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The Red Sea and Adjacent Countries

The Historical Perspective

From Early Times to 1900

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"If it is to be of any lasting value, the analysis of contemporary events requires depth, no less perhaps, indeed a good deal more -- than any kind of history; our only hope of discerning the forces actually operative in the world around us is to range them firmly against the past. Unfortunately this is rarely done."

Geoffrey Barraclough¹

"the world and our existence are only fragments of an eternally impenetrable whole."

Michela Chiaramonte²

Looking at today's issues in their historical setting, as we are hoping to do in this session of the Scientific Committee may strike some of us as an exercise in futility. What is the point? Today and yesterday may both be exploded into nothingness, soon. The sword of Damocles held high on our heads by Begin and Khomeini may soon fall and extinguish all. The coming war will end all wars, because there will not be anybody left to fight. I must admit there came upon me while doing this, such moments of gloom, a sense of the ridiculous, the trifling. Ideally it should not be so. The Khomeinis and Begins are instruments of history who in their turn make history, more often than not, by accident and not design. That is the way of the obdurate, the wily and the knowing fanatic. Some of the men who talk of a Sarajevo climate engulfing the world, command the world's respect and we

can ill afford to dismiss them as we do others. Helmut Schmidt is not Richard Nixon.

In our purposes in the Institute, however, it is important that issues discussed in other papers on the Red Sea and its environs, should be looked at in their historical setting. Our papers cannot hope to stop a Begin war in the Middle East, nor can they do much if Khomeini's dangerous antics lead to a universal war. There is intrinsic and practical value in what we say and write, though. "The Wisest and Brightest" of men in his time, 1561 - 1626, set out this meaning economically, yet lucidly : "Studies", said Francis Bacon, "serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgement and disposition of business." Our group can hardly be interested in the first of these "services" but certainly it is in the latter two, "the discourse" and the "disposition of business"

The difficulty about this undertaking is that it is bound to be inadequate. The papers carry a variety of themes to do with the area. An introductory essay will have to chose between two approaches. Either touch on all subjects, history, trade, commerce, strategy and culture, lightly perforce, or do one or two related ones, less lightly. The best, in the circumstances, is to try an amalgam of both, hoping that contributions of members will fill the gaps this essay leaves open; and they will be many, because it intends to begin at the time when the area came into the world scene and that is a long time ago. There is now geological evidence that it was almost

the hub of the world then, as it is now. The story goes back to the Pleistocene times. The land masses of West Asia and North East Africa were a single piece, with two land bridges over the south and north ends of the Red Sea and Bab-al-Mandab. This narrow water lane did not constitute much of a barrier in the face of trade and movement of people.¹ The cracking of the earth's crust over a period of geological centuries, resulted in the sinking of three great trough-vaults, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the famous East African rifts. Meeting at Bab-al-Mandab, they cut across the continuous uplifted block, and separated the Ethiopian from the Yemen highlands.² The most untrained eye can see the oneness of North East Ethiopia and Yemen, while travelling in the area.

With Saha-Re, second king of the fifth dynasty (2750 - 2625 B.C.) the western side of the region is hurled into a stream of history, that fed many others. He "continued the development of Egypt as the earliest known naval power in history!" The northern extremity of the region was connected with the south end of the Red Sea, taking in the south side of the Gulf of Aden. The "land of gold and incense" in Punt, the interior of Africa, and the shores of Arabia were penetrated, and never a dull moment around." The Red Sea and adjacent countries."⁴ The famous "Lords of Elephantine" ventured into Inner Africa and the southern Red Sea, and a nucleus of a world trade system was created, and once created it started growing.

Overland routes and water lanes kept adding commercial significance to the area, multiplying themselves in

the process. The difficulties of crossing the desert between the Suez and the Nile were daunting. In time, however, wells were dug and rest houses for weary caravan leaders were put up, by Mentuhotep V, the last king of the eleventh dynasty (2160 - 2000 B.C.) The greatest incentive for increased trade however, was connecting the Suez region and the Gulf of Suez to the Nile by a waterway " ..the earliest known connection between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean". Sesostris III, fifth king in the line of the twelfth dynasty (2000 - 1788 B.C.) was enabled now to bring in Syria and Palestine to this orbit of trade made less arduous and more profitable by the crowning monument of his dynasty. Queen Hatshepust (1501 - 1447 B.C.) could then send her noted expedition to Punt. Eight ships were "brought through a channel of the Nile to the Red Sea, and went south along the African coast of the Red Sea to the Horn of Africa and further in the southerly direction."⁵ Five hundred years later the channel was blocked, the roads blurred and the wells ruined because of disuse. Ramses III of the twentieth dynasty was not to be deterred. He carried on regardless and kept the spirit going⁶. But Egypt's fortunes were ebbing and the neglected route had to be abandoned. Necho of the twenty sixth dynasty (663 - 525) tried to restore the channel and repair roads but he could not do the job, though twenty thousand men perished in the act, according to Herodotus.

To this period of gradual growth into the most important trading block in the world belongs the Biblical era in the region. The lands of the Bible were drawn into it by vigorous pharaohs in Egypt, and routes across

the Suez into Sinai, Palestine and Syria and the Mediterranean littoral, were well trodden by caravans and boats. In the latter part of the pharonic ascendancy, these lands of West Asia began to develop their own identity. The modern world owes this period all the ports it uses now, and all the cities and towns in the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf, the Mediterranean shores and North East Africa including the Horn. In many cases the names have changed but the sites are almost the same. One can recognise these cities and ports even if couched in the ancient language of the Bible. In Genesis X6 - 21, you read of " the sons of Kush, Seba and Hanla and Sabath .. and Johtan begat Hazzaarmaveth and Jerah and Hadoram, and Uzal .. and Sheba and Ophir .. and their dwelling was from Mesha as thou goest into Sephar, a mount of the East"; but only a few places and peoples confound you a little.⁷ The central part played by the Red Sea in connecting so many diverse countries, climates and peoples, is well reflected in world literature. As in the case of ports and cities the name seems to have changed a number of times and evoked a lot of interest . "In the Old Testament up to Jeremiah it is called the Reed Sea. The New Testament speaks only of the Red Sea."⁸ The Arab encyclopidist Al -- Nuevairi looks at the water surface of the earth as one single unit of water and speaks of one branch of it coming into the land mass we are concerned with, from the West and another from the East. These are the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean,⁹ segments of which are the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

The struggle that rages today over Palestine, with

Arabs and Israelis as counters in the game of power between the East and the West, tends to obscure the strategic and commercial place of Palestine in the world. The points raised in the great debate are hardly relevant to the heart of the matter. They emphasize the religious and racial aspect of the matter, and though these are factors that cannot be pushed aside, the chief factor is strategic and commercial. It has been so throughout the ages. Between 1050 B.C. when King David ruled in Jerusalem and 1950 when Arabs and Israelis met face to face in war there, Palestine changed hands nineteen times. Powers great and small were involved in her chequered history. Her strategic and trading significance was supreme, and there to be seen by everybody, as from Solomon's reign (967-927) David's passion was for conquest, Solomon's was for trade. In his forty years of dominance, he extended the kingdom southwards to Aqaba, thus controlling the Axumite and Yemen trade on both sides of the Red Sea. Whether she travelled the hard way from Adulis in Axum or from South Yemen, the Queen of Sheba's journey to Jerusalem was to protest about the extortionate dues demanded by Solomon's tax collectors in Aqaba. But that was only an item in the many sources of his wealth and grandeur. He was well entrenched in the whole area, all of it accessible from Jerusalem which sits astride of it. His father's conquests were turned to good use. The warrior father was succeeded by the trader son. His closest ally was Tyre. The trade route from Damascus, to Derra, to the Palestinian coast and Egypt, was firmly in his hands. To utilize Aqaba's position on the sea, he kept garrisons

at Edom and Ezion Geber, strategic airfield sites which came to prominence in the disengagement talks that followed the Arab - Israeli war in 1973.¹⁰

The greater part of Solomon's wealth was drawn from Arabia's trade in incense, which was immense. It had a monopoly of this commodity, needed then as much as oil now. Every altar and every funeral was sweetened with frankincense from Arabia, the "Happy land" that provided it.¹¹ This "Happiness" was not unmixed. Then as now Arabia was too important for world economy to be left to its own devices, or to be more influenced by one power than by another, or group of powers. There was the power of Rome in the West and that of Persia in the East. These "...richest and perhaps the oldest routes of the ancient world" were coveted by both. The excuse for acquiring the routes and the sources of this most valuable commodity, was ready at hand for these two powers. Both said they could not trade safely in the area. A group of "rascally men" raided caravans passing through inland ports, and ships calling in for rest and water at sea ports. Another group of people charged excessive dues. The Romans were weary of this and fought for sea ways of their own and caravan routes. The West could not afford to lose this trade or to impose higher prices on the consumers who were already paying high prices, on account of the remoteness of the area and the prices of fear. The Romans pushed into the forbidden waters, in new and larger vessels garrisoned with bowmen. They had their experience while conquering Egypt and the northern caravan routes.¹² The Persians were not less anxious to have an influence

in the area. Jawad Ali, the Iraqi historian of this period in Arabia puts this race for influence there, more explicitly than others. The occasion he seizes upon to illustrate this point, is the renovation of the Marib dam in A.D. 450. High ranking delegations from Rome and Persia came to Maiarib to participate in the opening celebrations. "They were not there by King Abraha's side that date for the mere formality of congratulating the Yemenites and their Abyssinian king. They were there to study the trade and terrain, and to see what means to employ in stifling the Red Sea trade if they couldn't be the Lords of it, or to expand it if they managed to be the Lords. The Persians aimed at destroying the Roman institutions in the Peninsula, the Gulf and the Red Sea, if they failed in diverting the proceeds of the routes and the sale of the commodity to themselves. The world then as now was divided into two blocks, one Western and the other Eastern. The Romans mobilised all their commercial acumen and military power to dominate Arabia. The Persians on their side were bent on destroying any Arab quarter dealing with the Romans, and on obstructing the passage of their ships into the Indian Ocean for trade with Africa and Arabia." ¹³

The Biblical and Jahilia periods in West Asia faded gradually into the classical period of Greece and Rome. In about 600 the fortunes of Egypt were waning in the face of Assyria, and Solomon's kingdom was shattered after his death. It was about then that Kolaious, the Greek sailor, summed up an aspect of his sailing experiences to his countrymen. "It is worth sometimes" he wrote

"to remember that through all commerce runs a pedigree. Men still sail the same seas as did the ancients, and very commonly with the same purpose." Greece must have had a fund of maritime trade to inspire this daring sailor to speak of remembering things past. According to Professor Glover, Kolaious was a pioneer sailor trader, and tells us about his sea voyage from the Aegean to Egypt stopping at North East Africa on his way eastwards to the Nile. The hazards of journeying were immense then. The men who undertook them were sturdy. Kolaious was tossed about, but "many gales and fears after, he realised he was on the west coast of Spain". He was the first Greek to reach the Atlantic.¹⁴ A contemporary of this fearless and fortunate sailor was one Antimeridas who went East. It is not certain whether he went all the way overland or took a ship to Tyre or Sidon. It is certain, however, that he struck down the Euphrates to Babylon, the centre of power in the area at the time. Egypt, under Necho (609-593 B.C.) as we have seen, had withdrawn from the Middle Eastern scene to attend to Egypt, and after Solomon was the "deluge". Babylon was the master now from the Euphrates to the Gulf of Suez, coming therefore into the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade, joining it to that of Persia and the Persian Gulf.

To the Greek sailors, successors of Kolaious and Antimeridas, the world owes what it knows of the coming of the Horn of Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Somalia, into this trading area. It is a fascinating story the way these two countries of the Horn "crossed the Indian Ocean in their own ships" at about this time, the sixth

century, and things moved a little faster. From the other end of "The Red Sea and adjacent countries" "...great migrations of Malayan sea voyagescrossed the whole breadth of the Indian Ocean, to Madagascar, the Comoros and East Africa"? Southern Arabia India and beyond were then joined to the trading system of West Asia and Europe. The foundations of an international trade system were laid, the epoch making voyage of Admiral Nearchus (326-325B.C.) was not long in coming. It was, according to the admiral's biographer " ... the first event of general importance to mankind in the history of navigation". While Africans, Asians and Arabs were crossing the Red Sea and cautiously navigating the Indian Ocean very close to the coast because of their fragile ships,¹⁵ Admiral Nearchus, with all the experience of Greek maritime ventures, sailed from the Indies to the Euphrates. The consequences of the adventures were many. " ...in the first instance a communication between Europe and the most distant countries of Asia, so at a later period was it the source and origin of the Portuguese discoveries, the foundations of the greatest commercial system ever introduced into the world, and consequently the primary cause, however remote, of the British establishment in India".¹⁶

Dr. William Vincent was not overstating the case when he referred to " the greatest commercial system". The first cargo from India to Lisbon in 1497 covered the expenses of the voyage many times over. How much this voyage cost Vasco de Gama is not popularly known. One cannot go too wide off the mark if one remembers that Columbus' expedition cost £1500 (How much is that in

May 1980? Two and a half million?) How profitable trade started to be can be gleaned from the relative intensity of sea borne trade after De Gama. Between this latter part of the fifteenth century and the beginning of Portuguese decline as a maritime power early in the seventeenth century, some two ships plied between India and Portugal every year, carrying between 100 and 500 tons depending on the size of the ships. In the years between 1497 and 1612 some 806 vessels were put to sea; only 96 of them were lost. The average voyage cost £4000 during the period, but the freight exceeded the average of £150,000, per voyage. The admiral's voyage was a boon for islands and ports and countries in between India and Portugal, but noticeably for Egypt and Yemen. Egypt's earnings from levying duties on transit trade amounted to £290,000 a year in this period. The boon for Yemen could not have been any less than in any of the Eldorado countries of the Gulf or Arabia today. The author of the *Periplus* was writing long before this boon, when he visited the market place at Mukha: "The merchandise imported there consists of purple cloths both fine and course; clothing in the Arabian style, with sleeves; plain, ordinary, embroidered, or interwoven with gold; saffron, sweet rusks, muslins, cloaks, blankets, some plain and others made in the local fashion; sashes of different colours, fragrant ointments in moderate quantity wine and wheat not much".¹⁷ That was as early as the first century of our era, but continued prospering into this period we are discussing, late fifteenth century and early seventeenth; the Portuguese era, so to speak.

Mukha's prosperity like that of many Arabian and Horn ports was retained over this long period. In the late seventeenth century, even after the Portuguese era was on the way out, it "...has been the principal port in the Red Sea, and to which ships traffick from Surat, Cambay, Dien, Malabar and other parts of India. Hither also come ships from Denmark, Holland and England, France and Portugal - as also from Socatia, Muscat and all the Gulph of Persia, which bring hither the products of their several countries and are met by the merchants of Barbary, Egypt, Turkey and by the Abyssseens, Arabians , who buy off their goods for ready money, and make little other returns but coffee, sena and some aloes hepetica and other small things of no moment".¹⁸ The incense rich Arab was as well dressed and perfumed as the oil sheikh Arab, but there was a difference. The incense Arab man made a number of things he consumed. The world around him did not depend on him for incense alone, either. He had his knowledge of the sea to give, for instance. It was one of them who piloted Da Gama from Malindi to Calicut. By the fifteenth century, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the Indian Ocean and their environs were familiar routes of trade.

A mere two centuries after Muhammad, Haroun al-Rasheed (765-810) was at the head of a people whose civilisation had already reached its climax. His twenty three years of reign (765-810) were most prosperous materially and culturally, the revenue of the empire soared to 42,000,000 dinars annually and when he died his coffers were full- he left behind him 900,000,000

silver dirhams. Haroun was the perfect amalgam of ancient Arab vitality, the Islamic code of work and that universality of outlook Baghdad has been gathering to itself over many centuries. "Rain where you like and I will get the ^{land} taxes", he is supposed to have said. Whether he did or did not is immaterial. What the saying indicates is that the Islamic Empire was vast and that the government of the Empire was skilfully administered. "Kitab al -- Kharag: the book of taxes" is one of the detailed masterpieces of the period. The cracks in the Arab personality and the many schisms that were to beset Islam soon, however, were apparent even while he was the leading spirit. The shaikhly class were beginning to show their hand. When he proposed to his aids an idea he had long been contemplating they advised him against it. His commercial acumen was inhibited by unimaginative political consideration and a fear of ideas other than their own impinging on a society that held the shaikhly class in inordinately high regard. Haroun was contemplating a canal from the Gulf of Suez to the Mediterranean, and produced a plan that would have ultimately brought the West nearer to the East for commercial and other purposes¹⁹ but the shaikhly class would not have it. They dissuaded him on the grounds that the canal was bound to be an aid to European ships in the Red Sea, "...the Europeans will therefore find their way easy to the Holy Lands, by way of Hijaz ports and interrupt the road to Mecca." It was in his character to ignore the argument, but he had also the Shiite party to contend with, and thought better of it. The two stands and the activities they engendered, however, continued to develop , and draw

Strength from problems posed by internal and external challenge to the traditional mode of life. The contemporary strength of the shaikly class in Arab and muslim lands is not a perfect stranger to a pattern of responding to challenges that Islamic societies have met with in their many encounters with non-Islamic societies. The intensity and vehemence of response by the Shi'a in Iran, incidentally, is peculiarly, distinctly, Shiite. They had a raw deal in history because of their unbending conservatism, which did not win them the battle of running the Muslim state. Their adversaries won the battle. They were determined to run the state in the manner other states around them were run, on a kingly, imperial and thus a worldly basis. They fought the few battles that won them the day with vehemence. The Shi'as were saddled with scruples. They lost, and took refuge in doctrines thought out by theologians, scholars and poets whose ideas and sentiments were formed in the shadow of defeat, anger and a grave feeling of injustices inflicted on them by lesser breeds and intellects. Teachings and codes of behaviour born of this set of circumstances can only be dark and warped, even to a dispassionate, not ill-disposed outsider. Professor Ahmad Ameen was such a man.²⁰

One needs no excuse for lingering awhile on this last point. It is relevant to this moment of writing. Dr. William Vincent was writing in 1797, on Admiral Nearchus' voyage in the year 326-325 B.C., some two thousand years later. He could see the significance of that voyage in the early decades of the fourth century before Christ for

the few remaining years of the eighteenth century, and penetratingly remarked that "Historical facts demand our attention in proportion to the interest we feel , or the consequences we derive from them..." The consequences of the coming of the Shia party onto the Islamic scene in the eighth century²¹ are more than obvious to us in the closing decades of the twentieth century, that is, some twelve centuries later. The great many tracts written nowadays about the "Islamic Revolution at times and the "Islamic Revivals" at other times, à propos of the revolution in Iran, tend to generalise a lot. The leaders of the revolution in Iran stem from a sect in Islam with a special history and a special corpus of thinking and acting. Their armed disputes with the Arabs, the Kurds and Azribjanis are not purely secular. It is not far-fetched to assume that these armed disputes are an attempt at settling old scores between the Shiites and the Sunnis; and religious scores die harder than any other.

The thousand years of Muslim supremacy in the area was superceded by what one may call the first phase of the "European Era". If one were to choose a single moment at which this era commenced, it would certainly be the moment in 1500 when Vasco De Gama landed in Calicut. That was the day of Europe in the world. Interestingly enough world mastery changed hands at a time when the West was beleaguered and many voices were lamenting the lot of a hopelessly divided Europe parts of which had been swallowed up by the Turks. They had entered Constantinople in 1453, and in less than two decades had conquered many Balkan nations and were

banging at the doors of south eastern Europe. Northern Serbia was invaded in 1459, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1463, Albania in 1468. The advance was powerful and seemingly irresistible. Pope Pious was in despair:

"I cannot persuade myself that there is anything good in prospect, who will make the English love the French? Who will unite the Genoese and the Aragonese? Who will reconcile the Germans with the Hungarians and the Bohemians? If you lead a small army against the Turks you will easily be overcome; if a large one it will soon fall into confusion." Those were the years when "Europeans were conditioned to see as well as to think in terms of Christianity".²² Not because of his clarion call alone Europe repulsed Turkey at the gates of Vienna in 1529, at the gates of Malta in 1564, Belgrade in 1526. In 1571 the better known battle of Lepanto was fought and the Turkish naval power was broken in the face of the "Christian fleet" responding to the call of Pope Pious V, a century after the fall of Constantinople which lined up Christians against Islam at the time and kept up the pace for a very long while.²³

Side by side with all this, almost unaware, or at least unconcerned by the lamentations of the prelates, the volleys of the Turks, the recoiling of the Arabs into their lands and their own devices, not as much with it as they were a few years back, the process of conquering seas and oceans was at its peak now. The Portuguese and Spaniards laid the basis of world-wide European predominance. And perhaps much more. Into the Treaty of Tordesillas, in 1494, they wrote the essence of 'detente',

as 'detente' has been known since the early seventies. It divided the as yet undiscovered parts of the globe between them, and not many powers were in the way. She was busy in Europe and irritated by its vassals in Egypt and Syria. When the Cape route to India rendered the Mamluke trade in the Levant almost idle, Egypt could not watch that lucrative trade slipping, and was egged on by interested parties, in India in the East and Venice in the West. The Indians pleaded Islam and Venice pleaded ship tonnage. Egypt was not in the best of shapes on account of the in fights among the Mamlukes and the harrassing of the Sultans in Istamboul, but it had to move. Left unchallenged the diversion of trade would truly turn into the "crowning catastrophe" it is in the estimation of modern historians. The crisis helped the Mamlukes to throw up one of the luminaries of their chequered history. On 20th. April 1500 Ashraf Qansua Al-Ghuri was called upon to avert the impending catastrophe. The date of accession is so close to De Gama's landing in Calcut, and cannot be entirely fortuitous. Engrossed as they were in their feuds, they certainly had their eye on the most important item in the revenue.-- the dues charged on commodities passing through their inland and sea ports. This sturdy man of sixty had gathered himself a fleet of sorts in only eight years. From this position of modest power, he tried to persuade the Portuguese not to interfere with trade coming to Egypt by way of Aden, Jeddah and Suakin; but the Portuguese could not have been impressed. Landing in Calicut was the sweat and labour of years. Her men went round the Cape in 1488, to the West Indies in 1492,

almost got to Brazil in 1500, and her own Magellan circumnavigated South America in 1520.²⁴

By 1508, al-Ghuri had built himself the fleet just mentioned, restored the rest houses en route to the Red Sea from Cairo, dug the wells again, and scored an initial victory over the Portuguese,²⁵ who lost their flagship and its admiral Lorenzo, son of the famous Almeida. They joined battle a year later in 1509 and Egyptian carrying trade with India was doomed, and the Mamaluke dynasty was never the same again. No one was really, except the Portuguese, who soon after attacked Aden, in 1513, and therefrom held sway in Aden, the Arabian Sea, Oman and Hurmuz. It was not a very long period in terms of time. By about 1622, their trade and influence was shaken. The Portuguese chapter in East-West relations was not the dominant one any more. The English, the Dutch and the French were on the scene. It was nevertheless, the chapter that laid the foundations of East - West relations. The trail they left behind, in the attitude of the parties to each other, is with us today in many ways. They were the first Europeans to see the ocean as a universal link between the peoples of the world, between their cultures and civilisation. When they set out from their poor soil, hemmed in on all sides but the one on the Atlantic, they had no grandiose idea of themselves. Daring, imaginative, and all but a study of the economics of the enterprise, concludes by saying, " As yet it is doubtful whether either of the colonizing powers made more out of their overseas empires than they put into them. Much of the capital for the voyages was raised from Italian and German bankers, who had to be

repaid".²⁶ The conditional "as yet" refers to 1515, the end of Alfonso d'Albuquerque's period as viceroy of India. The study makes it clear that the European economy was only slightly enhanced by the consequences of voyages of De Gama and the many unknown sailors who prepared the ground for him. There was not much to record for these endeavours even by the year 1520. The Portuguese meant to be traders, but had turned into conquerors and bigotted ones at that. Pope Nicholas V authorised them "to make war on moors and pagans, seize their possessions and reduce them to perpetual slavery". This cynicism was put to practice with a vengeance. Henry the Navigator and his men did the job ferociously and safely. There was nobody to restrain them. All likely countries and men were forbidden questioning according to this pronouncement. Armed with this encouragement they faced the East. The West was not so impressed by their activities, but as time went on they began earning more and borrowing less. Their dominance of the Red Sea area gave them almost a monopoly of the trade in the area for a while. Other trades, other faiths and cultures were inconceivable now. Things went their way, they were too comfortable to be modest. They possessed some fifty establishments on the shores of the seas and these commanded 15,000 miles of coast, all held by only 2000 men, and started contemplating fanciful ideas having it all to themselves. One such fanciful idea was draining the Nile and the Red Sea. By so doing, Albuquerque thought he would discourage other nations from approaching India through Egypt, an idea which has been canvassed in every age in one form or another.²⁷

To see to it that no Moorish authority would reappear and molest the land of Prester John (Ethiopia), the Portuguese also considered closing the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, now that they were well established in Hurmuz and the Red Sea. They were "masters of the world" because of their establishment in the western extremities of the area, and "masters of the narrow seas" at the other end of the water in the Indian Ocean. As those were the times when the religious logic was the supreme logic, they could not bring themselves to recognise other creeds or respect those who held them. Elementary and instinctive logic fitted the mental make-up of such great sailor-fighter-traders as Almeida and Albuquerque.

The East-West relations started on a false step. The tone was authored by powerful prisoners of faith. The human relations that obtain today between peoples of the West and East, stem from this early phase of the "European era". Lord Acton is too perceptive a historian to have been writing with all the benefits of hindsight. The eighteen nineties, the time of his writing, was not very different from the sixteen sixties, when Portuguese man was the specimen of European man in Asia and Africa. His analysis of this initial encounter between East and West gets as near as can be to the heart of the matter. "The Portuguese lacked the diplomatic graces, and disregarded the art of making friends and acquiring ascendancy by the virtues of humanity and good faith. When it came to blows they acquitted themselves like men conscious that they were pioneers of history, that their footsteps

Were in the train of the onward march, that they were moulding the future, and making the world subservient to civilisation. They were crusaders coming the other way and robbing the Moslems of their resources."²⁸ Five centuries later a journalist visited Angola which the Portuguese colonised for as long and were ousted after fifteen years of war in the colony, and reported on the state of affairs there in terms not dissimilar from those of Lord Acton: "More than any European power, Portugal, the poorest nation in Western Europe, had pursued a policy that guaranteed eventual disaster, not only for the Empire but for the future of its colonies as well." David Lamb goes on in his Herald Tribune article of three weeks ago (May 20th. 1980) that when independence was wrested from Portugal in 1975 "98 per cent of the Angolans were illiterate. There were few with any technical skills and virtually none with university degree." Some colonisers were a shade better (Britain in Sudan) others cannot claim a less cynical record (Belgium in Zaire).

Let us stay a while with this theme, after all it is the theme that has been recurring in international relations in different guises. Many of the conflicts between East and West have some roots in this era. The seeds of the white man's mission were sown then. Religion as a factor in international relations was established more firmly, the ways of enforcing these elements more effectively than they hitherto had been enforced were outlined. A few pages after the foregoing analysis of Portuguese prowess in war, and failure in peace, Lord Acton refers to the style of alienation adopted: "Solemn

instruments had declared it lawful to expropriate and enslave Saracens and other enemies of Christ. What was in Africa²⁹ could not be wrong in Asia. Cabral had orders to treat with fire and sword any town that refused to admit either missionary or merchant. Banos the classic historian of Portuguese Asia, says that Christians have no duties towards pagans; and their best writers affirm that such calculated barbarity as they inflicted on women and children were justified by the necessity of striking terror! Albuquerque and Almeida after him were men of courage and resolution, but they were without subtlety or imagination. They were sturdy men but had no trace of intellect. They were in a sense possessed. It has been established that Albuquerque saw things that could not have been there. On one occasion he told his men he saw the cross illuminating the skies. It was brightest, he said, over the kingdom of Prester John. He affirms that he heard voices instructing him to forge an alliance with the king there and strike Mecca from the South. In fairness to his complex personality, however, one must assert that he was no more or less a "dervish" than many leading men in his time. Pope Pious V declared that he "saw" the way the battle of Lepanto, in October 1517, was going. He "saw" it all from his study in St. Peter's in the Vatican. The Sultan of Turkey was not to be beaten in the game. He chimed in "The infidels only singed my beard; it will grow again." It did not. Arab and Muslim might and civilisation was waning already in relation to that of Europe. Gone were the days when men around Charlemagne

gaped at the famous clock sent him by Haroun al-Rasheed in 807 and muttered "nowhere in the West was it possible to make or to see such mechanical wonders". Europe was not all "looting the Muslims" or the crassness of Almeida's men in Kilwa and Mombassa. Long before these great explorers and their superiors embarked on their vanity, more imaginative minds had got over the shock of Constantinople and "made the exhilarating discovery that the West had something to offer the world!" It is a sign of this that the man who lamented Constantinople in most rousing terms³⁰ is the same man who urged the 'despot' of Greece to send young citizens to Italy to "bring to Greece more advanced Western technology". Cardinal Bessarion was too good a Greek to cast aspersions on his nation's heritage. That was left to a German whose passion for sciences disturbed the slothful and excited the wonderous. Albercht Von Heller (1687-1776) was not a great one for intuition, inspiration and genius. He was one for: better telescopes, rounder lenses, nicer divisions of an inch, better syringes and scalpels. "They did more to enlarge the realm of science than did the creative genius of Descartes, than the system of Aristotle or the profound erudition of Gassendi!"³¹ Heller was no eccentric or a lonely voice in a tumult. Alexander Pope (1688-1744), the expression of this period, had already done his "Essay on Man" 1709 whom he held by the shoulder and delightedly admonished:

Go wondrous creature! mount where science guide
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tide;
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run
Correct old time and regulate the sun.

This was a far cry from the Middle Ages, when "Europe's main hope of survival continued to be placed in large measure in the hands of God!" The young Greek was now going to Italy to learn shipbuilding, manufacturing of arms, iron industries and above all else, mechanical engineering. Literacy which played the pivotal part in the advancement of Europe was an index of interest, it showed which way the wind was blowing in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth, towards a past dead and gone or a present, here and now. Most emphatically the old order was receding. The demand on classics by the young was diminishing. 89 editions of Pliny, for instance, were done in the sixteenth century but a century later only 43 editions were done, and a mere 19 in the nineteenth century. But European man was not a Godless creature sold to the science and mechanics of the period. In 1731, the European mind anticipated Sir Charles Snow and grappled with the idea of "two cultures". Fontenelle was voicing many of his contemporaries when he wrote: "A work of ethics, of politics, of criticism, perhaps of eloquence, will be finer if it is made by the hand of a geometrician!" He took the educated class to task because they tend to take nature "in little parcels", in modern language 'watertight compartments!'. He predicted that "these scattered members will be joined together in a single body!" Is this not what some call the "interdisciplinary approach"? The scientific spirit was strengthened further by kings and emperors who came to realise that their authority could be sustained only by better guns, mastery of the seas and

a little diffusion of power. The scientist was now, what the oracle was in ancient Greece. New machines and books were referred to them for examination. Inventors applied to them for patents, and the learned academies mushroomed over the Continent.³²

Turkey, however was still powerful and taken into account by Europe and Russia, because of its power, civilisation, culture and strategic position. As it came into Europe under the standard of Islam, it was seen as a challenge to the standard of Christianity. Europe and Russia never treated her as a power, they treated her as a bastion of Islam amidst their Christian nations. It is not unfair to Turkey and Portugal to see them as the chief factors in the lining up of people on the East and the West as hostile faiths; Islam versus Christianity and vice versa. The image of the Muslim as a brutal lecherous creature was a legacy of the Turks in the European mind. The image of the Christian as a grabbing beast was a creation of the Portuguese in the Muslim, Hindu and African mind. These images persist. The Muslim image had worse luck on account of its defeat in the ensuing duel. "Anyone overpowered is despised, ..." goes an ancient Arabic saying. It was about this time that the kings of Portugal went around with the ridiculous title of "King of Portugal, Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India." But how is it that the East lost to the West? This could have been an idle question in another time and another circumstance, but not now when there seems to be a feeling - a mere feeling, not reasoned logic, that Europe did it lying

down; by trickery and duplicity alone, by "imperialism", and "colonialism", two terms that seem to carry the whole weight of European advancement, together with that of the decline and fall of others. The question is important more for the others than the West. The answer cannot amuse the leaders of populace of what I call the others out of prudence. You cannot be beheaded if you are imprudent, but you can be ostracised and if you are someone of some repute, ostensibly respected and honoured and carefully left out, the powers that be, getting the credit for graciousness and open-mindedness, and the fellow or group of fellows in question left wondering whether they are wanted or unwanted. Thus paralysed, the answer to the question posed sees Turkey, China, India and the Arabs, steadily falling behind the West over the last five centuries. While Europe was perfecting its war-machine, these held fast to what they knew before. And as we are talking of seas and oceans we might as well draw our illustration from the newer naval tactics, the potentiality of which escaped the non-Westerners. The way it escaped them is discussed in one of the penetrating commentaries on East-West relations,³³ at the time. The scientific, technological and intellectual drive that had been taking shape since the fourteenth century, came to fruition in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with practical consequences that left the East behind and in time overpowered it. One important consequence was the development of weaponry in the West. Professor Cippola cites an Iberian general who saw battle with the Turks in 1664. The gap between their inherited

valour and the artillery that valour used in the battle is indicative of the plight of non-Western Turkey. The old-fashioned Turkish artillery is vividly described by the General but we cannot have it all here though a taste of it is interesting: "the enormous artillery of the Turks produces great damage when it hits, but it is awkward to move and it requires too much time to reload and right. Furthermore it consumes a great amount of powder besides cracking and breaking the wheels and the carriages and even the ramparts on which it is placed our artillery is more handy to move and more efficient and here resides our advantage over the cannon of the Turks." A century later things were the same. Europe was ahead of Turkey in weaponry. Professor Cipolla quotes another general who contended with the Turkish war machine operating in the Russian-Turkish war of 1768-1774. Baron de Tott is more technical than the Italian general but says much the same thing. The Turks were brave and shrewd certainly, but they did not catch up with Europe. The war machine was not created in a day nor was it fortuitous. Behind it was an intellectual upsurge in sciences, literature and the arts; sustaining it was the work of individual geniuses, as just mentioned, impelled by a passion for knowledge. It may or may not be a fact but it is indicative of the times that more than one reference tells us the same story about the scientist philosopher and poet, Albrecht Von Haller (1708-1777). He spent his wedding night solving a differential equation! This is important to note at a time when many are talking blithely about "transfer of technology", and as many people are discussing the way

tradition and modernity are juxtapositioned, and telling us about reconciling them or grafting one onto the other as if any of this could be done. It is important to note also because official missions on technical aid have been going East from the West for almost forty years now, that is, from after the last war, and "know How" and pamphlets and broadcasts have been crowding the air and U.S.I.S. shelves, helped along by training courses, refresher courses and crash courses. The West is not niggardly, the East is not uneducable, but not much seems to come out of these endeavours. It is the way history will have it. Abilities, competence and intelligence seem to have an as yet unrevealed way of travelling from one spot to another. A Chinese sage put the dilemma in words that reflect the gap between the desirability of levelling out wealth and technology even if a little, and the obstinacy of the means used thus far: "Since we were knocked out by cannon balls, naturally we became interested in them, thinking that by learning to make them we could strike back. We could forget for the time being from whose hand they had come, since for us common mortals to save our lives was more important than to save our souls. But history seems to move in very curious ways. From studying cannon balls we came to mechanical inventions, which in turn led us to political reforms; from political reforms we began to see political theories, which led us again to the philosophies of the West. On the other hand through mechanical inventions we saw science, from which we came to understand scientific method and the scientific mind. Step by step we were led further and further away from the cannon ball-

yet we came nearer and nearer it! These words were not written centuries ago. They were written in 1947 by Dr. M. Chiang in "Tides from the West",³⁴ a time of torment in China.

Turkey, the Arabs before them, Persia, China and India are now all out of the way in the face of the superior power of science and technology, both allied to an intellectual upsurge that served as a solid container for both, providing inspiration and creativity. We are now in what historians call "The Age of Imperialism" and some date it between 1880-1914. Heinrich Freidjung, the man who coined the phrase maintains that the most important characteristic of imperialism while it lasted was "that the power impulse became conscious, and was thus elevated to a directive for action! One hardly need say the date helps to talk and write, a mere device, no delineation. The European era we are emerging from in our narrative, and which was the prelude to "The age of imperialism" was long in receding; as long as it was slow in coming, perhaps as it should be in the rythm of history. It started the long march in the fourteenth century by the vigour we allude to in matters of the mind and matters of war. "...the power impulse" conceived by Proboss or Freidjung, did not elevate itself "to a directive for action" with a bang. It reached brazenly aggressive heights in this latter part of the nineteenth century, but it had been gathering sinews over the three previous centuries. The seventeenth century was the seminal era of great discoveries, the eighteenth was that of transferring the scientific spirit to other intellectual pursuits, the nineteenth century transformed the

European material environment and opened greater horizons to the creative abilities. Time was strained. It contained events that happened within it, by stretching its finite limits, it could not allow them to spill over into nothing. The powers that initiated the activity were many; England, France, Russia, Germany and the Netherlands chiefly. The race for acquisition between them started years before "The Imperialist Age". It was three-pronged, one blazed over Arab lands, another towards the Horn of Africa and the third towards Central Asia. In their march towards acquisition, England, France, Italy and Russia had to cross paths and conclude many treaties. They were broken as often as they were concluded and the alignment of powers were as often agreed upon and renounced. More permanent than the treaties and alignments was the mental attitude and intellectual climate in which wars were fought and peace was negotiated. The principal themes that persisted then seem to die hard. They linger on today, if not in the very form of yesterday, in subtle guises. One of them was the determination of Europe to see the end of Turkey there; if not expelled completely, then a weakened empire. Russia made no bones about this. It was a tenet of her foreign policy that never changed. Another of these persistent themes was to do with Europe and Russia. She was feared at times but most of the time looked upon as an intruder in Europe not to be tolerated, whether there or overseas. The third persistent theme within the western camp and that of Russia, was that the nations overseas, in Asia, Africa and later in the Americas, were the natural hunting ground

for them, the powerful, the more enlightened. The ancient civilisations of these lands were extolled and romanticised; they were dead and therefore harmless. The Soviet Union today is loudest in denouncing this attitude of Europe, past and present, but as late as the eighteen nineties, the Russians seem to have shared ideas then current in Europe about negroes. Though he was impressed by the Ethiopians, Father Porfiry Uspensky, (1804-1885) whom we shall meet later in our narrative, recorded in his diary published in 1896, a number of remarks that lead us to believe that he was not sure whether negroes were not inferior beings. They "could not have descended from Adam because of their colour, but from a black creation of the Lord, created along with the animals earlier than this first man, as a transition between him and the monkeys!"³⁵ It is worth noting here that "Uspensky's writings on Ethiopia established the theoretical basis for all of Czarist Russia's subsequent activities in sub-Saharan Africa." He was no ordinary monk; this indefatigable traveller, writer and politically talented man. His views were not that definite, often ameliorated by his religious upbringing; they worried him at times they were "incompatible with that brotherhood to which the words of the Gospel command men!"³⁶ Czarina Catherine, "though belonging to an earlier period on the throne (1762-96) was more certain of her ground. Her talents and genius lay elsewhere, not in religion. She treated that rather casually, changing from one church to another according to whim and ambition. The "Annals" of Tacitus seem to have guided her more than the

Gospels. On reading him she said she "began to see everything in black and searched to find deeper and was more interested in motives for the happenings around me" ³⁷ she pursued her purpose single-mindedly. With her eye on the Bosphorous and a pied-a terre in Egypt she was already contemplating the division of Ottoman spoils. In 1788, she proposed a Franco-Russian expedition to Egypt, but as Louis XVI was not forthcoming she resumed her earlier overtures to the Mamelukes in Egypt, promising the recognition of interdependence if they managed to wrest it from the Porte with her diplomatic and military aid, advising them "to throw out the Ottomans" and urged them "do not bear anyone for we are capable of protecting you against everyone" "...We have all the money and all the men you will ask of us, and even more than you can imagine!" The latter is a masterpiece of reporting in Al Jabarti's chatty style, most attentive to detail. It is reproduced in notes at the end. The Czarina's endeavours did not come to much but it is interesting to note that her consul in Alexandria succeeded in establishing a military presence for Russia in Egypt. "So great was this influx, in fact, that by 1786 it was estimated that one-fourth of the Egyptian militia was composed of Czarist troops!" ³⁸ The interest of Russia in Africa was coming to the fore. We will come back to this later.

The picture is complex and the lines overlap and criss cross each other. While leaving Russia at the door of Africa, in Egypt, it may be useful to have a preliminary look at the Asian theatre also, at this time when

the European era had done its work almost, and merging into the Age of Imperialism. Competition for trade and trade routes is now fiercer and subtler. Europe in the wake of the Franco-German war (1870-71) was going through relatively prosperous years. The infighting was halted for a period by the system of balance of power. There were many alliances and counter alliances guarded jealously by heavy arms "and with millions of men under arms!" This had to be paid for. Trade was the answer, and conquest if need be. We had a glimpse of this activity in North-east Africa; contemporaneously with the activities of Europe there and in the Horn, European eyes were focused on the Eastern Corner of the Eastern Question having had a settlement, however uneasy, expensive and divisive, in East and East-Central Europe, after the Crimean War.

The British who had been in India since the inception of the East India Company³⁹ were the first to take the initiative in going East. In 1799, Sir John Malcolm of India was in Persia "... to restore India from the annual alarm of Zemann Shah's invasions (from Afghanistan); to counteract the possible attempts of those villanous but active democrats the French; and to restore to some part of its former prosperity, a trade which has been in a great degree lost!" Sir John confides this to his diary with the rumblings of the French Revolution still on his mind, even ten years after. France was not to be beaten at the game. It very soon had occasion to counter. Persia afforded her the chance. Fearful of Russian encroachment on her north-eastern frontier, the treaty of 1807 was concluded with her. France got at Britain with a vengeance.

Persia agreed to break political and commercial relations with Britain, to expel British consuls in Persian cities and confiscate British goods coming into Persian ports. The treaty did not live long because by the time it was signed, France had lost Mauritius and British sea power in the Indian Ocean was supreme. Her trade and other ties with Persia were restored, and she had to contend with Russia in place of France. She had been warring with Persia for over twenty years and gaining territory in 1813, 1828, and 1838. Britain was wary of this. It came at the worst of times for her in the area. While gaining influence and territory in Iran, she was losing face and prestige in Afghanistan. An Anglo-Indian army of 30,000 reached the heart of Kabul in 1838 but in 1841 the Afghans rose against their own Shah who allowed such ignominy, killed him and massacred the infidels. Of the 4,500 Englishmen in the garrison only one survived to tell the story of this fury against the tribesmen's sense of honour and transgression of their creed. The first British attempt on Afghanistan ended in humiliation. The Duke of Wellington, not known for hyperbole, wrote saying "There is not a Muslem heart from Peking to Constantinople, which will not vibrate... It is impossible that that fact should not produce a moral effect injurious to British influence and power throughout the whole extent of Asia." Britain's bad consciousness was slightly calmed when almost at the same time, in 1842, Russian troops marching on Khiva lost some 3000 men in the bitter cold desert, and that was not the first reversal Russia sustained in her onslaught on Afghanistan; she had tried the same city in 1605, 1717 and

1739. She managed thirty years later in 1873. Those were the years of her ascendancy; she had perfected her war machine by then, and went at it with dogged determination. The Afghani casualties were enormous. In some battles they were two hundred and more times severer than those of the Russians.

Britain saw in the Russian thrust, her age-long drive to reach the hot waters. She was confirmed in her belief not out of the European experience alone, but by the way Russia was using her influence in Persia. She prompted the Persians to attack Afghanistan. Sir Malcolm who watched the scene struck a note which has been repeated by many after him, including Palmerston and Curzon. "The Russians", he reported, with this short period (ten years between his first and second trip to Persia) had advanced their frontier from the north to Caucasus to the Araxes, a distance of about four hundred miles! To him and his staff in India this was not different from Napoleon's attempts at getting to India from Central Asia, having failed to do so from Egypt. He had laid his plans for claiming the bear of Russia and the lion of Persia, with the design of harnessing them to his war chariot that he might drive in triumph over the rich plains of India! That danger was averted however, but the Russian danger to British interests in Persia, Afghanistan and India, was still hanging over Britain's head.

In March 1857, Britain managed to extract a promise from Persia that it would not tamper with Afghan independence any more. Those were propitious times for

the West and catastrophic times for Russia. The promise not to tamper with the Afghani independence would not have been possible had not Russia been weakened by her defeat in the Crimea. The promise was extracted only a year after concluding the Paris Treaty on 16th. April 1856. Of all the invasions of Russia by the West, because Crimea "in essence was an invasion of Russia by the West", this was "By far the most successful"⁴⁰ Writing as I am only about a week after the gathering of Nato powers in Brussels and the Warsaw Pact countries in Warsaw, one talking of chemical war and Russian plans and the other talking of preserving the détente, one cannot help but see a common denominator between the steps that led to the situation Professor Taylor is describing and this current one. Czar Nicholas I (1825-1855) in one of his many visits to Europe prior to the Crimean War is reported to have said to the British Prime Minister "... so many powder barrels close to the fire; how shall one prevent the sparks from catching!" A Russian army was at the time poised against a British fleet and a French squadron all in close proximity. Ten years later in 1854, the sparks duly caught. Will it be 1990 then? Those who warn us of a situation like that which preceded the 1914 war, are not really prophets of doom. The world scene at this moment cannot be very dissimilar from the rumblings that heralded the Crimean war or those that brought the First World War in its wake. The really significant thing to remember, however, is that though shattered and humiliated in 1856 Russia was not down and out. The so-called "Pendulum"⁴¹ theory was in full swing a mere

twenty years or so. It turned East. It took Tashkand in 1865, Bukhara in 1866, Samarkand in 1868 and Turkestan in 1869. The sailing must have been plain and the going good for Czar Alexander II (1881-1894). In an aside at a meeting over which he presided, he whispered cheerfully and seriously "Konstantin Petrovich, take Kiva for me!" General Von Kaufmann obliged; a year later in 1872, Khiva which had proved impregnable before, was taken. For Lord Curzon, energetic viceroy of India there was nothing to be cheerful about. These strategic cities were falling too rapidly for his comfort, one after the other bringing Russia nearer to India, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. In 1877, Russia was within fifty miles of Herat and Mer v, and Britain distracted on the Nile by Arabi and the Mahdi in 1882 did rather badly in the battle against Afghanistan in 1878, run at the time by a king who owed his position to the Russians. In 1883 Russia took Mer v; Curzon was incensed. London was lukewarm, and both her eyes were on the Nile. Again those were not dissimilar days from our own. Side by side with news of Gordon and the Mehdi, the names of Herat and Merv became the daily diet of the press. The Afghan cities taken by Russia were the gateway to India. The chief power in the West of the time was involved in more than one issue besetting it. Lord Curzon, however, was not a person to be subdued by crisis ; he was a superperson in his own estimation. "He raged against what struck him as complacency or mixing priorities or innaneness"

"Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcapia, Persia...to many these names breathe only a sense of utter remoteness" he wrote

to his masters in London. The term "appeasement" was not yet invented but he would have used it if it were. "or a memory of strange vicissitudes and of moribund romance. To me, I confess, they are pieces on a chess-board upon which is being played out a game for the dominance of the world! More venomous was his attack on the idea of a gift port to Russia. This was entertained in 1892 by some politician to satisfy Russia's "urge to the sea". A single port in the Persian Gulf studded as it is from Basra to Hurmuz cannot do much harm to British trade or political influence. "I should regard the concession of a port upon the Persian Gulf, to Russia, as a deliberate insult to Great Britain, as a wanton rupture of the status quo and as an international provocation to war."⁴² He and other like-minded believers in the Empire and its "missions" prevailed on cautious counsels and Britain launched an attack on Afghanistan from Herat in 1885, but the war was abandoned even before it began. For reasons to do more with the European diplomatic scene and the horrors of war in such terrain over these many years, rather inconclusively, Russia and Britain signed a protocol defining the northern borders of Afghanistan, in September 1885. The whole episode looked as if it were closing. "Indeed in 1907 the British and the Russians signed a classic imperialist document affirming Afghanistan's territorial integrity while leaving the country in Britain's care," says Professor Firuz, commenting on the apparent end of the "Big Game!"

And it was only apparent. Russia could not have done

otherwise. She was trying to put her difficult house in order after the December Revolution of 1905. Britain was not really a loser but again, she was busy hedging French onslaughts in Africa and Egypt. It was only three years after the 1904 agreement between them on leaving Britain alone in Egypt, and letting France go at North Africa. And all were chary of the gathering storms of the Big War.

In all this Russia was not without her own sense of "mission" in this period. It was not impelled by reasons of trade and trade routes alone. Europe which had been watching the duel between her and Britain in Asia, reckoned that in spite of her preoccupations at home and engagements in Europe, it had been expanding her frontiers at the rate of fifty square miles a day over the four centuries preceding the fateful year 1914. The "mission" was undertaken, upheld and articulated by men of stature in the arts diplomacy and military sciences Peter's (1682-1725) was a surgical operation delicate and painful, but it started to pay off these many centuries later. A great many men and women in authority now, were more inclined to pull up Russia by her bootstraps rather than carry on the dependence on Europe. A new breed of military strategists, statesmen and literary figures, all of them cultivated in Europe or in European institutions copied in Russia, and not a little angered by the attitudes of Europeans towards Russia and the Russians, turned Slaphoviles. ⁴³ Those imponderable sides of technology that no amount of authoritarianism can transmit from the West to the East, and Peter was not temperamentally fitted to apprehend anyway, came to change and stay

in Russia long after him. And they came over as a blizzard. Dostoevskij is one of those who made the blizzard. He was not one of those generous souls, but every word he wrote took the country by the neck. Nobler and more refined hearts and talents, like those of Jurgurev, were appreciated but their views were not taken; they were sympathetic to western ways, they left their admirers cold. Not so Dostoevskij. His views and emotions touched a sensitive chord in the Russian ego. His meanness and crudities were not only tolerated but even forgiven. His biographers make a point of his recluse life and his funeral that was attended by weepy men and women of Moscow, like no funeral was followed. His motions of the Russian church, indeed the "Russian Christ" stirred the imagination of every Russian. The "very being" of the "Russian Christ is contained in our orthodoxy" though "unknown to the wider world" to its deteriments. "In my opinion, here is found the principle of our future civilising force, and of Europe's resurrection at our hands, the very essence of our future strength".⁴⁴ Nations and tribes before them, have always claimed a special godliness and place among others. It was no different in Russia, if not a bit more so. A maid of honour in the court during the East-West confrontation in the Guinea, which were also the years of Slaphovile ascendancy, had no doubt that God will never forsake Russia, and put that in the most touching manner of the unquestionable faithfuls. "A

terrible struggle has burst upon us. Monumental and contradictory forces are on a collision course, the East and West, the Slavic world and the Latin world ... what will be the outcome of this struggle between two worlds? There can be no doubt. Russia fights not for material gain and worldly interests, but for eternal ideas. We, in Russia, are on the side of truth and ideals".⁴⁵

These mystic visions of Russia's destiny articulated by highly endowed intellectuals and embraced as articles of faith by the people, were given a logic of their own by men of action. They were mostly as brilliant as their Western rivals in justifying their territorial acquisitions. The noted soldier diplomat Prince A.M. Gorchakov, was such a one. Russian strategists were charting their route to Tashkend in 1865, he delighted Czar Alexander II, who had some compunctions about the conquests in Central Asia. He wrote to him in a dispatch that eased the conscience of the master, that what was happening had to happen". The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilised states which are brought into contact with half savage nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organisation. In such cases, it always happens that the more civilised state is forced in the interest of security of its frontiers and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character makes undesirable neighbours". The Prince goes on to say that this was not only true of Russia, it was true of other civilised nations in a similar predicament. "The go deeper

and deeper into barbarous countries that was the fate of the United States in her frontier days in the American West, France in Algeria, Holland, England in India, all have been irresistably forced, less by ambition than by imperious into this onward movement, where the greatest difficulty is to know where to stop.⁴⁶ This may read like a hypocritical case for aggrandisement, but it is no less no more hypocritical than the views and sentiments held by his Western adversaries in that Age of Imperialism. And could not have been pure and simple hypocrisy. More likely half truths plausible enough in the state of knowledge of the world beyond Europe - both East and West. France maintains throughout the eighteen nineties that she had no need for colonies. In the same breath she was acquiring them. Many still tell you that the British Empire was thrust into Britain's lap in a bit of absent-mindedness. Perhaps in patches of the long history of England, but not in the design as a whole. It was John Milton (1608-1674) who welcomed the English Revolution, as an act of god, "... decreeing to begin some new and great period". He revealed himself "first to Englishmen". Indeed Cromwell and other "God's Englishmen" ushered in an era. England was the first country on the road to the modern world, how much God had to do with that, it takes a Milton or Dostoevesky to dare say.

It was at this stage in Russia's politics of expansion that it turned to the Red Sea and its environs, and for the same number of complex reasons, mostly interlaced, that is the commercial, the drive to the hot waters, the desire not to be left out of the race for empire-building and, of course, the religious. It is usually maintained that her interest in this area of our concern now was brought to a peak in 1889 and began to decline in 1903, in other words, between the height of the scramble for North East and Central and before the Russo-Japanese war. Interest in the Horn, particularly Ethiopia, the one Christian country in the area as keen as Russia in breaking the muslim hold on it, represented at the time, by the Ottoman Empire, holding nominal sway in Sudan, Egypt, the Red Sea littoral south of Bab-al.-Mandab to the shores of modern Tanzania. Russia was some fifty years late in penetrating Africa, the way East Europe did through its explorers, missionaries and armies in the end. She came to it through her desire to get to India, like others did. Her efforts to get there by land were not that fruitful, as we have seen up to this point in our story of acquisitions in Central Asia. As long ago as the reign of Peter I (1682-1725) she thought of circumnavigating Africa to achieve that goal. He tried to persuade the Mogul ruler to enter into commercial relations, but India was not responsive, chary of Europe, having had a taste of its ways during the Portuguese era in Calicut and beyond. His other springboard to India was Madagascar, which was visited by an admiral envoy, instructed to invite the "highly esteemed king and owner of the glorious island"

to Russia and "by all means to learn from him whether he wishes to have commercial relations with us". Imperialism, in the sense we now know, was not on the Czar's mind, after all; his was not the first mission south. He was in line with the general attitude of Russia long before him,⁴⁷ and her attitude towards the south ever since his pioneer days. His Russian biographer asserts that "Madagascar - was needed by Peter, not for itself, but as a convenient way station in the trade between St. Petersburg and which was luring all of the European world - India". But Russia's interest in Africa became rather incidental thereafter. She had Europe and Turkey to contend with, her adventures in Central^{Asia} were not a walk-over, and her own decade of trouble "within" distracted her from serious undertakings in the Horn. The European powers carved out Africa at leisure, with a minimum of friction among them, notably those between Britain and France.

The interest of Russia did not completely wane because of the factors mentioned. They were even travelling far beyond her frontiers. In 1855, Emperor Theodore II of Tigray approached Nicholas on a Russo-Ethiopian alliance against Egypt and Turkey, but there were the years of Crimea. Tigray was not to give up. Theodore's successor approached Alexander II, "as fellow enemy of the Turks" and those were the years of infighting of ideologies in Russia. It was not until 1860 that Russia could give her wholehearted attention to Ethiopia, which by then had developed into the focus of her activities. This was the work of a single man whom we briefly met

in our narrative, the Orthodox monk, Porbiry Uspensky (1804-1885). The concept of religious rapprochement between Russia and Ethiopia as a basis for political cooperation has been in the air for some time but it was left to this brilliant churchman, diplomat, traveller and devotee of Slaphovilism, to set forth in convincing terms the rationale for Russian religious and political penetration of Ethiopia. From his post in Jerusalem as head of the Orthodox mission between 1848-1854, he became an authority on the Middle East and Ethiopia, with whose Orthodox mission in Jerusalem, he was most intimate. His reports to Russia and writings on Ethiopia became "the cornerstone of Russian ecclesiastical policy in Africa".⁴⁸ But certainly it was much more. "Uspensky was convinced that Ethiopia offered the best possible base from which to launch a Christian civilising mission in Africa. Since Christianity had already raised the people of Ethiopia above their barbarian neighbours, he maintained, that country could be looked to as a source of political as well as religious leadership for the rest of the African Continent." The ultimate end was to "use Ethiopia as a base from which to disseminate the message of Orthodox Christianity throughout the interior of Africa". To achieve this goal the Ethiopian monarchy was to be given every help and encouraged in all its ambitions to build up an army on modern lines. Like all overeager politico - religious zealots, Uspensky at times, crossed the boundaries of reason into those of vision. Russia, he wrote, must encourage this process and try "to determine the strength and the religio-political aspirations of the kingdom adjacent to Ethiopia - Adel, Sennar, Kordoban, Darbur, Kambat and to help Abyssenia annex these kingdoms and

providing in case it is necessary and opportune advice, arms and money in the interest of spreading Christian enlightenment inside Africa and linking Abyssenia with Timbahta and Senegambia by means of railroad".⁴⁹

Uspensky, his friends in St. Petersburg, and masters in the Kremlin were too engrossed in their own designs and thoughts of grandeur and mission, to note that Britain had long wormed its way in the area. This is a better known story, of course, but the very bare outlines of it should be recalled if only to suggest that Russian endeavours to hold Ethiopia, hence Egypt and the fanciful chain of Kingdoms were late in the day. With the coming of Britain in Egypt early in the nineteenth century to finally occupy it in 1882, the strategic importance of Ethiopia, had taken a much greater dimension than before. Through her many travellers and explorers, England had been aware of that since the seventeenth Century. With the construction of the Canal in the 1860's, her interest in Ethiopia was renewed then and vastly intensified later. She could not afford an enemy sitting astride Ethiopia and the Red Sea Ports. Many saw Disraeli's swift action in buying the controlling shares of Suez in 1875 as an "insurance against a take-over by Russia and as a barrier to the Eastward shipment of Russian arms". And that was no speculation on the part of observers. A mere eight years after the opening of the Canal in 1869 and only two years after the Disraeli Coup it was closed in the face of Russia in 1877, according to the wishes of Britain. She was now the Chief Imperial adversary to Russia in place of Turkey.

The stakes were too high for Russia to abandon the ideas building up over two centuries, or for Britain to accommodate Russian needs. These were not trifling needs either. It was not for nothing that de Lesseps was extended a warm reception when he visited Russia in 1858, seeking support for his project. Russia bought shares in his canal company and had a member appointed on the board of directors. With the extension of her boarders into Central Asia, the Commercial importance of the Canal was considerably enhanced. The distance between Odessa and Bombay was cut by seventy per cent. By 1871, Russia was the eighth largest user of the Canal. On both strategic and commercial counts, Russia could not afford not to put up a fight. Admittedly with the collaboration of France, she was able to argue Britain into accepting the mutuality of this waterway, and awarding sovereignty over it to Egypt in the Constantinople Convention of 1888, but she well know that "Passage through Suez will depend upon the goodwill of England as long as she occupies Egypt".

The ball set rolling by Uspensky, in the eighteen sixties, was kept going until about the end of the Century. Three men stand out as the chief characters in the dramatic persons, and it is no exaggeration calling this episode in the history of the Red Sea and its adjacent countries drama. All the ingredients of a drama are there, colourful men, adventure, secrecy, dark alleys, heroism, and pathetic failure. The series opens with an officer named Nicholas Ivanovitch Askinov in 1888, goes on to a Mashov in 1889 and concludes with an Elisiev in 1895.

When Askinov set on his colonial expedition in 1888, he was very much in tune with the Russian mood at the time and therefore came away with enormous sympathy supporting him in government circles, in the Church and among the people at large. The pace towards the south for the Bosphorous was proving impossibly slow and costly, the thrust towards central further East Asia, had come to a halt and the British control over the Suez Canal was increasingly getting stronger and stronger. There was need for an outlet other than Balkans and Asia, and Africa was the obvious one. When he arrived in Jedda on his way to Tajura Bay, opposite Djibuti, the welcoming French Consul there summed up the situation in the area neatly, in a speech addressed to the illustrious visitor. Both France and Russia, he said, were very much aware of a need for "creating at the heart of the Red Sea an independent and civilised nation (Ethiopia) capable of being the guardian of a straits which must henceforth play in the policy of the maritime powers a role no less considerable than that of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles".⁵⁰

It must immediately be mentioned that apart from the influential Slaphoviles of the times, none seemed to believe that much will come out of the expedition, inspite of the eloquent pleas of Askinov. Members of government went along simply because they felt they could disown him if "... that enterprise which he has already initiated on the banks of the Nile" did not materialise. After all "In such enterprises the most convenient tools are cut-throats of the likes of Askinov". Alexander III was prophetic, very much pressed by some of his advisers to give

him an audience, he did. He noted immediately though that "... this sly old fox Askinov will dupe everyone, rob everyone, and throw them out". He was chary of risking the growing friendship between Russia and France, and of incurring the wrath of Britain and Italy, who have already had considerable interests in the area, and who therefore acted in concert against possible intruders. The strategic advantages involved, however, were too enormous to counsel caution and, anyway, that was "a time when nearly all governments, one after another, and often at great sacrifice... are stirring to seize points along the African Coast, a handful of Russian Cossacks occupied the shore of Tafoura Bay, recognising not only the geographical, but particularly the strategic importance of this bay in the event of war with Britain". Primarily, because of her control of the Suez Canal, occupation of Egypt, eye on the Sudan and determination not to let Ethiopia fall into hostile hands, be they Russian or French at the time of Askinov, both British and Italian Chanceries in the area and the metropolitan capitals were busy watching the labours of the expedition on the coast and the interior and alerting France. Her part of Obok on Tajura Bay taken in 1862 was the most wanted target of the expedition. So were the friendships she has been collaborating since the early 1880s among the Somalis and over the Coast. France had already gone far in her friendship with Russia, and was too intent on constraining Britain, to bother about this "handful of Cossacks" gripped by the apparently fanciful idea of constructing "New Moscow" in Tajura Bay. France did not doubt that Russia acknowledges her sovereignty over that

entry to the Red Sea. Askinov and his party were too eager to know. They had meetings with the Danahil Chief and tended to deal with him as an independent chief whose authority extended to Lagallo, not far away from Tajura. Working on the Sultan's desire for arms, they struck an intimate friendship with him and moved into a fortress in Lagallo. The French who had already an inkling of Askinov's ways, when he insisted on raising the Russian flag over "New Moscow" informed the Czar of the mischief, and obtained permission to deal with him. On February 17, 1889, the French Red Sea Squadron attacked "New Moscow" and ended the first Russian Colonial adventure, with no consequences on Franco-Russian relations. The Lagallo incident has been forgotten as "a sad and stupid comedy" as described by Alexander, when told of the details of the bombarding. But not really. That was the remark of a statesman, wriggling out of a crisis he foresaw but did not prevent. The incident had a number of consequences, not all of them pertaining to this study.

The man who took up from where he left was of much more solid material and trusted by the Czar, Government and Church. His Central Asia encounters with Britain was one of the points in his favour, when it came to choosing the head of a "scientific" expedition to Ethiopia. He was Lt. V.F. Vasili Mashkov. Though shaped in the mantle of a scientist at the head of a "scientific" expedition, when he first arrived in Ethiopia, in October 1889, he had several meetings with Menelik who appreciated him immensely as the "military representative

of his brother, the Nugus of Muscovy". It does not look as if he did a great deal more than Askinov in acquiring ports in the area and influence in Ethiopia, but he was no reckless gambler. His reports were so balanced and so informative, that he was sent back to Ethiopia in early 1891. He pleased Menelik by listening hard to his denunciation of Italian claims of protecting Ethiopian interests under the famous article 17 of the Treaty of Ucciali, 1889 and by affirming that his country was for the independence of Ethiopia. He did not in any of these conversations betray his instructions "to mould the religious question into a powerful lever to be used in Abyssenia, as it was heretofore employed against the Turks in the Balkan Peninsula". Or his reflections after meeting with the Abunas of the Church. "Russian protection" of Ethiopia's religious matters was not an impossible ambition, he thought and wrote in his diary. Nor did he reveal that his innermost hope was to "... transfer into (Russian) hands the armed forces of the country". In fact, when he went back in August 1892 he transmitted a request from Menelik, asking for arms and instructors for the army. Those were the years when Menelik "was ready to buy any number of guns, any quantity of ammunition and he paid well those prepared to provide him with them". The Italians poured in enormous quantities of both as soon as Assab was open; the French did the same through Obok and Tajura Bay. England was in two minds about arms sales. All these powers had reasons of their own to woo Ethiopia, and oftentimes conflicting interests and different motives to sell. And events that called for changing sides and

attitudes were numerous, because apart from the European race for the Red Sea, there was the bloody hostility between Johnnes of Tigrai and Menelik in Shoa, and their fluctuating relations with the Mahdi administration in Khartoum. There was also the question of Egypt farther north. Musawaa was at the time still a Khedieval possession, but when his armies had to be withdrawn from Sudan, Britain now in effective control of Egypt, had to win Johnne's back for the Egyptian army on his borders to pass through his territory to Musuwaa. The Negus did all the passage in lieu of Britain permitting him to use the same port for importing arms.⁵² But that was not to go on for long. The kings of the north were exorbitant, and not to be relied upon as friends, and France was pressing. Britain had to fall back on her old ally, Italy. When it took Musawaa in February 1885, she was happier and indeed encouraged it. Russia was temporarily happy to be in the scene when Askinov constructed his short lived "New Moscow" in Tajura.

It fell to the third person in the Russian-Ethiopian Saga, to do some of the things Cardinal Uspensky, Mr Askinov and St. Mashhov attempted to do, but did not manage much more than preparing the ground for the last of the "scientists" and "Churchmen" who used both Church and science cloaks for Imperial designs. He was an arms doctor by the name of A.V. Eliseev, a more ubiquitous character than all his predecessors, but no more lucky in delivering the message of his masters, that is getting Ethiopia under Russian influence, and acquiring bases at the mouth of the Red Sea.

Those who closely followed the activities of the three men concluded their looking at Eliseev's expedition by saying that "In a political sense, the intimacy between Imperial Russia and Ethiopia". But he achieved more than this; without his endeavours in delivering arms and training men in Russia and at home, it would not have been easy for Ethiopia to win the war in Makkala, December 1885, and Adwa, March 1896. But Russia had to attend to other theaters of war by way of consolidating her central Asian possessions, in readiness to meet the rising power of Japan in 1905. The nineteenth Century was coming to a close in the Red Sea and adjacent countries far more quietly, almost surreptitiously, than it started, because that was also about the time when the British troops were withdrawn from the Southern Coast of the Red Sea. General Gordon had been defeated in Khartoum, in 1885, and the battles against the Sudanese garrisons in Suahion were not making much headway. Britain had to attend to Central Asia where Russia had already taken Merv in 1884. and gone the way you have seen until the 1907 agreement. They both had to leave this corner of the stage to its own devices. The lesson they took East with them at the close of the last Century remains as true in the context of current events at the closing years of the twentieth Century. It is well put by Edward Wilson: "... if the English could see the strategic link between Afghanistan and Eritrea, so could the Russians. In many ways the Red Sea Coast provided an inviting alternative to the geographical arduous path towards India via Nerv and Herat. Certainly, it provided a valuable strategic loca-

tion for sabotaging the British position in Egypt and for interfering with Britain's all important line of communication with India. Neighbouring Ethiopia, moreover, which was known to be kindly disposed towards Russia, possessed similar strategic attributes - an historically recognised potential for threatening Egypt and geographical proximity to the Suez route". Dr. Wilson goes on to quote the Berlin correspondent of a Russian paper of the times. He says in his dispatch "... a seawatered Abyssenia could become a watchman for the southern gates of the Red Sea". Thus Ethiopia and the surrounding territories promised to become an area in which Russia's anti-British manouvres might find political and strategic rewards. As such, this area was destined to provide the stage for Russia's first entrance into the politics of sub-Saharan Africa".

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. John Millais: Far away up the Nile. Longmans, 1924. pp. 75-79. Interesting material on movement of peoples, a summary of the ascertained facts about the African element in Egyptian racial mixture and cultural heritage. Mr. Millais goes back 9000 years in collating his evidence.
2. Rev. Dr. Richard Reush: History of East Africa, Evangelical missions verlag, 1954 p. 23. See also Arnold Wilson: The Persian Gulf, George Allen and Unwin, 1954, Chapter II "The Persian Gulf in the Earliest Historical Times", pp. 18-25.
3. Ibid p. 127.
4. This is the term used by the Hahilut society, which published in 1949 a description of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Eastern approaches of Arabia "at the Close of the seventeenth Century" by Joseph Pitts, William Daniel and Charles Jacques Poncet. Interesting on chief cities, Cairo, Gondar and Mecca for instance and the social and political structures in the three countries then.
5. Reush, op. cit. p. 15.
6. James Henry Breasted: A History of Egypt, first published 1909, the edition referred to here is Charles Scribner's, 1978. For detours to Red Sea and Mediterranean in this period, see Breasted p. 485.

7. Uzal in this verse is Sana of Yemen, Sephar is Dhofar of Oman. Both Seba and Joktan occur as they are in classical Arabic Literature and geograph. Most of these names are retained in Greek and Roman travel accounts, except in a few cases, that of Perim and Aden for instance; they become Ocelius and Endaemon.
8. A discussion of this point is in Werner Keller: translated by William Neil, Hodder and Stoughton, 1956, p. 126-27.
9. Al Nuairi : The End of Literature - The First Voyage, pg. 231-246.
10. There are superb maps in Sir John Bagot Glub: Peace in the Holy Land: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971. The maps are in Chapters IV and V, "Glorious Days" and "Decline and decadence", p. 55-87.
11. Freya Stark: The Southern Gates of Arabia, first edition, 1936, Penguin Edition, 1945. Miss Stark quotes Pliny on Arabia's wealth. "It is the luxury of man, which is displayed even in the paraphernalia of death, that has rendered Arabia thus - Happy.
 "The introduction is good on the quantity and value of incense exported from Arabia, and the kingdoms that blossomed in this trade". One after another they grew rich on their strip of the great highway; their policy was urged by the desire to control more of it, to control especially the incense regions of the south and the outlets to the sea; they became imperial and aristocratic, builders of tall cities; they colonised Somaliland and Ethiopia.

12. Ibid, p. 15-16.
13. Jamal-Ali; Details from the History of the Arabs, 3rd vol. (in Arabic).
14. T.R. Glover: The Ancient World, Cambridge University Press, 1935, Pelican Books, 1944, p. 43-46. tell the story of this forerunner of other Greek sailors, who is not as well known as his successors.
15. These ships were described by the sixth Century sailor trader Procopocius Calsarensis who visited India, Ceylon, Somalia and Ethiopia. "They" the ships "are not greased with pitch or anything else, the boards are knocked together by iron nails, but they are tied with ropes" "Most unlike the Greek ship that brought Procopocius, and a far cry from the shows that Swahili speaking peoples of East Africa used in the Middle Ages when they bustled to and from the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The essay from which this description is quoted contains useful information on Greek sailors and historians in the Horn of Africa. It is by YU M. Kobishchanov, in the Journal of African History, C.U.P., vol. VI, No 2, 1965. "On the problems of sea voyages of Ancient Africans in the Horn of Africa".
16. Quoted by Sir Arnold Wilson: The Persian Gulf, George Allen and Unwin, second impression, 1954, p. 9.
17. Quoted by Philip Hitti: History of the Arabs, Mac Millan, 6th Edition, 1965, p. 49.

18. "The Red Sea and adjacent Countries" op. cited pp. 173-182. In an appendix, the book produces: Ovington's notes on the Red Sea Ports, Mocha, Karman (Comoron Island), Jidda, Suez. The Rev. John Ovington: A Voyage to Suratt; 1969, said to be "a keen and diligent observer", he acted as chaplain at the East India Company's factory at Surat from 1690 to 1693.
19. Dr. Abdul Jabar: Al Jumcod Harun al Rashid; The Arabic Bookshop, Beirut, vol 1, pg. 372.
20. These are lucid and dispassionate, but not insensitive, studies of the origins, teachings and political thought of the Shia. Mrs. Molly Izzard's description of Shia rituals is very vivid and her summary of Shia relations in chapter on Bahrain is excellent; pg. 77-93: The Gulf, John Murry, 1979.
21. In Haroon al-Rasheed and the great Abbasids, Sir Hoddes and Stoughton, 1976, p. 65-81, chapter IV "The Pure Soul", Sir John Bagot Glubb summarises from al-Jabari and others, the tragic events that led to the death of Muhammad, al-Rouli al-Zahiyya and his brother Ibrahim, thus starting the chain of Shia Imams.
22. J.R. Hall: Renaissance Europe 1480-1520, Fontana/Collins, sixth impressions, 1977, p. 217.
23. G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) for instance composed this poem on the battle three centuries later; it was fought in this gulf between Central and Southern Greece to ward off Turkey from Cyprus from where it could

interrupt Venetian trade. For Chesterton the victory symbolised the power of Catholicism in preserving the truth and repelling the attacks of heresy and error.

24. There is a lot of literature on Portugal's determination to break the mamlukes of Egypt and a great many interpretations. There is for instance the heavy dues charged by Egypt, piracy, the appeal of King Sebna Dengel for help against muslim encroachment on Abyssenian ports. Many good references can be cited. The most interesting because unabashedly spirited is Chapter 2 p. 16-39 "The Halting of Kush" in The Earl of Sytton's: The Stolen Desert" Macdonald, 1966.
25. Stanley Lane-Pool: A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages, Cass. 1968 pp. 350-2. Though published in 1900, Lane-Poole's book still remains a mine of straightforward information on the period.
26. "Economic Europe", chapter IV in Professor J.R. Hale: Renaissance Europe, 1480-1520, Fontana, History of Europe, 1971, sixth impression, 1977 p. 138-167.
27. In less than three centuries after, during the Russo-Turkish war, the Canal was closed in the face of the Czar. A few years later Alexander III (1881-1894) considered filling in the Canal by diverting fresh water from the Canal to provoke India and Afghanistan against the British. Insane ideas but there were others thereafter, for instance, the blockade of the

Suez episode and that of Bab al-Mandab in 1973.

28. Lord Acton: Lectures on modern History, Mac Millan, 1952, p. 59. These lectures were delivered by Lord Acton in the accademical year 1899-1900 in Cambridge, published for the first time in 1906. The quotation from a lecture on "The New World".
29. For a specimen of Portuguese handling of Africa, see "The Sack of Two Cities, Kilwa and Mombassa", in 1505 p. 135-136 in the chapter on "Early East Africa" p. 101-137, in Basil Davidson: The African Past" Boston 1964.
30. The Turks were in his view "the most inhuman barbarians and the most savage enemies of the Christian faith". He eulogises Constantinople in terms indicative of the prevailing mood and warns "if the violent assaults of the most ferocious barbarians are not checked Italy will go and other lands too". And check they did. Turkey was repulsed at Vienna in 1529, Malta 1564, Belgrade 1526 and Russia was to come, in her time. (1708-1777)
31. A brief biography of Heller, scientist, philosopher and poet is in Preserved Smith: The Enlightenment (1687-1776), vol. II of "A History of Modern Culture, Collier Books, U.S.A., edition 1962.
32. There was the Royal Society of London, for example, with Newton as president between 1703-1727. In 1953 it created a prize for "the most momentous discovery or for the best work in the field of science". The 1793 Constitution of Académie des Sciences stipulated

that eight of its associate members should be foreigners and that no clerics were to be elected except as honorary members. This was a sign of the times. In 1700 the society of sciences was inaugurated by Frederick III in Berlin. Peter the Great founded his academy at St. Petersburg in 1724. And many followed. An academy of sciences was now a necessary source of power no less "than an army, a navy, a public debt, a splendid court, and a levy of royal mistresses".

33. Carlo Cippola: European Culture and Overseas expansion, Pelican Books, 1970, a slightly edited version of "Gun and sailors", published 1956.
34. Quoted by Professor Cippola, p. 109.
35. Edward T. Wilson: Russia and Black Africa before World War II, Holmes and Meier, 1974, p. 19.
36. Ibid p. 307.
37. Quoted by Vincent Cronin: Catherine, Empress of all the Russias, Collins, 1978,
38. Edward T. Wilson, op. Cited p. 7.

39. "The Company of the merchants of London Trading with the East Indies" or "East India Company was incorporated on 31st December, 1600. The original capital was £30,133 6s 8d. "The Indies being so remote from hence, they could not be traded with but in a joint or united stock" the Royal blessing was given. In 1858, the administration of India was transformed from the Company to the Crown.
40. A. J. P. Taylor: The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, Oxford 1954. Professor Taylor's other invasions of Russia by the West are Napoleon's in 1812, Britain and France's in 1854, Germany's in 1916-18, the entente Powers in 1919-1920, and Hitler's in 1941.
41. According to this theory Russia turns Eastwards when constrained in the west and vice-versa, and there is a lot to say for such a view of Russian history. At one stage it was the Baltic, then it was Central Europe, Eastern Europe, The Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The part her geography plays in shaping her destiny confirms the old adage that "Geography is the eye of history".
42. Quoted by Kenneth Rose: Superior Person: A portrait of Lord Curzon and his circle in late victorian England. Wadenfeld & Nicholson, 1969, p. 229.

43. This was a body of landowners, churchmen and intellectuals, whose nationalism crossed the boarder of their land to include all Slavs and all Orthodox wherever they were. They were against the West and those in Russia who believed in Western ways. Their views dominated the political and the literary scene between 1830 and 1840. For a brief but incisive treatment of the subject see Sir John Manyard: Russian Flux, Jordan 1941, chapter 6 "The Orthodox Church and the Slaphoviles".

44. Quoted by André Gide in Doesteovsky, 1949 edition, Camelot Press London, p. 38. chapter 11, p. 36-49 is devoted to his political convictions and visions of Russia's place among Slavs, in Asia and the world. See also Heinz Golwitzer, op. cit. p. 41-61 chapter on "Nationalism, pass-movements, Empire ideologies".

- 45.. Quoted by Bruce Lincoln in Nicholas' Allen Lane, 1978, p. 325, at the head of the chapter 10 "the last act" well documented chapter on Nicholas' many attempts at avoiding the "Unnecessary" War of the Crimea, p. 325-357.

46. Quoted by Firuz Kazemzadeh in essay on "Afghanistan: the Imperial Dream", New York Review of Books, Feb 21, 1980.

47. There is evidence now that the Kievan Prince Vladimir had sent an "ambassador" in Egypt as long ago as 1001.

48. Czeslaw Jessman: Russia in Ethiopia, London, 1954.
Professor Jessman's subtitle is "a study in futility"
It is a very clear, most detailed and interesting
book on the subject, drawing mostly on Russian
sources. I used it extensively in this part of my
essay.
49. See Edward Nelson op. cit. on the main writings and
dispatches of Uspensky, on p. 307 in "Notes on
Chapter 1".
50. Quoted from Gabriel Hanstau's History of the Nation
of Egypt by Edward Wilson p. 182.
51. Ibid. Quoting a speech delivered by the French
Consul in Jedda, January 1889, welcoming the stop-
over of Ashinov's colonial expedition.
52. For a brief but informative source on the piling of
arms by Menelik and Johnaes, the race of European
governments and arms dealers to oblige but also earn
money and the routes across the desert to the
ports on the Red Sea Coast, see Dr. Richard Pankhurst:
The Independence of Ethiopia and her import of arms
in the nineteenth Century. Presence Africaine, vol 415,
No. 32/33, July 1961.

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