

Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia: 1810-1895

GERALD MORGAN

With an Epilogue

by

GEOFFREY WHEELER



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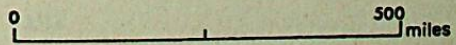
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ANGLO-RUSSIAN RIVALRY IN CENTRAL ASIA: 1810-1895

GERALD MORGAN

This book is the first to study the origins and the underlying objectives of the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia. Drawing on the best British sources and extensive archives, some unexamined hitherto, as well as the translated works of Tsarist and Soviet writers, it contrasts the political, geographical, strategic and logistical options open to both sides. Here was one empire reaching its zenith with the other achieving vast territorial gains, first in northern China and now moving southwards into a huge tract ripe for annexation. Where would it end?

It was the British who first became suspicious. There seemed the possibility of an invasion of India (Pakistan). At all costs Russia must be prevented from establishing a border contiguous with India. Suspicion soon became mutual and is almost a theme in itself. Britain's first attempt was to gain supremacy through trade but there was none to be had with the primitive Khanates. She then turned her attention to Persia (Iran) as a buffer state, but when that too failed she turned to Afghanistan — that wild, savage country inhabited by equally savage and warlike tribes, but rarely unified. The attempt cost Britain two unnecessary wars before a strong Amir fortuitously unified his country, allied himself to Britain and remained a loyal ally. In 1895 the River Amu Dar'ya was finally accepted as the Russian-Afghan border.

The vexed subject of espionage is discussed and some strange characters on both sides are introduced. There were frequent crises and at times it seemed war was imminent. But Lord Palmerston never spoke a truer word than when he said in 1835, 'Here we are, just as we were, snarling at each other, hating each other, but neither wishing for war'. And so it turned out.

This book is history and it ends with the tripartite Pamirs Agreement of 1895. But there are lessons to be learned. In his valuable Epilogue Geoffrey Wheeler summarizes developments as far as is possible up to the present time.

(continued on back flap)

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