

I replied that no more formal declaration would be made than that conveyed in the letter from the Viceroy to the Chinese Resident. If the progress of the Mission were obstructed, General Macdonald would use force to clear a way for the passage of the Mission. If no opposition were offered, he would not attack the Tibetans. We were prepared to fight if fighting were forced upon us; we were equally ready to negotiate if the Chinese and Tibetans would send proper delegates to negotiate with us.

All accounts seemed to show at that time that the Tibetans intended to fight, and from several independent sources came information that they were relying on Russian support. And these latter reports were confirmed later by Colonel Chao, the Chinese delegate, who said that Dorjjeff was then in Lhasa, and that the arrogance of the Tibetans was due to their reliance on the support of the Russians, since many discussions had been held in Russia between Dorjjeff and Russian officials, with the result that of late the Tibetans had been taunting the Chinese openly, and saying that they had now a stronger and greater Power than China upon which to rely for assistance.

Still, I meant to do my best to secure our passage to Gyantse without fighting, and to the General commanding the Tibetan troops at Yatung I gave the pledge that we were conducting the Mission, under adequate protection, to a place better fitted for negotiation, but that we were not at war with Tibet, and unless we were ourselves attacked, we should not attack the Tibetans. I repeated these assurances to some Tibetan messengers at Gnatong, and told them to tell the Tibetan Generals that if they did not attack us we would not attack them.

On reaching the summit of the Jelap-la, on a bright, clear sunny day, with glorious views all round, we found no one to oppose us. We looked down into the Chumbi Valley into a sort of labyrinth of deep forest-clad valleys, and beyond these to the high main range, which still separated us from Tibet proper, for Chumbi is not geographically part of Tibet, nor are its inhabitants true Tibetans.