Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

The Present Situation on the Indian Frontier

Right Hon. Sir Richard Temple Barl., G.C.S.I., C.I.E.,
D.C.L., LL.D., M.P.

Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Right Hon. Sir Richard Temple Barl., G.C.S.I., C.I.E., D.C.L.,
LL.D., M.P. (1899) The Present Situation on the Indian Frontier, Royal United Services
Institution. Journal, 43:251, 1-17, DOI: [10.1080/03071849909417606](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071849909417606)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071849909417606>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the
information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform.
However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no
representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness,
or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views
expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and
are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the
Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with
primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any
losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages,
and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or
indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the
Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes.
Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE JOURNAL

OF THE

ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION.

VOL. XLIII.

JANUARY, 1899.

No. 251.

[Authors alone are responsible for the contents of their respective Papers.]

THE PRESENT SITUATION ON THE INDIAN FRONTIER.

*By the Right Hon. Sir RICHARD TEMPLE, Bart., G.C.S.I.,
C.I.E., D.C.L., LL.D., M.P.*

Thursday, December 8th, 1898.

Lieut.-General Lord METHUEN, K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G.,
in the Chair.

MAY I begin by reminding you of the qualification I am supposed to possess for addressing you on such a subject as the North-West Frontier of India? Well, I was for some years Secretary to the Government that administered the northern half of that frontier, and for several years I myself governed the southern part; so that I have been officially connected with it from the northern down to the southern extremity. May I also remind you that this subject, although in the first place Indian, is, nevertheless, assuming world-wide importance? If you take the most recent case, that of England and France, you recollect how disappointed France was at not obtaining Russian support. Now what did she mean by that? Did she suppose that Russia could render any naval assistance in the event of war with England? She knew, and Russia knew, that a squadron from the Black Sea going to aid the French at Toulon, when they were blockaded by the British, would be picked off when it emerged into the Mediterranean. If, on the other hand, the squadron went from the Baltic to remove a British blockade at Cherbourg, why, it would be stopped and destroyed in the Straits of Dover. What was it then that France expected and was so disappointed at not receiving? Of course, it was a demonstration from Russia towards the North-West Frontier of India. Russia did not see her way at that time to make such a demonstration, and therefore she advised France to yield. But take the Russian view of the case. Only last week a pronouncement was made in the Russian Press at St. Petersburg—and

this Press is either inspired or is under censorship—to the effect that Russia was making a great mistake in fortifying herself with Port Arthur and along the coast of Manchuria, because that was only giving pledges to misfortune, to be victimised in the event of war with England. “No,” said the Russian authority—this is only another common expression—“Port Arthur is the vulnerable point in the heel of Achilles; let us give up that, and concentrate all our energies towards the North-West Frontier of India.” Well, it is a long cry from Paris to Port Arthur, but along that immense line, by political electricity, was flashed the words “The North-West Frontier of India,” and that sound has now re-echoed at the headquarters of every Government and every Army in Europe.

Now, I do not profess on this occasion to describe to you the geography of that frontier. I assume, as I justly may, that you all know it. Therefore I shall not enter upon that tempting theme of the strategic topography, of the grand scenery, and of the historical and noble circumstances connected with it. No; I will keep all my time, which I really want, for the military and political problems which I have to submit to you. Therefore I shall divide my address into two parts—first, the frontier proper, and then the Russian relations regarding it.

In the first place, let me begin with Chitral. The Government of India was perfectly right in taking and occupying that place and in making and maintaining a military communication with it. And why? Because it lies near the base of the Pamirs, that elevated plateau which is called, of course, the roof of the world. When the Pamir plateau was partitioned between England and Russia, I rather think that Russia had been allowed in that partition to get somewhat inconveniently near that corner of our frontier on the extreme North-West. But Chitral lies at the base, and in the event of war or trouble with Russia her scouts would cross her Pamir frontier and traverse our piece, for we never keep any establishments in that snowy region; and then they would peer down and see what was going on in the upper valleys of the Indus. Now, if that sort of movement were unchecked, or, at all events, if it were not stopped even, the moral effect upon Kashmir and the outlying portions of the dominion would be very bad indeed. There would be a clear case of Russian scouts approaching, not to the frontier of Afghanistan or to any allied State, but within the red line even, the limit of British dominion, of a British vassal State, and for that to happen unchecked would have a very bad effect. Therefore it is so important to keep Chitral.

Now I pass on past the Peshawar Valley and the Afridi country to the Khyber Pass. There is no more absolute proposition than this, that we should have command of that pass. And why? The answer to that involves the question of the Ameer of Kabul. He is a typical instance of a man between two fires. In his own native version I dare say he translates to himself the old English saying “How happy could I be with either, were t’other dear charmer away!” which means “How well could I get on with the British if the Russians were out of the way; what comfortable terms I should make with the Russians if the English

were not behind me!" The consequence is, he is always wobbling in his mind. Generally, he sees that our star is in the ascendant, but of late years there is no doubt Russian prestige has increased enormously in Central Asia. When he thinks of all that, he somewhat inclines towards Russia. But we may hope that this Ameer at least will be faithful to us. He has reason to be so, of course, but no one can read the Afghan heart; of all hearts it is the hardest to read. But at any rate he must obviously follow his own interest, and that lies with us. During the last war, however questionable his conduct may have been at the first, he ultimately behaved well and faithfully towards us, and so we may hope he will continue. But he must know that, in the event of war between ourselves and Russia, he will be invaded, and the question with him is, Can he depend upon our protection? I do hope that we have given him the fullest assurances in that respect. I do not venture to affirm that, but I recommend anyone who doubts it to obtain official information. I hope it has been the case—an absolute, unreserved assurance that if he is attacked by Russia in consequence of his conduct towards us, he will be supported with the whole might of the British Empire. For such protection it is necessary that we should be able to defend him at least with an army corps at Kabul. I submit that proposition to be self-evident. We must be able to defend the Ameer in the last resort with a British army corps at Kabul, with a temporary railway from Peshawar and our base there. That is the one great argument of the Khyber Pass.

But that is not the only one. This Ameer, we hope, is faithful, but he is an elderly man now; and are you sure under what auspices and education and circumstances his successor is being brought up? Even then, who knows what may be the consequences of a palace revolution? Are you always sure that there will be a faithful and loyal Ameer? Have you ever heard of an instance to the contrary? Think of that poor Shere Ali, who acted as a traitor to us, and lost his crown and his life in consequence. Well, the Ameer and their successors have several times tasted of British cold steel, but never, as yet, of the Russian. Still, who can say what line they may take? Therefore it is necessary that Russia should know, and that the Afghans should know, that we have the power of enforcing loyalty to the solemn engagements made between Afghanistan and us; and that is undoubtedly the second reason which I may state without any breach of diplomatic discretion. It is no part of diplomacy to conceal notorious facts which, if not known to us, are known to everybody else. Those are two tremendous reasons for the command of the Khyber Pass.

But it is one thing to command a pass, and another thing to hold it. I do not undertake to say that it is necessary to hold the Khyber Pass, that is to say, to have military posts and British troops inside it. I do not say it is not necessary, but I do not undertake to recommend it. I believe that the Government of India, with the sanction of the Government of England, has determined so to hold it; and certainly whatever the Government of India decides to do, you may accept as the nearest

approach you are likely to have to political wisdom in the world. I believe that of the Government of India. But still, there it is, an arguable question either way. There will be certain objections and difficulties connected with the military holding of the pass.

Now, what are those difficulties? In the first place, it will be disliked by the Afridis—those Afridis who fought us in the Tirah campaign. They have shown a very remarkable power of combination. I have known the Afridis now for full forty years, and I never heard of such a combination before. It was a most momentous and portentous circumstance, which in many respects should be a warning to us, however decisively they may have been overcome by the skill of our officers and the gallantry of our troops. Nevertheless, its recurrence must, if possible, be prevented by political means. Now, what may we suppose were the causes of that extraordinary combination? Of course, the official authorities all say it was fanaticism. Well, that no doubt was the spark that set a combustible mass on fire; but what rendered the mass combustible? The main cause, no doubt, of that was set forth by the Afridis in many of their proclamations, which you may find in the Blue Book. They had consistently said from first to last that the reason of the revolt was the frequent encroachment by the British upon their country. They said they had been hemmed in in all directions, and that their independence was threatened. Nothing was further from the intention of the Government of India than to threaten that independence. But then sometimes we unconsciously do things which have a different effect to that which we intended, and no doubt there was something of that kind. If you wish for a very full statement on this point, I would refer you to a remarkable speech made by the Earl of Northbrook last February, in the House of Lords, in which, with the knowledge of an ex-Viceroy, he set forth the various points of the North-West Frontier, in which he thought we had slightly transgressed the policy of the previous Government. I am not condemning the recent policy. I merely mention it as a fact, and we must take notice of it. Therefore, there is a danger lest our holding of the Khyber Pass should set up the Afridis or keep that war, like fire, still warm. If that has been decided upon, we should spare no pains to assure the Afridis, in common with all the tribes, that their independence under us is absolutely secure. Let us try and ask them what possible guarantee they require, and then, if possible, grant it, so that they may be perfectly satisfied with us in that respect.

Then the other cause was what is known as the Durand boundary. As was intended by the Government of India it was nothing more than a delineation between Afghanistan and that belt of independent tribes, which lies along this North-Western Frontier. But you see in the estimation of those tribes it had the effect of their seeing British officers with a strong escort in their rear, while they had British dominion in front of them, and they felt themselves surrounded. It is just one of those things which it is impossible to make those semi-barbarous tribes understand, and this was no doubt one cause of the revolt. Certainly, if we had gone to war with France the other day, and

Russia had allied herself with her, which would have been probable, and if we had had this war on our hands this year instead of last,—I do not say it would have been disastrous, but it would have greatly aggravated the burdens which our country has to bear. We should not allow it to occur. I do not doubt that with the good political arrangement the Government of India is capable of making, we shall prevent a recrudescence of these dangerous alarms. Recollect that these tribes have no wish to be at permanent enmity with us. Although they live in their mountains and cherish their independence, they must come down to our villages in the plains for half their food and many other things they require. They depend on the villages of the trans-Indian territories almost as much as England depends for her food supplies on foreign countries. Therefore we ought to be able to keep them satisfied.

Well, our policy with them might have been of two or three kinds. One kind was to treat them as Russia treated Circassia after the Crimean War; it was little short of extermination. I need not dwell upon that, because such a policy would never be undertaken by the Government of India, and would not be suffered by the people at home. The second plan was to try and administer that territory as we had those of many parts of India, and all territory near our borders elsewhere, and the like. Well, that probably would be too expensive, and it would never succeed with the tribes; they would never submit to it. It would be an incessant revolution, or rather a revolt, an insurrection and repression, ending, of course, in what I may call the Circassian method. So that second alternative really is not to be thought of either. Now, may I mention one point? It has been said by an authority, for whom I have the greatest friendship and respect, that that is a plan of administering these independent tribes which is not so impossible as people suppose, because it had been done with effect by the Bombay Government—which I had the honour of conducting—with many tribes in the south on the same frontier. Now, there are tribes and tribes, and tempers and tempers; and it does not follow because the tribes in a fair territory in a valley, with hills not so steep and rugged, have a manageable temper, that these Afridis in a different country should have a similar temper. There is the greatest difference in the world between the two tempers. The Creator who made the hills in the south comparatively low and easy of access, with gentle slopes, gave the tribes a mild temper; the same Creator who made the rugged ravine and the tremendous precipices and the inclement climate, of course has given the inhabitants a temper in correspondence with their surroundings; and you will never make the two assimilate.

Well, so much for that matter of the tribes, which is one of extreme importance, because, if we manage well, as I believe the Government of India will, then we should have them as comparatively loyal adherents, at any rate spectators, of any dangerous trouble we may be involved in with Afghanistan or Russia, for it comes to the same thing. We may have them as benevolent spectators, but we may have them as a desperate danger on our flank, and I hope this will be avoided.

So much just for that part of the subject. Now I pass on from Peshawar and Tirah, past Kohat to Bannu. Near Bannu, I may just remark, while I am on the frontier, that there is the Koorram Valley, and from this valley there are two passes which lead direct to Kabul. Many people in my time considered that that was the best approach to Kabul. However, authorities nowadays think otherwise; but to show you the advantage of that Koorram route, by the Paiwar Kotal Pass, which is now the British boundary, and the "Shutar Gardan," or Camel-neck Pass, which leads straight down to Kabul—to show the importance of those two passes, I merely remind you that when General Roberts went to avenge the murder of Cavagnari and the massacre of the Embassy, he got there in very good time through this Koorram Pass. But I believe the importance of this route has now quite waned, as the old route by the Khyber has waxed, and I have no doubt that, taking it all in all, with Peshawar at its base, it is better to keep to the Khyber route.

So I pass on southwards until we get to what is called the Goomul Pass, just opposite Dera Ismail Khan, and just at the foot of Solomon's Throne, the Takhi-i-Sulaiman mountain. Now, that is a pass of first-rate importance, because if you look at the map you will find that the route from there to Kandahar runs westward in what is called a bee-line. This is the pass by which invaders have more than once burst upon India, and I should have little doubt that if, as I will explain presently, a critical battle were fought for the possession of India between England and Russia at Kandahar, and if, as is almost impossible, or violently improbable, the British position there was lost, the Russian commander would make straight for the bee-line to the Goomul Pass and burst into the middle of the Punjab, disconcerting many other arrangements we might have made. Therefore I do think this Goomul Pass has not been sufficiently looked to—it might on military examination turn out to be a group of passes. An amount of attention was paid to it in the transactions which led to the recent war, but nothing effectual has been done to command the mouth of that pass towards India. I do not at all recommend occupying it. I recommend commanding it; that is, making such arrangements at the Indian mouth of it as shall enable us to block it if we require to do so, or traverse it if it suits us on political emergency.

And inasmuch as there runs down the left bank of the Indus a continuous railway from north to south, I submit that opposite Dera Ismail Khan, and opposite this Goomul Pass, a viaduct ought to be constructed so that we shall be able to take an army corps across that river at will, if necessary, because it would be a second string to our bow in the event of anything happening at Kandahar. That I submit to you is a matter of first-rate military importance. We should never know how important it was until something had gone wrong with us at Kandahar in the front. You will find a great deal about it in the writings of the late Sir Robert Sandeman, who was an intimate friend of mine.

Now I will get a little further south, and we come to Sukkur, and the great railway viaduct there. As you know, there runs from there a

railway across the Sibi desert up to Quetta. Inside the mountains Quetta has become a great basis of military operation, which would be, of course, of supreme importance in the event of war with Russia. From Quetta, as you very well know, there runs a line through Pishin piercing the Khoja Amaram range by the Khoja tunnelling. I suppose for military strategy, in the event of extreme danger, there is no more important work in the British Empire than that tunnel, which takes us straight on to the plains that lead to Kandahar. I feel it almost a pride amongst the memories of my existence that I had so large a share in the initiation and making of that railway across the Sibi desert up to Pishin. From the mouth of this tunnel, which you know by the name of Chaman, there is a comparatively easy road of about 90 miles to Kandahar, which could be ridden in a day. I have done that myself.

Now we get to Kandahar. I submit to you, as a body of experts, that if Russia attacks us by the south-western route, which is the most likely one, that we should give her battle at Kandahar. In every way that is a valuable military position. The commander of a British army corps there would have a desert on his left, which could not be turned; he would have a river on his right, which would be turned only with great difficulty; and in his rear a district, one of the richest on the face of the earth, limited in area but boundless in fertility and abundance. He could draw his supplies from there, and from there he would have a temporary railway running from Kandahar to Chaman, which could be made in two-and-a-half or three months at the rate of a mile a day; and from thence, of course, he would have railway communication with India. You cannot imagine a more beautiful spot for a British commander than that. In front he has a rough and half-desert road of 300 miles or more, which an enemy must traverse to approach him; and that is the position for the British I submit from the military point of view. The political advantage, of course, is enormous, because one does not want India to see us fighting with Europeans; better that there should be a veil over that tremendous transaction. Let the fight go on behind the mountains—tolerably near to us no doubt, but not too far from our base; everywhere convenient, but hidden from the sight of all the Indian peoples except the gallant men engaged in it on our side. That is an enormous political advantage, and you can take my word for it.

So much, then, for Kandahar. You have heard that a temporary railway can be run from Chaman to Kandahar within three months at the rate of a mile a day. The last act I ever did before I left India was to give orders for it being done; so I know exactly what I am talking about; and its execution was only prevented by a general election in Britain and a change of Government in India.

This concludes the first part of my address. You see, I have run over the points briefly in order to give myself time for the second part, which is really the most important, namely, the relations of Russia towards this frontier. I do not, of course, want to say anything which is hostile to Russia, more than I can help. Of course, we wish to remain at peace with Russia, and with everybody else. Let her develop Central

Asia and pacify the turbulent and semi-barbarous tribes, and let her spread her railways and increase her cultivation, and send her surplus food to us as much as she likes; and if she likes, let her borrow British capital. We are not sorry there to find a field for our enterprise. But if she tries to take our country from us and to prevent our legitimate expansion in other directions, well then, she will be sowing the wind, and I am sure that she will reap the whirlwind. We wish peace, but it must be peace on safe and honourable conditions. If we cannot get that we will fall back on the old saying, that there are worse evils than war. I submit to you that that is my political creed before I begin on the subject of the relations of Russia to this frontier.

In the first place, let me just remind you of two facts. You have read the Tsar's proclamation about universal peace and general restriction of armaments. I will not say disarmament, but cessation of preparation for increased armament. I will not say anything now this moment of what Russia is doing in China, but I shall just mention two circumstances up to date, the most recent occurrences, now going on on this Indian frontier, on which I just ask your patriotic judgment as to whether these proceedings are consistent in any degree with the spirit of that proclamation. In the first place, she is building as fast as she can go her railway from Merv to a place called Koshak on the Afghan frontier, within 70 miles of Herat. Supposing that the railway called the Trans-Caspian Railway which runs from the Caspian Sea to Merv, was a civilising and a commercial project; let us grant for the sake of charity, if you like, that it was a commercial and civilising railway, and so on to Samarcand and Bokhara; what are you to say about the peculiar branch of 100 miles from Merv to Koshak? Is it not the most transparent sophistry to say that is merely a civilising project? It is of course a menace to England, and nothing short of that. Don't let anybody, for the sake of charity or peace, deceive themselves in that matter. It is an unfriendly act of the most overt kind. We have heard a good deal about unfriendly acts. I am sure no act of France was more dangerously unfriendly than this. I believe within a very few months it will be completed, and its effect will be apparent on the policy of Afghanistan. I will tell you of another, not so dangerous, although perhaps a worse case than that. It is within my certain knowledge that at this moment Russia is sending all sorts of officers and small establishments to hunt up the Afghan frontier towards Seistan. She availed herself of her position in Northern Persia to do that. Now, to use a common expression, what is she poking her nose in that part for, sniffing about in that way? It means the preparation of a menace, and nothing short of that. She has no business whatever there, commercial or political or anything else, except that of bothering Afghanistan, and through Afghanistan bothering England, and consolidating her policy of menace. That is really what it is. Of course, we must come to terms with Persia about all that; but on this occasion I will not talk about that point. It would require, perhaps, a second address for me to explain fully British and Russian policy as regards Persia. I merely confine myself to the policy of Persia towards Afghanistan. These are two acts of Russia up to date, and

so you see what it really amounts to. And when you say that this Trans-Caspian Railway, or if they say that this Trans-Caspian Railway was merely a civilising and a commercial project—well, if ever there was a military railway, made altogether by military means, under military arrangements, it was that, and its policy was declared by Skobelev. Now, considering that Skobelev was the conqueror of Geok Tepe and the victor of Merv, and destroyed the Turkoman power, substituting the Russian power for it, I should say he is a pretty good judge. He said, and his words are on record, that he was practically sure that “Not for a generation or more to come would Russia be able to advance beyond Herat upon India. But in the meantime, by this railway of ours we are assuming a menacing position towards England, which will keep her occupied in India and prevent her impeding us in other parts of the world.” He went on to allude to the Eastern Question—of course he meant Constantinople. Now, I think you had better take the word of Skobelev than the word of what I may call benevolent people who think of nothing but peace at any price. Peace let us have, but not at any price. Now, these railways of Russia are, of course, largely extending. There is first of all the Trans-Caspian, which you recollect runs from the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea to within striking distance of the Herat frontier. The first idea was, that part of the nearest point where the bend of this railway approaches the Herat frontier—where there is a place called Doshak, which is Persian for “bifurcation”—the railway would be carried to the Herat frontier. Now, the Russians have decided otherwise, and are making the railway, as I have already explained, from Merv, which comes to the same thing practically. Then from Merv the railway has for some years past extended from Samarcand to Bokhara, and now from Samarcand it has been completed to Tashkend, with a view to an ultimate extension to Balkh, on the Oxus River. That of course is a considerable extension, but I wish to explain to you presently that it does not particularly help Russia. What will help Russia some day is this, that she has now got her railway extended from the main trunk line of Siberia, which runs from west to east, and from that trunk line she has her railway extended to Orenburg, which is the south-west corner of Siberia. From Orenburg she will have, in the course of a very few years, a railway on to the Sea of Aral, and then to Khiva and so on to Samarcand, and will thus complete a regular circle by the Trans-Caspian Railway to the Caspian Sea. That will give her, of course, a great additional military power; but still I wish to say that these extensions will not much alter the conditions of her possible invasion of India. The differences may be in degree only and not in kind, as I will immediately explain.

But before I go any further upon this point I should just like to mention that there are two lines of possible advance. One would possibly be from Samarcand or Bokhara to the north of the Oxus, near Balkh, on to the Indian Caucasus by the valley of the Oxus, to Bamian and so on, to Kabul, if she should ever get there. That is the first line, and that is the hardest and least probable. The second line is from the shores of the Caspian, or rather from Baku at the end of

the Caucasus, across the Caspian Sea to the east shore of the Sea, then on to Merv, and so on to Herat, and then on to Kandahar, where I believe the great battle would be fought in that case. I beg you to bear in mind those two lines, the northern and the south-eastern, which I have already mentioned.

Now, as regards both these lines, there is no doubt of the importance of the railway extension; but I venture to say—and this will be really the most important point in the whole of my address to you this afternoon, if it shall find favour with you—that no writer that I know of on these subjects, and they are many, has ever adequately dealt with the question of transport and supply. There has only been one author who has attempted it, and he was the anonymous writer of some newspaper articles, of which copies were sent to me. I was very much struck by them. But no writer, in his own name, in any book of authority, has ever dealt with this tremendous question. I do hope in a very few minutes to make this point clear to your expert minds. It is assumed that, when the railway is made, all the Russians would have to do would be to send an army along it. Now, when you come to look at that, pray consider that that is not an easy proposition. In the first place, it is a single line. Of course they may make sidings, and so on, at different points, and so facilitate matters; but still it would remain a single-line railway. To send on even 40,000 men, with all their impedimenta included, along a single line, for several hundred miles, is not itself at all an easy task. But I shall show directly that at least 100,000 men would be required. Moreover, on these lines they would have to carry all their supplies with them. Think of that. All their supplies with them, unless they had established magazines at different points beforehand. Therefore, it would be a tremendous business really to carry the army itself down the railway, to say nothing of the delay which would arise in the transport across the Caspian. How many steamers or boats has Russia got there? A good many, I dare say. But what would they count for when you come to send an army of 40,000 with all the munitions of war? That is itself a great difficulty, but it is not the difficulty which they are immediately met with. Many writers seem to think that once the army had got to the end of the railway and were only a few marches from Herat or anywhere else, they would go up at once. But would they? Now, just consider. They have got to march, and they want transport. That is a grave matter. I speak feelingly on the subject, because I myself have been engaged in it. I once had to act virtually as a Chief Transport Officer, and I know what it is to raise 100,000 camels. We could do it in India; but could you do that sort of thing in Central Asia? Look at the country through which that railway passes from the Caspian Sea to Samarcand. Does it produce any vast number of camels? Is it a great camel-breeding country? Of course, it has many centuries ago produced, I dare say, a countless number of camels; but all that has greatly fallen off now, and I think it would be found, if you came to work it out, that comparatively few camels would be available. However, I do not doubt it would be done.

I have no doubt that by sweeping all the country from the Aral Sea downwards, you might get together 100,000 camels. Could Russia attempt an invasion with less than 100,000 camels? I say she could not. She must have 100,000 men. There must be an army corps to deliver the assault; there must be one in support, and there must be a reserve. I am sure if you put 40,000 men into line in the front of battle, everybody knows you must have double or treble that number in the rear, protecting your base, and with all the transport and supplies for them. Here is then a difficulty. I do not say it would not be overcome, but I contend that a lengthened preparation would be necessary; and if war moves suddenly, as it generally does in this nineteenth century, why, then Russia would not be anything like in time. The whole thing would be over in various parts of the world long before the Russian movement in this quarter was in serious motion. I submit that this is a cardinal difficulty in the matter which has never been adequately understood. I impress that particularly upon you, because it is of extreme importance in the general consideration of the case, and it would immensely hamper the movements of Russia. You say there would be a similar difficulty on our side. None whatever. I could, by holding up my little finger and my money bags, in any part of India, raise any number of thousands of cattle, 100,000 camels, and yet another, to say nothing of our enormous resources in transport of other kinds. Of course, we do not have very much to do with that, because we have railways on to our fighting point. Whereas at the southern line the Russians have 370 miles and at the upper 700 miles, over a very difficult and desert country.

Now, having made those general remarks on the subject of Russian movements, may I just ask your attention to the route Russia might take in the event of a possible advance? Many people say nowadays that she will take the northern route, that she must take the northern route, and that she is preparing for that. I cannot say I believe it, and I think you will not either when you come to consider the case. She would start either from Bokhara or Samarcand—it does not matter which—with her transport, to go to the Oxus, which is a good 350 miles. I admit that there are no very great hills or mountains to traverse, but still she would have to get her supplies. Then she would have to cross the Oxus, a broad river. I do not know how she would get boats for that. However, everything would come in time. Having crossed the river, she would get to Balkh, and from the Oxus through Balkh to the head of the Bamian Pass to the Indian Caucasus is another 200 miles; that makes 550. Then through the Bamian Pass down to Kabul there would be another 100—that is 650; and I dare say with little deviations in the route you might put it at about 700 miles of marching. To take 100,000 men such a route as that is something too tremendous, especially when you consider the dreadful character of the Indian Caucasus and the rugged ground of the route on to Kabul. And when she gets to Kabul she has to meet a British army, which would have a temporary railway ready from Peshawar, with its base there, and another army corps there

for its support. That would be the situation, and I believe under present circumstances it is impossible. I ask you to enquire of any military man—and there are many now who are intimately acquainted with this country—and they will tell you that it is practically impossible. Russia will never get there. Another thing is this, the railway to Tashkend has not improved that railway at all. All that railway has done is to improve Russian communication with Central Asia or the Khanates and Central Siberia. So we fall back at last upon the south-eastern route.

Now, some people have spoken of this as a bugbear which could never be seriously contemplated. Others have said it could be easily done. I do not go to either extreme. I say that it could be attempted, and I feel certain that a Russian commander, if he had the ability of our British officers—and I suppose he has—could manage it. But I believe it is a task of great difficulty and one that would take a large amount of time. In the first place, think, as I have explained to you, of the trouble he would have in getting his troops across the Caspian and then along the railway to Merv, and then by this new branch to the Herat frontier. Then he would have to get his supplies together, which I am sure would take two or three months to collect. I am certain that if I were to get, as Senior Transport Officer, or, putting myself out of the case, the same orders from the Russian Tsar which I got from the Viceroy of India, I should not do it under three months, getting all these camels together from these great distances. Well, supposing he got the supplies, then he would have to go to Herat. Whether Herat could be defended, or would be defended, no man can say. That would depend upon the temper of the Afghans at the time. There is no doubt that if the Afghans were in high spirits about it, which I doubt, that the place might be defended. The Government of India could send some first-rate engineers to show them how to repair the walls, some first-rate artillery to show them how to fire straight; and some first-rate practical officers to “keep their pecker up.” I dare say by these means Russia might be kept dancing before Herat for some days, and perhaps for some weeks. Of course, it is very important to crown all the hills near Herat, which if once got at by the Russians would lead to the command of the city. But at the best this could not go on for very long. The Russians, being a civilised enemy, must take it, and I assume we could not send troops there so far from our base. Herat would fall, but it would fall after delay, and delay which would be convenient to us. So that Russia would get on by degrees and reach Kandahar. What would happen there would depend upon the British army, but I cannot doubt that the Russian army would be repulsed. If by any chance it forced that position, the Russian commander might go on towards the Goomal Pass, where he would meet another army corps, and then his rear would be threatened by another army corps which would be in support from Quetta—for the reserved army corps would come up at once. There would be thus an attacking Russian army corps with an army corps in reserve, but with three British army corps—the one at Kandahar, the one at Quetta, and

the one at the Goomal. The result of that would be that England would have to send an army corps to India. She would actually have to do that in any case if there was a war with Russia. It could be done, and without any difficulty. Our first army corps could go at once, and a second army corps would have to be formed in this country. It would be an expensive business, but I suppose we could defray the cost, and Russia afterwards would have to pay an indemnity either in money or in territory in China. Well, that would be the case as regards the south-western route.

But there is another possible danger, which is this. I have been arguing both these cases on the supposition that Russia having declared war must go for us straight away, that she cannot wait six months or a year. But supposing she tried the waiting game—and I have no doubt this is what they hope—they would in the first place send, if not an army corps, a certain body of troops to take Herat and occupy that position. Then they would send a force across the Indus to occupy Balkh, and so bring the Russian troops right up to the northern basis of the Indian Caucasus. These are the easy parts of Afghanistan, the prosperous and wealthy parts. Russia would then make herself comfortable in those quarters and make her preparations for the final advance against the British line. That is what is feared, and certainly if the war is to last for a year she could do that. Of course, we could not, I suppose, allow such a thing to happen, because of our power of assailing Russia in Europe. It is all very well for Russia to say that she will occupy those two advanced positions and that we cannot keep her out. That is quite true. We could not turn the Russians out, and, I suppose, the Afghans could not either. The Afghans would, of course, wait until they saw our side was victorious. They would remain as passive spectators, and would not help us, although they would be nominally our allies. If we repulsed the Russians they would go for the Russians like a knife. There is no other way of describing it. We could not turn Russia out of those two provinces. But there would be war all this time, and Russia in Europe would be suffering. If we succeeded by quick movement in entering the Black Sea, there would be a happy hunting-ground for the British Navy, and anyhow the Baltic would be entirely in the possession of our ships. We should be cruising about, and the thunder of the British cannon would be heard at St. Petersburg. I do not know what would be the effect on the revolutionary tendency of the Russian people. At any rate, her sea-borne commerce would be all sealed up, and some of her Chinese possessions taken from her. It is very doubtful if she could stand that pressure one year after another. In the meantime England is not hurt in the least. She has not been touched in India, not approached for hundreds of miles. Of course, England will never make peace with Russia until she evacuated Afghanistan, re-crossed the Oxus, and had gone back over the Herat frontier. There is still one consideration which I should like to mention before I conclude. Some people might say, How if Russia were to attempt both the northern and the southern lines at once by long preparation of transport and supplies?

Well, that would go hard with England ; but it is not beyond the power of England even yet, because after all a Russian force advancing towards Kabul would be met by a British army corps there with a reserve one at Peshawar ; the one which marched from Kandahar would be met by one there with a reserve at Quetta ; and so the thing would be accomplished. But let me point out that a simultaneous invasion by both these routes is impossible, because of the climate. The northern route could not be passed in winter on account of the dreadful cold. It could of course only be passed, if at all, in summer. The southern route could be passed quite well in winter—that is the proper season—but in summer the burning heat would be too much, so that there must be an interval of six months between the attacks ; and therefore I say they would never both be made, because one attack could be delivered, and if it failed I do not think the other would be attempted ; and if unhappily it succeeded, which I cannot imagine, then the second one would not be needed. So you see it is quite certain they never will both be made at the same time, or about the same time.

I am now extremely obliged to you for the attention which you have been good enough to give. I can hardly imagine more important military problems that could be submitted to any expert audience. I am sorry I have not been able to make them more complete, but it is no good wearying you with details. I have pointed out the main points, and I desire to repeat that I have no wish to make a war-like or bellicose speech against Russia or against anybody. But I am bound to speak out in defence of my own country, and I do think that our patriotic interests have sometimes suffered from our not speaking out in time. Nor do I consider that I have given what may be called information to the enemy. I have certainly given him information, but it is exactly what I want him to know for his own benefit, that he may digest it and see how impossible it is for him to invade the Queen's Empire in India, so that he may not waste his time and his money and his thoughts and his resources upon impossible projects.

In conclusion, let me say that while in the nineteenth century discipline, organisation, training, science, are of much avail, yet behind and beyond all these there is the national spirit in the men. Now, think, my expert friends, how that spirit would rise and swell in the breast of every member of a British army corps at Kandahar or at Kabul waiting the Russian onslaught ! The Russians would come, if it was the northern route, dreadfully worn out by their fatigues over the Indian Caucasus ; if by the southern route, much exhausted by their marches amidst the drifting and driving sand. Each man on our side would be in the highest possible condition, full of spirits, in excellent health, in good climate, with everything found—the men would be just as well as if they were in Hyde Park. There would be a great difference in the physical condition, and still greater would be the difference in the moral state of the two armies. The Russians would be invaders, trying to take our country from us ; our men would be defenders of their native Empire. Fancy the appeal to the men which might be made—"Why, men, these

Russians are coming to take your country from you! Give it to them hot!" And then think of the memories which would arise in the minds of our troops, in the minds of the Guards, the Highlanders, the Borderers, and the infantry, of the historic counties of England—Lancashire, Yorkshire, Kent, Devon, etc. Think, again, of the Lancers and the Hussars compared to the Russian Cossacks. Think of the memories which would come into the minds of such men, the memories of the victories gained at Waterloo and Salamanca, at Alma and Inkerman, at Blenheim and Oudenarde. Think of what the cavalry would be dreaming when they thought of their achievements—immense achievements—at Assaye in the Deccan, at Waterloo, at Moodki on the banks of the Sutlej. Why, their bosoms would swell and their pulses would beat high; and above them all would be our venerable Queen-Empress in England praying, "Oh, God of Battles, steel my soldiers' hearts!"

Major-General FREDERICK LANCE :—I should never have ventured to address this meeting had I not been able, as I hope, to give the opinions on one point of this lecture of two very distinguished officers, who I regret to say are not able to give their opinion, and whose voices will never more be heard amongst us. The lecturer referred to the Goomul Pass, and I gather from what he said that it was his opinion that it should be defended from the side of India. It was my privilege to travel with the late Sir Charles McGregor along that frontier in 1884, at the time when I believe his opinion had been asked by the Government upon the feasibility of carrying out some scheme such as was indicated by the lecturer. In those days I do not think the policy of India was what was called a "forward" one, and I know that Sir Charles McGregor devoted very great study and thought as well as personal observation, to solve this difficulty. One suggestion was a very large fort somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Goomul Pass, with a view of covering an army corps debouching on the plains of the Indus. After a very useful observation of the whole of that frontier, aided by the very large knowledge he had of the subject, Sir Charles McGregor came to the conclusion that such a scheme was absolutely unfeasible. I will not give the reasons further than saying that a force approaching from the other side had the choice of a great number of routes, by which to come, and it was not at all necessary that they should go through the Goomul Pass. In later years, when the policy of India was much more forward, I had the opportunity of knowing the opinions on this subject of the late Sir James Brown, who was also Quarter-Master-General of India, as Sir Charles McGregor had been before him. Sir James Brown was, I think, the only officer able to get—or he was the first officer who succeeded in getting—a Viceroy of India and a Commander-in-Chief to meet together, with other authorities, at Dera Ismail Khan, to go thoroughly into the whole of this question and to formulate, if possible, a uniform and lasting policy for the Government of India on the subject of frontier defence. Sir James Brown's policy, as many here know, was one of communications, and so far, I think, he was able to commit the Government of India to carrying out a great deal of the policy that he advocated; but, at the same time, his policy of communications was merely a part of what he wished done; and it was his opinion that the most efficient way of protecting that part of the frontier was to establish a division on the other side of the Goomul Pass, about Khudadad and many places there, where troops could be placed with a railway at their backs, and where there are high hills on which British troops could be established, and so save the burning heat of those plains, and be fully mobilised and equipped ready to start at once, so that on occasion a division could be placed at Ghazni at a week's notice. It was Sir James Brown's opinion that such a course would at once bring over the Afghans entirely to our side, and that, by

doing so, we should show that we really meant business, as well as being first in the field.

Sir RICHARD TEMPLE :—With his lordship the Chairman's permission, there is just one little point I should like to mention which I omitted, and it is this. In the event of Russia coming down upon us by the northern route which I have described, it might be said, "Oh, she would get no end of transport from Badakshan," where the people are very hostile to the Afghans, and where there are plenty of the most beautiful ponies available in great numbers. Well, a commander advancing from Bokhara to Balkh would have Badakshan upwards of 200 miles on his left up in the hills. I do not know how he is going to get the ponies. He would not get them unless he sent men to fetch and drive them; and when, after great delay, he got them, I do not think such ponies would be of very great use for military transport. They might be used for light loads, but you cannot put a heavy load upon them. There is the question of pack-saddles, galling, and all that. I do not think any such ponies would be of use, and it would take a great deal of trouble to get them. If, however, the commander were to diverge into Badakshan in order to get these means of transport, he would be involved in some of the most tremendous mountains in the world. In reference to what has just fallen from my honourable and gallant friend, I quite admit that in the direction of Goomul there are several other passes, but the Goomul has always been considered the best, and was so esteemed by the many great commanders in the middle ages, and even later times. At all events, it is a good thing, I do not say to hold this pass with any force, but to have one or two forts which may be held, and which would make that pass not available for an enemy. By having an army corps at Darza Khan and a bridge across the railway, you would have a force available to meet the enemy whichever pass he comes up. He must come up somewhere in that direction. With regard to having, as I understand, a station up in the hills for European troops with the view of pouncing down upon Ghazui, I never heard that Ghazui was of very first-class importance, except that it is on the road between Kandahar and Kabul. The Russians are not coming to Ghazui, remember. Ghazui was of enormous importance when we went up from Kandahar to Kabul, or when Lord Roberts marched down from Kabul to Kandahar after the Embassy disaster; but for a Russian invasion it is not of any great importance. But apart from that, all these plans have this difficulty which I have already submitted to you, that it would involve our keeping a part of the hills belonging to these tribes, and would set the whole of the tribes along that extended frontier against us. That is the difficulty, and I submit it is a difficulty we ought not to lay ourselves open to unless we find we cannot help it.

The CHAIRMAN (Lord Methuen):—I am afraid no discussion is likely to be forthcoming, and I shall confine myself, as Chairman, simply to thanking the lecturer for the discourse that he has given to us. I will at the same time submit that it is a very good thing in this Institution that we should have a lecture given to us which is quite clear of being a technical or expert's lecture. I say so, because when a person occupying the high and independent position that Sir Richard Temple does, delivers a lecture here, I find that a very large audience is always ready to attend. I think, also, that for a person in Sir Richard Temple's position it is gratifying to him to be able to express his opinion on a subject which he knows so well here rather than in the House of Commons. It is an opinion which he may rest assured will be read far and wide by all the members who take in our JOURNAL. I will only make two short remarks before sitting down, regarding the subject mentioned in the lecture. I rather think, and I believe those who were in the Tirah campaign will agree with me, that it is not quite so easy a matter now to collect your transport in India as Sir Richard Temple affirms. There are, I believe, two difficulties. First of all, the animals are not forthcoming; and secondly, which is very important, it is extremely difficult to find in the same numbers the drivers that

we used formerly to get for these animals. I had hoped to hear Sir Richard Temple touch upon a railway up the Khyber Pass. So far, as an outsider, I will go, and no further. There seems to me to be no such great civiliser as a railway, and if we wish to have the Khyber perfectly in our possession and make one good shot forward, I most humbly beg to contend that we can do it in no better manner than by running a railway up to Lundi Kotal. With these few words, I thank the audience very much for the kind attention they have given to Sir Richard Temple, and I thank him most heartily on the part of the Institution for having addressed us as he has done, and thereby promoting the work of this Institution.

Sir RICHARD TEMPLE :—Before we part, may I be allowed to express to you my thanks for the very kind reception you have given me here. I understand that you are the most expert audience that could be addressed in all England upon this subject, and the fact of hardly anyone dissenting from or controverting the manifold propositions I have made makes me think that I must have been pretty correct. With regard to what the noble Chairman said about transport, I did not mean to say it was easy in India, but I did mean to say, and do mean to say, that it can be done; I will ask his lordship whether he meant camels or mules. Mules are notoriously difficult to get, but we should not attempt such transport in the event of our having to meet Russia. We should rely, I have no doubt, upon camels. You will find the breeding grounds of the Sind Desert and the Rajputana area the finest breeding grounds of camels in the world, and we have command of them. With regard to the railway through the Khyber, I quite admit this, at all events, the line ought at once to be made from Peshawar to Jumrood at the mouth of the Khyber, because that cuts off ten miles distance; and when you come to a military emergency every ten miles count. I certainly agree with his lordship that if you are occupying the Khyber Pass at all with military forces, you had better have a railway through, because it makes the thing complete. The Afridis will not be a bit more afraid of the railway than they will of the military posts, and they will rather think the railway looks as if we were going on towards Kabul, to which they have no sort of objection. Therefore I think the railway might be made, if the Khyber is to be held by British forces. It would be very good in time of peace. But the real point in the future battle—whenever it comes off at Kabul—is not the railway through the Khyber, but a railway carried on by a temporary line through Jellalabad up to Kabul itself. I thank you most heartily. I am sure it has been a great pleasure to prepare this address for your kind consideration; and I assure you further that although I cannot always give the source of my information, what I have said are sound facts, right up to date.