

Our Minister at Peking, on August 2, 1902, telegraphed* to Lord Lansdowne that there had been going the rounds of the press an agreement in regard to Tibet, alleged to have been secretly made between Russia and China. In return for a promise to uphold the integrity of China, the entire interest of China in Tibet was to be relinquished to Russia. This rumour, said our Minister, seemed to have originated in a Chinese paper published in Satow. Fuller information was sent by letter. According to this, among other things, Russia would establish Government officers in Tibet to control Tibetan affairs.

On Sir Ernest Satow making, in accordance with Lord Lansdowne's instructions, a representation to the Chinese Foreign Board about this, the President of the Board strongly denied that there was any such agreement, and declared that no such arrangement had ever formed a subject of discussion between the Chinese and Russian Governments. But the rumour seems to have had a wide prevalence and to have been regarded seriously, for our Ambassador at St. Petersburg reported in October that the Chinese Minister there had told him that several of his colleagues had been making inquiries from him respecting this pretended agreement, which had appeared in several Continental as well as Russian newspapers, and which he, the Chinese Minister, had first seen in the Chinese newspapers. The Government of India, also, reported to the Secretary of State that circumstantial evidence, derived from a variety of quarters, all pointed in the same direction, and tended to show the existence of an arrangement of some sort between Russia and Tibet.

It may be asked—and, indeed, it was asked—why the Government of India should have been so nervous about Russian action in Tibet. The Russian Government had said that the mission which the Dalai Lama had sent to St. Petersburg was of a “religious” nature, and the Chinese Foreign Board had said there was no agreement

* Blue-book, p. 140.