principalities. The river Sutlej, which formed the boundary between British India and the Panjáb, offered no natural obstacle to the advance of an enemy. Beyond that line was the domain of Ranjit Singh, a powerful potentate, known for his political ambition and unscrupulous politics. He was thwarted by the British in his ambition to spread his power to the east of the Sutlej, and to the south in Sindh, and, though outwardly a loyal friend, bound by treaty obligations, could not be relied upon to sacrifice his real interest to his sense of loyalty or friendship for the British. The Talpur Baluchi Chiefs, who partitioned Sindh among themselves, were turbulent, ferocious, and warlike, and were not amenable to any permanent political understanding on which any reliance could be placed. These two powers, separate or even united, might not prove a serious menace to the security of British India, but they could easily play very handy tools in the hands of a powerful foreign enemy who might choose to use them deliberately in an aggressive design against India.

The British statesmen in the second quarter of the nineteenth century looked upon Russia as such an enemy, and the rapid advance of Russia towards Central Asia in the east, and Persia in the south, caused grave apprehension in their minds. Their fear was not altogether unfounded. During the period when the British were consolidating their authority in India, Russia had grown from a small principality into a vast empire. She had wrested large slices of territory from Sweden, Poland, Turkey (in Europe and Asia), Persia, and Central Asia, and it has been estimated that the territory she acquired between 1772 and 1836 was greater in extent and importance than the whole empire she had in Europe before that time. During the same period she “stretched herself forward about one thousand miles towards India and the same distance towards the capital of Persia.” It was calculated “that the battalions of the Russian imperial guard that invaded Persia found, at the termination of the war, that they were as near to Herat as to the banks of the Don, that they had already accomplished half the distance from their capital to Delhi”. As a matter of fact the Persian Government was
now completely under the influence of Russia, and "The Moscow Gazette", it was alleged, "threatens to dictate at Calcutta the next peace with England."

It was believed by a large section of the British public that Russia had definite designs against India. Dr. John McNeill, a medical officer attached to the British Mission in Persia, forcefully expressed this view with facts and arguments in his book "Progress and present position of Russia in the East, published in 1836. A number of pamphlets and articles in journals also fanned the flame of anti-Russian propaganda, with the result that "Russophobia became a leading element in British public opinion". Many public men, regarded as experts in the Far Eastern problem, contributed to this feeling by raising the cry of 'India in danger'.

It was generally believed that Russia would advance towards India through the valley of the Oxus, then occupied by the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhārā, the latter of which had a common boundary with Afghānistān. Another alternative route by which Russia could possibly advance was through Persia and Herāt. Thus both Afghānistān and Persia became objects of anxious and serious attention to the Government of India as well as the British Cabinet.

In 1835, the Whig ministry of Melbourne succeeded the ministry of Peel, and Palmerston became the Foreign Secretary. Palmerston was an ardent Russophobe and lost no time in giving public evidence of it. Lord Heytesbury was nominated by the Peel Ministry to succeed Bentinck as Governor-General of India. But Palmerston did not like the appointment, for Heytesbury, when an ambassador in Russia, was an admirer of the Tsar Nicholas. As noted above,¹ Heytesbury's appointment was cancelled, and Lord Auckland, "a sound Whig henchman", was appointed in his place. Palmerston gave further evidence of the same policy by appointing Dr. McNeill, mentioned above, as Minister Plenipotentiary at Teheran, the Persian capital. Thus the two key-posts, from which Russian advance could be observed and checked, if necessary, were filled by two officers chosen by Palmerston, and they could be relied upon to give effect to his anti-Russian policy. Before, however, tracing their activities, it is necessary to take a bird's-eye view of the position of Russia and Britain in Persia and Afghānistān.

2. Persia and Afghānistān

Reference has been made in the preceding volume to the dangers to the security of north-western frontier of India, apprehended by the British at the commencement of the nineteenth century, partly from the machinations of the French and partly from the growing
power of Zaman Shah, ruler of Afgānīstān. To counteract both of these, Captain John Malcolm was sent as an envoy to the court of Persia in A.D. 1799. A treaty was concluded with the ruler of Persia in A.D. 1801 by which the latter agreed that should a French army attempt to establish themselves on any of the islands or shores of Persia, the two contracting parties should act in co-operation “to destroy and put an end to the foundation of their treason.” The treaty also provided that in case the Afgāns attempt to invade India, “the king of Persia should be bound to lay waste, with a great army, the country of the Afgāns.”

Persia soon changed her policy and courted alliance with the French. But the British succeeded in breaking it up and regaining the friendship of Persia. A new treaty was concluded in 1812 and revised, with a few modifications, in 1814, by which Persia definitely abrogated her alliance with the French, agreed not to enter into any alliance with any European power in a state of hostility with Britain, or permit any European force to pass through her territories towards India, and to use her good offices with rulers of Khorasan, Tatarstān, Bokhārā and Samarkhand to prevent any European power from passing through their dominions to invade India. In the event of Persia being invaded by any European power, Great Britain was to furnish a military force, or in lieu thereof a subsidy with warlike ammunitions. But when Persia was engaged in a disastrous war with Russia, the British found themselves in a difficulty to carry out this provision, and annulled it in 1828 by paying Persia a sum of money which the latter badly needed in discharging the claim of Russia.

There were two articles in the treaty with Persia which related to Afgānīstān. By the first Persia agreed to send an army against Afgānīstān if the British were in a state of war with that country. By the second, the British undertook not to interfere in the case of war between Persia and Afgānīstān, unless their mediation were solicited by both the parties.

The affairs of Afgānīstān were in a distracted condition since Zaman Shah, the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali (or Durrani) of the famous Sadozai clan, was deposed and blinded in A.D. 1800 by his brother Mahmud Mirza with the help of the Barakzai brothers. Mahmud, in his turn, was defeated three years later by his younger brother Shuja Mirza (or Shuja-ul-mulk). But Fath Khan, the chief of the Barakzais, joined Kamran Mirza, the son of Mahmud, and stirred up rebellion. Shuja had sent his best army to Kāshmir but it was defeated, and about the same time Fath Khan and Mahmud seized Kandāhār. Shah Shuja was finally defeated
by them in 1809 and after some adventures took refuge with Ranjit Singh at Lahore. Ranjit promised to help him in recovering the throne, and took from him the famous Koh-i-nur diamond, but actually did nothing. Shah Shuja resumed his life of intrigue and adventures till he settled down at Ludhiana in 1816, under British protection. By a strange coincidence the deposed and blinded Zaman Shah was also living there as a pensioner of the British.

Though Mahmud became nominally the king, the real power was in the hands of the Barakzai chief, Fath Khan, who was helped by his able brother, Dost Muhammad, and asserted Afghān supremacy over Sindh, Baluchistān, and Kāshmir. Being deputed by his brother, Dost Muhammad, though very young, treacherously seized Herāt, which was then being ruled by Firuz-ud-din, brother of king Mahmud. In course of this he is alleged to have behaved rudely to the ladies of the harem. To avenge this insult to the royal family, or perhaps to get rid of a virtual master, Kamran, the son of Mahmud, murdered Fath Khan.

The assassination of Fath Khan was a signal for the final collapse of the ruling Sadozai clan. The Barakzai brothers rose in revolt, and though the eldest, Azim Khan, counselled moderation, Dost Muhammad seized Kābul. He had to defend himself not only against Shah Mahmud and prince Kamran, who were in possession of Herāt, but also against his own brother Azim Khan who asserted his claim as the representative of the Barakzai family. The two brothers now nominated two members of the royal family for the throne. Dost Muhammad set up Shahzada Sultan Ali, while the choice of Azim Khan fell upon Shah Shuja, the ex-ruler, now an exile at Ludhiana. Shah Shuja advanced towards Kābul, but his overbearing conduct gave so great an offence to Azim Khan, that the two quarrelled. A conflict ensued and Shah Shuja, being defeated, fled, first to Khyber hills and then to Sindh. Azim thereupon set up prince Ayub as his nominee and set out for Kābul with him.

In the meantime Shah Mahmud and Kamran, marching from Herāt, reached within six miles of Kābul. Dost Muhammad, despairing of success, prepared for flight, but at the last moment Shah Mahmud's courage failed him, and he fled back to Herāt.

The Barakzai brothers now ruled over the whole of Afghānistān, except Herāt, under the nominal sovereignty of Ayub, the puppet of Azim Khan, whose superior claim was recognised by his brothers. Sultan Ali, the nominee of Dost Muhammad, quietly passed out of the stage into insignificance. The whole country was parcelled out among the brothers, about twenty in number, with Azim Khan as the chief of Kābul and groups of his brothers ruling
at Kandahar and Peshawar, nominally in subordination to him. Shah Shuja made one more attempt to regain his throne and organised an army at Shikarpur. Azim Khan moved down and easily dispersed it. He then planned an invasion of the Sikh territory. But Ranjit Singh very cleverly sowed seeds of dissension among the Barakzai brothers, and one of them, Sultan Mahmud, who was ruling in Peshawar, was won over by him. Dost Muhammad having also joined the plot, Azim Khan was forced to fall back. Ranjit Singh entered Peshawar in triumph, but, instead of annexing it, divided the territory between Sultan Muhammad and Dost Muhammad.

Shortly afterwards, in A.D. 1823, Azim Khan died of a broken heart. His death was a signal for struggle among the Barakzai brothers to succeed to the chief power. For three years they were all fighting for themselves, but in A.D. 1826 Dost Muhammad seized Kabul and henceforth remained the supreme chief in Afghanistan. The nominal king Ayub, of the Sadozai clan, had already been made a prisoner in 1823, and ultimately found refuge in Lahore and got a pension of 1,000 Rupees per month from Ranjit Singh.

Shah Shuja made one more effort to regain his throne. He turned to the British for helping him with money, but Lord Bentinck, though sympathetic to his cause, plainly told him that such help would be inconsistent with the policy of neutrality adopted by his Government. All that he could get was four months’ allowance (Rs. 16,000) paid in advance.

Nevertheless Shuja left Ludhiana in January 1833, and proceeded to Shikarpur in Sindh. On his way he concluded a treaty with Ranjit Singh, by one of the articles of which Peshawar was ceded to the latter. The Amirs of Sindh having resisted Shuja’s demands for money, he defeated them in a battle at Rori. The Amirs now acknowledged his supremacy and accepted the terms offered by him. Shuja then marched to Kandahar and invested the place. But he was defeated by Dost Muhammad and fled.

Shortly afterwards Ranjit Singh entered into a conspiracy with the Barakzai brothers at Peshawar against Dost Muhammad. A Sikh army of 9,000 men advanced as friends, but seized Peshawar, and Sultan Muhammad Khan ignominiously fled. Dost Muhammad declared a religious war against Ranjit, and reached Peshawar with a huge army. But Ranjit’s diplomacy succeeded in dividing the brothers, and Dost Muhammad had to retire without striking a blow. Shortly afterwards he heard that his brother Sultan Muhammad was again intriguing with Ranjit Singh for an invasion of Kabul. He sent an army under his two sons who defeated the Sikh army at Jamrud (A.D. 1837), but did not follow up their victory.
While the Barakzai revolution was convulsing Afgānistān, events were marching rapidly in Persia. By a series of successful fights, Russia had humbled the power of Persian rulers but not their pride. They still thought of the eastern empire of Nadir Shah and dreamt of re-establishing their authority in Khurāsān and Afgānistān, if not even further east in India. The British influence in Persian Court was replaced by Russian, and the Persian ambition admirably fitted in with the expansionist policy of Russia in Central and Eastern Asia.

Persia's claims over Afgānistān were based not only on the old conquests of Nadir Shah, but also on recent engagements between Persia and Afgānistān. These claims were encouraged by Russia which had now a complete grip over Persia. Persia accordingly planned to conquer Herāt.

3. British negotiations with Persia and Afgānistān

The stage was thus set for the “Central-Asian duel” between Russia and England. Lord Palmerston made emphatic protests to Russia against her activities in Persia. Though the Russian Court denied any complicity in the Persian design upon Herāt, it is generally believed that Count Simonitch, the Russian ambassador to Teheran, either under secret instruction of the Russian Government, or without it, encouraged the Persian king Shah Mahmud, who left his capital on July 23, 1837, with a big army towards Herāt. McNeill's objections were brushed aside, and the scant respect which Persia now felt for the British authority was also displayed in other ways. In October a courier, attached to the British mission, alleged that, while carrying a letter from Herāt to McNeill, he was waylaid by Persian soldiers, assaulted, and placed in confinement. Strong protests were lodged against this breach of diplomatic privilege, but no heed was paid to them by the Persian Government. In the meantime the representations of Palmerston forced the Russian Emperor to admit the truth and issue orders for the recall of Simonitch. But the latter still continued in Persia.

In November, 1837, the Persian army reached Herāt and made preparations to besiege the city. It was regarded by the British authorities as a serious crisis. Herāt occupied a very strategic position. Situated in a fertile oasis it could serve as an admirable basis of military operations against India, as it commanded the two military routes to India running respectively via Kābul and Kandāhār. As the British Minister in Persia commented: “In the present state of the relations between Persia and Russia, it cannot be denied that the progress of the former in Afgānistān is tantamount to the
advance of the latter”. The British Government also took the same view, but they were unable to interfere in the war between Persia and Herāt in view of that clause in the treaty of 1814 with Persia which stipulated that the British must not interfere in any war between Persia and Afghānistān unless called upon to do so by both parties.

The diplomatic discomfiture in Persia turned the attention of the British Government towards Afghānistān. The initiative for a strong and active policy in that quarter was taken by Palmerston. A despatch from London dated 25th June, 1836, drew a very grave picture of the political situation. It reported that both Kābul and Kandāhār were carrying on intrigues with the Persian court, and referred to a rumour that Russia had entered into a secret agreement with the Khan (ruler) of Khiva. The Governor-General was warned “of the dangerous character of Russian action in Persia”, and urged “to raise a timely barrier against the encroachments of Russian influence”. As an immediate concrete step it was suggested that an agent might be sent to Kābul to watch events.

Lord Auckland was thinking in the same line and had already issued instructions in September, 1836, to Captain Alexander Burnes to proceed to Kābul. It was ostensibly on a commercial mission, but its real object was to conclude an agreement with the Barakzai rulers of Kābul and Kandāhār with a view to making Afghānistān a barrier against Russian advance to India. Burnes arrived at Kābul in September, 1837, and found “Persian and Russian intrigue actively at work in Afghānistān”. The precise nature and object of these intrigues are difficult to determine. It seems the Barakzai rulers of Kandāhār welcomed the Persian invasion of Herāt as a means of getting rid of the last remnant of the power of the Sadozais and adding it to their own dominions—an idea in which they were encouraged by the Russians and Persians. Dost Muhammad, on the other hand, was eager to secure the aid of Persia and Russia for recovering Peshāwār from Ranjit Singh. Letters were exchanged, and Count Simonitch, the Russian ambassador in the court of Persia, not only wrote to Dost Muhammad, but also sent a verbal message, to the effect that if Persia does not come to his help, Russia will, their object being to secure a passage to India. How far this message, as reported, truly represented the views of the Russian Government we have no means to determine.

Shortly a Russian emissary, Captain Vitkevitch (or Witkiewicz), made his appearance in Kābul with credentials from Count Simonitch and a letter of recommendation from the Shah of Persia. It is said that he also brought a congratulatory, but unsigned, letter purporting
to be from the Tsar Nicholas.⁶ According to the information which Burnes could gather at Kābul, Vitkevitch offered, on behalf of Russia, pecuniary aid to Dost Muhammad for expelling Ranjit Singh from Peshāwār. About the same time a treaty was concluded between the rulers of Kandāhār and Shah of Persia providing for the transfer of Herāt to the former. This treaty was guaranteed by Count Simonitch.

But all the while Burnes also was not sitting idle. Very interesting light is thrown on the nature of Burnes’s mission and the guiding principle of British foreign policy in respect of Afghānistān by the confidential correspondence between him and McNeill, the British Minister at the Court of Teheran. The latter wrote to Burnes recommending that the British should help Dost Muhammad in getting possession of Kandāhār and Herāt on condition that his relations with foreign governments should be controlled by the British. Captain Claude Wade, Governor-General’s agent on the North-Western Frontier, regarded this policy with misgivings, as it would deprive the British of the powerful means which they then possessed of controlling the present rulers of Afghānistān. “Our policy”, continued Wade, “ought not to be to destroy, but to use our endeavours to preserve and strengthen the different governments in Afghanistan as they at present stand.”⁷ The correspondence that passed between Burnes and the Government of India also shows the same sinister designs in respect of the kingdom of Afghānistān. The main objective was stated to be merely to weaken the influence of Russia and not to allow Dost Muhammad to play off Russia against the British. But the attention of Burnes was specifically drawn to the fact that “a consolidated and powerful Muhammedan State on our frontier might be anything rather than safe and useful to us, and the existing division of strength (i.e., between Kābul, Kandāhār and Herāt) seems far preferable.”⁸ This principle of “Divide and Rule” was accepted as the guiding policy by the British Government not only in respect of Afghānistān, but as regards the whole of Central Asia. Burnes accordingly intrigued simultaneously with the courts of Kandāhār and Kābul. He threatened the rulers of the former with the evil consequences of their intrigues with the Russians and, when they grew more pliable, offered British help in case of attack by the Persians, who were then besieging Herāt. To Dost Muhammed also he promised military help and sent an English military officer to him. But the Government of India thought that Burnes had gone too far and exceeded his instructions. He was accordingly asked to get out of the position created by him.⁹

The definite proposal of the Government of India was to the effect that Dost Muhammad should agree not to enter into political
relation with any other State, and as the price of this complete political isolation, the British would restrain Ranjit Singh from attacking his dominions. But this vague promise appeared to the Amir to be but a poor compensation for the amount of sacrifice, in political power and prestige, which he was asked to make. What he wanted was the British help in arriving at an amicable settlement with Ranjit Singh about the political status of Peshāwār, which would remove all danger to his security from that quarter.

But Auckland looked upon an alliance with Ranjit Singh as the pivot of the whole frontier policy. He could not ignore the fact that “the extensive dominions of Ranjit and his superb army lay at the most vulnerable point of the frontier of British India,” nor did he ever forget “that the Sikhs are always our first friends and steadfast allies”. Auckland felt, perhaps rightly, that if, in pursuance of the desire of Dost Muhammad, he put any pressure on Ranjit Singh in respect of Peshāwār, the Anglo-Sikh alliance would be in danger. Thus Burnes’s mission was foredoomed to failure, even though he reached Kābul before the Russian envoy and established very cordial relation with the Amir.

There is a general misapprehension regarding the attitude of Dost Muhammad Khan. This is mainly due to the fact that in order to justify their later policy against that Afghān ruler, the Government of India published, in the form of a Blue Book, the correspondence of Burnes, after omitting important passages and extracts which represent Dost Muhammad in a favourable light. It is clear from Burnes’s letters that while he was cordially welcomed by the Amir, the reception of the Russian agent was very cold and discouraging. The Amir made it quite plain that he would be “willing to receive a little from England, rather than much” from Russia or Persia. He wanted “the friendly mediation of the British Government” between him and Ranjit Singh in respect of Peshāwār, and discussed in a statesmanlike manner the various aspects of the problem and the complexities of the issues involved. Burnes was very favourably impressed with the moderation of the Amir’s view. The latter did not seek possession of Peshāwār, but only his security from that quarter. But the Government of India sent specific instructions to Burnes not to encourage the hopes of the Amir in any way in this respect as they decided to maintain the status quo in respect of Peshawar. On January 20, 1838, Auckland wrote to Burnes that the Amir ‘must give up all hope of obtaining Peshāwār’.

It is quite clear that until this was communicated to Dost Muhammad, about the end of February, 1838, he had always clung to the
hope of securing British friendship and showed definite preference for Burnes and discouragement to Vitkevitch, the Russian agent.\textsuperscript{14} It is only after all hopes of British help were extinguished that “a change came over the conduct of Dost Muhammad, and the Russian Mission began to rise in importance.”\textsuperscript{15} Even then the Amir did not give up all hope. On March 21, “the Ameer wrote a friendly letter to Lord Auckland, imploring him in language, almost of humility, to “remedy the grievances of the Afghans,” to “give them a little encouragement and power.” But there was no favourable response. In the meanwhile one of the ruling Sardars of Kandahar came to Kabul in order to win over the Amir to the Persian alliance. As Burnes put it, the “do-nothing policy” of the Indian Government put the Russian agent on a high pedestal. “Vitkevitch was publicly sent for, and paraded through the streets of Kabul.”\textsuperscript{16} So Burnes left Kabul on April 26, 1838. The British diplomacy proved a complete failure in Afganistân.

The British position in Persia was equally bad, to start with, and soon became worse. As noted above, Herât was besieged in November, 1837. McNeill, the British Minister at Teheran, visited the Persian Shah in his camp and protested that the war was a violation of the treaty between England and Persia, but it proved of no avail. The promises of help and support from Russia as well as Kandahar encouraged the Persians to press the siege. An Englishman, Eldred Pottinger, the nephew of the British Resident in Sindh, who was in Herat at the time, ably aided the defence of Herat which held on till June, 1838. In the meantime, as the position of Herat seemed desperate, McNeill wrote to Auckland in March, 1838, suggesting the despatch of a British expeditionary force to the Gulf of Persia in order to compel the Shah to desist from his attack on Herat. McNeill himself visited the Shah of Persia in his camp as well as the besieged ruler in Herat, and arranged the terms of a treaty between the two. But, at the instigation of Simonitch, the Shah refused to ratify it. On June 7 McNeill declared his relations with the Government of Persia suspended, and set out for Tabriz. The prospect of the English was gloomy in the extreme.

Two circumstances now turned the tide in favour of the British. In response to the request of McNeill, Auckland had sent an expeditionary naval force to the Persian Gulf, and it occupied the island of Kharak, 30 miles north-west of Bushire, on June 19. Secondly, McNeill was authorised by Palmerston to tell the Persian Shah that the attack of Herat by the Persians was regarded as a hostile act by the British. Referring to the occupation of Kharak, McNeill added “that if the Shah desired the British Government to
suspend the measures in progress for the vindication of its honour, he must at once retire from Herat." A formal message to this effect was handed over to the Persian Government by Col. Stoddart on August 12, 1838. The failure of the great assault on Herāt on June 24, 1838, the British expeditionary force, whose strength was magnified by rumours, and the firm tone of the British—all taken together created a great alarm in the mind of the Shah. He thereupon raised the siege of Herāt and retreated on September 9, 1838. It is interesting to note in this connection that by Article 9 of the treaty with Persia, England had bound herself not to interfere in any quarrels between the Afghāns and the Persians.

The British diplomatic representation to the Russian Government against their aggressive policy in Persia also bore fruit. That Government had already denied completely any design against the British in India, and now, as a proof of their good faith, disowned and recalled count Simonitch and Vitkevitch; while the Russian Emperor refused to confirm the guarantee which had been given by the Count to the treaty between Persia and Kandāhār. Vitkevitch in his disgrace blew out his brains.

4. Declaration of War against Afghānistān.

The retreat of the Persians from Herāt and the strong and open disavowal by Russian Government of any design to interfere in the affairs of Afghānistān must be regarded as a great triumph for the British, and it might well be hoped that the curtain would at last fall upon the cold diplomatic war going on between England, Russia, and Persia for years past. But that was not to be. In order to understand this it is necessary to consider the reaction produced upon the Government of India by the failure of the mission of Burnes. The Governor-General, Auckland, had bestowed much thought on the whole question and discussed it fully with his colleagues and advisers who had greater knowledge and experience on the subject. The momentous issue, in his opinion, was to decide, well in advance, the policy to be adopted in case Persia succeeded in capturing Herāt and then advanced further east into the heart of Afghānistān, for that would constitute a grave danger to the security of India. In an elaborate minute, dated 12 May, 1838, he held that three courses were open to the Government of India. The first was to defend the line of the Sindhu (Indus) without any concern with the affairs in Afghānistān; the second was to help the ruler of Kābul and Kandāhār to repel Persian invasion; the third was "to permit or to encourage Ranjit Singh to invade Afghānistān and to organise a British expedition against that country under the nominal lead of
Shah Shuja, in order to restore him to the throne.” The Governor-General preferred the third alternative and recommended its adoption, whether Herat successfully resists the Persians or succumbs to their attack.

The third course having been finally decided upon, negotiations were set on foot with Ranjit Singh to devise measures to restore Shuja on the throne of Kabul. Macnaghten was chosen to carry on the delicate diplomatic conversations with Ranjit at Lahore. What exactly transpired between the two is not definitely known. It appears that the British were at first inclined to induce Ranjit Singh to take the leading part and advance against Kabul with his army through Khyber Pass, while Shah Shuja would proceed via Sindh and Kandahar, and the British would help him with money and officers to enable him to recover his throne.

Ranjit Singh, however, refused to take, independently, the leading part in invading Afghanistān, and clearly expressed the view that in this matter he wished to act only with the British Government. Ranjit Singh had his “misgivings regarding the success of an undertaking in which his own troops and the raw levies of Shah Shuja were to be the main actors,” and coaxed Macnaghten into giving an assurance, if not a formal undertaking, that, if necessary, the British would send troops sufficient in number to ensure the success of the expedition. Thus Ranjit Singh had a complete diplomatic triumph over Macnaghten. Whereas the Governor-General seems to have ruled out the idea of taking the leading part in the invasion of Afghanistān, the terms of agreement with Ranjit Singh ultimately forced him to take that very course. The Lion of the Panjab seems to have outwitted his fellow Lion of Britain.

The treaty, which was in effect one between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, guaranteed by the British Government, confirmed Ranjit’s right over the territories he then held, including Peshawar, and no one was to cross the Indus or Sutlej without his permission. But he renounced his claim on Sindh, which would belong to the Amirs on payment of a pecuniary compensation to the Maharaja. He would maintain not less than 5,000 Muhammadan troops at Peshawar for the support of the Shah, and would receive two lakhs of rupees a year from Shah Shuja for this purpose. The Shah gave up all claims of supremacy and arrears of tribute over Sindh on payment, by the Amirs of that country, of a sum of money as might be determined under the mediation of the British Government; fifteen lakhs of rupees of such payment being made over by him to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Shuja also bound himself and his successors not to enter into negotiation with any foreign State without
the consent of the British and the Sikh Governments. On a closer analysis of the treaty it would appear that while all the advantages were with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his commitments seem to have been of a very vague character. He was to send his own troops to Kābul, but the number was not specified, and he might call upon Shuja to supply his own troops. This Tripartite treaty was signed by Ranjit Singh on June 26, 1838, approved by the Governor-General, and received the signature of Shah Shuja on 17 July, 1838.

The Tripartite Treaty, as noted above, did not lay down any military obligations of the British, beyond furnishing a handful of European officers. In fact, the first idea of the Governor-General was that the main expedition should be undertaken by the Sikhs and the Afghān army, either together or each following its own way. In any case it was the idea, up to the very end of negotiations, that Shuja himself would take the leading part. But gradually the scheme underwent a radical change. It was ultimately decided that it was mainly the British army which would undertake to seat Shuja on his throne. Accordingly, arrangement was made for the equipment of a grand army consisting of two powerful detachments, one from Bengal and the other from Bombay Army.

Much ink has been spilt in apportioning the responsibility for the Afghān policy, particularly the idea of sending a powerful British army, between Auckland, the Governor-General, and his advisers, specially William Macnaghten, the Chief Secretary, his assistant, Henry Torrens, John Colvin, the Private Secretary of the Governor-General, the Commander-in-Chief, and Captains Burnes and Wade. But while the question may be of great significance in a biography of Auckland, it has little importance in a general history of India. For, in the first place, such questions might be raised in regard to almost every grave issue decided by the Government of India, and secondly, it is almost impossible, from the very nature of the case, to come to any satisfactory conclusion regarding the point when we remember that influence might be exercised, to a very large extent, by private consultation and day to day discussion of which no faithful record is likely to be preserved. In any event, under the existing constitution, the Governor-General must be prepared to take full responsibility for any policy to which he gave his approval, even if he had not initiated it.

On October 1, 1838, the Government of India issued a manifesto from Simla tracing in detail the course of events which led to the war and offering a justification of the policy pursued by the Governor-General. It is unnecessary to comment at length upon
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this manifesto. So far as negotiations with Dost Muhammad are concerned, it is a tissue of lies from beginning to end, and the entire document is a string of misrepresentations, deliberate distortion of facts and views, and misleading assumptions unsupported by any evidence. Even the Anglo-Indian public of those days, though the whole truth was not known to them, denounced the manifesto in the strongest terms. “The press seized upon it and tore it to pieces. If it were not pronounced to be a collection of absolute falsehoods, it was described as a most disingenuous distortion of the truth.”

Kaye has truly remarked that “never, since the English in India began the work of King-making, had a more remarkable document issued from the council-chamber of an Anglo-Indian Viceroy”. Instead of ‘remarkable’ he might have easily said ‘preposterous’.

One instance should suffice to indicate the nature of the manifesto. The original objects of the mission of Burnes, we are told, “were purely of a commercial nature”. But after his departure “the troops of Dost Muhammad Khan had made a sudden and unprovoked attack on those of our ancient ally Maharajah Runjeet Singh”. In order to avert a calamitous war Captain Burnes was authorised “to intimate to Dost Muhammad Khan, that if he should evince a disposition to come to just and reasonable terms with the Maharajah, his Lordship would exert his good offices with his Highness for the restoration of an amicable understanding between the two powers.” But “it appeared”, continues the manifesto, “that Dost Muhammad Khan, chiefly in consequence of his reliance upon Persian encouragement and assistance, persisted...in urging the most unreasonable pretentions,...that he avowed schemes of aggrandisement and ambition injurious to the security and peace of the frontiers of India; and that he openly threatened, in furtherance of these schemes, to call every foreign aid which he could command.” The correspondence of Burnes, referred to above, would prove to the meanest intellect, that all these allegations are diametrically opposite of truth. All declarations of war not unnaturally contain suppression or distortion of facts to a certain extent, but it would be difficult to name any such document in the history of the world which can beat the Simla manifesto in respect of deliberate suppression of truth and mischievous and malicious distortion of facts.

“The Simla manifesto had placed the siege of Herāt by the Persians in the foreground as the main cause of the contemplated expedition.” But unfortunately for Lord Auckland, this siege, which formed the _casus belli_, was withdrawn about three weeks before the manifesto was issued. It is true that he was unaware of it at the time, but when, shortly afterwards, this all-important fact came

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to his knowledge, and the chief, if not the only justification for the military expedition ceased to exist, Auckland did not abandon the idea, though there was ample time for making a graceful retreat from the bellicose attitude which was both unjust and inexpedient. There was also no inherent difficulty in adopting such a course, for under the terms of the Tripartite Treaty, the British were under no obligation to provide any military help. But Auckland persisted in his aggressive policy. A proclamation was issued on November 8, 1838, in which, after announcing that the Persians had raised the siege of Herāt it was declared that the Governor-General “will continue to prosecute with vigour the measures which have been announced, with a view to the substitution of a friendly for a hostile power in the eastern provinces of Afghānistān, and to the establishment of a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression upon our North-West frontier.” Perhaps the Governor-General was unwilling to forego the laudable desire, expressed in his earlier manifesto, “to assist in restoring the union and prosperity of the Afghān people” and “to put an end to the distractions by which, for so many years, the welfare and happiness of the Afghāns have been impaired.”

The aggressive policy which the British Government adopted towards Afghānistān has been supported by some and adversely criticised by others. It is unnecessary to discuss at length the question whether Shah Shuja had any legal or moral right to the throne of Kābul. In that country, actual possession was the only right recognised alike by the ruler and the people. Besides, it would be idle to pretend that such questions really had played any part in the decision of the British Government. It is a plain fact that they chose to interfere in the affairs of Afghānistān in order to serve their own interest, and not in defence of any right such as Shah Shuja might have possessed. They tried to establish their influence through Dost Muhammad, but failed, and now sought to achieve the same end by placing Shah Shuja on the throne in his place. They cared little who occupied the throne of Kābul so long as he was subservient to the British. In any case, it is obvious that Shah Shuja’s claim to the throne of Kābul was very questionable. His elder brother, whom he had forcibly dispossessed, again took possession of it after he left, and the latter’s son Kamran, who was still ruling in Herāt, a part of the kingdom of Afghānistān, had therefore undoubtedly superior claims to the Afghān kingdom. The British Government and the historians who have supported them justify the action on the ground that Shah Shuja’s claim was in any event better than that of the usurper Dost Muhammad. But it must not be forgotten that Shah Shuja himself was no better than a usurper when he seized the throne of Kābul by force from his elder brother. On the whole,
no unprejudiced man can possibly deny that there was no justification for attacking Dost Muhammad. Considering the difficult position in which he was placed, it is now generally admitted that he did not do or say anything which might justly be construed as a provocation by the British.

On the other hand, the correspondence of Burnes leaves no doubt that Dost Muhammad was sincerely anxious to come to an understanding with the British, and decidedly preferred an alliance with them to that with either Persia or Russia. His attitude was, however, deliberately misrepresented by the Governor-General, and what was far worse, the correspondence of Burnes, as mentioned above, was mutilated to lend support to his view.

Even according to the Governor-General's manifesto, the sole offence of Dost Muhammad consisted in the preference shown by him to a Persian over a British alliance which really means his refusal to ally himself with the British against Persia and Russia, a course which offered no advantage to him, but might easily draw upon him the wrath of a mighty European power which was his next-door neighbour. If such a refusal may be regarded as a sufficient cause for a declaration of war against him by the British in alliance with his avowed enemy, the Sikhs, perhaps no aggressive and unprovoked war in the history of the world would lack in a justifiable cause of action. It should be remembered that up to the very end Dost Muhammad did not form any alliance with Russia, and maintained strict neutrality. Auckland's diabolical scheme of ruining him finds the nearest parallel in the conspiracy of Warren Hastings with Shuja-ud-daulla for destroying the Rohillas, though with far less excuse.

Apart from the question of legal or moral justification, the course adopted by the Government of India has been adversely criticised on grounds of expediency, both at the time and ever since. The distance, climate and the nature of the land offered so many serious difficulties to an invading army, that an expedition to Kābul should not have been lightly undertaken save in an extreme emergency involving great risk to the safety and security of India. Such an emergency never existed, in fact, and whatever apprehensions might have been entertained were removed by the withdrawal of the Persians from Herāt.

On the other hand, Auckland's action has been justified, even by eminent authorities, mainly on two grounds. It has been urged in the first place that "he had no option in the matter. He had gone too far to recede." The validity of this assumption may be
doubted, as noted above. Secondly, it has been argued "that the
isolation in which Dost Muhammad was now left by the Russopersian withdrawal was, on military grounds, a special reason for
pressing on against him." This is no doubt a weighty argument,
and may be presumed to have largely influenced the decision of
Auckland. But it is an admission of the British aggression in its
most naked and brutal form, without the slightest pretence of any
moral justification or political necessity.

There was, however, another aspect of the problem. A perti-
nent question, asked at the time, was that supposing Shah Shuja
could be placed on the throne with the help of the British army,
could he maintain it without the same? As the Duke of Wellington
very tersely put it, "the consequence of the advance of the British
army into Afgânistân would be a perennial march into that
country."

It should, however, be pointed out that the responsibility for
the Governor-General's action must be shared by the Home au-
thorities. For they fully approved of armed intervention, though they
at the same time hinted at the possibility of avoiding it. They, no
doubt, expressed some misgivings about the course of action pro-
posed to be pursued, but were mainly guided by their apprehensions
about Russia, and regarded the Afgân expedition as a part of the
Central Asian Policy.

The public opinion, both in England and India (among the
Anglo-Indians, or at least a large section of it), was also in favour
of the expedition. It is now held that this was mainly due to the
fact that a Blue Book, published in 1839, gave a garbled version of
the despatches, conveying a false impression of the views of Burnes
as well as of Dost Muhammad. Though this was denied by Palmer-
ston in the House of Commons, the revised version of the despatches,
published in 1859, fully supports the charge, and "no defence worth
considering has ever been offered of such an extraordinary per-
formance." But it is difficult to exonerate the English public on
this ground alone. For the broad fact remained unchallenged that
the British nation, alarmed at the bogey of a Russian invasion, did
not scruple in the least to destroy an innocent neighbourly power.
As noted above, the nearest parallel to such a crime in the history
of British India is afforded by Hastings' action against the Rûnîlès.
But while this was denounced by a strong section of the public in
England, the Afgân war was generally applauded, and the perpe-
trators of the crime were rewarded with the highest honours. The
difference in the reaction against these two deplorable incidents may
be taken as a fair measure of the demoralisation brought upon Englishmen by the virus of imperialism in course of half a century.

5. *The Afghan War*²⁴

The British army destined for the conquest of Afghānistān was called "the army of the Indus" (à la Napoleon). As the shrewd Ranjit Singh did not like the idea that the British troops should march through his country, the Bengal army, like that of Bombay, had to march through Sindh. The Governor-General pompously announced in his manifesto: "His Majesty Shah Shoojah-ool-Moolk will enter Afghanistan surrounded by his own troops, and will be supported against foreign interference and factious opposition by a British army." Thus the fiction was maintained that the powerful British army was only an auxiliary force aiding Shah Shuja, who was proceeding at the head of his own troops to recover his rightful throne. To keep up this pretence, a force was placed at the disposal of the Shah, which consisted of a troop of native horse-artillery, two regiments of cavalry, and five of infantry. Major-General Simpson was appointed the Commander of this force. In addition to this expeditionary force proceeding through Southern Afghānistān, the Sikh army of Ranjit Singh was to proceed directly towards Kābul via Peshāwār and Khyber pass. This was to co-operate with what was called the Shahjada's army, namely, a force composed of British sepoys and adventurers under the nominal command of Timur, the son of Shah Shuja.

Diplomatic fiction supplemented the military fiction. Macnaghten was appointed "Envoy and Minister on the part of the Government of India at the Court of Shooja-ool-Moolk", and accompanied the expedition with his full staff.

The whole of the Bengal force under Sir Willoughby Cotton was encamped, by the end of November, 1838, at Ferozepore where, amidst gay festivities and gorgeous display, a series of interviews took place between the Governor-General and Ranjit Singh. The raising of the siege of Herāt produced two notable changes. The strength of the expeditionary force was somewhat reduced, and Sir Henry Fane, the Commandar-in-Chief, whose health was rapidly falling, was relieved of its command, which was given to Sir John Keane, the Commander of the Bombay division.

Early in December, the army of His Majesty Shah Shuja moved from Ferozepore, followed by the Bengal division of the British army, and both arrived on the banks of the Sindhu in the third week of January, 1839. Here, a great difficulty arose with the Amirs of Sindh. The relations of the British with these chiefs will be re-
lated in detail elsewhere.25 Here it will suffice to state, that in disregard of solemn assurances given by the Government of India to the Amirs that no military stores would be carried along the Sindhu, the army and its equipments were transported through Sindh, and the Amirs were coerced, under threats of dire consequences, to render all help to the British army, proceeding to invade a country with which they had friendly relations. Further, though Shuja gave pledges, written on copies of Qur'ān, releasing the Amirs of Sindh from any obligation of payment to him,26 they were now forced to pay twenty-five lakhs of Rupees to be shared by Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja in the proportion of 15 to 10.

The Bengal army crossed the Sindhu without any difficulty and reached Shikarpur on 20 February. Hitherto the army of Shah Shuja had always preceded the British force by a few days' march. Henceforth the order of march was changed. The British troops moved in advance, "being better able to cope with an enemy" than the raw levy of His Majesty. The army marched through Bolan pass and reached Quetta on March, 26. Here the Bombay force joined the Bengal Army, and its Commander, Sir John Keane, the Commander-in-Chief of the whole army, established his headquarters at Quetta on April 6, 1839. Both the columns had suffered great hardships and privations during their march through Sindh, and bitterly complained of lack of friendship on the part of the people. They failed to realise that the British troops as well as Shuja were most unwelcome guests who were tolerated merely at the point of the bayonet.

The progress of the army in Afghānistān would have been more like a joy-ride than any gruesome fight, but for the rigorous climate and shortness of provisions. The Afghāns were overcome more by gold than by iron bullets. Bribery on a large scale won over the tribes, one after another, and there was hardly any campaigning. Kandāhār surrendered without any fight on 25 April, 1839, and there Shah Shuja was solemnly enthroned on an improvised platform serving as masnad. As soon as he ascended the throne, "a salvo was discharged from a hundred and one pieces of artillery." John Keane and others offered naazars, and the "army of the Indus" marched in review in front of the throne.

In his manifesto of October 1, 1838, Lord Auckland had declared that the popularity of Shah Shuja, throughout Afghānistān, was proved "by the strong and unanimous testimony of the best authorities." Doubts had arisen on this point in the minds of many in course of this march, but it was put to the test after Shuja's enthronement at Kandāhār. "No alacrity was shown in joining his
standard," and when, in accordance with custom, he sent ten thousand Rupees to the Ghilzai chiefs with a copy of the Qur'ān, on which to swear allegiance to the Shah, they kept the money, but returned the book, refusing to "offer any pledge of adherence to the royal cause." And this was not the only instance of this kind.

After a few short skirmishes the army appeared before Ghazni on July 21. The fort proved to be much stronger than the British anticipated, but though the heavy guns had been left behind, bribery and treachery did their part and the fort was taken by assault with a loss of only 17 killed and 165 wounded.

Shortly afterwards Nawab Jabbar Khan, brother of Dost Muhammad, arrived at the British camp with overtures for peace. He offered to acknowledge Shah Shuja as sovereign on condition that Dost Muhammad should be his wazir. Not only was this refused, but it was insisted that Dost Muhammad should leave Afghānistān. The negotiations accordingly broke off, and on July 30, the British army began to march towards Kābul.

Dost Muhammad now made a final effort to resist the invaders. But he soon discovered that his troops were not loyal to his cause. He made a touching appeal to them in the name of their country, but when this proved unavailing, he fled towards the Hindu Kush. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that here, too, bribery and treachery played their part.

On August 7, 1839, Shah Shuja entered Kābul in triumph. As a contemporary historian has observed: "It was graced by all the marks of honour which the British authorities could offer, and was deficient in nothing but the congratulations of the people over whom the restored king was to reign."27 "It was more like a funeral procession than the entry of a king into the capital of his restored dominions."28 Prince Timur and the Sikh contingent, marching through the Khyber Pass, had to put up a strenuous fight for capturing the fort of Ali Masjid, but took Jalālābād without any difficulty. They reached Kābul on September 3, and the whole expedition had thus a triumphant end. Honours were now showered upon the heroes from both sides. Shah Shuja instituted an Order of Knighthood on the model of the British Order of the Bath, to which the officers of the "army of the Indus" were liberally admitted, together with a few distinguished civil functionaries. The British Government did not lag behind. Auckland was made an Earl, Sir John Keane, a Baron, and both Pottinger and Macnaghten, Barons. A pension of two thousand pounds a year was granted to Keane and his two next heirs male. Others were suitably rewarded with Knighthood, G.C.B., etc.
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In his famous manifesto of October 1, 1838, to which reference has been made above, Auckland had assumed, on the "strong and unanimous testimony of the best authorities," that Shah Shuja was popular throughout Afghanistān, and therefore declared it to be his intention to withdraw the British army as soon as His Majesty was "replaced on the throne by his own subjects and adherents", "and the independence and integrity of Afghanistān established". The party hostile to Shah Shuja also liked nothing better. The brother of Dost Muhammad, who unsuccessfully negotiated with the British at Ghazni, as mentioned above, frankly put it as follows: "If Shah Shuja is really a king, and come to the kingdom of his ancestors, what is the use of your army and name? You have brought him by your money and arms into Afghanistān, leave him now with us Afghans, and let him rule us if he can."29

The sinister meaning of these observations was soon proved by the hostile attitude of the people, almost throughout the country, towards the army of occupation, and many ugly incidents caused thereby. Lt. Col. Henry, marching in charge of a treasure convoy from Kandahār to Kābul, was waylaid by the Kojuks and killed. The Ghilzais had been openly demonstrating their hostility and Captain Outram had to march against them. The tribes who controlled the passes of the Khyber, discontented with the amount of money distributed among them to secure peace, rose up against the small detachments left at different posts between Peshāwār and Jalālābād.

These and many other incidents of a similar nature made the British painfully aware of the fact that they were in a hostile territory rather than in a friendly kingdom. The popularity of Shah Shuja, on which Auckland had waxed eloquent, and which formed the basis of his Afghan policy, was nowhere to be seen. He had therefore to reconsider his original plan of withdrawing the British army. Ultimately it was decided to withdraw the major part of the British troops, according to original plan, and leave about five or six regiments at Kābul. Accordingly a part of the Bengal force, under General Nott and Col. Sale, was left in Afghanistān, while the rest of it, as well as the entire Bombay column, returned to India, the former by the Khyber pass, and the latter by the way by which they came.

In course of the return journey the Bombay column stormed the fortress of Kalat in Baluchistan, not far from Quetta. The ruler of this place had incurred the displeasure of the British when they were marching towards Kābul, because he did not help them sufficiently. The fact is that the Baluchis were hostile to the British,
whom they naturally detested as foreign invaders, and bitterly resented the damage to their crops, caused by the advancing British troops. As noted before, the British army suffered heavily for want of food, and the British felt 'righteous' indignation that they were not being liberally helped by the Baluchis out of their difficulties. For some reasons, the ruler of Kalat, Mehrab Khan, was specially selected for wreaking their vengeance. This is quite clear from a letter of Macnaghten written during the advance to Kābul, in which he suggested, by way of punishing the Khan of Kalat, that a part of his territories should be annexed to Shah Shuja’s dominions. But the time was inopportune and the British could do nothing. Now, flushed with victory, the British gave vent to their pent-up feeling of fury. Although no provocation was given by the Khan, and no specific charges were made against him, Kalat was attacked by a British detachment sent from Quetta for this purpose. The Khan made a brave and protracted resistance, and fought “with desperate valour” which extorted admiration even from the British. But nothing availed; the fortress was stormed, though the British loss was heavy; Mehrab Khan died, sword in hand, and another chief was put up in his place as a protégé of the British. As suggested by Macnaghten, three districts of the Khan were annexed to the dominions of Shah Shuja. A British historian has remarked: “It may be doubted whether these proceedings were wise, and it seems certain that they were unjust.”

The Bengal force, returning under the Commander-in-Chief, suffered a great deal from the attacks of the Afghān tribes living in the neighbourhood of the Khyber Pass, who made plundering raids and carried off provisions and camels. Ultimately Macnaghten made peace with them by pecuniary grants, and the army safely returned to India. By a general order, dated January 2, 1840, the “army of the Indus” was formally dissolved.

6. British Disaster in Afghānistān

It was not long before the British army, left in Afghānistān, realised that it was far easier to seat Shah Shuja on the throne of Kābul than to keep him there. Widespread discontent gathered momentum throughout the dominions of Shuja; the people disliked him and seemed to be determined not to submit to his authority. Early in 1840, a British detachment was sent against a refractory chief of Pishoot, a fort situated about fifty miles from Jalālābād. The British forces stormed the first gate but were unable to break down the inner one and had to retreat with heavy loss. Similar acts of defiance occurring in other places could be put down only after
heavy fighting in which the Afghān tribes always offered a stout resistance. A regular and sanguinary fight took place with the Ghilzais, a notorious tribe, on May 16, 1840. The Baluchis cut off, at Nufusk Pass, Lt. Clark who had gone out of the fort of Kahun with a small party to procure supplies. In order to supply the fort, Major Cliborn was dispatched on August 12 with a convoy from Sukkur. He met with a terrible disaster in the same place. He won a victory, but could not carry the pass and had to fall back, pursued by the enemy; his men died of thirst in hundreds and he lost all his arms and equipments. Kahun and Quetta were besieged and almost the whole country rose in revolt. A great disaster befell the British at Kalat. The new chief set up by them could not defend himself against a rising of the people who besieged the fort. He surrendered and abdicated in favour of Nasir Khan, son of Mehrab Khan, mentioned above. The British Lieutenant, who was left there to protect him with a sepoy force, was made prisoner and subsequently murdered.

It would be tedious to relate all the events in detail. But it was now apparent even to the meanest intellect, that Shah Shuja was maintained on the throne not by his own strength but only by the British bayonets. Series of outbreaks like those mentioned above, all over the country, kept the British forces almost continuously engaged in suppressing them. Though generally successful, they also met with occasional reverses.

Encouraged by the favourable turn of events in Afghānistān, its ex-ruler, Dost Muhammad Khan, who had fled towards the Hindu Kush, now made an effort to regain his throne. He made an alliance with the Uzbegs under Wali of Kulun and advanced upon Bamiyān. Their joint force was defeated on September 18 by a British detachment, and soon the Wali was won over, evidently by the British gold. Dost Muhammad now moved towards Kohistān and was joined by many chiefs. He was defeated near the entrance of the Ghorbund Pass, on September 29, but the British forces were repulsed at Julgah, another fort occupied by the rebel chiefs of Kohistān, on October 3. Throughout the month of October Dost Muhammad fled from place to place till, joined by some of Shah Shuja’s troops, he marched towards Kābul. A battle took place at Parwandurrah on November 2, 1840, in which the British cavalry suffered severe losses owing to the defection of the Afghān troops in the midst of the battle. Two days after this glorious triumph, Dost Muhammad, who had no illusion about the ultimate result of the contest, rode towards Kābul, and surrendered himself to the British envoy, Macnaghten.
Dost Muhammad received cordial treatment at the hands of the British envoy, and was sent to India on November 12, 1840, under a strong escort. In recommending to the Governor-General that the ex-Amir should be treated with liberality, Macnaghten refuted the argument that Dost Muhammad should not be treated more handsomely than Shah Shuja. "The Shah," he said, "had no claim upon us. We had no hand in depriving him of his kingdom, whereas we ejected the Dost, who never offended us, in support of our policy of which he was the victim". At last even Macnaghten blurted out a great truth which may be looked upon as the strongest denunciation of the Afghān policy of which he is generally believed to have been the chief adviser and advocate.

On the very day when Dost Muhammad surrendered, the British army re-occupied Kalat after defeating the army of Nasir Khan. But though the year 1840 thus ended auspiciously for the British, the condition of Afghānistān was still a source of great anxiety to them. The situation was admirably and accurately summed up by the Secret Committee in their letter to the Government of India, dated December 31, 1840. They pointed out that "for many years to come, the restored monarchy will have need of a British force", and that this force must necessarily be a large one. The maintenance of such a force and the suppression of "repeated revolts and disorders" would entail too heavy a financial burden on the Indian Government. There were only two alternatives open to them,—either to face this intolerable burden, both military and financial, or "the entire abandonment of the country and a frank confession of failure." The Secret Committee made it clear that they preferred the second alternative; the Council of the Governor-General, however, decided in favour of the continued occupation of Afghānistān. But both the Government of India and Macnaghten fully realised the need of reducing the drain upon the resources of India, and Macnaghten was forced to reduce the stipends or subsidies to the Afghān tribal chiefs.

All the tribal chiefs regarded this measure of economy as a great blow upon their powers and privileges. They held secret meetings and entered into a conspiracy to recover by force what was withheld from them. The Eastern Ghilzais, who had other grievances, were the first to strike the blow. They left Kābul and occupied the passes on the road to Jalālābād, cutting off all communications with India.

After a protracted warfare with the Ghilzais, involving several bloody encounters, Humjee Khan, a man of high rank and Governor of the Ghilzais, was sent to treat with them. But it later transpired
that he himself was the instigator of the hostile movement. A truce was arranged by Macgregor, after making valuable concessions. But it was of no avail. Sir Robert Sale, who was marching with his force to Jalālābād on his return journey to India, was attacked by the Afghāns. He forced the pass of Khurd Kābul occupied by the rebel chiefs, but was wounded in the fight. A number of skirmishes followed in which the British gained victories, but the troops suffered heavily on account of attacks of isolated bodies of Afghāns issuing from hills and dales. On October 29, 1841, while marching from Jagdalak towards Gandammak, Sale found the hills bristling with armed men who poured a heavy fire from all sides. The army pushed through the pass after defeating the enemy, but these reappeared and fell upon the rear-guard of the British army. Sale not only lost a number of men, but also a heavy quantity of baggage and camp equipage. Next day he wrote a letter giving a dismal account of the military position. Referring to his troops he says: "Since leaving Kabul, they have been kept constantly on the alert by attacks by night and day, . . . each succeeding morning has brought its affair with a bold and active enemy."

At Gandammak, Sale got the news that Jalālābād was threatened by the enemy. He forthwith marched upon it and arrived there on November 12, 1841, "having sustained considerable annoyance from plunderers" on the way. The whole of his camp equipage was destroyed and the sick and the wounded amounted to more than three hundred. He found Jalālābād invested on every side, but by a bold charge dispersed the enemy. The position at Jalālābād, however, gave cause for grave anxiety. Its defences were weak, the protecting army was much smaller than necessary, provisions were short, and there was no expectation of securing any help from any quarter in near future.

In the meantime things were getting from bad to worse in Kābul. There was still a considerable number of British troops in that city. Part of these was stationed at the Bala Hissār, the royal citadel, which overlooked the town, and the rest were in the cantonments lying at a distance of about three miles. Some British officers resided in the town and part of the commissariat establishment was also within its walls.

Rumours and warnings of a secret conspiracy in Kābul to drive away the British had reached the authorities from various sources, but they paid no heed to it. It had assumed serious proportions on the evening of November 1, when, according to later reports, the hostile chiefs met to discuss the measures to be taken to incite the people. They decided to "announce on the one hand that the king
had given orders for the destruction of the infidels", and to spread a report, on the other, that the British authorities were bent upon "seizing the principal chiefs and sending them prisoners to London." Sadyat Khan, at whose house the meeting was held, was once rudely treated by Burnes, and he proposed that the "first overt act of violence on the morrow should be an attack on the house of the man who had so insulted him." How far these reports of the conspiracy may be accepted as accurate it is difficult to say. But there is no doubt about what followed.

On the morning of November 2, 1841, a riot broke out in the city. The shops were looted and the houses of British officers attacked. Sir Alexander Burnes, his brother Lt. Burnes of the Bombay army, and Lt. Broadfoot of the Bengal European regiment lost their lives in the hands of the unruly mob. The Shah's treasury and the residence of Burnes were plundered and burnt, and every man, woman and child found in either were killed. Shortly, the revolt spread all over the city, and was marked by a lust for the blood of the Europeans, some of whom were wounded, and others narrowly escaped.

The anti-British insurrection continued on the following days and soon took an alarming character. Had the British authorities taken strong measures at the very outset, the whole trouble might have been nipped in the bud. But at first they did not regard the outbreak as a serious one, and when they realised the true situation, they seem to have been paralysed by the sudden outburst of popular frenzy on a wide scale. They made a few desultory efforts, but there was no sign of any well-conceived plan for either attack or defence. Important posts in the town, held by the British, fell in quick succession for want of ammunition which never reached them in spite of pressing applications to the authorities. In particular, the loss of the British Commissariat fort was a severe blow to the safety and security of the British army. It was the principal depot containing provisions of all kinds, and was bravely defended by Ensign Warren. He repeatedly asked for succour, and it was represented to the General by the commissariat officers that the capture of the depot would mean sure destruction of the British troops, as the cantonments did not possess more than two days' provisions and it was impossible to procure supplies in the prevailing circumstances. In spite of all this, Elphinstone, the aged Commander-in-Chief, failed to send an adequate force during the two days following the outbreak, and the depot fell into the hands of the insurgents. "This was a blow at the British cause in Kābul before which it reeled." It is unnecessary to give further details of the insurrection which
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grew in momentum every day, and of the unsuccessful efforts of the British to put it down. The most notable point in the whole affray was the cowardice and lack of discipline displayed by the British infantry, both native and European, in several engagements with the rebels. The troops lost heart and showed a craven spirit, so unusual to them, which not unoften led to grave disasters. They would not obey the orders to advance, and often deserted their line and posts in the face of hostile attack. In a word, a large section of the British troops seem to have been almost as much paralysed as their old Commander-in-Chief. The two expeditions, sent on November 22 and 23, to capture a village called Behmura, ending in veritable disgrace and disasters, offer a striking illustration of the inefficiency of the commanding officers and the sunken spirit of the men. The British historians have deplored this strange shortcoming of the Indian soldiers, but have not cared to explore its causes. Some light is thrown on this by the long memorandum prepared by Shaikh Hidayat Ali, Subahdar and Sardar Bahadur, Bengal Sikh Police Battalion, immediately after the Mutiny of 1857, in order to explain its causes. He has clearly pointed out that the Afghan expedition was highly disliked by the sepoys who took part in it. The Hindu sepoys feared that they had lost their caste, and the Muslim sepoys were dissatisfied as they had to fight against men of their own faith. Actually, a Muslim Subahdar and a Hindu Subahdar were, respectively, shot dead and dismissed for expressing these sentiments. But the feelings could not be checked by such punishment. The sepoys had no heart in the fight and we are even told that they sometimes even shot in the air rather than at their opponents.34

But the insurrection did not long remain confined to the city of Kábul. The fort of Ladhman was attacked and the British garrison removed to Charikar. This was invested by the Afgháns, and desertion, followed by open mutiny among the British troops who killed their own officer, forced the remnant to evacuate the fort and march towards Kábul. All the fugitives were lost except two officers and a single soldier, who reached Kábul, more dead than alive. Two officers stationed at a fort in Kohistán, about 12 miles from Kábul, were deserted by their men and murdered, and large bodies of Kohistánis and Nírowis were ready to join the rebels at Kábul. A detachment proceeding from Ghazni to Kábul was surprised and cut off. Of the force left by Sale at Gandamak, the major portion deserted to the enemy and the rest had to proceed to Jalalábad, leaving arms and equipage. Further east, at Pesh Bulak, between Jalalábad and Khyber Pass, Captain Ferris of the Shah's
service was surrounded by the enemy, and though he cut his way through, a rich treasure, left behind, fell into the hands of the enemy.

But the most severe blow was dealt to the power and prestige of the British in Afghanistān by the fall of Ghāzni. When the situation was getting worse every day, Col. Palmer, the officer commanding at Ghazni, suggested to the authorities at Kābul a plan for repairing and strengthening its defence, but the necessary sanctions never came. The Englishmen fondly believed that the people were devoted to their cause. But like many other assumptions this also proved untrue. By means of intrigue and treachery such a large number of Afghāns were able to enter the city from outside, that the British garrison were forced to take shelter in the citadel (December, 1841). They maintained this position till March 6, 1842, when they evacuated it under terms of an agreement which secured their safe retreat under an escort for protection. But the day after they left the citadel, they were treacherously attacked and a large number of officers and men were killed. The sepoys escaped by digging through a hole in the outer wall of the town, but they lost their way owing to a heavy fall of snow, and were all cut to pieces or imprisoned. The officers surrendered themselves.

The real nature of the troubles in Afghanistān was now slowly dawning upon the British statesmen. It was no longer a mere dislike for, or aversion to, Shah Shuja, but a national revolt of the Afghāns against the domination of the hated Feringhees. The Afghāns could now clearly see that it was the British who were ruling over them in the name of their puppet ruler. This was a rude shock to the freedom-loving tribes of Afghanistān. To this were added the insults, indignities and sufferings, inherent in the occupation of a country by foreign troops. But there was one special form of these which touched to the quick the sensibilities of the Afghāns. They were very jealous of the honour of their women, but the British officers could not resist the attractions of the women of Kābul. It is better to throw a veil over the details, but a general reference must be made to this indelicate affair, both for the sake of historical truth, as well as an important cause of the growing conflagration. The following statement by an eminent British historian who has made a special study of the Afghān War, may be taken as a fairly accurate description of the general situation.

“The inmate of the Mahomedan Zenana was not unwilling to visit the quarters of the Christian stranger. For two long years, now, had this shame been burning itself into the hearts of the Kabulis; and there were some men of note and influence among
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d them who knew themselves to be thus wronged. Complaints were made; but they were made in vain. The scandal was open, undisguised, notorious. Redress was not to be obtained. The evil was not in course of suppression. It went on till it became intolerable and the injured then began to see that the only remedy was in their own hands.”

Various causes,—political, social and religious,—combined to lead to a general national rising of the Afghân against the British. The men on the spot, particularly Macnaghten, failed to realise its nature and gravity, and belittled its importance. But the Governor-General took a saner view of things from a distance. On December 1, 1841, he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief: “It is, however, I fear, more likely that the national spirit has [been] generally roused.”

Three days later he wrote to Macnaghten, pointing out how futile it would be “to continue to wrestle against the universal opinion, national and religious, which has been so suddenly and so strongly brought in array against us.” Lord Auckland accordingly was anxious to devise a means by which “all that belongs to India may be most immediately and most honourably withdrawn from the country.”

Macnaghten was, however, an incurable optimist. He believed, even as late as September 1841, that “the noses of the Durani Khans had been brought to the grindstone,” and that the prospects of the British “were brightening in every direction.”

Towards the end of September he reported that “the whole country was quiet, and insisted that the Shah’s force, aided by one European regiment at Kâbul and another at Kândâhr, would be sufficient to keep the whole country in order.” To him the very idea of British withdrawal from Afghânistân was an “unparalleled atrocity.”

But even the obtuse mind of Macnaghten could not ignore the importance of the ominous news that Muhammad Akbar Khan, son of Dost Muhammad, had advanced as far as Bamiyân. The rebels had now got the only thing wanting to them, namely, a trusted leader. Mohanial, a confidential agent of Macnaghten, advised him to win over Akbar Khan by money. But Macnaghten thought it to be a wiser policy to distribute the money among the rebel chiefs. The greed and cupidity of the Afghân chiefs was only too well-known to the British, whose early successes in the war, up to the fall of Kâbul, were almost entirely due to this lamentable weakness of Afghân character. Macnaghten, who was blissfully ignorant of the deeper causes which stirred the emotions of a whole people, naturally relied upon the means which had already proved so effective in
the earlier stages of the expedition. So he deputed Mohanlal to scatter, among the tribes, Rs. 50,000 in cash, as well as promises for more in future.

So far there was nothing out of the way, nor anything particularly dishonourable, in the conduct of the British. But Mohanlal had further secret instructions which reflect the highest discredit on the British, as a civilized nation of the West. He was asked to bribe the Shia chiefs to rise against the Sunnis: “You can promise”, wrote Lt. Conolly to Mohanlal, “one lakh of Rupees to Khan Sherin on the condition of his killing and seizing the rebels.” The letter, dated November 5, concluded with the following postscript: “I promise 10,000 Rupees for the head of each of the principal rebel chiefs”. The amount was later increased to Rs. 15,000, and even the modus operandi of the assassination was freely discussed. 40

This desperate and disreputable plan may be taken as a measure of the depth to which the prestige of the British and the reputation of their military had now sunk in Kābul. England thus descended to the level of one of the worst forms of oriental medieval despotism and savage diplomacy, which the Europeans are never tired of denouncing in the strongest terms.

After the disastrous and disgraceful defeat of the British forces at Behmaru on November 22 and 23, referred to above, the morale of the troops was utterly destroyed. It was the end of military operation. The military authorities seemed to be convinced that nothing more was to be gained by fighting. When, on the day following the second defeat, the rebels began to destroy the bridge which the British General, a short time before, had thrown on the Kābul river, “the military chiefs looked idly on” the operation carried on within the range of musket shot from the cantonments. Macnaghten recalled the troops under Sale from Gandammak, but learnt to his dismay that he had already left for Jalālābād. Macnaghten also tried to secure help from the Sikhs. But in the meantime the military authorities were clamouring for negotiations. Things came to such a strange pass that the civilian political agent, Sir William Macnaghten, was the only one to urge upon the military authorities to fight and make some demonstration worthy of their country, while the latter, in a body, were not less strenuous in urging him to commence negotiations with the rebels. Meanwhile the British troops suffered extreme privations. Temporary supplies were procured with great difficulty, and the prospect of starvation was ominously looming large. Complete demoralisation now pervaded the whole army and there was hardly any semblance of order and discipline. A plan was mooted for evacuating the cantonments which were exposed to
enemy attack on all sides, and removing to the citadel of Bala Hissār, but this measure, which might have saved the British, was not adopted.

On November 24, 1841, Macnaghten wrote to Elphinstone, the Commander of the British troops in Afgānistan, calling for his opinion as to whether, from a military point of view, it was feasible to maintain his position in the country. In reply the latter wrote to him on the same day that it was not feasible, and requested him to avail himself of the pacific overtures made by the enemy. Macnaghten thereupon had no other means left but to open negotiations. But the terms dictated by the Afgāni deputation, which met him on November 25, amounting virtually to an unconditional surrender by the British as prisoners of war, were rejected by Macnaghten. He again urged Elphinstone to secure provisions by sending military expeditions to neighbouring villages. But the old general would not or could not do anything. At last, faced by immediate starvation, Macnaghten offered terms which were accepted by the Afgāns on December 11. According to these ‘the British troops should evacuate the whole of Afgānistan and the Sirdars engaged that they would be unmolested on their journey, and receive all possible assistance in carriage and provisions; Shah Shuja would formally abdicate, and either remain in Afgānistan with a suitable allowance, or return to India with the British troops. For the due fulfilment of the conditions, four British officers will be left as hostages in Kābul.’

The Bala Hissār was evacuated by the British troops on December 13. But there was mutual distrust and the terms were not fulfilled. The British authorities asked for provisions which the Afgān chiefs had undertaken to supply. The latter asked the British, as a proof of their sincerity, to give up the different forts which they occupied in the neighbourhood of cantonments. To this the British agreed, and the forts were handed over to the Afgāns. Provisions, however, came in very slowly, and carriages were not sent at all by the Afgāns. Even the supplies that were sent were intercepted by the mob who committed all kinds of outrages.

The British force was now entirely at the mercy of the enemy who possessed the forts commanding the cantonments, in which all the troops had collected themselves. To add to the extreme difficulties caused by want of provisions and forage, a severe winter set in, causing a heavy fall of snow which covered the ground.

While the British were in such a hopeless situation and in a desperate mood, Macnaghten received a proposal from Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Muhammad, who was one of the most important
among the hostile chiefs. It was to the effect that Akbar Khan with the Ghilzai chiefs should join the British, that the British troops should continue in Afghanistan till the spring and then voluntarily withdraw, that Shah Shuja should retain his sovereignty with Akbar Khan as his wazir, and that the latter should receive a large pecuniary reward. Further, as a preparatory to all this, a joint attack should be made on Muhammad Khan's fort, and Aminullah Khan, a prominent chief, should be seized; it was even suggested that an assassin might be easily hired to kill him. The British envoy, Macnaghten, rejected the last part of the proposal, but otherwise accepted it, and even agreed to attend a conference held for the purpose of arranging the details. Accordingly, on December 23, 1841, Macnaghten, accompanied by three officers, proceeded to the place of conference near the British cantonment. But after the conference had begun, the envoy and his companions were suddenly seized from behind. He and one of the officers were immediately killed, and the two others were kept as prisoners.

A great deal of criticism has been made regarding the conduct of Macnaghten. There is no doubt that he fully realised the great danger in which he placed himself, but the motive which induced him to accept the proposal may be gathered from his statement that he would rather "suffer a hundred deaths than live the six last weeks over again." But while it may be conceded that he had to accept the proposal of the conference as there was no other means of escape from the hopeless situation, it may be justly argued that it was highly improper on his part to entrust himself to the enemies without any adequate protecting force. But it should be noted that the sixteen soldiers, who formed his guard, were at a little distance from the scene of the conference. They, however, ran away as soon as the danger arose, with the exception of one man, who was immediately cut down. Macnaghten's conduct has also been impugned on the ground that while one negotiation was actually concluded with the party, he should not have entered into a secret pact with Akbar Khan. But, it may be pointed out, the Afghan chiefs had failed to fulfil their part of the pledge by not supplying adequate provision, transport and other facilities, "and exacted from the British conditions after conditions not named in the treaty." It is to be considered whether, in these circumstances, Macnaghten was under any moral obligation to regard that treaty as binding and thus standing in the way of forming another agreement. But Macnaghten himself admitted his conduct to be a breach of faith. The provision with regard to Aminulla Khan was highly objectionable as he was one of the confederate chiefs with whom the earlier treaty was concluded.
The tragic death of Macnaghten, far from rousing the spirit of the British for taking vengeance, rather seems to have paralysed their activities. They must have sunk to the lowest depths of infamy and degradation when they accepted the terms of a new treaty offered by the murderers of their envoy. In addition to the articles of the previous treaty, it contained four new ones, namely, (1) that the British should leave behind all the guns, except six, and all muskets and ordnance stores in the magazine; (2) they should give up all the coins in the public treasury; (3) all the spare muskets should be left behind, and (4) that the hostages already held by the Afgāns should be exchanged for married men with their wives and families. This was debated in the Council and, subject to the protest of a single member, it was resolved to accept all the demands. But as no married men agreed to offer themselves as hostages, the British General accepted the first three articles, and replied in a lofty tone that he “could not consent to an arrangement which would brand him with perpetual disgrace in his own country.” He remitted the required amount, namely, 14 lakhs of rupees, by a bill on the Government of India, handed over the guns, wagons, small arms and ammunition, and also bound the Government to restore the deposed Amir. The Afgāns agreed to receive as hostages men instead of women, and these were accordingly sent.

It was arranged that the sick and the wounded in the British force were to be left behind, and they were accordingly conveyed to the Bala Hissār. The rest began their march towards India on January 6, 1842. There were about 4,500 fighting men and not less than 12,000 followers, besides women and children. As soon as this huge body left the cantonment, all order was lost and troops and camp-followers were hopelessly intermingled in one disorderly mass. It was found at night that the provision for encampment was hopelessly inefficient and they could not get either any shelter, fire or food. To make matters worse, one of the Shah’s regiments disappeared and probably returned to Kābul. Numerous small groups of Afgāns, both horse and foot, were marching in a parallel line along the flanks of the British force, and it was believed that they formed the escort to be supplied by the chiefs in return for the amount of fourteen lakhs paid to them for this purpose. But it soon proved to be a mistake, for these Afgāns attacked the rear of the British army. Communications were now opened with Akbar Khan who happened to be near by, and he asked the British force to halt at But-Khak or Tezeem, until news was received of the evacuation of Jalālabād. But next morning, as the British force crossed the Khurd Kābul Pass, about five miles long and bounded on both sides by high hills, continuous fire was poured upon them by the Ghilzais.
from the adjacent heights, in spite of the efforts of Akbar Khan to restrain them. This murderous fire caused havoc among the British forces, a number of whom deserted, and a larger number succumbed to the bullets or to the rigours of the climate and want of food. Nearly three thousand thus perished in the defile. Next, another proposal came from Akbar Khan to the effect, that the "ladies who accompanied the British force, with their husbands and children, should be placed under his protection." It was obvious that Akbar Khan wanted in an indirect way to achieve the object of taking ladies as hostages, which was previously declined. But the position of the British was such that the General now agreed to this proposition, and all married officers and ladies were sent with a body of Afghān troops who had been despatched by Akbar Khan to conduct them.

On the following morning (January 10, 1842) the rest of the army resumed their march to Jalālābād, and the cruel scenes of the previous day were repeated. The promised supply of food and fuel never came, and in the narrow portion of the Jagdullack Pass, heavy casualties were inflicted by the fire of the enemy from the heights. The narrow pass became literally choked with the dead. Many died and a large number fled for life. The enemy thereupon rushed down, sword in hand, slaughtered the men like sheep, and captured the treasure and baggage. A large number of officers were killed, and only a small number of the advance party succeeded in escaping. It is unnecessary to give further details of the march of the British troops, exposed as ever to the destructive fire of the enemy. It has been aptly remarked that under the murderous fire of the Ghilzais "the progress of the retiring party was a moving massacre." The British army had ceased to exist. When the British force approached Gandammak they could muster only about twenty muskets. Only twelve officers and forty-five European soldiers rode on, but they were all massacred at Gandammak. A few had managed to push on in advance of the column, but one by one they fell on the way, and only six reached Fatehābād, sixteen miles from Jalālābād. These six were at first received with professions of friendship by the inhabitants, and while they were engaged in partaking of the refreshments offered to them, the people armed themselves and rushed upon them. Two were immediately cut down, and although the remaining four rode off, they were pursued, and three were slain before reaching Jalālābād. The single survivor was Dr. Brydon, who reached that fort on January 13, 1842, to tell the tragic tale.

The situation at Kandāhār was much better than at Kābul, when a demand for assistance came from Kābul, a brigade under
Maclaren was ordered to march thither, but was compelled to return on account of severe winter. General Nott, the commander, refused to evacuate Kandahar, though ordered to do so. Akbar Khan, after finishing his business at Kabul, proceeded to Kandahar. The British now tried to win over the Afghān chiefs by grant of money, and a lakh of rupees was distributed among the chiefs, but though they took the money they joined Akbar Khan, and even a son of Shah Shuja joined this group. General Nott attacked the Afghāns on January 12, 1842, and defeated them, and thus saved the situation for the time being.

On March 7, he moved out of the city and drove the enemy from the neighbourhood. A detachment was sent from Sindh under Brigadier England to his relief, but he was signally defeated near Hykulzie in the valley of the Pishin, and fell back upon Quetta.

Jalalabad was still held by the English under Sir Robert Sale. He had been asked, under the conditions of the treaty concluded at Kabul, to evacuate the fort and march back to India. Sale, however, refused to comply with this, though his position was very grave as he was short of men, money and provisions.

His difficulties were increased by a terrible earthquake on February 19, which destroyed the defensive works he had erected during the last three months. Akbar Khan seized this opportunity and advanced with his army within two miles of Jalalabad. After a number of skirmishes, Sale attacked the Afghān camp on April 7. Akbar Khan was decisively beaten and fled towards Laghman. This brilliant British victory saved Jalalabad. The Governor-General conferred on Sale's brigade the honourable title of the "Illustrious Garrison."

The news of the terrible disaster that befell the British on their way from Kabul to Jalalabad reached Auckland towards the end of January. His first feeling was one of astonishment, as he never could realise that the state of affairs in Afghānistān was really so bad. But soon he was seized with a feeling of panic or despair. He conceived the plan of abandoning Jalalabad and falling back upon Peshāwār, and even of retiring to Ferozepore. But the date of relinquishing his office was near at hand, and he did not like to take any decisive step which might embarrass his successor. Measures had been taken some time earlier to send a relief force to Jalalabad. Brigadier Wild proceeded with four regiments from Ferozepore, but when he reached Peshāwār, he found the Sikhs very lukewarm in their support. They at first agreed to accompany him as far as Ali Masjid, a strategic fort commanding the Khyber Pass, threatened
by the Afridis. But at the last moment the Sikhs refused and marched back upon Peshāwār.

To make matters worse, a sepoy battalion mutinied on January 10, "demanding increased allowances and coats and gloves before advancing through the cold to Kabul." Wild was ready to fire upon the mutineers and this might have created a terrible situation, "for there is little doubt that all the sepoys were equally averse to the advance." But the crisis was averted by the calmness and prudence of Henry Lawrence who pacified the sepoys. Wild advanced to the Pass, but was decisively defeated on January 19, at the entrance of the Pass, as his sepoys had no heart in the fight. He fell back on Jamrud, and Ali Masjid fell into the hands of the Afghan. A strong detachment was now sent under Pollock who reached Peshāwār on February 5. But on account of the sickness of a large number of troops, Pollock could not immediately advance, and halted at Peshāwār during the next two months. It was not till the beginning of April that he could commence his march through the Khyber Pass towards Jalālābād, and relieve that garrison on April 16.

In the midst of a gloomy situation Lord Auckland left India with a broken heart on March 12, 1842, and was succeeded by Lord Ellenborough who had reached Calcutta a few days earlier, on February 28. The new Governor-General did not take a long time to study the situation before he formulated his policy. He realised that the war in Afghanistān "has assumed a religious, as well as national, character", and that "the possession of Afghanistān, could we recover it, would be a source of weakness, rather than of strength, in resisting the invasion of any army from the west." He therefore concluded that "the ground upon which the policy of the advance of our troops to that country mainly rested, has altogether ceased to exist". So far the views of His Lordship are quite precise and easily intelligible, and will probably command general approval. Equally clear is his general policy, resulting from this conclusion, namely, that the British army should evacuate that country, at the earliest possible date with due regard to the safety and security of the detached bodies of troops in different forts or in the field, but without any further concern about the fate of Shah Shuja. But what is not equally clear is whether the evacuation was to be preceded by any attempt to vindicate British honour and military prestige by inflicting a signal defeat upon the Afghans. In his despatch of March 15, he seems to attach much importance to this. But in his letter to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Jasper Nicolls, dated April 19, 1842, he expressed grave doubts whether it would be justifiable to undertake military operations "for no other object than that of
revenging our losses and of re-establishing in all its original brilliancy our military character".\textsuperscript{44} He therefore issued specific orders to Pollock to withdraw all the forces in Upper Afghanistān to the Khyber Pass, and to Nott, to retire through Quetta and Sukkur in Sindh, with all the forces in Lower Afghanistān. But the Commander-in-Chief, as well as Nott and Pollock, the commanding officers, respectively, of Kandāhār and Jalālābād, all attached great importance to the point of regaining military prestige before leaving Afghanistān. For a long time the Governor-General stuck to his original plan, but at last yielded to the extent of giving Nott a discretionary power to “march through Ghazni and Kābul, over the scene of our late disasters”.\textsuperscript{45} While he appreciated fully the far-reaching effects of the successful execution of this march on India and the world at large, he took good care to point out the great risk involved in this course, for “failure in the attempt is certain and irretrievable ruin”. Even after this grudging concession, he spoke of the movement on Kābul as an “adventurous march” and the tone of his letter to Nott, dated July 10, was “uniformly discouraging and disappointing.”\textsuperscript{46}

The letters which the Governor-General wrote to Nott and Pollock, on July 4, form a most curious episode in the whole affair. Reaffirming his fixed policy of withdrawing British troops from Afghanistān, “he suggested that perhaps General Nott might feel disposed to retire from Kandāhār to the provinces of India by the route of Ghazni, Kābul and Jalālābād, and that perhaps General Pollock might feel disposed to assist the retreat of the Kandāhār force by moving forward upon Kābul.”\textsuperscript{47} As has been pointed out, the wording was so chosen “as to cast upon them (the Generals) all the onus of failure, and to confer upon the Governor-General, or at least to divide with him, all the honour of success.”\textsuperscript{48}

Both Pollock and Nott, who were permitted, at their discretion, to vindicate the honour of the British arms, entered upon their task with full confidence. Pollock moved from Jalālābād on August 20, and defeated an enemy force three days later near Gandāmmak. After fighting his way through, and defeating numerous bodies of hostile Afghanāns, he reached Kābul on September 15, and planted the British flag on the Bala Hissār.

General Nott sent a part of his force back to India by way of Quetta, and started with the rest, on August 9, towards Ghazni. He arrived on September 5 before that town, and during the night it was evacuated by the enemy. He destroyed the town, and in pursuance of the express instructions of the Governor-General he took away the gates of the tomb of Mahmūd of Ghazni “which are the
gates of the temple of Somnath." On September 17 Nott joined Pollock at Kābul.

Saleh Muhammad Khan, who was in charge of the British prisoners at Bamiyān, now delivered them over to the British general on condition of receiving Rs. 20,000 in ready cash, and Rs. 1,000 per month for life.

The Supreme Government desired that some mark of the retributory visit of the British should be left upon the offending city. The great bāzār of Kābul was therefore destroyed as a reminder to the residents of the ills they had done to the British. A British historian has characterised it as "an inexcusable act of vandalism." "Far worse was the deliberate sacking of Kābul, not in the heat of entry; but as a last minute policy." "Guilty and innocent alike fell under the heavy hand of the lawless retribution. Many unoffending Hindoos, who, lulled into a sense of delusive security by the outward re-establishment of a government, had returned to the city and re-opened their shops, were now disastrously ruined. In the mad excitement of the hour, friend and foe were stricken down by the same unsparing hand."

Shah Shuja ruled nominally in Kābul for some time after the departure of the British, but was murdered on April 5, and Fath Jung, his second son, was raised to the throne. He had, however, no power and was merely a tool in the hands of Akbar Khan who wielded the real authority. As soon as Pollock began his march from Jalālābād, Fath Jung fled from Kābul and surrendered to Pollock on September 1. He formally abdicated, and prince Shapur, another son of Shah Shuja, was declared king. The armies of Pollock and Nott then returned through the Khyber Pass, having destroyed the defences of Jalālābād and Ali Masjid on their way. They had a magnificent reception from the Governor-General in person at Ferozepur in December, 1842. They fully deserved it, for the credit of rehabilitating the honour and prestige of England really, and almost entirely, belongs to them.

On October 1, 1842, Lord Ellenborough issued a proclamation at Simla, reviewing the whole course of the Afghān war and pointing out the faults committed in course of it. This annoyed Lord Auckland who openly said in a party of friends that "he had been convinced that Lord Ellenborough was mad from the moment of his landing." A grandiloquent passage refers to the recovery of the gates of Somnath, by which "the insult of eight hundred years was avenged." Many people have expressed doubts whether these wooden gates, now preserved as a lumber in the Agra fort, really belonged to the temple of Somnath.
The most important part of the proclamation was the enunciation of the future Afghān policy. Ellenborough declared that his Government “would willingly recognise any government approved by the Afghans themselves, which should appear desirous and capable of maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring states.” A practical demonstration of this policy was not long delayed. The Afghān prisoners in India, including Dost Muhammad, were permitted to return to Afghānistān, and when he occupied the throne of Kābul in 1843 after Shapur had fled to Peshāwār, the British Government recognised him as the rightful king.

The curtain thus fell on an ill-fated expedition which brought the greatest calamity and disgrace to Englishmen in the whole course of their history in India. On the inexpediency of the great undertaking there is a general agreement of views. On the wisdom of the policy which originated it, opinion is sharply divided. The imperialist school viewed it as a well-conceived plan to safeguard the vital interests of India from Russian aggression, which was regarded at the time as almost inevitable and imminent. The lapse of a century has considerably modified this view, and doubts are now genuinely felt whether the Russian fear was not considerably exaggerated. It is now maintained by many that Afghānistān, left as it was, would have proved a far more formidable barrier to foreign aggression, as it has actually proved ever since, and more so at that time, as the territories of Ranjit Singh intervened between that kingdom and the British dominion. On the moral justice of the measures pursued, something has been said above. Any impartial observer would denounce the idea of ruining a neighbour, who has done no harm, merely to safeguard one's own interests, however necessary such a step might appear in the eyes of the aggressor.

The British historians are almost unanimous in attributing the disaster to the incompetence of men entrusted with the execution of the plan, in particular the old general Elphinstone and his coadjutors. That they were primarily responsible for the tragic end, admits of no doubt. But there were other factors, too, which should not be ignored. Sufficient account has not been taken of the fighting qualities of the Afghāns and the courage and tenacity with which they fought for the defence of their motherland against foreign aggressions. The rousing of a national spirit in Afghānistān,—of which we find a tardy recognition by British rulers after the tragedy,—was an important factor in the discomfiture of the British arms. To the same end worked another important factor which has been completely ignored, so far, alike by statesmen and historians. This was the repugnance of the Indian soldiers to the military campaign in
Afghanistan. This point was briefly but very lucidly brought out in a memorandum prepared by Shaik Hidayat Ali, a native military officer, on the causes of the Sepoy Mutiny, and submitted to the Government of India on August 7, 1858.  

It is not difficult to imagine the consequences of a contest in which the wild, fierce and warlike, sturdy Afghans, fired by a genuine national spirit, were opposed to a body of grumbling, downhearted, and discontented sepoys suffering from rigours of climate and insufficiency of food, and fighting under conditions which they disliked on moral and religious grounds. The repeated tales of cowardice, indiscipline, and treason displayed by the sepoys on various occasions during this campaign may be explained to a large extent by the observations of the Indian military officer mentioned above. In any case this is an important factor which, as he remarked, was big with future consequences, and must be taken into serious consideration in any review of the First Afghan War.

2. See above, p. 3.
5. One clause of the agreement between Shah Shuja and the Amirs, to which great significance was attached at a later date, ran as follows: “That the Shah should give up Shikarpur to the Amirs for an annual tribute of six lakhs of rupees on the condition that if he conquered Afghanistan they would continue to pay him a tribute of seven lakhs of rupees yearly, but should he fail in doing so, the first six lakhs should be considered as a donation from them, and that they would not give him a farthing after that.” As the Shah failed to conquer Afghanistan, he had no right or pretence to demand anything more from the Amirs, and this release of the Amirs from obligation to any further payment was written on the pages of a copy of the Qur’an. For the text of the clause, see Wade to Government, 1st April, 1834, Punjab Government Records, Book 140, L. 25, quoted in Khera, 45, f. n. 16.
6. Kaye-II, I. 197-8; the letter is quoted in CHBFP, II. 204.
8. CHI, V. 491.
9. CHI, V. 492-3.
11. CHBFP, II. 205.
12. For a correct version of the negotiations between Burnes and the Amir, cf. Kaye-II, I. 198 ff. Kaye has justly expressed “abhorrence of this system of garbling the official correspondence of public men—sending the letters of a statesman or diplomatist into the world mutilated, emasculated—the very pith and substance of them cut out by the unsparing hand of the state-anatomist” (ibid, 203).
13. CHBFP, II. 205.
14. This is clearly proved by the correspondence of Vitkevitch himself (quoted in Kaye-II, I. 204).
15. Kaye, op. cit., 204.
20. Ibid, 382.
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22. CHBF, II. 208.
23. CHI, V. 499.
24. The account of the campaign, unless otherwise stated, is based on Kaye-II.
25. See Ch. VIII.
27. Thornton, VI. 197-8.
29. Ibid, 469, footnote.
30. CHI, V. 502. The action has been severely condemned by Kaye (op. cit. Vol. II, 29-31).
32. Ibid, 146.
33. Ibid, 166-8.
36. CHI, V. 507.
37. CHI, V. 508.
38. Kaye, op. cit., 144.
39. Ibid, 150.
41. Ibid, 312-3. As Kaye justly points out, Macnaghten might have broken off the engagement with the confederate chiefs on the ground that they had failed to fulfil their part, “but until such a declaration was made, he was not at liberty to enter secretly into any new negotiations practically annuling the old” (ibid, 313).
42. THG, 350 (312). (The figure within bracket refers to page number of reprint in 1958).
43. CHI, V. 513
44. Thornton, VI. 349.
45. Ibid, 367.
46. Ibid.
49. Ibid, 337. This belief is, however, entirely erroneous.
51. THG, 351 (313).
52. Kaye, op. cit., 369.
53. Ibid, 376 ff.
54. “One rumour, apparently emanating from Lord Auckland’s sister, was that he (Ellenborough) was mad”. (Imlah, 209).
55. See above, p. 187 and f.n. 34.
CHAPTER VIII

SINDH

At the end of the eighteenth century Sindh, nominally a part of the Durani kingdom in Afgānistān, was ruled by a Baluchi tribe called Talpuris who had ousted the Kaloras in 1783. There were at first four, but later three, distinct ruling families, one in Upper Sindh with Khairpur as capital, another in Lower Sindh with Hyderabad as capital, and the third with its capital at Mirpur, to the north-east of the last named city. The rulers, known as Amirs, were practically independent, though a position of supremacy was claimed by, and conceded in theory to, the Hyderabad family. Each Amir, again, was, under a long-standing convention, bound to consult the members of his family on all important matters. The succession to “the turban”, i.e., headship, also generally passed to the brother rather than the son of the ruling chief. The domains of the Amirs extended up to the border of Cutch, and thus reached the frontier of British territory in India. They also included Karachi, the well-known port, Shikarpur, an important centre of trade with the West, and the fortress of Gukkur, which stands on a rock in the middle of the bed of the Sindh and thus completely commands the navigation of that river.

The importance of the Sindh as a channel for commerce was realised by the British East India Company from the very beginning. They obtained a firman from the Mughul Emperor in 1630 for trade in Sindh, and established factories. But the relations, commercial or otherwise, between the two did not assume any importance till the end of the eighteenth century. Then the rumours of Napoleon’s invasion of India gave Sindh a political importance leading to the treaty of 1809, by which the Amirs of Sindh agreed that they would “not allow the establishment of the tribe of the French in Sindh.” The treaty was renewed in 1820 by which the Amirs engaged “not to permit any European or American to settle in their dominions.”

In the meantime the rapid conquests of Ranjit Singh brought his dominions to the frontier of Sindh, and he had aggressive designs against that country. Between A.D. 1823 and 1825 he made elaborate preparations, but could not successfully carry out his design for reasons stated elsewhere. At that time the British Government did not take any special interest in Sindh. But the fear of Russian cum Persian advance to the Sindh, which ultimately led to the
Afghan War of 1839, had also invested Sindh with a great political importance, as the route from Kandahar via Quetta and the Bolan Pass to India passed through the territories of the Amirs.

The first concrete measure of political intercourse was taken in 1831 when Sir Alexander Burnes was sent to explore the possibilities of the navigation of the river Sindhu. The pretence was afforded by a desire to convey by water some horses which were presented by King William IV to Ranjit Singh. The Amirs of Sindh naturally looked upon the move with suspicion and refused the passage to Burnes. But they had to give way when Ranjit Singh remonstrated with them, for they were mightily afraid of a Sikh invasion of their territory. So Burnes was allowed to proceed to Lahore. But the natural instincts of the people of Sindh told them that this was the beginning of the end. A Baluchi soldier told Burnes: “The mischief is done, you have seen our country”. One Sindhi exclaimed: “Alas! Sindh is now gone, since the English have seen the river, which is the high road to its conquest.” These words proved prophetic.

The report drawn up by Burnes emphasised the great facility afforded by the Sindhu river for the transport of the commerce coming by sea, as well as by land route, via Herat, Kandahar and Quetta to Shikarpur in Sind which was then a great emporium of trade. So Lt. Col. Pottinger, the British Resident in Cutch, was directed to open negotiations with Sindh for the conclusion of a commercial treaty.

Pottinger went to Sindh in February, but the Amirs grew suspicious as to the ulterior designs of the British, and regarded the proposed commercial treaty as merely a cloak for gaining political supremacy. That the Amirs were not very wrong in their surmise is clearly proved by the following extract from a letter written to Pottinger by the Government of India.

“The Secret Committee of the Court of Directors have expressed great anxiety to obtain the free navigation of the Indus with a view to the advantages that must result from substituting our influence for that derived by Russia through her commercial intercourse with Bokhara and the countries lying between Hindustan and the Caspian Sea, as well as because of the great facilities afforded by this river for the disposal of the produce and manufacture of the British dominions both in Europe and in India.”

This clearly shows that the so-called commercial treaty had an ulterior political motive, and was mainly due to Russophobia which inspired the Indian foreign policy in regard to Western and Central Asia.
The Amirs of Sindh tried their very best to avoid the treaty. They even sought the help of Shah Shuja on the one hand and the Barakzai rulers of Kābul on the other "to avert the threatened invasion of the English." But nothing availed, and the Amirs of Hyderābād and Khairpur had to conclude a new treaty in 1832 by which they allowed the British subjects to use the roads and the river Sindhu on the following conditions:

1. That no person shall bring any description of military stores by the above river or roads.
2. That no armed vessels or boats shall come by the said river.
3. That no English merchants shall be allowed to settle in Sindh.

Ranjit Singh naturally looked upon this treaty as the first step taken by the British to thwart his designs upon Sindh. So he decided to precipitate matters before the British influence was deeply rooted in Sindh. He found a pretext in the predatory raid of the Mazaris who lived a few miles to the south-west of Mithāŋkot and were nominally subjects of Sindh. In 1836 he moved troops towards Sindh and captured Rojhan, the seat of the Mazari Chief, but at the same time he was unwilling to carry matters to the extreme without ascertaining the attitude of the English towards this aggressive step. He had not to wait long. He had asked for permission to import firearms by way of the Sindhu. The Governor-General refused it on the ground that it would be a clear infringement of the treaty of 1832. Ranjit Singh was further informed that his designs on Sindh would endanger peace which was necessary for the promotion of trade and navigation on the Sindhu river.

As mentioned above, the Amirs of Sindh had invited Shah Shuja to save them from the British. It is probable that Ranjit Singh wanted to forestall any movement on the part of Shah Shuja to establish his authority in Sindh. But the British authorities looked with equal disfavour upon the designs of both. So Shah Shuja was informed that "should he leave Ludhiana without the express sanction of the Government, he would no longer be allowed an asylum within the British territories and the maintenance allowance to him and his family would be discontinued." This threat was enough to stop any movement on his part.

Unfortunately the Amirs of Sindh could not possibly realise, and certainly did not know, that the attitude of the British had restrained Ranjit Singh's aggressive attitude towards them. But the British fully exploited the situation to their advantage. The Government of India wrote to the Secret Committee on 28th Novem-
ber, 1836: “We considered it our duty to endeavour to induce the Maharajah to lay aside his hostile intentions. It appeared to us, also, that this opportunity ought not to be neglected, of establishing the British influence on a solid basis in Sindh, a country which is of great importance to us both from its commanding the entrance to the Indus and from its position in reference to the Punjab and Afghanistan.”

Lord Auckland therefore instructed Pottinger, Agent for the affairs of Sindh, to intimate to the Amirs that in the very dangerous position in which they then stood they could only be saved by the mediation of the British. The Amirs were therefore “promised the protection of the Anglo-Indian Government against the Sikhs, in consideration of which, it was hoped, they would receive, and themselves pay, a British force to be stationed in their capital.”

But even in spite of the imminent danger which seemed to threaten them, the Amirs were unwilling to accept these terms. Protracted negotiations followed and the terms were modified by omitting the provision for stationing troops at the capital city of Sindh. But even then the Amirs did not agree until significant hints were given “that Ranjit Singh would be let loose, if not aided, to work his pleasure in Sindh.”

By the treaty, concluded in April, 1838, the British Government engaged to use their good offices to adjust the present differences between the Amirs of Sindh and Ranjit Singh. It was further agreed that an accredited British minister would reside at the court of Hyderâbâd and be empowered to move all over Sindh, attended by such an escort as may be deemed suitable by the British Government.

A contemporary British historian has partially justified the British policy by an observation which, however unpalatable, undoubtedly represents the truth. “Disinterested friendship between nations,” says he, “is not to be expected; and when it is professed, the profession is an emanation of pure hypocrisy.” On this plea he supports the British demand for the presence of a British agent in Sindh. But he has the candour to admit that “the desire to reduce Sindh to the condition of a subsidiary state ought to have found no place in British counsels.”

But the treaty deserves severe condemnation on moral grounds. It is worthy of note that the British Government knew full well that Ranjit Singh would not invade Sindh in opposition to their wishes, and Lord Auckland declared this to be his conviction arising from long experience. Yet he did not scruple to hold out this bogey to the Amirs of Sindh to wring out concessions from them which would virtually mean their political extinction. Even the modified terms
embodied in the treaty openly encroached upon the independence of the Amirs.

The free movement of a British agent all over Sindh with an army of unspecified strength "placed a loaded shell in the palace of the Amirs to explode" at the pleasure of the Governor-General. It was clearly an unjust and oppressive action against the Amirs for whom the British professed great friendship and who had not done the least harm to them. The irony of the situation is that a short while ago the British had dissuaded Ranjit Singh from aggression against Sindh by an array of facts and reasoning all of which were trampled under foot when they themselves chose to follow the same aggressive policy. The quick change in the attitude of British Government towards Sindh is also worthy of note. In 1831 the Amirs themselves had asked for British protection against Ranjit, but it was refused by Bentinck. Five years later Auckland strained his utmost to bring Sindh into the orbit of British protection.

But the worst was yet to come. This followed from the Tripartite Treaty, between Ranjit Singh, Shah Shuja and the British in 1838, to which reference has been made above. As noted above, it was decided between the three parties that the Amirs of Sindh would be made to pay to Shah Shuja a sum of money as may be determined under the mediation of the British Government. It was at first fixed at twenty lakhs and then raised to twenty-five lakhs of Rupees. It was also agreed that the troops of the British and Shah Shuja were to pass through their territories. All this was done without the consent or even knowledge of the Amirs, though both were in clear violation of the pledges given to them.

As regards the payment, it was a legacy of old days when Sindh was part of the Durani kingdom. But the tribute was never paid except when the ruler of Kābul was strong enough to enforce payment. At the time of which we are speaking, the Amirs were in no mood to pay anything, and Shah Shuja could not compel them to pay without the aid of his British ally. It is also doubtful if Shah Shuja, himself a fugitive from Kābul, had any legitimate claim upon what was, even by fiction, the arrears of tribute due to Kābul. Besides, the Amirs pointed out that, when in 1834 Shah Shuja attempted to capture Kābul, he entered into an agreement with the Amirs by which, among other things, they were exempted from all further payment to Shah Shuja. In support of this the Amirs produced releases from obligations to further payment which were written in the Qur’an and signed by Shah Shuja.16

The British Resident at Sindh candidly confessed, "how this (release) is to be got over, I do not myself see."17 But his master
was less troubled by such inconvenient moral considerations. "The Governor-General is of opinion that it is not incumbent on the British Government to enter into any formal investigation of the plea adduced by the Amirs." This must be regarded as one of the most extraordinary pronouncements even in the annals of the British relation with Sindh. A contemporary British historian has very rightly observed: "The position that the British Government was not bound to investigate the subject was certainly most extraordinary. A party claims from another a large sum—a third party, without consulting the reputed debtor, undertakes to compromise the matter, and to determine how much shall be paid—the alleged debtor denies that anything is due, and produces a release from the creditor—the arbitrator, thereupon, declares that it is not incumbent on him to inquire into the plea. Would such a course be considered just in any private transaction? And if not, can it be reconciled with any honest principles of public morality? The truth is, that money was wanted; the Amirs were looked to for a supply, and it was inconvenient to enter upon any inquiry as to whether they could justly be required to furnish it or not."

If the forced payment by the Amirs was opposed to both legal and moral principles, the free passage of troops through Sindh was a clear violation of the treaty of 1832, which expressly forbade the transport of arms by the river or roads in Sindh. As pointed out above, the British quoted this provision of the treaty when, as recently as 1836, they prevented Ranjit Singh from importing arms through the Sindhu river.

But Lord Auckland did not scruple in the least to violate either clear legal and moral principles or express provisions of a treaty. He bluntly told the Amirs that the provisions of the old treaties should be suspended in favour of the proposed expedition through Sindh, and they must be prepared to make such other concessions as may be necessary for the successful execution of the military operation against Afghanistān—a country against whose Government they had no complaint and with which they were on friendly relations. Lord Auckland made it quite clear that the British Government lacked neither resources nor the will to use them against the Amirs if they dared oppose the measures deemed necessary by him.

The Amirs had, of course, to yield to the logic of the strong towards the weak. A treaty was concluded with the Khairpur State on December 24, 1838, and ratified by the Governor-General on January 10, 1839, by which it became a protected State acting in subordinate co-operation with the British Government and acknow-
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ledging its supremacy. The Amir agreed to furnish troops according to his means at the requisition of the British Government, and render it all kinds of aid during the continuance of the war. A supplementary article was added by which in return for protecting the State and not coveting any portion of its possessions, the British were authorised to occupy the fortress of Bukkur.20 'A right to territorial gain for non-covetousness' is perhaps a new conception even in the British diplomacy in India.

The Amir offered to cede some other fortress instead of Bukkur. But Burnes ‘asked a plain question and wanted a plain answer. Would Rustum sign the treaty or not? Yes or No? No haggling.’21 The poor Amir had to say “yes.”

The Amirs of Hyderābād in Lower Sindh were tougher customers, and would not agree to receive a subsidiary force. The result was a foregone conclusion. It was alleged that their men had plundered the stores collected at Hyderābād for the British army, and the British agent, therefore, wanted to teach them a lesson. He proclaimed that “nothing on the record of Indian History will be more justified than our bringing these men to reason.” So, Sir John Keane, the British Commander of the expedition, led in person a military expedition against Hyderābād, and other forces, sent from Bombay to his aid, captured Karachi.22 This brought “reason” to the recalcitrant Amirs who signed a treaty on February 3, 1839, surrendering Karachi (fort and town), and another on March 11, 1839, agreeing to receive a subsidiary force, not exceeding 5,000 men, and pay three lakhs yearly for its maintenance.23 To this Lord Auckland added another clause, namely, that Karachi was to continue in the occupation of the British troops.24 It was added without the knowledge or consent of the Amirs who had merely to accept it. Even the annals of the British in India contain few parallels to this highhanded act of injustice.

By this treaty Lower Sindh, like Upper Sindh, was placed under British protection. By a clever ingenuity this treaty was separately made with the four chiefs of Lower Sindh, disputes between whom were to be referred to the Resident for mediation. A similar treaty was made with the Amir of Mirpur, which was ratified in July, 1841.

As a result of these treaties the confederacy of the Amirs was virtually dissolved, the navigation of the Sindhu was rendered free of all tolls, and, to guarantee all this, a British force was to be maintained to the west of the Sindhu. But the most important consequence may be described in the words of Auckland: “Sindh is placed formally under British protection and brought within the circle of
our Indian relations.” This painful episode, so discrepable to the
British authority, both in India and England, may be fittingly con-
cluded with the following ejaculation of Auckland:

“These are objects of high undoubted value, and especially so
when acquired without bloodshed, as the first advance towards that
consolidation of our influence, and extension of the general benefits
of commerce, throughout Afghânistân, which form the great end of
our designs.” This was written on March 11, 1839, and the words,
italicised by us, explain the real motive behind the nefarious trans-
actions in Sindh.

We now come to the final act in the tragic drama, for which the
stage was admirably set by Auckland in 1839. Nobody, familiar
with the story of the expansion of British dominion in India, could
doubt for a moment that the situation created by the treaties in
1839 would inevitably lead, sooner or later, to the annexation of
Sindh by the British; only the process was hastened by the memo-
rable events that took place in Afghânistân, as described above.

It has been justly observed that “the conquest of Sindh was
not merely a sequence but a consequence of the Afghân War.”
According to Napier, “it was the tail of the Afghân storm.” The
British reverses in Afghânistân had undoubtedly a powerful
effect on the affairs in Sindh. The Amirs, who received such unjust
and humiliating treatment in the hands of the British, would natur-
ally feel elated at their disgrace and discomfiture, and some chiefs
of Sindh might even look upon the recent events as opening a faint
prospect of recovering their lost power and prestige. They would
be more or less than human beings if such thoughts did not surge
in their minds. The British also, in their guilty conscience, could
not but believe in the existence of such feelings, and would be
naturally prone to exaggerate them and ascribe hostile motives to
the Baluchis of Sindh on the most slender evidence. In any case
their natural tendency would be to exaggerate, beyond all propor-
tions, the importance or gravity of any act of hostility, real or
imaginary, on the part of the Amirs of Sindh.

About this time, Nasir Khan was ruling at Hyderâbâd, Rustum
Khan at Khairpur, and Sher Muhammad Khan at Mirpur. Lord Ellen-
borough started with a deep-rooted suspicion against them. One of
his first acts was to write letters to the Amirs, of which the follow-
ing extracts give a fair idea. “I will confide in your fidelity, and in
your friendship until I have proof of your faithlessness and of your
hostility in my hands; but be assured, if I should obtain such proof
.....sovereignty will have passed from you.”

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These letters were sent to Major Outram, the Political Agent of Sindh and Baluchistān, to be handed over to those Amirs whom he "may have ground for suspecting of hostile designs". In a covering note he added "that the threat contained is no idle threat intended only to alarm, but a declaration of the Governor-General's fixed determination to punish, cost what it may, the first chief who shall prove faithless, by the confiscation of his dominions." In conclusion he added that action would be taken only on the "clear proof of such faithlessness."²⁹

Major Outram, however, withheld the letters as he feared that the effects produced by them on the Amirs would be just the opposite of what was intended. Further, and this is more important, no overt act of hostility was as yet attributed to any of the Amirs.

Lord Ellenborough's attitude of announcing punishment for crimes which were yet non-existent or unknown, can be best explained by the general policy towards Sindh on which the Government of India and the Home Government were in perfect accord. In spite of their open professions that the occupation of strategic posts in Sindh was a purely defensive and temporary measure dictated by the necessities of the Afghan expedition, we find Auckland writing on January 8, 1840, that the Directors "attach with the Governor-General the utmost importance to the complete maintenance of the British superiority in Sindh and the navigation of the Indus not only during the occupation of Afghanistan but permanently."³⁰ The experience of the Afghan expedition undoubtedly proved the great strategic importance of Sindh and consequently the necessity of maintaining a strong position in that country. So Ellenborough's early despatches emphasise the need of the continued occupation of Karachi in order to communicate with Bombay, and of the occupation of Bukkur and Sukkur to ensure a passage over the Sindh. Consequently he made the concrete proposal of inducing the Amirs to cede these territories in perpetuity in consideration of the remission of all tributes or pecuniary payments, including arrears. Outram recommended the addition of Shikārpur to the list of territories to be ceded and informed the Governor-General that he would be justified in forcing a new treaty, embodying these terms, on the Amirs, on the evidence of their guilt collected by him. This evidence, diligently collected by him, was formulated in a series of ten indictments.³¹

Although Ellenborough did not agree to the inclusion of Shikārpur, he now desired to take two other districts and restore them to the faithful Nawab of Bahawālpur from whom they were wrested by the Amirs thirty years ago. But before any decisive step could
be taken, Major Outram was replaced by Sir Charles Napier, newly arrived from England, who was also to assume the chief military command. In September 1842, Ellenborough repeated to him the same instructions which he had sent to Outram four months ago, proving thereby that in spite of Outram's formidable array of charges against the Amirs, the Governor-General was not yet convinced of their faithlessness or hostile designs. This is further proved by the following passage in his letter to Napier.

"The Governor-General relies entirely on your sense of justice, and is convinced that whatever reports you may make upon the subject, after full investigation, will be such as he may safely act upon."\(^{32}\)

Full responsibility being thus thrown upon Sir Charles Napier, he entered upon the task of collecting evidence and formulating his views upon the action to be taken in respect to Sindh. As he was more a soldier than a diplomat, he put forth his views very candidly in the elaborate reports he drew up on the subject. These may be summed up as follows:\(^{33}\)

1. The procedure by which the English occupied Sindh might be dishonest, but that was not his concern. Nor was he prepared to condone the Amirs on the ground that the treaties, which they were guilty of violating, were unjustly forced upon them by most oppressive means. Both parties must stand by the terms of the treaty, which must be considered as "free expressions of the will of the contracting parties", particularly as "there does not appear any public protest registered against the treaties by the Amir."

2. The Amirs of Sindh are barbarous and debauchees, and their rule must be considered as a great curse upon the people of Sindh, who would be more happy and prosperous if their authority be replaced by that of the British.

3. The occupation of Shikārpur is absolutely necessary for the security of Sukkur and the commercial prosperity of the country. Therefore this must be added to the list of territories to be ceded by the Amirs as proposed by the Governor-General.

4. Several Amirs are guilty of violating treaties (and several concrete instances are cited in the "Return of Complaint" drawn up by him, to be referred to later).

The offences of the Amirs, so proved, may not be very serious or commensurate with the penalty proposed. "Their measures, hasty and violent, were adopted more in defence than offence, as thinking their dominions were to be wrested from them." "The Amirs are nervous, and these ebullitions are the result."
5. Nevertheless "the Amirs have broken treaties and have given a pretext" for justifying measures which are dictated alike by considerations of humanity and advantages of the British.

The more serious charges framed by Napier and accepted by the Governor-General may be briefly stated as follows:—

1. Amir Rustum of Khairpur carried on secret intercourse with foreign States (particularly Panjab) with designs hostile to the British, and his minister helped in the escape of Muhammad Sherif, who was seized in the act of organising a tribal rising against the British.

2. Amir Nasir of Hyderabād excited, by letter, Beebruck, the chief of the Bughtee tribe, to take up arms against the British troops when retreating from Afghānistān.

3. Rustum and Nasir contracted a secret alliance, offensive and defensive, against the British, and issued instructions to all their feudatory chiefs to be in readiness to take the field.

4. The Amirs levied tolls, which were in violation of article XI of the treaty.

The Amirs of Sindh admitted the last charge, but denied that it was a violation of the treaty. That their explanation might not fully justify, but certainly went a long way to excuse, their action, and attenuate their offence, was admitted by Napier himself.

The other charges, the truth of which was categorically denied by the Amirs, but in respect of which the British, acting both as accuser and judge, gave a verdict without any regular trial or inquiry, did not amount to anything more than a hostile intention without leading to any overt act of hostility against the British.

One British historian refers to the charges as vague, "based on evidence now generally recognised to have been unsatisfactory". Another observes that the only serious item of the charge was a letter which, some good scholars considered, was probably a forgery, but which Napier, who had the advantage of total ignorance of any Indian language, decided was genuine.34

On the basis of the reports of Sir Charles Napier a new treaty was drawn up on 4 November, 1842, which took away from the Amirs the right of coinage, a privilege highly valued by them as the last emblem of their ruling powers, and forced them to cede in perpetuity, with necessary arrondissements, Karachi and Tatta in Lower Sindh, with right of free passage over the territories lying between them and Sukkur and Bukkur and Rohri in Upper Sindh. All the territories between Bahawālpur and Rohri, possessed by
the Amirs, were transferred to the Nawab of the former place for his faithfulness to the British. In return for all these concessions the Amirs were exempted from the payment of tribute.\textsuperscript{35}

The draft of the new treaty was sent to Hyderabad on December 2, 1842, and to Khairpur two days later. But on December 1, Napier issued a proclamation that he would immediately occupy the town of Rohri and the entire left bank of the Sindhu from that town to the frontier of Bahawalpur. Having sent an army for the purpose, Napier himself marched on Khairpur and manoeuvred by threat of invasion to make Ali Murad, the brother of Rustum Khan, the chief of Khairpur, even before the death of the latter, for Ali Murad had agreed to cast in his lot with the British.

Rustum was forced to conclude an agreement, resigning the "turban" or sovereign powers to his brother, and ceding to him certain villages including Mathela.\textsuperscript{36} This was a great provocation to the members of the family who had chosen Mir Muhammad Husham, the son of Rustum, as his successor. There is no doubt that Ali Murad was chosen on account of his loyalty and devotion to the British. In any case, by this master-stroke of diplomacy the whole of Upper Sindh, as Napier wrote on December 23, was perfectly settled without any fight. As Rustum's family and many followers fled to Imamgarh, a desert fortress, half way between Khairpur and Hyderabad, Napier marched against it. Although Rustum proved submissive and no resistance was offered when Napier reached Imamgarh on January 12, the fortress was blown up. It is to be noted that Napier's proclamation was issued and subsequent hostile acts were done when negotiation with the Amirs was still going on. One need therefore hardly be surprised that though the Amirs had verbally agreed to accept the new treaty, and a meeting was arranged at Khairpur on January 20 for settling details, only the vakils of Hyderabad were present.

Napier was convinced from some letters intercepted by him that the Amirs, bent upon war, were assembling troops for the purpose, and made preparations accordingly. Outram, who was now Commissioner in Sindh and conducting negotiations with the Amirs, held a different view. He arrived at Hyderabad on February 8, and got all the Amirs to sign the treaty excepting Nasir Khan of Khairpur, who was absent but promised his adherence. Outram wrote to Napier not to approach with his troops towards Hyderabad which had not a single armed man, and even suggested that he would come alone to that city. Napier, however, paid no heed to this, and continued his march. So the situation changed. On February 12,\textsuperscript{36a} Outram was insulted in the street, and next day was warned by the
Amirs that a number of Baluchis had come to the city and could not be controlled by them (the Amirs). He was accordingly advised to quit Hyderābād, but he stayed on, and his residence was attacked by several thousand armed Baluchis. After a gallant resistance he escaped, embarked a steamer which lay on the river, and joined Napier who was then encamped at Hala, thirty miles north of Hyderābād.

Definite information having been obtained that the hostile troops numbering more than twenty thousand were assembled at Miani, Napier threw away all further considerations of negotiating with the Amirs. He marched with his army of 2,800 and defeated the enemy after a severely contested battle on February 17, 1843.

"The ferocity on both sides was unbounded, the carnage, terrible." "Thick as standing corn," the Baluchis clustered on both banks and shook their sharp swords while the "Irish soldiers met them with that queen of weapons, the musket". "The British guns swept the river course diagonally, tearing the dense crowd with an appalling carnage." The casualties were 275 British and 6,000 Baluchis.37 Six of the Amirs now surrendered as prisoners of war and Hyderābād was occupied on the 20th. But Sher Muhammad of Mirpur, who still commanded a large force, defied the British. After some rest, and receiving reinforcements, Napier marched against him and defeated him at Dabo, six miles from Hyderābād, on March 24, 1843. It was "a repetition of the previous battle, the losses of both sides almost exactly as before." Mirpur was taken on March 27, and Amarkot fell shortly after. This ended the hostilities, at least for the time being. Already, on March 5, the annexation of Sindh had been virtually proclaimed by a notification, and it was now carried into effect by the formal appointment of Napier as Governor.

The whole of Sindh from Sukkur to the sea now formed part of British India, but Ali Murad was allowed to rule over Khairpur as a vassal chief on account of his faithful alliance with the British. The Amirs were deported but were later allowed to return, and granted pensions.

The troubles in Sindh were not, however, altogether over. Sher Muhammad of Mirpur, Rustum’s son Husham, some other chiefs, and isolated groups of armed Baluchis made a last desperate struggle against the usurpers of their country, but as could be easily foreseen, they were all signally defeated. By the middle of June all open hostilities were at an end, and Sir Charles Napier, who was vested with almost absolute powers, devoted his attention to the
restoration of order and improvement in the administration of the newly conquered country.

Ali Murad, as mentioned above, had obtained certain villages by an agreement with his brother, Rustum. The terms were embodied in the Treaty of Naunahar which was written, as was the usual custom on the blank pages of a manuscript of the Holy Qurān. Murad substituted new pages which “altered the grant from the cession of a single village Mathela to that of three districts, namely, Mirpur, Mathela and Meharki.” The forgery was suspected in 1848 and proved by a Commission of inquiry. The Court of Directors ordered in 1851 that “Mir Ali should not only surrender the possessions fraudulently acquired, but that he should forfeit the turban and title of Rais of Upper Sindh, and that his authority should be confined to the possessions inherited by him from his father Mir Sohrab of Khairpur”.38

It is not necessary to dwell at length upon the British policy towards Sindh. It was characterised by coercion and injustice and there is a general consensus of opinion that the transactions of Auckland, Ellenborough, and Napier have left the blackest stain on the character of the British administration during the whole course of their history in India. Indeed it would be difficult to name any other major political operation of the British in India—save the Afghān expedition of which it forms a part—one on which the hostile judgment has been so definite and universal. An attempt was made at the time by interested parties to throw all the blame on Auckland and to represent Ellenborough and Napier as having merely continued a bad job to its bitter end. But at this distance of time, when it is possible to look upon the whole episode in a more detached spirit, it is impossible to subscribe to this view. That Ellenborough, in violation of justice and moral principles, followed a policy of shameful aggrandisement, to which he was by no means irrevocably committed by his predecessor, is now generally admitted. Although he managed to throw the entire responsibility for the final action on the shoulders of Napier, he must take his due share of it, because he was the head of the Government, and initiated a frankly hostile and aggressive policy before ascertaining whether it was justified by the conduct of the Amirs.39a

Sir Charles Napier must be principally held to blame for precipitating the war. He had begun military operations even while negotiations were proceeding, and did not cease them even when the Amirs, with a single exception, had signed the treaty. His only justification lay in the belief that the Amirs were not sincere in signing the treaty and really entertained hostile designs. This be-
lief, it is generally held, was vindicated by the subsequent conduct of the Amirs. But a little scrutiny would show that this view is not so obviously correct as it is generally supposed to be.

The two incidents which are regarded as proving the hostile designs of the Amirs were the attack on Outram's residence, and the assemblage of army at Miani by the Amirs. As regards the first, it is generally ignored that Outram's own account completely exonerates the Amirs from any responsibility in the matter. On December 12, while returning from the Durbar, where the Amirs had "signed and sealed the new treaty with all formalities," Outram was surrounded by an excited and infuriated crowd who "execrated the Amirs for their dastardly submission to what they styled robbery." The Amirs restrained the crowd at the Darbar and streets of the fort, but failed to do so in the city. But they did their utmost to check the crowd. Outram says: "Had we not been guarded by a numerous body of horse, headed by some of the most influential Belooch Chiefs, I dare say the mob would have proceeded to violence; as it was, a stone was thrown, which struck Captain Wells." Outram gives full credit to the Amirs for the utmost exertion they displayed in protecting them, and his sincere belief in their innocence is proved by the fact that after narrating the incident, with full details, of the angry crowds, he requested Napier to "come down in the steamer and stop the troops."  

The above account is based on a letter written by Outram on December 13. On that very day "he wrote a second letter, saying the Amirs had just told him that the Balochis were uncontrollable; they have taken an oath to have 'yageo' (supposed to be vengeance) unless Rustum was righted: they would not obey the Amirs". "Armed men", he said, "were flocking into the city," at the same time "expressing his confidence that the Amirs were doing all they could to disperse the Balochis and send them out of Hyderabad.

"At three o'clock on the 13th two deputies from the Amirs informed Outram that as he could give no pledge to restore Rustum (of Khairpur) to the turban (i.e., Chiefship), all the Balochi Sirdars swore on the Quran to fight the British army, and not to sheathe the sword until they had restored him. They would march that night and the Amirs could no longer restrain them."

At ten o'clock at night Outram was informed that the Baluchis were to march the next morning to fall on the British army and the Residency was to be attacked in the night. Outram, however, regarded it as 'boast and vanity' and did not even take the precaution of plac-
ing a night sentinel on the house.\textsuperscript{41} On the 14th the Amirs sent messengers to Major Outram, urging upon him to leave the place.

This circumstantial narrative of events from day to day makes a strong prima facie case in favour of the Amirs. They had kept Outram fully informed of the development of the situation until it culminated in an attack on the Residency and the flight of Outram, after a brave defence, as mentioned above. Whether all this was a mere duplicity on their part is a matter of opinion. But one thing is certain. At the time, Outram, who was in the best position to judge, had not only felt no distrust in the Amirs, but was convinced of their honesty. Napier, who was at a distance, and had already formed his own opinion of the hostile design of the Amirs, regarded their action as a mere camouflage to hide their evil designs.

On general grounds, therefore, there is nothing to justify the attitude which summarily dismisses the view of Outram and places implicit faith in that of Napier. That such an attitude has been almost universal is mainly due to the subsequent hostilities of the Amirs. It is a common human failing to judge the previous conduct in the light of subsequent events, and vice-versa, without carefully considering whether there was any connection or causal relation between the two. As such the open hostility of the Amirs should also be carefully examined independently.

There is no doubt that Napier was determined upon war. He had begun hostilities by marching his troops in Upper Sindh while negotiations with the Amirs were still being conducted by Outram with every hope of success, at least according to the opinion of the latter. If Napier had no confidence in the judgement of the man whom he had himself appointed to conduct the negotiations, the more straightforward course would have been to break off all negotiations and declare war. But a very strange spectacle was witnessed in Sindh; the accredited agent was carrying on negotiations with the Amirs, while the General, who deputed him to negotiate, was in full march against them with his whole army. The absurdity of the situation was quite patent to all except Napier. The Amirs pointed it out and very cogently argued that unless the General should delay his march it would be impossible to restrain the Baluchi warriors. In vain did Outram send repeated requests to the General to stop his march towards Hyderabad, a step utterly inconsistent with an earnest desire to settle the matter by amicable means which prompted the negotiations still continuing. Even when the Amirs signed the treaty on the 12th, Napier did not halt the march of his troops. As his brother and great apologist observes: “He disregarded the signing of the treaty and looked upon it as a mockery.”\textsuperscript{42}
The fatal consequence of this policy, pursued by Napier in spite of strong remonstrances by Outram, has been described by the latter in a letter to his chief, dated December 12. Referring to the Amirs, Outram observes:

"These fools (?) are in the utmost alarm in consequence of the continued progress of your troops towards Hyderabad, notwithstanding their acceptance of the treaty, which they hoped would have caused you to stop. If you come beyond Hulla, if so far, I fear they will be impelled by their fears to assemble their rabble, with a view to defend themselves and their families, in the idea that we are determined to destroy them, notwithstanding their submission. I do hope, therefore, you may not consider it necessary to bring the troops any further in this direction; for I fear it may drive the Amirs to act contrary to your orders to disperse their troops, or rather not to assemble them, for they were all dispersed yesterday; and thus compel us to quarrel with them."43

As the apologist biographer puts it: "Sir Charles Napier's judgment was disturbed neither by the deceit of the Amirs, nor by the credulity of his Commissioner."44 So he wrote in reply, on the 13th, that the object of the Amirs was now evident and consequently "he would march the next day."45

When the Baluchi chiefs of Sindh found that even the abject submission of the Amirs by formally accepting the treaty could not stop the military movements of the British, they naturally concluded that the British desired nothing less than their utter destruction. Is there anything to be wondered at that such a fear would seize them and lead to all the consequences as were predicted by Outram in the passage quoted above? According to Outram, even at this crisis, relying mainly upon his assurance, the Amirs tried their best to restrain the excited Baluchis, but failed. But even if we disbelieve this, and credit the Amirs themselves with a deliberate and determined policy to fight the English invaders, who continued to march in disregard of the provisions of the treaty they had just concluded, can we justly blame them for their action? Napier and his apologists justify his measures by the assemblage of troops at Miani, within six miles of Hyderabad. But it would surely be unreasonable to expect that while the British army was in full march to destroy the Amirs, they would not take the ordinary precaution of getting an army ready in the vicinity of their threatened capital. Did Napier really expect that the Amirs would send their army away and then stand before his soldiers with bare breasts to receive the bayonet charge of the English troops?
SINDH

No unprejudiced man who carefully reads the events of those fateful days at the beginning of 1843 can possibly fail to carry away the impression that Napier was bent upon war. Even Outram condemned the British demands as tyrannical and the action of Napier as provocative. In February, 1843, he wrote to Napier that he was unable entirely to concur in his views either as respects the policy or justice of, at least so suddenly, overturning the patriarchal government to which alone Sindh had been accustomed.... "It grieves me to say that my heart, and the judgment God has given me, unite in condemning the measures we are carrying out for his Lordship as most tyrannical—positive robbery." Fortunately, Napier has left us in no doubt as to the 'high principles' which dictated his policy. He was convinced that the barbarous, despotic, and tyrannical rule of the Amirs would sooner or later be replaced by the civilised administration of the British. He was therefore persuaded to believe that sooner he brings about such a consummation, to be devoutly wished for, the better for the British and the people of Sindh. A treaty would merely prolong the darkness of misery and misrule, while a war would hasten the dawn of the new era. So, humane considerations urged him on to a final decision by arms. Sir Charles Napier showed indomitable courage and great military skill in inflicting crushing defeats upon the host of Baluchis nearly ten times the number of his troops. But while he justly takes his rank as a great general, his political philosophy does him little credit. For the principles, so boldly laid down by him, would give a charter or free license to any people to bring under their domination those who are, or are believed by them to be, living under an inferior type of civilisation. Such an idea, no doubt, has always existed, but it would be a bad day for humanity to elevate it into a high moral principle.

But one virtue must not be denied to Napier. He was brutally frank. He pithily noted in his journal: "We have no right to seize Scinde; yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it would be." It is impossible to improve upon this judgment of his own action by himself. It was graphically represented by the Punch when he was made to summarise his great exploit in only one word instead of three—vini, vidi, vici—used by Julius Caesar. That one word was ‘peccavi' (I have (Sind) sinned).

Since the days of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, no other action of a Governor-General was so severely condemned in England as the annexation of Sindh by Ellenborough. Ashley described it as a "criminal folly". The Times denounced it as "undisguised attempt at spoliation of the most daring kind", and asked, "can we be anything but ashamed?" The Court of Directors regarded it as "unjust and impolitic, and inconsistent with the true interests and
honour of the Indian Government.” They threatened to recall the Governor-General, and but for the influence and persuasion of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, would have carried out the threat. But though Peel prevented them from going to this extremity for the time being, even the views of the British Cabinet reflected the prevailing temper of the English people. Their first reaction was one of irritation at being presented with so unreasonable a ‘fait accompli.’ As the press fulminated against the annexation, they seriously considered the question of rescinding it. By July they reached a calmer attitude through a compromise. They informed Ellenborough of their general disapproval, leaving discretion, for the moment, in the hands of the Governor-General in Council. The decision of the Council was, of course, a foregone conclusion. But as soon as the Governor-General in Council gave a decided opinion in favour of the annexation, the Cabinet confirmed the act. In support of the Cabinet it has been urged that they did this only because the lapse of time made the evils of revocation too serious to ignore. But it is difficult to support the contention, for the serious consequences of revocation are by no means apparent, unless it be a false sense of prestige. In fairness to the Cabinet it should be mentioned that while formal resolution was passed by the House of Commons thanking Napier and his troops for their brilliant military exploits, Ellenborough’s name was significantly omitted from the resolution. As to the English public a just appreciation of the situation is given by Trotter in the following words: “If Englishmen privately regretted the wrong done to the Amirs, they were none the less willing to stand upon the seeming advantage thereby won for themselves.”

The best historical comment on the whole episode is to be found in the Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy: “Then came the annexation of Sind. The story of that much discussed event might be taken for a lost chapter from the Prince of Machiavelli. No amount of sophistry can disprove the charge that Ellenborough was determined from the very beginning to carry through the project by fair means or foul, that the treaty engagements with the Talpur Amirs were cynically violated, and that the ensuing War was forced upon them. Opinion at home was prompt in denunciation. Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Nestor of Anglo-Indian politics at that time, gave the best of the many verdicts passed on the subject. ‘Coming after Afghanistan, it (i.e., the annexation of Sindh) put one in mind of a bully who had been kicked in the streets and went home to beat his wife in revenge.’ The act was solemnly condemned by the Court of Directors, and disapproved by the Cabinet. Nevertheless, there was no modification, much less any reversal, of the Governor-General’s action.”
1. See Ch. X.
2. See Ch. VII.
5. Ibid, 21.
8. Khera, 32.
10. Thornton, VI. 400; Napier, I. 44.
12. Khera, 71; Aitchison, VIII. 328.
15. Ch. VII
17. Letter to the Secretary with Governor-General, October 25, 1838. Sind Papers p. 80 (quoted in Thornton, VI. 404).
18. Letter from the Secretary with Governor-General to Resident in Sind November 19, 1838. Sind Papers, p. 117 (quoted in Thornton, VI. 404).
22. Ibid.
23. Khera, 76-8; Aitchison, VIII. 332-6.
24. Khera, 49.
25. The Home authorities fully supported Auckland. The relevant letter will be quoted later in this Chapter.
27. Napier, I. 111.
28. Ibid, 98.
29. Ibid.
30. CHI V. 528. See fn. 25.
32. Ibid, 113.
33. Ibid, 122 ff.
34. THG, 356 (317).
35. Aitchison, VIII. 339.
36. For the controversy over this affair, cf. Thornton, VI. 420-22. Thornton denounces the conduct of Napier.
37. Napier, II. 311-2; THG, 357 (318).
38a. For an elaborate defence of his policy by Ellenborough and its criticism cf, Thornton, VI. 448-66.
40. Ibid, 283.
41. Ibid, 288.
42. Ibid, 292.
43. Ibid, 277.
44. Ibid, 282.
45. Ibid, 283.
46. James Outram, 316; quoted in THG, 355-6.
47. Napier, II. 203.
49. Imlah, 216. “Mr. Gladstone afterwards revealed that Sir Robert Peel’s Cabinet, of which he and the Duke of Wellington were both members, disapproved, he believed unanimously, of the conquest. But the ministry were powerless, insomuch as the mischief of retaining was less than the mischief of abandoning it, and it remains an accomplished fact.” Contemporary Review, November, 1876, quoted in THG, 358-9 (319-20).
50. Trotter, History, I. 41.
51. CHBFP, II. 211.
CHAPTER IX

ELLENBOROUGH AND SINDHIA

Reference has been made above to the treaty imposed upon Daulat Rao Sindhia by the British, in 1817, at the beginning of the Third Maratha War.\(^1\) Although his prestige was humbled and his army reduced, the suppression of the Pindaris benefitted him by the peace, order, and tranquillity that now prevailed in his dominions. The reduction in his military expenses, the rise in revenue by about 25 p.c., and a reduction of about 15 p.c. in the expenses of its collection,—all combined to increase his material prosperity.\(^2\)

Daulat Rao Sindhia died in March, 1827. His widow, Baiza Bai, was a scheming and intriguing woman, and her ambition was to rule the State for life. But she was prevailed upon by the British to adopt a son, in accordance with the wishes of her late husband. Accordingly, a boy of eleven, Jankoji Rao, was adopted by Baiza Bai, but she continued to govern the State as Regent. She seems to have been engaged in various plots in order to keep the absolute power in her own hands during her life, and was encouraged in furthering her plans as the British authorities declined to interfere in the internal affairs of the State. Jankoji was virtually kept a prisoner in his palace. He, however, managed to escape to the Resident and reported that his life was in danger. When the Governor-General, Bentinck, paid a visit to Gwālior, he was approached by both parties. A definite decision on his part would have settled the dispute, but instead of that he gave Baiza Bai to understand that she might continue as Regent so long as she guaranteed the future rights of Jankoji, and told the latter that the British Government would prevent the Resident from doing anything prejudicial to his interests. This has been characterised by an eminent British historian as “an equivocal advice, which being interpreted by Baiza Bai to mean that she was, if possible, to keep her power, and by Jankoji that he was, if possible, to wrest it from her, rather hastened than protracted the crisis”.\(^3\) A section of the military now espoused the cause of Jankoji, and on 10 July, 1833, invested the palace. Baiza Bai took to flight and ultimately agreed to retire on a pension. Jankoji concluded a new engagement with the British in 1837 by which he “engaged to defray all the charge of a force, to be commanded by British officers, and constantly stationed within His Highness’ territories, for the protection thereof and the preservation of good order therein.”\(^3a\)
ELLENBOROUGH AND SINDHIA

The advice given by Bentinck, bearing on its face marks of deliberate duplicity, may appear to be somewhat strange, but seems to have been part of a deep-laid conspiracy, if we can trust the accounts of Mr. John Hope, who once held the post of Superintending Surgeon of Sindhia's Contingent, and Surgeon to the Court of Gwālior. According to him, the Council in Calcutta was anxious to profit by the troubles in Sindhia's Court. Accordingly, "a demi-official letter was written to the Resident by the Chief Secretary of the Foreign Department, desiring him to learn at a private interview, by way of a feeler, if the Maharaja, encircled as he was by serious troubles,—troubles mainly caused by our Government—would like to resign, assigning over the country to the British Government and receiving a handsome pension, which would be paid out of his own revenues." The Resident declined to make the suggestion and thus, as the Deputy-Secretary of the Foreign Department admonished him, "allowed a favourable chance to escape of connecting the Agra to the Bombay Presidency". The Resident, Cavendish, was, of course, removed, and when his successor, Major Sutherland, waited on the Governor-General for instructions about the policy to be pursued in Gwālior, Bentinck "opened wide his mouth and placed his thumb and finger together like a boy about to swallow a sugar-plum. Then turning to the astonished Major, he said: "If the Gwālior State will fall down your throat, you are not to shut it, as Mr. Cavendish did, but swallow it; that is my policy."

The desired opportunity of swallowing Gwālior was not long in coming. On 7 February, 1843, Jankoji Rao Sindhia died, without leaving any son and without making any adoption. His widow, about 11 years old, adopted, with the full concurrence of the Chiefs and influential persons, a boy of eight, who assumed the name Jayaji Rao, and was placed on the throne without any difficulty or opposition from any quarter. As the Queen-mother was too young to act effectively as Regent, it was necessary to vest some person with real authority to carry on the administration.

This matter was very much complicated by the keen personal interest which the Governor-General evinced in the affairs of Gwālior. As soon as Lord Ellenborough heard of the death of Jankoji Sindhia, he cancelled his visit to Meerut and proceeded to Agra "in order to be near Gwālior." It is very curious that although he admits in a letter, written to Queen Victoria on 19 February, that "hitherto everything has been conducted at Gwālior peaceably and properly," he assumed that "for some time there must be a difficulty in carrying on any new administration" and therefore "the necessity
might possibly arise for instant intervention." Accordingly, he "made some change in the disposition of the regiments in order to have with him old corps upon which he can entirely depend."6

All this lends some colour to the view, openly expressed by John Hope, mentioned above, that Ellenborough decided to take advantage of Jankoji's death and the succession of a minor, under a minor Queen-mother, to deprive the State of Gwālior of its independence, and further resolved that "the preliminary step would necessarily be to set aside the Maharani on the ground of her infancy and put up in her place as Regent a person who would cheerfully do the bidding of the British Government."7

There is no positive evidence to prove such diabolical design on the part of the Governor-General, but his action undoubtedly followed the line of policy indicated in the above passage. There were two candidates for the office of the Regent. According to John Hope, the Gwālior Darbār, if left to itself, would have chosen Dada Khasjiwalla, but through the intervention of the Governor-General, Mama Saheb, a maternal uncle of Jankoji Sindhia, was appointed to the office, "being the one individual in that Council who would lend himself to carry out an anti-national policy" of supporting the designs of the British.8 Hope's estimate of the policy and character of Mama Saheb was corroborated by the Resident himself who, in recommending him for the post of Regent, remarked that "he seems to be attached to our interests."9 In any case, there is no doubt that the Mama Saheb owed his appointment to the influence and active interference of the British. In a letter to Queen Victoria, dated 21 March, 1843, Ellenborough writes that his movement to Agra "had the desired effect of establishing without contest a strong Government at Gwālior in the person of Mama Saheb, who feels that the support which has been given to him by the British representative has practically given to him the regency."10 It is to be noted that such an active interference in the internal affairs of Gwālior was not sanctioned by any treaty rights nor justified by any circumstance known to us. It proceeded from the pretensions and prerogatives of a paramount power and was dictated by the well-known British policy not to tolerate able men, but to appoint stooges at the helm of affairs in a Native State.

The newly appointed Regent, Mama Saheb, being extremely unpopular, evidently attempted to strengthen his influence by effecting a marriage between his niece (a child of six years of age) and the Maharaja (who was nine), and the Tika ceremony actually took place on 19 May, 1843. On May 21, the young Queen-mother wrote to the British Resident "complaining of the conduct of the Regent,
and expressing a desire for his removal.” There is no doubt that she was prevailed upon to take this action by the chiefs of the Gwālior Darbār.11 Lord Ellenborough says, in a letter to Queen Victoria, dated 8 June, 1843, that all the chiefs joined the faction hostile to the Regent.12 In plain words it means that there were really no factions, as suggested, but all the chiefs unanimously requested the Queen-mother to take the action. It has been urged by the British authorities that the Queen-mother at first gave her consent to the marriage or seemed to have done so, and was made to realise later, by the other chiefs, the grave danger “that the Regent, having managed this marriage would, in the name of the minor Maharajah, supersede her authority in the state.”13 It is, however, immaterial to discuss this question, for, being only about twelve years of age, she was not in a position to formulate any decision. The fact which admits of no doubt is that she represented the unanimous opinion of the Gwālior Darbār when she wrote to the Resident for the removal of the Regent. The Resident, of course, remonstrated, but to no effect, and “after discussions which lasted a fortnight, the Regent was dismissed.”14 Dada Khasjiwalla, though not formally appointed as Regent, henceforth exercised dominant influence in the Gwālior Darbār.

The attitude of the Governor-General at this juncture is not easy to explain. Soon after the appointment of Mama Saheb as Regent, Ellenborough expressed the view, in a letter to the Resident, that the authority of the new Regent should be supported, if need be, by ‘march of troops upon Gwālior’, and he had even taken measures “for the purpose of concentrating a preponderating force.”15 But as the Governor-General was assured by the Resident that he did not anticipate any such need, he countermanded those measures. Yet when Mama Saheb was dismissed, and the Resident applied for permission to call on the officer commanding at Agra for troops to support the Regent, it was refused. The ex-Regent was plainly told that the British Government could not give him permanent protection within the Gwālior State, and so he proceeded to Seronge within the British territory. The Governor-General also declared that he did “not wish to have any concern with the Mama Saheb’s proceedings.”16

It is significant that this changed attitude of the Governor-General coincided with his change of opinion about the ability of Mama Saheb. In a letter to the Resident, dated June 5, 1843, the Secretary to the Governor-General observed that the Mama Saheb “manifested a want of decision and energy”, “proved himself quite unfit to manage either men or women”, failed to use any of
his advantages, and "gradually allowed to grow up an opinion of his weakness." Evidently, Ellenborough had reasons to feel that Mama Saheb did not, or would not, prove as pliant an instrument in his hands, for serving the cause of British interest, as he was led to expect.

The Governor-General seems to have been dissatisfied with the Resident, Mr. Spiers. Immediately after the dismissal of the Regent, Spiers was asked to quit Gwālior and retire to Dholpur. He was also asked to discontinue official intercourse with the Gwālior Darbār. In his letter to the Resident, dated June 20, the Governor-General claims that these two measures "had the desired effect of impressing the Maharani and the Durbar with a sense of the serious displeasure with which their recent conduct had been viewed by the British Government." But the Resident assured the Maharani that his proceeding to Dholpur was a matter of routine and had no political significance. Further, as the Maharani had not appointed any minister in place of Mama Saheb and held the daily Darbār, the Resident was instructed by the Governor-General to carry on direct communication with her. Such inconsistencies are difficult to explain.

The fact seems to be that the Governor-General was as yet undecided as to the line of action to be adopted towards Gwālior, and therefore did not push the matter to the extremes. But we can trace the gradual stiffening of his attitude. His first reaction can be seen in his letter to the Resident, dated 3 June, 1843. His Government, he said, could not acquiesce in the removal of the Regent "without the assignment of any reason for such a measure except the wish of the Maharanees." At the same time he observed that as there was a long line of common boundary between the dominions of Sindhia and British India, the Governor-General regarded it as of paramount importance to ensure peace and tranquillity within Gwālior and prevent "a lax system of rule generating habits of plunder along its frontier." No serious objection could be taken to this attitude, particularly when we remember that, as noted above, he did not sanction the use of force in support of the Regent and directed the Resident to communicate directly with the Maharani.

But the mind of the Governor-General was fast moving, and he gradually assumed a more and more bellicose attitude. He now decided to teach Gwālior a lesson for its contumacy. In a letter to Queen Victoria on 13 August, 1843, he writes: "The example of a successful defiance of the British Government at Gwālior has led the weak Holkar to pay less attention to our expressed wishes. Disturbances are expected on the borders of Berar, and it is hardly
possible that the vicinity of the ungoverned districts belonging to
the Gwalior State should not lead to much disposition to plunder
along our frontier and that of our allies."\(^{21}\) In a minute recorded
on 10 August, he elaborates the same idea and argues that when
such plunder takes place, the British Government will naturally
ask for reparation, which the Gwalior Darbar will be unable to
afford and must therefore be forcibly exacted.\(^{22}\) We learn from both
the letter and the minute that in anticipation of this danger, which
did not yet exist but which he expected (or hoped for?), he had
decided to assemble a considerable force, commanded by Sir Hugh
Gough at Agra.

The psychological or political ground, which was evidently the
real one, is also explained in his letter to Queen Victoria, dated
August 13, 1843, namely, "the continued existence of a hostile Gov-
ernment at Gwalior would be inconsistent with the continuance of our
permanent influence in India, by which alone its peace is preserved."

There was one additional reason which, according to Ellen-
borough, required "immediate adoption of measures of coercion." This was the existence of "70,000 Sikh soldiers within three marches
of the Sutlej", "desirous of war and of plunder, and under no disci-
pline or control." Though His Lordship hoped that there would be
no war with the Sikhs, still he observed: "It would be unpardonable
were we not to take every possible precaution against such an event,
and no precaution appears to be more necessary, than that of ren-
dering our rear, and our communications, secure by the re-establish-
ment of a friendly government at Gwalior."\(^ {23}\)

The Governor-General expressed his conviction that all the pur-
poses would be achieved by the expulsion of Dada Khasjiwalla from
the Darbar.

When the Maharani expressed a strong desire that the
Resident should return to Gwalior, he refused to do so, except "on
condition of Dada Khasjeewalla being not only deprived of author-
ity but punished by fine and banishment, or what was regarded as
a preferable course, surrendered to the British Government."\(^ {24}\) Such
a demand was preposterous as no such power was given to the Brit-
ish by any existing treaty. But the British Government soon found
a pretext which was not only disingenuous, but frivolous—almost
ridiculous in the extreme.

It was alleged that a paper, addressed to the Maharani by the
Resident, which contained the demand for the punishment or sur-
render of the Dada, was intercepted by him. The Governor-General
expressed "great indignation" at the conduct of the Dada in with-
holding the communication, which was declared to be "an offence
of a most criminal character against the State of Gwālior amounting to a supersession of the Maharani's authority, and the transference of all power in an unlawful manner to himself.” “The Governor-General in Council,” it was added, “will not permit any subject of the State of Gwālior thus to supersede the authority of his sovereign”. The contemporary British historian, Thornton, has strongly denounced the language of the Governor-General and exposed the hollow-ness of the charge and the fallacious nature of the argument by which it was sustained. As he has pointed out, “the girl-Maharani was not the sovereign” and her position even as Regent was never admitted by the British Government. According to the declared conviction of the Government, neither (the Dada nor the Maharani) had any right to the exercise of sovereign authority (the boy Sindhia being the real sovereign). The charge of supersession of the sovereign authority by the Dada therefore certainly does not lie in the mouth of the British Government.26

All these arguments are justly advanced on the assumption that the Dada deliberately intercepted the letter with a view to hiding its contents from the Maharani. But the real fact, and the motive for misinterpreting it deliberately, are thus set forth by John Hope.26

“The letter was written in the Persian language, and the Maharani, a child of thirteen, could neither read nor write any language at all. There was only one man in the capital who, by virtue of his hereditary office of 'Great Chamberlain and Keeper of the crown jewels,' could enter the most sacred of the female apartments, and that man was the Dada Khasjiwalla......Who then, except this man, had the privilege to open and read the Governor-General's letter.....? To suppose that this man, the favourite of the palace, cared to keep in ignorance a child, not out of the nursery, of the contents of a letter, albeit they conveyed censures upon himself, is in the last degree Quixotic. The only thing that can be said to explain the whole affair is delenda est Carthago; and that being so, this charge, contemptible as we regard it, would do as well as any other7.

It is unnecessary to discuss at length the tortuous politics of the British and its reaction upon the Gwālior Darbār. The insistent demand of the British had the desired effect. Dada Khasjiwalla was confined. According to the British view this was the result of internal dissension. Even if it were so, it is impossible not to detect in it the hands of the British Resident. On the other hand, Hope says that it was done by the Gwālior Darbār to satisfy the British demands. But the British Government refused to be satisfied. The Resident insisted that the Dada should be handed over to him, and
declared that “the delivery of the Dada was the only measure which could arrest the advance of British troops.”

There can be no doubt that by this time the Governor-General had decided to coerce Gwālior by violence. As a preliminary step he personally proceeded to Agra and appointed as Resident, in place of Spiers, Sleeman, who was an avowed enemy of the Gwālior State.

The Governor-General arrived at Agra on December 11, and next day made a formal communication to the Maharani that he had “directed the advance of the British armies.” Thereupon Dada Khasjiwalla was surrendered to the British and conducted to Agra.

As noted above, this was so far the only demand of the British Government, and the Governor-General was so convinced that the expulsion of Dada Khasjiwalla would “re-establish visibly our influence at Gwālior without delay”, that even so late as November 1, 1843, he considered it “to be most prudent to confine to that one point any requisition addressed to the darbār of Gwālior.”

But, as the contemporary British historian observes, the ready submission of the Gwālior Darbār “under the influence of the terror imposed by the march of the British force seems to have effected a change in the policy of the Governor-General, and he determined to employ that terror as an instrument for obtaining those ulterior objects which less than two months before he had been content to leave to the effect of ‘influence.’”

One of these objects, as Ellenborough informed Queen Victoria on 19 December, was “the disbandment and disarming of a disaffected portion of the Gwālior army”, for “the existence of an army of such strength in that position must very seriously embarrass the disposition of troops we might be desirous of making to meet a coming danger from the Sutlej.”

But it was difficult to find a casus belli after the surrender of Dada Khasjiwalla. However, on December 19, Ellenborough took his stand upon the Treaty of Burhānpur, concluded in 1804, according to which the British Government undertook to assist Sindhiya with a military force at his requisition. Unfortunately, there was no such requisition; but Ellenborough was not to be deterred by such inconvenient trifles. He boldly asserted that as the Maharaja and Maharani were “children incapable of acting for themselves”, and the British Government “stood almost in the place of the guardian of the infant sovereign,” it was for him to decide, requisition or no requisition, whether the safety and security of Gwālior required a British army. But apart from this curious interpretation
of the Treaty of Bahrānpur, there was the fact, ignored by the Governor-General, that the Treaty of Bahrānpur had long ago ceased to be in force, being superseded by several other treaties, none of which referred to any part of it as still being operative, as would have been certainly the case if any such intention were there.

The contemporary British historian, Thornton, has lamented that the Governor-General should have taken resort to such an indefensible plea instead of boldly claiming, as the paramount authority in India, the right and duty of interfering in the affairs of Gwalior on the ground that its disordered state threatened the peace and tranquillity of India. Later historians have sought to justify Ellenborough’s action on the same ground. But even this ground can hardly be justified. For such disturbances as occurred were more or less the result of British interference or British machinations, and they were certainly not of a serious character calling for British interference. As noted above, the Governor-General’s military preparations were made not to put down any disturbances that actually occurred, but merely to avert any which was expected (or hoped?). In these circumstances little importance attaches to the disturbances that might have actually occurred, and there is less necessity of finding out their nature and causes. In view of the known desire of the British Government it would have been strange indeed if there had been no disturbances, and absolute quiet prevailed in Gwalior. It has been pointed out by Hope that at the very moment when Ellenborough was contemplating and justifying military interference in Gwalior for the sake of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas, which its disordered state threatened, the two rich British provinces of Sagar and Narbada, bordering on Sindhia’s dominions, were in open insurrection, and two detachments of Sindhia’s army were saving the British towns of Khimlassa and Balabehut from destruction by the rebels.34

When the stronger is determined to destroy the weaker party, pretexts are never wanting, and the former is hardly under any necessity to scrutinise them from either moral or legal point of view. This alone explains Ellenborough’s reference to, and interpretation of, the Treaty of Bahrānpur and his subsequent conduct.

At a conference held on 20 December between the Governor-General and certain chiefs of Gwalior, he specified the conditions on which alone he would stop the march of the British army. He had already informed the Maharani “that the movement of the British armies cannot be arrested until the Governor-General has full security for the future maintenance of tranquillity upon the common frontier; nor until there shall be established at Gwalior
a Government willing and able to coerce its own subjects and to
maintain permanently the relations of amity with the British Gov-
ernment and its allies.” In addition to these he now demanded an
increase in the British force maintained at Gwālior under British
officers and the assignment of districts to be administered under the
British Government for its support. The advance of the British army
would be stopped only if “a treaty, making provision for these and
various other points, should be ratified within three days.” It was
accordingly decided that there should be a meeting between the
Maharaja and the Governor-General. The Gwālior chiefs suggested
that the “place of meeting should be the ground then occupied by
the British army—that being the spot where former Governors-
General had been met on occasions of visiting Gwālior.” They pointed
out that if the British army passed the Gwālior frontier by crossing
the Chambal river before the Maharaja met him, it would eternally
disgrace the Maharaja and the Government. The Governor-General,
however, expressed his determination to advance. In vain did the
chiefs implore him, with joined hands, to reconsider his decision,
and expressed their fear that if the British army crossed the frontier
before the meeting of the Sindhia and the Governor-General, the
troops of Gwālior would believe that the latter was coming not as
a friend, but with a hostile intention, and serious consequences
might follow. The newly appointed Resident, Sleeman, after meet-
ing the Maharaja and the Maharani, also reported similar feelings
on their part, and the “impossibility of averting collision” with the
Gwālior force, if British troops crossed the Chambal. The Gov-
ernor-General, however, was deaf to all these and crossed the Cham-
bal on 22 December. The Gwālior chiefs, who were friendly to the
British, including the one who, according to British version, took
the leading part in arresting Dada Khasjiwalla, left the British
camp on the 25th, and proceeded to Gwālior.

The causes or sequence of events after this are not exactly
known. On 26 December, 1843, the Governor-General communi-
cated to the Maharani that the treaty to be framed, embodying his
demands, mentioned above, should be ratified on the 28th, and for
each day’s delay beyond that the Gwālior Darbār would have to pay
a fine of fifteen thousand Rupees. But on 29 December, the
British troops, under the Commander-in-Chief, Hugh Gough, came
into clash with the Gwālior troops, and the Governor-General him-
self witnessed the military operations. The Gwālior troops occupied
a strong position at Chonda, and while the British force was march-
ing towards it, they unexpectedly met with the enemy troops at
Mahārājpur, a strong position occupied by them during the night.
Here a sanguinary fight ensued, and though the Maratha troops fought with courage, they were dislodged and the British force proceeded to attack their main position at Chonda. The British army gained a complete victory but suffered heavy losses, and the gallantry of Gwālior troops extorted the admiration even of their opponents. On the same day, another wing of the British army defeated a large body of Gwālior troops near Punniar. The causes or circumstances leading to the military clash are not exactly known. It seems to be certain, however, that the British army took the aggressive and attacked the Maratha force without any formal declaration of war on either side.

Next day, that is on 30 December, the Governor-General held a conference with the Maharaja and the Maharani, and the Maharaja agreed to issue an order to all his officers and servants to desist from hostilities against the British armies. On January 5, 1844, the Governor-General dictated the terms of a treaty at Gwālior, of which the following are the main provisions.38

1. The British contingent force was increased and revenues of certain additional districts were assigned for the additional expenses involved, the civil administration of these being conducted by the British government, like those already so assigned.

2. The Gwālior Darbār was to pay in cash twenty-six lakhs of Rupees.

3. The military force of all arms to be maintained by the Maharaja was not to exceed nine thousand (and the surplus troops were forthwith disbanded).

4. Until the Maharaja attained majority on 19 January, 1853, the administration was to be carried on by a Council of Regency which would act upon the British Resident’s advice “in all matters wherein such advice shall be offered.”

On January 13, the very day on which the treaty was ratified by the Governor-General, it was publicly announced that as a result of his military victories the Governor-General had securely established British supremacy at Gwālior. In the despatch addressed to the Secret Committee, Ellenborough observed that “neither the excitement of victory nor the consciousness of irresistible power has led to the entertainment of views of ambitious aggrandizement.”39 Later British historians and statesmen have given him credit for his moderation that he did not annex the dominions of Sindhia to the British territory. Of course, if a crime, however grave, is to be applauded simply on the ground that a still graver crime, though feasible, was not perpetrated, Ellenborough is entitled to the praise.
showered upon him. For, compared with his action in Sindh, he showed moderation in the case of Gwālior. But in both cases he was undoubtedly guilty of high-handed acts of injustice, involving employment of brute force, without any redeeming feature or extenuating factor. He was a true representative of the most aggressive form of British Imperialism which slowly made its appearance after the Third Maratha War in 1818, and led to the frank assumption by the British of a position of paramountcy in India, as an established fact, with its rights and obligations widely different in character from those that had hitherto prevailed.

It is somewhat singular that in the Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy Ellenborough's action has been described as "both just and salutary", though in the immediately preceding paragraph his annexation of Sindh has been denounced in the strongest language. The course of events in Gwālior has been described above in some detail in order to enable any unprejudiced person to draw his own conclusion.

But the grounds on which Ellenborough's policy has been commended is worth noticing: "A disputed regency and an overgrown local army had created a situation of danger which the Paramount Power very properly refused to tolerate." As noted above, the dispute about regency was solely the creation of the British. So the real ground was the strength of Sindhi's army. This is further growing disorder in the Panjāb. His coup d'état at Gwālior secured borough showed strategical insight. He had carefully watched the growing disorder in the Panjāb. His coup d'état at Gwālior secured both the rear and the communications of the British army in the event of a Sikh War." That this was the real ground of Ellenborough's action has been indirectly admitted by himself, as noted above. There is therefore hardly any doubt that the actions of Ellenborough in Sindh and Gwālior were inspired by the same "strategical insight" of a "Paramount Power", and it is idle to pretend any moral or legal justification in either case.

2. Beveridge, III. 113.
3. Ibid. 221.
4. Aitchison. V. 117 (Article 2).
6. The age is given as 13 by Thornton, but Ellenborough, in his letter to the Queen, dated 19 February, 1843, refers to her age as eleven (Basu-I, 842).
8. Hope, op. cit. 42.
9. Ibid.
11. "On the 21st the Maharanee summoned to her presence all the chiefs in camp excepting Mama Sahib, and subsequently despatched a message to the British Resident, complaining of the conduct of the Regent, and expressing a desire for his removal" (Thornton, VI. 470-1).

13. Ellenborough's letter to the Queen, dated 8 June, 1843 (Basu-I, 843).
14. Ibid.
15. Thornton, VI. 530.
17. Ibid., pp. 534 ff. (footnote).
18. Ibid, 540.
20. Ibid, 533, fn.
23. Ibid, 489.
24. Ibid, 481.
25. Ibid. 481-2.
27. Thornton, VI. 491.
28. In his Rambles and Recollections, Sleeman wrote: "As a citizen of the world I could not help thinking that it would have been a great blessing upon a large portion of our species if an earthquake were to swallow up this court of Gwalior and the army that surrounds it". (Quoted in Basu-I, 846).
29. Thornton, VI. 494.
30. Ibid, fn.
31. Ibid, 495.
32. Basu-I, 848.
34. Basu-I, 844-5.
36. Thornton, VI. 502-4; Beveridge, III. 480.
37. The account that follows is based upon Thornton, VI. 506 ff.
39. Thornton, VI. 525.
40. CHBF, II. 211.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid, 212.