



Shooting Leave: Spying Out Central Asia in the Great Game

John Ure

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Snow leopards and Cossacks can both be dangerous. But to young British officers in India in the nineteenth century there was only one thing more exciting than shooting wild game in the mountains and steppes of Central Asia, and that was spying out those uncharted lands and impeding the advance of Tsarist Russia towards the frontiers of the British Raj. When the two activities were combined - in what was euphemistically called 'shooting leave' - adventures followed thick and fast. Shooting Leave tells the thrilling story of the dashing cavalry officers who volunteered for these adventures. They were individuals of talent and courage, but also of disturbing prejudice, aristocratic arrogance, missionary zeal or trigger-happy temperament. But whatever their specific task, one factor remained common to all officers sent out on covert and exploratory missions: they were expendable. Here they are brought to life as characters in their own right, as well as players in the Great Game.

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