

THE RIVAL POWERS IN CENTRAL ASIA

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The rival powers in Central Asia by Various

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VARIOUS

**THE RIVAL POWERS
IN CENTRAL ASIA**

THE RIVAL POWERS

IN

CENTRAL ASIA

OR

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN ENGLAND
AND RUSSIA IN THE EAST. TRANSLATED
FROM THE GERMAN OF JOSEF
POPOWSKI BY ARTHUR BARING BRABANT
AND EDITED BY CHARLES E. D.
BLACK LATE IN CHARGE OF THE
GEOGRAPHICAL BUSINESS OF THE
INDIA OFFICE

WITH A MAP OF THE NORTH-WESTERN FRONTIER
OF INDIA SHOWING THE PAMIR REGION
AND PART OF AFGHANISTAN

Westminster

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY

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1893

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION	vi
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	I
ENGLAND AND RUSSIA—	
I. RUSSIA'S ADVANCE IN ASIA	7
II. RUSSIA ASPIRES TO THE POSSESSION OF INDIA	65
III. CAN ENGLAND ARREST RUSSIA'S ADVANCE IN ASIA?	79
IV. STRATEGICAL RELATIONS OF THE TWO STATES	135
V. ENGLAND'S VALUE TO THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN CO- ALITION,—FINAL CONCLUSIONS	204
INDEX	225



EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

IT is more than seventeen years since the issue of Sir Henry Rawlinson's "England and Russia in the East" awoke British public opinion to a livelier sense of the responsibilities and dangers attaching to our tenure of India. At that time it was a far cry from Westminster to Calcutta or Simla, and India was a comparatively unfamiliar topic; its geography and resources were but little known; the network of surveys, topographical, archæological, statistical, and economic, was incomplete; and the literature, official, journalistic, and miscellaneous, had not attained that distinctive character and individual excellence which have since attracted and interested Englishmen. If it were so in the case of Hindostan, public opinion was still less enlightened with regard to its contiguous regions. The most stupendous mountain range and table-land on the face of the earth were indeed known to abut on the northern frontier, and, as history could prove, to have secured practical immunity from invasion in that direction. But this circumstance seems to have lulled us into a mistaken sense of security in respect of the western and north-western frontiers, which were vaguely imagined to be bounded by equally impassable mountains, impracticable deserts, and unconquerable tribes, which would surely repel the intrusion

alike of the invaders or defenders of India. Moreover, this lack of knowledge was generally shared by high and low, and more recently still Englishmen have been authoritatively invited to reassure themselves and dispel their anxiety by mere consideration of the size of the maps of the regions referred to. No doubt the teachings of geography are essential to a comprehension of the Central Asian question, but those of history are scarcely less important, and in both respects Sir Henry Rawlinson's treatise was so exceptionally able, while his conclusions were so striking and convincing, that it is not surprising to find a distinguished Russian professor of international law, F. Martens, calling the famous "Memorandum" a historical document, in regard to the influence it had on the public mind and policy.

The gravity of the Central Asian question has in no sense abated since 1875; nay, it has rather increased, but at the same time it may be said to have entered upon new phases. The conquest of the Turcomans and the construction of the Trans-Caspian railway, while they brought Russia into immediate contact with Afghanistan, roused our country to the necessity of strictly defining the respective national limits from the Heri Rud to the Oxus. Again the recent *imbroglios* on the Pamir have brought to light doubts and differences which similarly can only be settled by mutual agreement and local demarcation. Concurrently with these events there has been a vast development of geographical knowledge during the past decade and a half which has forcibly impressed upon the British mind that India's position is continental rather than peninsular, and that, as such, it is amenable to those exigencies to which continental powers find they are subject.

While, therefore, Herr Popowski's work as a recent expert analysis of the Central Asian question will attract deserved attention, it is probably from the standpoint of a Continental observer that his conclusions will be most attentively scrutinized. In the accompanying translation these views have called for editorial comment in but few instances. At the same time readers will do well to remember that during the two years that have elapsed since the publication of "Antagonismus"¹ much that is noteworthy has happened, and it will be impossible to judge of the soundness and present applicability of the author's contentions without a brief retrospect of the more important events that have passed in the interim.

One of the chief factors in the development of the political situation has been the internal condition of Afghanistan, which, during the past two years, has been undoubtedly very troublous, especially in the little known country inhabited by the Hazaras. The Hazarajat proper covers an area of 18,000 square miles in the heart of Afghanistan, and the Hazaras number about half a million souls, divided into eight clans, seven of which pay tribute amounting to between five and six lakhs of rupees annually to the Amir's treasury. The eighth and remaining section, dwelling west of the road from Khelat-i-Ghilzai to Ghazni, is said by Leech to number some 20,000 men, but as the country has not been explored, very little is known as to its present resources. Uruzghan is said to form an extensive plain in this region, and to have been celebrated from the days of Rustam up to the present

¹ The German title of this book is *Antagonismus der Englischen und Russischen Interessen in Asien. Eine Militär-politische studie.* Vienna. Wilhelm Frick. 1890.

By Leech
5/2/107

day as a breeding-ground for horses. Valuable lead mines exist in the country, which enable the inhabitants to manufacture and export bullets, though their principal occupation is cattle-grazing. The Hazaras are exceedingly hospitable and friendly to strangers, especially to priests and doctors, and they enjoy a great reputation for powers of divination.

In the summer of 1890 the Amir despatched troops into that portion of the Hazarajat which lies in the Upper Helmand Valley, to enforce his revenue dues; and in the discharge of this mission, which appears to have dragged on through two dreary years, the Afghan soldiery were guilty of excesses and cruelty against the inhabitants, their women and children. This treatment drove the Uruzghan section of the Hazaras into revolt, and the rising subsequently spread through the wild and bleak uplands which form the home of their fellow-tribesmen. It is impossible to arrive at an exact idea of the course of the rebellion from the vague and often biassed rumours which have reached us *via* Cabul or Candahar, but it is clear that the Hazaras offered a desperate resistance, that their cause elicited wide and active sympathy among their brethren; that success was in no way confined to one side or the other; and that the anxieties of the Amir's situation were so serious that, in consequence, he declared himself unable (probably in all good faith) to receive a mission from the Viceroy to discuss the various important questions pending between the two countries. The advent of the winter of 1892-3 appears to have caused a temporary suspension of hostilities, and recently intelligence has been received of the entire pacification of the country, a welcome piece of news that will not improbably conduce to closer relations between Afghanistan and India.