

'Nechto Eroticheskoe', 'Courir après l'ombre'? – logistical imperatives and the fall of Tashkent, 1859 – 1865.

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Abstract

This article explores the debates that preceded the Russian conquest of Tashkent in 1865. It argues that none of the explanations usually given for this – the 'men on the spot', cotton hunger and the 'Great Game' with Britain – is satisfactory. Instead it shows that the War Ministry and the Governors of Orenburg had advocated the capture of Tashkent from the late 1850s, and that General Cherniaev's assault in 1865 was at least tacitly authorised. The motives for the Russian advance combined the need for better supply-chains to the steppe fortresses, a desire to 'anchor' their new frontier in a region with a sedentary population, and concerns about security from attacks by the Khoqand Khanate. Economic considerations and rivalry with Britain played a very minor role.

Keywords

Tashkent, Steppe, Khoqand, Imperialism, Cherniaev, Miliutin, Orenburg, Omsk

Introduction

For most historians, the pivotal moment in the history of the Russian conquest of Central Asia is the fall of Tashkent to General M. G. Cherniaev in early June 1865 (Carrère d'Encausse 1967; LeDonne 2004, 235). This was the culmination of a series of dramatic campaigns in which small forces of Orenburg and Siberian troops successfully united the two lines of fortresses which the Russians had built across the steppe since the early 1840s, plugging the gap between Fort Perovskii on the Syr-Darya (established in 1853) and Fort Vernoe in Semirechie (established in 1854), and creating a new southern state frontier. The Russians brought the Khanate of Khoqand's rule in the southern part of the steppe (the *Dasht-i Qipchaq*) to a decisive end, besieging and storming a series of Khoqandi fortresses as they advanced from Vernoe through Merke, Toqmaq, Pishpek Chulaq-Qurghan and Aulie-Ata, and from Fort Perovskii through Yangi-Qurghan, Suzaq, Turkestan and Chimkent. Tashkent itself was a major prize, a large commercial centre with a population of at least 100,000, ruled by Khoqand since 1809 but long contested between that Khanate and Bukhara. Its capture marked the beginning of the conquest of the settled, riverine oases of Turkestan, with their dense population and irrigated agriculture. Once Tashkent fell, so the story goes, the die was cast, and the annexation or subjugation of the three khanates swiftly followed. The capture of the city almost immediately came to be considered an act of particular heroism, and it would be extensively commemorated by Tashkent settler society even on apparently insignificant anniversaries (Iuzhakov 1881; Ostroumov 1908; Abramov 1915-16; Sahadeo 2007, 49).

Supposedly the fall of Tashkent came about by accident, an episode of disobedience and deceit by Russia's 'man on the spot', General M. G. Cherniaev, in defiance of St Petersburg's orders (Mackenzie 1969). Famously the Russian interior minister, P. A. Valuev, recorded in his diary on the 20th July 1865 that 'Tashkent has been taken by General Cherniaev. No-one knows why and for what [...] there is something erotic (*nechto eroticheskoe*) about everything we do on the far-flung periphery of the empire' (Zaionchkovskii 1961 II, 60-1; Geyer 1987, 89; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2006, 563-4). This oft-quoted *bon mot* is actually rather misleading:¹ it reflects little other than the fact that Valuev did not sit on the committee which dealt with Central Asian affairs. However, in his later memoirs the War Minister D. A. Miliutin (1816-1912) also claimed that Cherniaev had not been ordered to attack Tashkent, and did so through ambition (*chestolubie*) (Miliutin 2003, 518-24). An even more controversial episode was Cherniaev's first, failed assault on Tashkent in September 1864, which his superiors also claimed was unauthorised. In his private papers Cherniaev preserved a letter of rebuke from his immediate superior, the Governor of Western Siberia, A. O. Duhamel (1801-1880), which had clearly wounded him. The latter wrote that Cherniaev appeared to have suppressed news of the attack, in which one of his best officers, Obukh, had been killed, and another, Lerkhe, seriously wounded. Cherniaev's reports of the 11th, 13th and 17th October had not mentioned the assault, and Duhamel had found out about it from private letters which had reached Semipalatinsk at the beginning of November.

'Your lengthy silence on the subject of these sad events could have very undesirable consequences, and cause me some considerable difficulties. It would be easy for news of these events to have reached St Petersburg through Orenburg earlier than they reached me, and that the War Minister could think that I am hiding from him the true state of affairs.'²

Not only the fall of Tashkent, but also Cherniaev's earlier capture of Chimkent in 1864 supposedly took place without St Petersburg's sanction. Cherniaev kept a copy of a resolution from Miliutin, expressing apprehension at Cherniaev's apparent intention of seizing Chimkent, stating that 'such an expansion of our frontiers never entered into our plans', but regretting that because communications were so slow it was unlikely a countermand would reach Cherniaev in time.³ Immediately after this letter Cherniaev had inserted a series of notes excerpted from a letter from Duhamel to Miliutin on the necessity of taking Chimkent to prevent the Khoqandis rupturing communications between Aulie-Ata and Turkestan, clearly intended as proof that his conduct was authorised.⁴ These transparent attempts at self-justification by the man responsible appear to confirm the prevailing interpretation that 'powerful local atamans' were responsible for some of the most crucial phases of the Russian advance, an interpretation Tsarist military

historians were happy to endorse retrospectively (Sergeev 2012, 106; Babadzhanov 2010, 280-1; Snesarev 1906, 51; Terent'ev 1906 I, 297-8).

As Svetlana Gorshenina has suggested, the idea of the 'man on the spot' out of control absolved Russian statesmen of responsibility, allowing them to claim that Russia had been helplessly sucked into conquest after conquest. This is a narrative of which we should instinctively be suspicious, not least because it resembles so closely British interpretations of the conquest of India in the 18th and early 19th centuries (Gorshenina 2012, 51-63; Fisher 1997, 5-7, 15-20). The idea that Tashkent was taken 'by accident' is based on a very selective reading of the archival sources and memoir literature, which, as Cherniaev's contradictory orders regarding Chimkent from Miliutin and Duhamel suggest, present a much more complex picture. Firstly, almost all Russian advances into Central Asia had to be authorised in St Petersburg, if only for logistical reasons. Steppe expeditions were expensive and complicated to plan, requiring thousands of camels and tonnes of supplies, and they were usually costed down to the last kopeck before they went ahead: the failed winter expedition to Khiva of 1839 was first proposed in 1835, and it took eighteen months to round up the necessary camels from the Kazakhs (Morrison 2014). Secondly, official policy was often inconsistent and vacillating, as the aggressive Ministry of War competed with the more cautious Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance, and usually won, especially while Nicholas I was Tsar. This was further complicated by the division between two local military commands, in Omsk and Orenburg, which were often at loggerheads. Finally, the focus on the fall of Tashkent has tended to obscure other phases of the Russian advance which were equally if not more important, notably the capture of Aq Masjid and its recreation as 'Fort Perovskii' in 1853, and the establishment of Fort Vernoe in Semirechie in 1854, both of which took place with full sanction and authorisation from St Petersburg. Without the creation of these two lines of fortresses, which had already extended the Russian frontier over 1,000km to the south of the old Orenburg and Siberian lines, there would have been no possibility of or need for an attack on Tashkent in the first place.

By the early 1860s there was a broad consensus that the two lines of Russian fortresses in the steppe should be united, but no agreement on where the new frontier should run. The quest for a supposedly 'natural' frontier (an imaginary string of lakes between the Syr-Darya and Lake Balkhash, the River Arys and the summit of the Kara-Tau range were all proposed at different times) was complicated by the absence of any accurate idea of the geography of the region (Gorshenina 2012, 169-70; Sergeev 2012, 93-94). As this paper will show, the idea of annexing Tashkent as the anchor of the new frontier had been current in Russian official thinking since at least the late 1850s, but there were conflicting opinions on the subject. When the city was taken

by Cherniaev in 1865, it was far from unexpected: as Matthew Jamison has shown, Cherniaev's 'disobedience', if it existed at all, was minor. He had been ordered by N. A. Kryzhanovskii (1818-1888), the governor of Orenburg, to remove Tashkent from Khoqandi influence and turn it into a vassal khanate, an idea first floated by Duhamel in 1863 as an alternative to outright annexation:

'As for Tashkent, I beg your Excellency vigilantly and closely to observe everything that occurs in this town, and to assist the moral party which wishes to separate from hostile Kokand and through your actions to direct the formation from Tashkent of a polity, independent from Kokand and Bukhara, but a vassal of Russia.'⁵

It is hard to see how he could have been expected to do this without first conquering the city and expelling its Khoqandi garrison (Jamison 2007, 176-189).⁶ As we shall see, even if Cherniaev had not interpreted his orders in this manner, it would not have been long before Miliutin won that particular argument in St Petersburg. However, if the 'man on the spot' did not single-handedly bring about the fall of Tashkent, that does not mean that either of the other two grand narratives of the conquest of Central Asia: the 'Great Game' with the British in India, or the 'cotton hunger' of the Moscow textile industry during the American Civil War, was of any importance either, popular as they were with Soviet historians (Khalfin 1960, Khidoyatov 1969). Instead it was more prosaic considerations of finance and supply, coupled with some awareness of Tashkent's importance as a trading entrepôt, which dominated Russian official thinking.

I – The Lure of Tashkent

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War in 1856 had made it clear that further expansion in the Balkans would have to be suspended for the foreseeable future, while the capture of Shamil in 1859 rendered the Caucasian frontier more tractable than hitherto. Russia's generals and diplomats fretted over her weakened position after the Treaty of Paris, and sought both to avoid direct confrontation with Britain and France, to break up the coalition that had formed between these and other powers by 1855, and to strengthen what was perceived as the vulnerable southern frontier in the empire. Together these factors contributed to a renewed interest in resolving the difficulties the Tsarist state was encountering on its frontier in the steppe, while in the process regaining some lost military prestige. Together with the Amur Valley and the Ussuri region, where Russia also advanced in the 1860s, Central Asia was an arena where no power other than Britain had any vital interests. The planned uniting of the Orenburg and Siberian lines of fortresses, which had been authorised by Nicholas I but halted by the outbreak of war, offered a suitable initial objective (Geyer 1987, 86-95; Fuller 1992, 265-92; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2006, 561-4; Erofeeva 2010, 368-74). The first manifestation of this was the decision in 1857 to send N. P. Ignat'ev on an embassy to Bukhara and Khiva in 1858-9 which,

whilst it achieved little in diplomatic terms (there was never much likelihood of either khanate allying itself with Khoqand, as the Russians feared), greatly improved Russian intelligence of the upper Amu-Darya, and confirmed the opinion that neither state had significant military resources (Ignat'ev 1897; Strong 1975). A more permanent solution to the perennial problem of frontier security was put forward by the Governor of Orenburg, General Katenin, in September 1858: namely the uniting of the Syr-Darya Line (whose difficulties of supply and morale had been eloquently recounted to him by its commander, A. L. Danzas),⁷ with that of Western Siberia by means of an advance south through Djulek, Yangi Qurghan and Aulie-Ata to Tashkent.⁸ He received support from G. Kh. Gasfort (1794-1874), the Governor of Western Siberia, who in January 1859 advised St Petersburg that a further advance was necessary from Fort Vernoe on the Siberian line in order to seize the Khoqandi fortresses of Toqmaq, Pishpek, Aulie-Ata, Suzaq and the upper reaches of the river Chu 'in order to unite the southern forward line of Western Siberia with that of Orenburg on the Syr-Darya [...] and in this way obtain a firm state boundary [*poluchit' tverduiu gosudarstvennuu granitsu*].'⁹ This would bring a halt to Khoqandi raiding and firmly establish Russian sovereignty over the Kazakhs of the Senior Horde. The State Advisory Council's verdict on this note, confirmed by the Tsar, was that further reconnaissance of the territory and more detailed estimates of the forces required were needed before a first assault, on Pishpek, could be sanctioned.¹⁰ By late July the famous military geographer M. I. Veniukov (1832-1901) had carried out a survey of the upper valley of the Chu, and after several months of preparations and the gathering of supplies and transport in December the attack was finally authorised by the Tsar's own hand (Anon 1861; Veniukov 1861; Veniukov 1868, 121-170).¹¹ The next question was whether this advance from Fort Vernoe should become permanent, and thus be met by one from the Syr-Darya line. Katenin formed a committee of members of the staff of the Orenburg Corps to debate this question; they were asked to give their views 'on Russian influence in Asia and the means of increasing it', a file on which the Tsar had written (rather unhelpfully, given the wide range of views therein) 'There is much which is just'.

State Counsellor Artsimovich presented the most pessimistic viewpoint 'The many years in which the Kazakh steppe of the Orenburg agency has been subject to Russia have demonstrated, that the steppe not only brings no benefit to the state, but obvious harm. Its revenues do not suffice to cover the expenses of its administration, and maintaining it in a state of calm each year requires the expenditure of vast sums, to the detriment of other aspects of administration in the empire.' He poured scorn on the argument that the establishment of this or that fortified point in the steppe would suddenly bring about long-awaited trade benefits, and

also the prospect of any serious competition with Britain in the region. All that was left was the question of a secure frontier, and he considered that ‘any conquest along the vast frontiers of Russia is an evil [...] and I cannot depart from my conviction that the sole and eternal security for our frontier must be where the limits of Russian population end.’ In other words, he advocated a retreat to the original Orenburg and Siberian fortified lines, and he claimed that his views were shared by almost everyone who had spent any time on the administration of the Orenburg region.¹² Rear-Admiral A. I. Butakov, the creator of the Aral Sea Flotilla and a man whose career had been made by the advance along the Syr-Darya and the use of his steamers in the assault on the Khoqandi fortress of Aq-Masjid, was almost equally pessimistic, but came to a rather different conclusion:

‘I will not seek to judge whether there was really any necessity to take Fort Perovskii and create the Syr-Darya Line. Our expansion to the East along the Syr-Darya into this particularly painful place in the Orenburg *krai* has given us the while nothing but unproductive expenditure. Be that as it may, the Syr-Darya line exists. We cannot abandon it without injury to the honour of Russia; we are obliged to protect the new nomadic subjects of Russia, acquired at a very high price, and it would be shameful of us to abandon them once again to the arbitrariness and exactions of the Khoqandis.’¹³

He considered the possibility of carrying on south-eastwards as far as Tashkent, but concluded that it would be too difficult to administer. Instead he advocated a further advance, but along the Amu-Darya towards Khiva rather than along the Syr towards Kokand, something that would guarantee a starring role for his flotilla. Butakov wrote that Russia should annex Khiva and establish control over what he fondly imagined would be an all-water route to the Afghan frontier because it would worry Britain more than any other action Russia could take, and he cited the opinions of Arthur Conolly and James Abbott on this point (Conolly 1834; Abbott 1843). Russia should take advantage of the shock which the Indian Mutiny had dealt to British confidence: ‘If the English had these misgivings at a time when they were unshakeably certain of the firmness of their rule in India, and when our affairs in the Caucasus were going worse than ever, then what will they do now, when recent events in India have shown them how little they have established themselves there?’¹⁴ He also cited a comparison of the relative merits of the Amu and the Syr, and a description of the water routes to Kungrad by Cherniaev; at this stage the future conqueror of Tashkent was also a firm advocate of the Amu-Darya route, writing that the lower reaches of the Syr-Darya were unknown territory, and that the lines of supply from Orenburg would be so long that the Russians would in any case be confronted with a choice between advancing further to annex more fertile regions to the South, or annexing the lower reaches of the Amu, which were already known to be productive, in order to use their resources to supply the Syr-Darya line.¹⁵ The Orientalist V. V. Grigor’ev, at that time the head of the Orenburg Frontier Commission, was against any advance whatsoever, writing that it would

only serve to stir up the fanaticism of the inhabitants of Khoqand and Bukhara, especially if the Russians were to seize Turkestan, site of the mausoleum of Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi.¹⁶ However Colonel Dandevil', the then commander of the Syr-Darya Line, was quite certain that the Russians should advance along the Syr-Darya and take Tashkent, extending their frontier as far as the River Chirchik. This would counter British influence and trade in the neighbouring regions of China and Persia, would allow the Russians to dominate all three khanates, and provide a firmer, and above all, cheaper frontier than the one they had at present.¹⁷

II – Long distance trade and the 'British Threat'

Thus already in 1859 some voices were calling for the annexation of Tashkent, but there was still considerable disagreement as to whether this was necessary or desirable. Discussion was dominated, above all, by the practicalities of reducing expenditure, guaranteeing ease of supply for steppe garrisons, and ensuring military security. Big capitalist lobbying for the securing of captive markets and supplies of raw cotton for Russian industry in Central Asia, so beloved of Soviet historians and those who thoughtlessly reproduce their Hobsonian-Leninist arguments, were never mentioned (Beckert 2004; Buttino 2008, 18; Bregel 2009, 405-411; Dempsey 2010, 2-3, 36-38). At this time there was no suggestion that Central Asian cotton was a particularly desirable commodity for the Russian market. In early 1861 the head of the Orenburg Customs region noted that an overall increase in imports from Central Asia over the previous year was largely attributable to

'the import of cotton from Central Asia. The beneficial sale of cotton at the Nizhny-Novgorod fair (*Yarmarka*) in 1859 at the price of 6-7 roubles per *pood* encouraged the Asiatics to increase its import in 1860. But as the cotton was of poor quality [...] not cleaned of seeds, and it was clear that much of the weight was made up of sand, the Orenburg merchants had to clean it themselves before sending it on to the fair. This irresponsibility rebounded on the Asiatic merchants, as no-one wanted to buy that sort of cotton from them, and the price fell sharply, still more so because plenty of cotton of a better quality had been brought to the fair from Persia and America.'¹⁸

Central Asian cotton, a short-staple variety known as *ghuz̧a*, was unsuited to industrial manufacture, and it would be another thirty years before the cultivation of long-staple varieties became at all widespread. The following year, in desperation, Russian merchants were indeed forced to turn to Asian cotton supplies (including China, Persia, the Ottoman Empire and Egypt as well as Central Asia) to make up the shortfall caused by the loss of supplies from the Southern United States, although Central Asian merchants were at first not well-prepared to take advantage of this:

'The Asiatics, fearing new losses from this good, brought considerably less of it in 1861 than in previous years, and in place of cotton bought larger quantities of raw silk and textiles; as it happened, the severe shortage of American cotton in 1861 obliged our manufacturers to demand it from Asia, as a result of which many important Bukharans sent agents to purchase and quickly despatch this good to Orenburg; however, owing to the difficulty of the roads and the insufficiency of grazing on the steppe, because of

deep snow, prevented the Asiatics from delivering it in the quantities which would have allowed them to sell it for the greatest benefit, as the price for cotton rose to 7 roubles in Orenburg, and to 7 roubles 7 kopeks at the fair.¹⁹

The total value of raw cotton imported through Orenburg in 1861 was just 475,383 roubles, down from 666,326 roubles in 1860. In 1862, however, the Bukharan merchants who dominated the trade were prepared for increased Russian demand, and the value of cotton imported shot up to 1,829,208 roubles, over four times as much. The value of raw cotton imports rose by another 1,031,660 roubles in 1863, or 4.3 times as much as in 1860, though this was exaggerated by the fact that that summer the price reached a peak of over 18 roubles per *pod*, 2.6 times the rate of 7 roubles recorded in 1860;²⁰ even allowing for the price increase, the quantity imported had increased by 67% since 1860. It was clear enough that market stimuli were perfectly sufficient to encourage Central Asian merchants to vastly increase the amount of cotton they imported into Russia, with no coercion required, and there is no suggestion in any Russian correspondence on the subject of the cotton drought that outright conquest might be needed to maximise the Asian supply, particularly given that it was clear the shortage of American supplies would not last forever. By the time the Russians moved into the cotton-growing oasis regions to the south of the Steppe after 1865 the American Civil War was over. The notion that Russia's fledgling industrial capitalists, who even in the 1890s were unable to exercise any decisive influence over the empire's foreign policy, were somehow pulling strings behind the scenes in the 1860s is inherently implausible, and no solid evidence has ever been found to corroborate what was always an ideologically-driven theory, based primarily on Lenin's re-working of J. A. Hobson's arguments about the origins of the Boer War (Eckstein 1991, 306-16).²¹ Throughout the first part of 1865 the military authorities in Orenburg and the other northern steppe fortresses actually detained all Bukharan merchants and impounded their goods, thus cutting off the supply of low-grade Central Asian cotton to the Nizhny Novgorod fair, something which prompted a petition for their release from the Orenburg merchants.²² As Kryzhanovskii's translator, Bekchurin, who toured the region with the Orenburg Governor in 1865-6 observed, the temporary spike in cotton prices caused by the American Civil War had already eased by the time the Russians moved south of Tashkent, and an influx of cheap, higher-quality cotton from India and the Southern United States meant that the Moscow manufacturers were no longer buying Bukharan cotton (Bekchurin 1872, 46). The Russians could, in any case, have created cotton plantations in Transcaucasia, where the land and climate are equally well-suited to cotton growing, without the need for expensive conquest at all.²³ The 'cotton hunger' argument for Central Asian conquest was rejected long ago both in some western publications (Whitman 1956;

Becker 1988) and, more surprisingly, in the only Soviet-era work which engaged in any serious analysis of Russia's economic relationship with Central Asia in the first half of the 19th century, that of M. K. Rozhkova, who explicitly attacked Khalfin's Hobsonian thesis of bourgeois manipulation (Rozhkova 1963, 199 – 201).

Broader trade considerations did play a role in Russian thinking, as Tashkent's status as the main entrepôt for caravans crossing the steppe was well known. It is likely however that many officers merely paid lip-service to its importance, and in most cases saw it as a means of furthering political interests and projecting Russian power rather than an end in itself. As even Soviet historians were forced to admit, Central Asia accounted for only 2.5% of the value of Russia's external trade in the early 1850s, when the Russian advance began in earnest with the annexation of Aq Masjid (Khalfin 1960, 39). It is worth noting, however that between 1820 and 1850 the Asian market absorbed between 88% and 99% of all Russia's textile exports, although in 1825 56% of these were destined for Iran and Turkey, and in 1850 52% were destined for China (Rozhkova 1963, 66; Palat 1988, 229). Asian trade received a fillip when European markets were cut off during the Crimean War. Russian exports to Asia rose to a peak of 27.3% in 1855, falling back to 6.7% once the war ended, although they remained at a permanently higher level than before. Between 1856 and 1867 the proportion of Russian exports across the Asiatic frontier rose from 6.7% to 10.6% of the total, and more than doubled in value from 10,594,000 roubles to 24,640,000 roubles. A much higher proportion than in any other external market consisted of manufactured goods (Rozhkova 1963, 58-9).

Nevertheless, it is hard to see this as a *motive* for conquest: Madhavan Palat used Rozhkova's figures for Russian trade with Central Asia to develop a powerful, if slightly impressionistic thesis – namely that the Central Asian khanates had already entered into a subordinate, colonial economic relationship with Russia *before* they were conquered, as their exports of finished textiles declined, to be replaced with exports of raw cotton and imports of Russian industrial textiles (Rozhkova 1963, 66-69; Palat 1988). Thus, in the best traditions of 'informal empire', the Russians were already getting pretty much what they wanted from Central Asia without formal annexation (Palat 1988, 234-41, based on Rozhkova 1963, 66-7; Robinson & Gallagher 1953). Between 1820 and 1860, the largest portion of Russia's Asian exports (40 – 65%) were destined for China, through Kiakhta in Siberia. The value of exports to the steppe and the Central Asian khanates did rise substantially in the 1860s, to a peak of 67% of Asian trade in 1867.

fig.1 Russian exports across the Asian frontier (Caucasus, Astrakhan, Orenburg, Siberia, Kiakhta)
(Rozhkova 1963, 60)

Year	Total value of	To the	%	To the Central	%	To China	%	To Persia	%
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	trade (1000s of roubles)	steppe		Asian Khanates				and Asiatic Turkey	
1855	10348	1826	17.6	757	7.3	6771	65.4	994	9.7
1856	10594	2119	20	757	7.1	6157	58.1	1561	14.8
1857	11946	2587	21.5	1164	9.8	6109	51.1	2106	17.6
1858	11910	2825	23.7	1312	11	5768	48.4	2005	16.9
1859	12995	2926	22.5	1803	13.9	5940	45.7	2326	17.9
1860	13352	2888	21.6	1920	14.4	5857	43.9	2687	20.1
1861	13458	2646	19.7	3066	22.8	4970	36.9	2767	20.6
1862	13309	2202	16.5	3275	24.6	4507	33.9	3266	24.5
1863	13701	1774	12.9	3049	22.3	3416	24.9	4580	33.4
1864	15538	1738	11.5	4740	30.5	3704	23.8	4366	28.1
1865	17924	2483	13.9	3775	21.1	5058	28.2	5822	32.5
1866	21859	5252	24	5629	25.8	5146	23.5	5285	24.2
1867	24640	6359	25.8	10275	41.7	4094	16.6	3907	15.9

While, as Rozhkova argues, this increase was perhaps a result of the improved security and conditions for Russian traders brought about by the military advance along the line of the Syr-Darya between 1853 and 1865, this is not to say that this was the *reason* such annexations were undertaken, as she argued (Rozhkova 1963, 49, 60, 64-5). Trade followed the flag, rather than the other way round, but the timing and route of the Russian advance were only marginally affected by commercial considerations.

While some metropolitan commentators both highlighted the threat of British competition and made wildly over-optimistic predictions of the possibilities for expanding Russian trade with Central Asia (Kamenskii 1859; Gagemeister 1862), those who were actually on the spot were more realistic. The sentiments of I. O. Osmolovskii, chief administrator of the Syr-Darya Kazakhs, who was an agent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were characteristic. In 1859 he produced a lengthy memorandum on Russia's position in Central Asia in which he discussed the competition between British and Russian goods in the Bukharan market, and British ambitions to create a 'greater Afghanistan' under their influence which would include parts of the territory of Khiva, Kokand and Bukhara. However, he concluded that, however useful some Central Asian products such as cotton might be, 'regardless of all success in this regard, the low population of the Central Asian khanates will always be a reason why our trade with them cannot develop on a large scale.' Instead he thought trade with Chinese Turkestan a much more promising prospect, however in order to penetrate this market a further advance would be necessary:

'For the consolidation of our trade with Chinese Turkestan, it is essential to establish our sovereignty not on the steppe among wandering nomads, but in the settled regions – neighbouring Tashkent, which we would then be able to quickly develop as an entrepôt and focus for our Central Asian trade; then the improvement of routes of communication would be a utopia, and an essential requirement, and despite the unenterprising nature of our merchants, seeing their interests in a clear and tangible way they would no longer fear to invest their capital.'²⁴

In other words, it was the long-distance trade with neighbouring regions which mattered more than that with the Central Asian khanates itself, and the state was to be the facilitator of sluggish private enterprise, not the servant of powerful commercial interests. Such considerations could be invoked to convince sceptical officials of the Ministry of Finance of the need for further annexations, but they were not the crucial factor behind the decision to renew the Russian advance in 1860-1. Neither was it anything to do with a supposed threat from the British in India who, under the Viceroyalty of Sir John Lawrence, were not about to renew a 'forward' policy in Central Asia, as the Russians were well aware (Yapp 1987). In 1864, after rumours that British agents had appeared in Bukhara with the intention of launching steamers on the Amu-Darya, the new Governor of Orenburg, General A. P. Bezak (1800-1868), who was certainly no dove in Central Asian affairs, and had not long since enthusiastically advocated an advance to Tashkent, made the following revealing commentary:

"The very carriage of heavy and burdensome parts of iron steamers, such as the hull, across the Hindu Kush, is probably not possible, and even if it were, what benefit would [the English] gain if they managed with enormous effort to float a few steamers on the Amu Darya? In my view none at all. Through the agency of Afghan merchants English goods even without this are already able to spread [...] from India to the Central Asian khanates; but this trade can never become significant or particularly profitable because of the poverty of the inhabitants of these countries, who have little demand for textile products; even for us trade with the Bukharans is not profitable, thanks to their carriage of large amounts of coin from Russia; if at the moment they are essential for our factories in supplying them with cotton, this will only last as long as the war in America.

Turning to the political side, I am very doubtful if the English really have any desire to extend their power over the Central Asian khanates; they are of course sure, that in such a case they will come into conflict in Asia prematurely with Russia, at a time when they do not have the means to throw them back on the other side of the mountains, and apart from this it would oblige [the Russians] to advance their frontier closer to India, something which the English without doubt wish to avoid as far as they possibly can. Finally, the loss in the 1840s in Afghanistan of an army of 20,000 men and their decision not to attempt again the invasion of that country, allows us to posit that the English will not enter the desert khanates of Central Asia, and that the rumours of their measures to construct a flotilla on the Amu-Darya, so long as they remain unconfirmed, are no more than rumours.²⁵

This memorandum neatly dismisses both the 'Great Game' and 'Cotton Canard' arguments for the Russian advance in two paragraphs, although it is easy to see how, quoted out of context, it might be manipulated to confirm both of them.²⁶ It is in fact one of the rare references to cotton in debates among the military, and as we can see, a negative one: even before the end of the American Civil War, nobody thought the cotton drought would last forever. The campaign to unite the Syr-Darya and Siberian lines of fortresses in Central Asia did not proceed from rational economic calculation, rivalry with Britain, local aggression or 'men on the spot', but was instead the outcome of a sustained debate between Orenburg, Omsk and the highest levels of government in St Petersburg, a debate which focused primarily on military security, logistics, and what the Russians saw as the immediate threat from the Central Asian khanates.

III – Uniting the Lines

The major figures in the decision to unite the Orenburg and Siberian lines of fortresses were the new Governors of Orenburg and Western Siberia - A. P. Bezak & A. O. Duhamel - and the new War Minister, D. A. Miliutin. No other Russian statesman of the nineteenth century left behind such a copious quantity of written material as Miliutin, comprising, in addition to his official correspondence and memoranda, his diaries for the 1870s and 1880s, and his still more voluminous *Memoirs*. However the diaries do not cover the most crucial period of the Central Asian advance, and the memoirs were written with hindsight and are not always wholly reliable. Although he was fairly guarded on the subject both in his private and public correspondence, it seems clear that Miliutin strongly favoured a further advance, primarily for strategic reasons, and was not in favour of trying to maintain a frontier on the Syr-Darya. A letter from him which was circulated by Bezak to the officers of the Line contained the following telling sentiments: ‘The construction of such fortresses is expensive, brings little benefit (as the fortress remains in a passive state) and will restrict us still further in future.’²⁷ As he later recalled ‘in the Central Asian borderlands our situation appeared to be somewhat undefined; we did not even have a definite state border’ (Miliutin 1999, 208). Thus the receipt late in 1861 of a lengthy memorandum from Bezak, arguing for the unsustainability of the Syr-Darya line as a frontier, is likely to have been welcome to him.

Bezak began by noting that the ‘system of separate fortresses in the steppe, taking the place of the frequent and expensive despatch of forces’ set up by General V. A. Obruchev in the 1840s ‘was the best means of defending our frontiers at the time from predatory Kirgiz.’ Neither these, nor the Syr-Darya fortresses, were adequate any longer however:

‘The construction of these fortresses, on account of a lack of local means, and through errors in the initial design, has turned out to be extraordinarily expensive. At the moment expenditure on the forts in the steppe, and on the garrisons which occupy them, amounts to up to 700,000 silver roubles a year, whilst the levy on *kibitkas* brings in no more than 200,000. In consequence the Government has doomed itself to an annual subsidy of almost half a million, not counting expenditure on the administration of the region, which comes to another 100,000 silver roubles.

The government, wanting to escape from this undesirable state of affairs, gave instructions for the establishment of Russian colonies near the forts; but the experience of the settlements at Fort No.1, and also at the Ural and Orenburg fortresses [Irgiz and Turgai] and Kara-Butak, proved not to be durable. Settled Cossacks, unaccustomed to carrying out the heavy labour associated with cultivation in the steppe, came to occupy themselves largely with carriage and trade, thus the Government’s aim has not been realised, and hopes for the creation of Russian settlements on the Syr, and for the development of agriculture remain unrealised. If we can expect more grain to be sown in the Steppe at all, then it is more likely to be by the Kirgiz [Kazakhs] themselves; but this will take a great deal of time, because even the poorest *ichins* (ploughmen) grow grain only as a last resort, and so long as the Kirgiz are satisfied with nomadic life in our or neighbouring jurisdictions they do not turn to agriculture.’

The annual expenses were now approaching 1,300,000 silver roubles, and there was still no firm frontier, either west across the Aral Sea, or to the East from Djulek to the Siberian Line.

‘We can only escape from this situation on the Eastern frontier by driving on up the Syr-Darya in order to take more fertile areas with a settled native population, where there is abundant grain productivity, and where there are standing forests which are essential to the support of our fortresses on the Syr-Darya. [...] Between Turkestan and Tashkent, according to those of our merchants who have been there, grain cultivation is in a flourishing state.’²⁸

He was not proposing that any advance take place immediately, not least because extensive reconnaissance would be necessary, but he felt sure that this would chime with the views of the Tsar, noting how ten years before, when Count V. A. Perovskii was still Governor of Orenburg, Nicholas I had expressed the desirability of uniting the Siberian and Orenburg lines, saying it was of the greatest importance, and urging the benefits it could bring to Russian trade with China. This could be done either by taking Turkestan or by pushing on to Tashkent, but he favoured the latter. If they took Tashkent

‘Then Russia would obtain on this side an excellent state boundary [...] it gives us the possibility to cheaply supply our forts on the Syr-Darya with provisions and wooden materials, with the aid of our flotilla [...] As Tashkent is the most important manufacturing town in those parts, through which pass all the trade routes between Bukhara, China and Russia, and as Kokand is only 150 versts distant from it, if we ruled Tashkent, we would have a decisive influence not only over the Khanate of Kokand, but would strengthen our influence over Bukhara, which would significantly develop our trade.’²⁹

He also believed that Tashkent itself might bring in revenues of up to 1,350,000 silver roubles, basing his assertion on a description of the Khoqand Khanate published in the *Journal of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society* (Anon 1849). He did not think this was likely to cause any particular problems with the British, as ‘I do not think, incidentally, that the English seriously fear an expedition of ours to India, in my view this is a chimera which they will not yield to, being a highly practical people’, and he considered they would probably accept Russian arguments about the need to protect their Kazakh subjects: in any case, Russia could not afford to allow her policy in Central Asia to be dictated by England’s likes and dislikes.³⁰ Miliutin referred approvingly to Bezak’s plan in his memoirs, but simply as the prelude to the capture and destruction of the Khoqandi fortress of Yangi-Qurghan later that year: he did not mention either Bezak’s proposal to seize Tashkent, nor the reasons he had advanced for doing so (Miliutin 1999, 208).

Bezak’s letter provoked a cautious reaction from Ignat’ev, the new head of the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a more enthusiastic one from his predecessor Kovalevskii, but Duhamel was strongly opposed. Tashkent could perhaps be taken, he wrote, but it would require the construction of two more fortresses at a cost of over 700,000 roubles, and he was sceptical about the quantity of revenue the city would yield. There would be no material benefits, and any political ones would take a long time to manifest themselves. He

expressed himself still more forthrightly in a letter to Prince A. M. Gorchakov (1798-1883), the Foreign Minister, on which Alexander II had written ‘C’est fort sage et juste’:

‘It is impossible for me to share the opinion emitted by Adj.-General Bezak and Lt-Gen. Kovalevskii on the urgency and utility of conquering the province of Tashkent. I’m afraid that we are embarking on a bad business, of which the final consequences cannot even be predicted at this moment. To organise distant conquests instead of developing the resources of the Transsiberian country which, with colonists other than Cossacks, could become very flourishing, is to abandon reality to chase after shadows [*courir après l’ombre*].’³¹

Gorchakov forwarded this letter to Miliutin, drawing his attention to the Tsar’s annotation, and observing that he was suffering from a severe attack of gout. The inclusion of such personal details, together with the use of French throughout this correspondence, emphasises that this matter was being debated within the very highest circles of Russian government.³² Miliutin, who in his memoirs referred to Duhamel as ‘the embodiment of inertia, (Miliutin 1999, 36) then attempted to convince the Governor of Siberia of the need for a forward policy, dropping all reference to Tashkent but pointing out that even the region around Aulie-Ata was said to be sufficiently fertile to sustain a settled population. Duhamel was still sceptical: ‘The further and deeper we go into the interior of Asia, the greater are the expenses.’ However, he now put forward an alternative proposal: the separation of Tashkent from Khoqandi rule, and its re-establishment as an independent khanate, with a Russian client as its ruler.³³ A special Central Asian Committee, consisting of Gorchakov, Bezak, Miliutin, Reitern, Vershinin, Kovalevskii and Ignat’ev, met on the 28th February 1863 to consider these proposals, and its written conclusions appeared on the 2nd March. While noting that the decision to establish the Syr-Darya line of fortresses might have been a mistake, Miliutin urged that ‘we must acknowledge that it is a historical fact, and now limit ourselves to considering what measures we can take to improve and consolidate our position in that distant region,’ the cost of whose maintenance he estimated at 600,000 roubles a year. ‘Remaining in the north, we control the poorest, most infertile places, when neighbouring them is a rich region, plentiful in good things.’ This meant the unification of the two lines – the question was what form it should take: the conquest of Turkestan and Tashkent, or the creation of a client khanate in the latter city? The latter option would be cheaper and attract less attention from other European powers, and the committee added that ‘the English use a similar system which has brought beneficial results in India’, referring to indirect rule over the Indian princely states. The Minister of Finance, Baron Reitern, agreed with Miliutin that Russia’s previous actions in establishing the Syr-Darya line and conquering the Kazakh steppe now belonged to history, ‘and it is now too late to debate whether or not this region was really necessary for us. Fully recognising that Russia must not concede or abandon those places which she already rules, the Minister of Finance finds that we must

therefore be still more careful and prudent in future with each new forward step in Central Asia.’ He opposed any further advance, saying that whilst the areas proposed for annexation might be fertile, Russia at present did not have the resources and capital to develop them properly.³⁴ Gorchakov concluded by saying that it was also important to preserve good relations with Russia’s neighbours, and the committee’s overall conclusion, no doubt much to Bezak and Miliutin’s disgust, was that however desirable the uniting of the lines might be, it would have to be postponed, at least until the following year. In the interim, Cherniaev was authorised to conduct a reconnaissance from Djulek towards Turkestan along the line of the proposed frontier, and to send a ‘flying column’ to probe the defences of the Khoqandi fortress of Suzaq.³⁵

While the Russian advance was being planned in St Petersburg, relative peace prevailed with Khoqand. Although tsarist historians generally claimed that Russian attacks were always provoked by Khoqandi aggression, the view from the other side was different. According to the *Ta’rikh-i ‘Aliquli*, a later memoir by Mullah Yunus Tashkandi, principal lieutenant to Khoqand’s then ruler, Mullah ‘Alimqul, even as the Russians made their plans for the uniting of the fortresses and the annexation of more Khoqandi territory, the leadership of the khanate was contemplating a rapprochement. Mullah Yunus remembered advising ‘Alimqul in March 1864 that as there had been a period of peace with Russia (which was how he interpreted the lull after the capture of Djulek and the destruction of Pishpek and Yangi-Qurghan in 1860) now was the time to send an embassy of four respected *‘ulama* with connections amongst the Tatar merchants in Russia in order to negotiate peace. ‘Alimqul said that he would consider this, but in the interim a diplomatic crisis emerged in Kashgar, where the Khoqandi ambassador had been detained by Yaqub Bek. Mullah Yunus was sent to resolve this, and by the time he had returned ‘Alimqul said to him: “We are very glad and satisfied with your actions. But you were too long of a journey. [Therefore] the opportunity [to send an ambassador] has passed. Turkistan has been lost [to the Russians] (Beisembiev 2003, 61-3).

As this suggests, the Russian decision to pause their advance did not last long; nor was it provoked by any particular aggression from Khoqand. In June Bezak wrote to Miliutin to say that Cherniaev had already taken Suzaq with surprisingly little effort and cost, and that now ‘it seems to me, that the most rational form of action’ would be to carry on reconnaissance of the routes towards Aulie-Ata, to determine whether the land was as fertile as Cherniaev’s forces had reported the area around Suzaq to be, and therefore whether it would be suitable for the future frontier.³⁶ This in turn prompted Miliutin to write a belligerent letter to Gorchakov, urging once again the importance of uniting the line, the possibilities it gave of reducing the garrisons in its most difficult sections and moving them to more fertile areas and thus reducing costs, and also

its usefulness in diplomatic terms: 'In the case of a European war we must especially value the occupation of a region, which brings us closer to the Northern borders of India, and renders easier our access to that country. Ruling in Kokand, we will be able to permanently threaten the East Indian possessions of England. It is still more important as it is only here that we can be dangerous to this enemy of ours.' This 'Great Game' argument (which, we should note, Miliutin only invoked *after* the emphasis on the immediate military needs of the frontier had failed to move the Foreign Ministry) finally convinced Gorchakov, as the latter wrote that it did indeed seem to be a good idea to take advantage of the momentum created by Cherniaev's easy victory at Suzaq, and unite the two lines along the summit of the Kara-Tau range, through Aulie-Ata.³⁷ On the 1st August Miliutin and Gorchakov presented their joint conclusion that the lines should be united forthwith to Alexander II, omitting Miliutin's arguments about threatening Britain,³⁸ and the Tsar approved the plan. Miliutin sent the substance of their reasoning to Bezak a week later:

'In uniting the line, and with the establishment of our frontier on the summit of the Kara-Tau, we are not broadening our frontiers, but on the contrary restricting their extent, and coming closer to the fertile regions of Central Asia; as a consequence we will be able to use the resources of these lands, guaranteeing the sustenance of the garrisons of our steppe fortresses, and the Syr-Darya Line only then will obtain the significance which is its due, when it can be satisfied by local resources, rather than supplies brought from interior Russia.

The fulfilment of this union represents the furthest development of the idea, stated in the Journal of the special Committee of the 2nd March this year, (confirmed by his Imperial Majesty), and considered by your Excellency and the Commander of the Siberian Corps. At that time the Committee could not accept the aforesaid proposal, partly because of the lack of precision of the proposed measures and anticipated expenses, and also because of the impossibility of reconciling your opinion on the necessity of taking Tashkent, with the conclusion of General Duhamel, proposing that it would be more beneficial for us to turn Tashkent into an independent Khanate. Because of this the Committee concluded with the thought that "the actual uniting of the Orenburg and Siberia Lines, however desirable it might be, must for the time being be set aside, limiting ourselves for the immediate future exclusively to putting a barrier around those Kirgiz who are already under our jurisdiction, and studying the area which divides the two advanced lines"

Now, the situation of the question has fundamentally changed. The successful actions of Colonel Cherniaev, without any special expenditure or casualties, has brought us significantly closer to the fulfilment of our principal aim.³⁹

Thus, in the final resort, it is true that a small successful action by an officer on the frontier served to tip the scale and push the more cautious members of the Committee towards Miliutin's point of view (much to his evident satisfaction), but the key factor was that, at this stage at least, Cherniaev had powerful supporters in both Orenburg and St Petersburg, whom he knew would endorse his actions. The final outcome of the campaign to 'unite the line' – the capture, in rapid succession, of Turkestan by Colonel Verevkin, and Aulie-Ata, Chimkent and finally Tashkent by Cherniaev, is well-known, though not without its own controversies. Tashkent would eventually be captured and held partly to prise it away from Khoqandi influence,

and partly to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Amir of Bukhara, although it was not until September 1866 that Duhamel's idea of turning the city into an independent khanate was finally abandoned as impractical.

Conclusion

The classic justification for the Russian conquest of Central Asia, repeatedly invoked by historians, remains that given by Foreign Minister Prince A. M. Gorchakov in his famous circular to European Governments of 1864, which emphasised the instability of the existing frontier, and Russia's responsibility, shared with other 'civilised' powers, of disciplining and controlling the savage tribes on her frontiers (Sergeev 2012, 94, 100-101). While these considerations did play an important part in Russian deliberations over advancing the line of their frontier, they were not the sole, nor the decisive ones. These were in fact mentioned by Gorchakov, but have never received the same degree of attention from historians:

'It was essential that the line of our advanced forts thus completed should be situated in a country fertile enough, not only to insure their supplies, but also to facilitate the regular colonization, which alone can prepare a future of stability and prosperity for the occupied country, by gaining over the neighbouring populations to civilized life. [...] By the adoption of this line we obtain a double result. In the first place, the country it takes in is fertile, well wooded, and watered by numerous water-courses; it is partly inhabited by various Kirghize tribes, which have already accepted our rule; it consequently offers favourable conditions for colonization, and the supply of provisions to our garrisons. In the second place, it puts us in the immediate neighbourhood of the agricultural and commercial populations of Kokand.'⁴⁰

The decision of the Russians to move their frontier far to the south so that it would run through the settled regions of Central Asia was motivated by a number of factors. Prestige – the refusal to countenance frontier raids, or to be seen to retreat or abandon territory – was one. The desire for a firmly demarcated, secure frontier was another. The expansion of trade was a third, although arguably rather less important, and mainly aimed at tapping the larger markets of India, China and Persia that lay beyond Central Asia itself. Annoying the British did play a minor role, but not enough to justify the overwhelming significance that is usually attached to it. However, one crucial factor, and one which is rarely, if ever referred to, is that in the 1840s and 50s with the construction of the Syr-Darya line, the Russians had chosen the worst possible place to try to build a frontier – a particularly painful place, in Butakov's words – which was too expensive and difficult to maintain precisely because it lay mid-way between the limits of Russian settlement to the north, and the riverine oases to the South. Within a few years of the fall of Aq-Masjid the Russians had realised this, and instead wanted a frontier that ran through a region with a sedentary, rather than a nomadic population, with an ample supply of grain and wood, and with a climate and surroundings that did not sap and destroy the morale of their officers and men. They could obtain this only by either retreating to their original fortified line at Orenburg, or by

advancing to the oases around Aulie-Ata, Chimkent, and, above all, Tashkent itself. The former option was proposed by some, but ruled out for reasons of prestige, so they chose the latter. Whilst the final decision to take Tashkent had not yet been made in 1863-4, the logic which led to it is clearly illustrated in the official debates on the subject. Cherniaev's assault on the city did not come out of nowhere.

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Notes

¹ In more ways than one – Sergei Abashin tells me that the late Anatolyi Remnev always insisted that what Valuev had actually written was ‘*nechto erraticheskoe*’ – ‘something *erratic*’, and that the editor of the diary, Zaionchkovskii, had made an error.

² Duhamel to Cherniaev 12/11/1864 RGIM OPI F.208 Op.1 D.5 l.27*ob*

³ ‘Kopiia s rezoliutsii Voennogo Ministra, na pis'mo General-Maiora Cherniaeva, prislannoe Polkovniku Poltoratskomu 18 Avgusta 1864g’ RGIM OPI F.208 Op.1 D.6 ll.10-*ob*

⁴ Duhamel to Miliutin 23/09/1864 RGIM OPI F.208 Op.1 D.6 ll.11-12

⁵ Kryzhanovskii to Cherniaev 25/02/1865 (Serebrennikov 1914b Doc.63, 88)

⁶ The initial published report on the fall of Tashkent noted that it had been an essential step to prevent such a valuable centre of trade falling into the hands of the Bukharans (Anon 1865, 195-196)

⁷ Danzas to Katenin 11/10/1857; 01/12/1857 RGVIA F.67 Op.1 D.242 l.1-12*ob*

⁸ ‘Vsepoddanneishee donesenie A. A. Katenina’ 22/09/1858, cited in Khalfin 1960, 120, Erofeeva 2010, 373, 392 n.60.

⁹ ‘Zapiska Komandira Otdel'nogo Sibirskogo Korpusa i General Gubernatora Zapadnoi Sibiri o neobkhodimosti zaniatiia verkhov'ev r. Chu i predvaritel'nykh k tomu rasporiazheniiam’ 21/01/1859 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.51 ll.4-5*ob*

¹⁰ This consisted of Prince A. M. Gorchakov (Foreign Ministry), N. O. Sukhozanet (War Ministry), A. F. Kniazhevich (Finance Ministry), Baron V. K. Lieven, E. P. Kovalevskii (Former Director of the Asiatic Department), N. P. Ignat'ev (Current Director of the same), Katenin and Gasfort himself. 28/01/1859 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.51 ll.12-14*ob*

¹¹ ‘Sobstvenno EGO VELICHESTVA rukoii pisana karandashym: soglasen’ 20/12/1859 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.51 l.241

¹² Statskii Sovetnik Artsimovich ‘O vliianie Rossii v Srednei Azii i merakh k uvelichenii’ 1859 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.1-5*ob*

¹³ Rear Admiral A. I. Butakov ‘O budushchikh deistviiakh Rossii v Srednei Azii’ 1859 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.9-*ob*

¹⁴ Butakov ‘O budushchikh deistviiakh Rossii v Srednei Azii’ 1859 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.10*ob*-11

¹⁵ Cherniaev ‘Sravnitel'nyi ocherk Amu i Syra’ RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.40-41. In Cherniaev's private papers the same text appears as ‘Dokladnaia Zapiska General'nogo Shtaba Podpolkovnika Cherniaeva G-nu Komandiru Otdel'nogo Orenburgskogo Korpusa 1858g’ RGIM OPI F.208 Op.1 D.4 ‘Materialy kasaiushchiii 1858g po Syr-D. Linii’ ll.48-9. Cherniaev's description of the routes to Kungrad is on ll.10-35 of this file, and as cited by Butakov in RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.19-28. It was published in *Russkii Arkhiv* in 1905.

¹⁶ V. V. Grigor'ev ‘Chto predstavliaetsia vygodneishim dlia nas: zaniatie del'ty Amy, ili dvizhenie vverkh po Syru do Tashkenta vkluchitel'no?’ RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.42-57. On Grigor'ev's difficult relationship with his superiors in Orenburg see Knight 2000.

¹⁷ Dandevil' ‘O deistviiakh nashikh v Srednei Azii’ RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.53 ll.58-83

¹⁸ Head of the Orenburg Customs Region to the Department of External Trade, Ministry of Finance, 08/01/1861 RGVIA F.19 Op.3 D.961 ‘Otchety nachal'nikov tamozhennykh okrugov o khode torgovli za 1860 god’ l.300*ob*

- ¹⁹ Head of the Orenburg Customs Region to the Department of External Trade, Ministry of Finance, 12/01/1862 RGIA F.19 Op.3 D.962 ll.288ob - 289
- ²⁰ Head of the Orenburg Customs Region to the Department of External Trade, Ministry of Finance, 09/01/1863 RGIA F.19 Op.3 D.963 ll.296-7; Head of the Orenburg Customs Region to the Department of External Trade, Ministry of Finance, 14/01/1863 RGIA F.19 Op.3 D.964 ll.29ob – 30ob.
- ²¹ The ‘evidence’ advanced by the likes of Khalfin, and subsequently parroted by many western historians, consisted almost exclusively of articles in metropolitan journals speculating about the value of Central Asian markets, without demonstrating any connection whatsoever between these and the reasoning of the Ministers and officers who took the crucial decisions in the course of the conquest. See Khalfin 1960, 60-66, 151-7, 213-6. The most Khalfin was able to do was demonstrate that some Moscow-based merchants took an interest in the commercial opportunities opened up by the conquest after it had happened, which is hardly surprising. Even these hopes would remain largely unrealised, and in any case it hardly suggests they had the ear of Miliutin or the Tsar.
- ²² Kryzhanovskii to Miliutin 12/08/1865 (Serebrennikov 1915, Doc.196, 14-16)
- ²³ Some half-hearted attempts were made in the 1840s, but imported cotton was better and cheaper (Rozhkova 1949, 113)
- ²⁴ ‘Zapiska o slukhakh i sobytiakh v Srednei Azii’ 31/12/1859 RGVIA F.1433 Op.1 D.7 ll.12-15
- ²⁵ Bezak to Miliutin 27/02/1864 (Serebrennikov 1914a, Doc.37, 73)
- ²⁶ Sergeev quotes a supposed earlier letter from Bezak to Miliutin (cited in Khalfin 1960, 137) as evidence that the Orenburg Governor *was* concerned with the threat that British trade would penetrate Khoqand, before acknowledging that in this memorandum he more or less dismissed its importance. He still takes it as evidence that the British threat was what drove Russian expansion, which is not supported by the evidence (Sergeev 2012, 89-90).
- ²⁷ ‘Vypiska iz pis’ma Voennogo Ministra’ n.d. (after Dec. 1862) TsGARKaz F.382 Op.1 D.47 ‘O budushchikh deistviakh nashikh v Srednei Azii’ l.2ob
- ²⁸ Bezak to Miliutin 29/11/1861 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.6ob-8ob
- ²⁹ Bezak to Miliutin 29/11/1861 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.13-ob; Khalfin cites the copy of this memorandum made by Serebrennikov from his *Fond* in the Tashkent archives, and (I can only assume) invents a line about ‘valuable mineral deposits for national industry’ which does not appear to be in the original (Khalfin 1960, 142).
- ³⁰ Bezak to Miliutin 29/11/1861 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 l.15
- ³¹ Duhamel to Gorchakov 26/05/1862 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.70-ob
- ³² ‘Je souffre d’un violent accès de goutte qui me rends pour le moment inhabile pour tout travail sérieux.’ Gorchakov to Miliutin 15/06/1862 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 l.72 ; Fuller also notes that Gorchakov’s hypochondria features heavily in his letters to the Tsar (1992, 268).
- ³³ Miliutin to Duhamel 28/06/1862; Duhamel to Miliutin 04/09/1862; Duhamel Memorandum 23/01/1863 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.77-85ob, 89, 128-30
- ³⁴ Making nonsense of Khalfin’s claim that Reiter saw the conquest of Central Asia as a means of *restoring* the Imperial finances after the Crimean War (Khalfin 1960, 60-2)
- ³⁵ 02/03/1863 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.160-178
- ³⁶ Bezak to Miliutin 11/06/1863 & 25/06/1863 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.189-197
- ³⁷ Miliutin to Gorchakov 01/?/1863 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.198ob-199ob
- ³⁸ Sergeev gives a clear account of these deliberations, though lays a greater stress on Miliutin’s arguments about threatening Britain than is really warranted, given that these seem to have been put forward almost as an afterthought to the debate about the consolidation of the frontier (Sergeev 2012, 92-3).
- ³⁹ Miliutin to Bezak 12/08/1863 TsGARKaz F.382 Op.1 D.47 ll.33ob-34ob
- ⁴⁰ ‘Circular dispatch addressed by Prince Gortchakow to Russian Representatives abroad.’ 21/11/1864 *Parliamentary Papers* Central Asia No.2 (1873) ‘Correspondence Respecting Central Asia’ C.704: 70-75. Miliutin later echoed these sentiments, which, as we have seen, originated with the War Ministry (Miliutin 2003, 520-521)

Abbreviations

RGIM OPI: *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Muzei. Otdel Pismennykh Istochnikov* – Manuscript Division of the Russian State Historical Museum, Moscow.

Fond 208 ‘M. G. Cherniaev’

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Fond 19 'Departament Vneshnei Torgovli'

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