

associations. Political conditions seemed for a long time to bar all access to them for British travellers, and in particular for anyone serving like myself under the Indian Government. But the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian agreement reconciling the Asiatic interests of both Empires seemed to encourage some hope that the bar might at least partially be lifted for the sake of my scholarly aims. I accordingly had in the autumn of 1913 addressed a request to the Foreign Department of the Government of India that with the approval of the Foreign Office in London the Russian Government might be approached for permission enabling me to visit the Alai portion of the Pamirs and the mountain tracts westwards through which the route of the ancient silk trade from China to Bactria must have passed.

Previous experience had induced me to provide an adequate allowance of time for needful diplomatic procedure and slow postal communications in Chinese Turkistan. All the same it was a great relief when a mail bag received at Kucha in April 1915 brought cheering demi-official information from Simla that the desired permission had been accorded by the Russian Foreign Ministry. I felt duly grateful for the alliance between Russia and the British Empire, cemented by the War, which was likely to have helped towards securing this concession.

But my hope for the prompt realization of my programme, which in the end was to take me through Russian Turkistan to south-eastern Persia for the following winter's work, was much damped on my arrival at Kashgar. The Russian diplomatic representative, Consul General Prince Mestchersky, cultivated very friendly relations with his British