

He told the Ambassador* that the language of the communication had seemed to him unusual, and, indeed, almost minatory in tone. He referred especially to the statement that the Imperial Government might, in consequence of our action in a country which immediately adjoined the frontiers of India, find it necessary to take measures to protect Russian interests in those regions. Lord Lansdowne said he could not conceive why it was necessary for Russia to evince her interest in this manner.

Count Benckendorff expressed his opinion that these exaggerated rumours had been spread designedly in order to foster ill-feeling between Great Britain and Russia, and thought we should spare no pains in order to dissipate them. There was, he said, no reason whatever why the two Governments should have trouble over Tibet. Russia had no political designs upon the country, and he presumed we had not.

Lord Lansdowne replied that if he was invited to say that we had no desire to annex Tibetan territory, he would unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative, but he was bound to be careful how he gave general assurances, the import of which might hereafter be called in question, as to our future relations with Tibet. It was natural that the Indian Government should desire to promote Indian trade in that country, and they would no doubt take whatever measures seemed to them necessary for that purpose. The Ambassador admitted that this was only natural.

A few days later, on February 18, Lord Lansdowne, in a further conversation with the Russian Ambassador, recurred to the same subject.† He said that the Indian Government had been seriously perturbed by the communication made to the Foreign Office. The interest of India in Tibet was, Lord Lansdowne said, of a very special character. With a map of Central Asia before him, he pointed out to the Ambassador that Lhasa was within a comparatively short distance of the Indian frontier, while, on the other hand, it was considerably over 1,000 miles from the Asiatic possessions of Russia, and

* Blue-book, p. 180.

† *Ibid.*, p. 181.