

any sudden display of Russian interest or activity in the regions immediately adjoining the possessions of Great Britain could scarcely fail to have a disturbing effect upon the population, or to create the impression that British influence was receding, and that of Russia making rapid advances into regions which had hitherto been regarded as altogether outside her sphere of influence.

Lord Lansdowne added that he had received from apparently trustworthy sources reports to the effect that Russia had lately concluded agreements for the establishment of a Russian protectorate over Tibet, and also that, if she had not already done so, she intended to establish Russian agents or Consular officers at Lhasa, and he thought it of the utmost importance that as the Ambassador had disclaimed on the part of Russia political designs upon Tibet, he should be in a position to state whether these rumours were or were not without foundation.

Count Benckendorff replied that he did not believe that there was any foundation in them, but he expressed his readiness to make special inquiries of the Russian Government as to the truth of the statements referred to.

Lord Lansdowne then went on to say that as we were much more closely interested than Russia in Tibet, it followed that, should there be any display of Russian activity in that country, we should be obliged to reply by a display of activity, not only equivalent to, but exceeding that made by Russia. If they sent a mission or an expedition, we should have to do the same, but in greater strength. As to our dealings with Tibet at the moment, Lord Lansdowne stated that we were endeavouring to obtain from the Tibetan authorities the fulfilment of pledges which had been given to us in 1890 in regard to the location of the frontier, and in regard to trade facilities on the borders of Sikkim. We had found that it was of no use to deal with Tibet through China, owing to the dilatory methods of the Chinese Government and the slenderness of their influence over Tibet. It was absolutely necessary that these local questions should be disposed of to our satisfaction, and we should continue to take the necessary steps for that purpose.