**Sir Francis Edward Younghusband 1863-1942**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband>

  



[**Lieutenant Colonel**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_Colonel) **Sir Francis Edward Younghusband** [KCSI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Star_of_India) [KCIE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Indian_Empire) ([31 May](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_31) [1863](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1863) - [31 July](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_31) [1942](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1942), Dorset[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-obit-0)) was a [British Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Army) officer, [explorer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_explorers), and spiritual writer. He is remembered chiefly for his travels in the [Far East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_East) and [Central Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asia)--especially the [1904 British invasion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_expedition_to_Tibet) of [Tibet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet), which he led, the massacring of Tibetan soldiers, and for his writings on Asia and foreign policy. Younghusband held positions including British commissioner to Tibet and President of the [Royal Geographical Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Geographical_Society).

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## Early life

Francis Younghusband was born in 1863 at [Murree](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murree), [British India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_India) (now [Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan)) to a British military family, John Younghusband and his wife Clara Jane Shaw. Clara's brother, [Robert Shaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Robert_Barkley_Shaw&action=edit&redlink=1), was a noted explorer of [Central Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asia).

As an infant, Francis was taken to live in England by his mother. When Clara returned to India in 1867 she left her son in the care of two austere and strictly religious aunts. In 1870 his mother and father returned to England and reunited the family. In 1876 at age thirteen, Francis entered [Clifton College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifton_College), [Bristol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol). In 1881 he entered the [Royal Military Academy Sandhurst](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Military_Academy_Sandhurst) and in 1882 he was commissioned as a [subaltern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_%28rank%29) in the [1st King's Dragoon Guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_King%27s_Dragoon_Guards).

## Military career



"From Peking To Yarkand and Kashmir via the Mustagh Pass"

In 1886-1887, on leave from his regiment, Younghusband made an expedition through [Manchuria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchuria), crossing the [Gobi Desert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gobi_Desert) and pioneering a route from [Kashgar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashgar) and [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) through the uncharted [Mustagh Pass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustagh_Pass).[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-1) For this achievement he was elected the youngest member of the [Royal Geographic Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Geographic_Society) and received the society's gold medal.

In 1889, Younghusband was dispatched with a small escort of [Gurkha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurkha) soldiers to survey an uncharted region of the [Hunza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunza_Valley) valley and the [Khunjerab Pass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khunjerab_Pass) through the [Karakoram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karakoram) mountain range. Whilst encamped in a remote area of Hunza, Younghusband received a messenger at his camp, inviting him to dinner with Captain [Bronislav Gromchevsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronislav_Gromchevsky), his Russian counterpart in "[The Great Game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Game)". Younghusband accepted the invitation to Gromchevsky's camp, and after dinner the two rivals talked into the night, sharing brandy and vodka, and discussing the possibility of a Russian invasion of British India. Gromchevsky impressed Younghusband with the horsemanship skills of his [Cossack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cossack) escort, and Younghusband impressed Gromchevsky with the rifle drill of his Gurkhas. After their meeting in this remote frontier region, Gromchevsky resumed his expedition in the direction of [Kashmir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir) and Younghusband continued his exploration of Hunza.

During his service in Kashmir, he wrote a book called 'Kashmir' at the request of Edward Molyneux. Younghusband's descriptions went hand in hand with his paintings of the Valley by Molyneux. In the book, Younghusband declared his immense admiration of the natural beauty of Kashmir and its history.

In 1890, Younghusband transferred to the [Indian Political Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Political_Service). He served as a political officer on secondment from the British Army.

The Great Game, between Britain and Russia, continued beyond the turn of the century. Rumors of Russian expansion into the [Hindu Kush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_Kush) and a Russian presence in [Tibet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet) prompted the [Viceroy of India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viceroy_of_India) [Lord Curzon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Nathaniel_Curzon) to appoint Younghusband, by then a Major, to serve as British commissioner to Tibet from 1902-1904. In 1903-1904, under orders from Curzon, Younghusband, jointly with John Claude White, the Political Officer for Sikkim, led a [British expedition to Tibet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_expedition_to_Tibet), whose putative aim was to settle disputes over the [Sikkim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikkim)-[Tibet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet) border but whose true aim was to establish British [hegemony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegemony) in Tibet; the expedition controversially became (by exceeding instructions from London) a *de facto* [invasion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tibet) and occupation of Tibet.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-Younghusband-2) About one hundred miles inside Tibet, on the way to [Gyangzê](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gyangz%C3%AA), thence to the capital of [Lhasa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lhasa), a confrontation outside the hamlet of Guru led to the massacre, by the expedition, of 600-700 Tibetan militia.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-3) The British force was supported by [King Ugyen Wangchuck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugyen_Wangchuck) of [Bhutan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhutan), who was knighted in return for his services.

In 1904, Younghusband received the title of Knight Commander of the [Order of the Indian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Indian_Empire); and in 1917, the superior title of Knight Commander of the [Order of the Star of India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Star_of_India).

In 1906, Younghusband settled in [Kashmir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir) as the British representative before returning to [Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland) where he became an active member of many clubs and societies. During [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) his patriotic [Fight for Right](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fight_for_Right) campaign commissioned the song [Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/And_did_those_feet_in_ancient_time).

## Himalaya and mountaineering

Younghusband was elected President of the [Royal Geographic Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Geographic_Society) in 1919, and two years later became Chairman of the [Mount Everest Committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Everest_Committee) which was set up in 1921 to co-ordinate the reconnaissance of [Mount Everest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Everest).[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-4) He actively encouraged climbers, including [George Mallory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Mallory), to attempt the first ascent of Mount Everest, and they followed the same initial route as the earlier Tibet Mission.

In 1938 Younghusband encouraged [Ernst Schäfer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Sch%C3%A4fer), who was about to lead a German expedition to Tibet, to "sneak over the border" when faced with British intransigence towards Schäfer's efforts to reach Tibet.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-5)

## Spiritual life

Biographer [Patrick French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_French) describes Younghusband as one who was

*brought up an* [*Evangelical*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism) *Christian, read his way into* [*Tolstoyan*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Tolstoy) *simplicity, experienced a revelatory vision in the mountains of Tibet, toyed with* [*telepathy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telepathy) *in* [*Kashmir*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir)*, proposed a new faith based on virile* [*racial theory*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_theory)*, then transformed it into what* [*Bertrand Russell*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertrand_Russell) *called 'a religion of* [*atheism*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism)*.'* [*[7]*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-6)

Ultimately he became what French calls a "premature [hippy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippy)" who "had great faith in the power of [cosmic rays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_ray), and claimed that there are extraterrestrials with translucent flesh on the planet [Altair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altair)." [[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-7)

During his 1904 retreat from Tibet, Younghusband had a mystical experience which suffused him with "love for the whole world" and convinced him that "men at heart are divine." [[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-8) This conviction led him to regret his invasion of Tibet, and eventually, in 1936, to found the [World Congress of Faiths](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=World_Congress_of_Faiths&action=edit&redlink=1) (in imitation of the [World Parliament of Religions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Parliament_of_Religions)).

Younghusband published a number of books with what we might call [New Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Age) themes, with titles like *The Gleam: Being an account of the life of Nija Svabhava, pseud.* (1920); *Mother World (in Travail for the Christ that is to be)* (1924); and *Life in the Stars: An Exposition of the View that on some Planets of some Stars exist Beings higher than Ourselves, and on one a World-Leader, the Supreme Embodiment of the Eternal Spirit which animates the Whole* (1927). (This last was admired by Lord [Baden-Powell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baden-Powell), the Boy Scouts founder.) [[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-9) Key concepts include what would come to be known as the [Gaia hypothesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_hypothesis), [pantheism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantheism), and a Christlike "world leader" living on the planet "Altair" (or "Stellair"), who radiates spiritual guidance by means of telepathy.

Younghusband also came to believe in [free love](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_love) ("freedom to unite when and how a man and a woman please"), marriage laws being a matter of "outdated custom." [[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-10) He wrote his longtime lover [Madeline, Lady Lees](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Madeline,_Lady_Lees&action=edit&redlink=1) that "I *have* made the discovery that bodily union does not impair soul union but heightens and tightens it." [[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-11) Lees agreed. French, restoring censored passages from Younghusband's correspondence, discovered a letter from him suggesting that Lees was pregnant with Younghusband's child:

*...why shouldn't an exceptionally spiritual woman like you who has already had the idea of giving birth to a Christ and who is now wedded in the spirit [to me?] crown her experience and give birth to a God-Child who will manifest God more completely even than Jesus did?* [*[13]*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-12)

The identity of the child is unknown, and its existence cannot be confirmed.

One of Younghusband's domestic servants, [Gladys Aylward](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gladys_Aylward), became a Christian missionary to China. The [Ingrid Bergman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingrid_Bergman) film [*The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Inn_of_the_Sixth_Happiness) is based on her life, with an actor portraying Younghusband. [[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_note-13)

## Footnotes

1. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-obit_0-0) Anon. 1942 Obituary: Sir Francis Edward Younghusband. Geographical Review 32(4):681
2. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-1) Younghusband, Francis E. (1896). *The Heart of a Continent*, pp. 58-290. John Murray, London. Facsimile reprint: (2005) Elbiron Classics.
3. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-Younghusband_2-0) ["Tibetans' fight against British invasion"](http://en.tibet.cn/history/tib/t20050309_14950.htm). En.Tibet.cn – China Tibet Information Center. <http://en.tibet.cn/history/tib/t20050309_14950.htm>. Retrieved on 2008-01-15.
4. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-3) Morris, James: *Farewell the Trumpets* (Faber & Faber, 1979), p.102.
5. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-4) <http://www.mountain-portal.co.uk/text/everest/Evrst02.htm> Text of *The Epic of Mount Everest*, Sir Francis Younghusband.
6. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-5) Hale, Christopher. *Himmler's Crusade* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003) pp. 149-151
7. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-6) French, p. 313.
8. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-7) French, p. xx
9. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-8) quoted in French, p. 252.
10. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-9) French, p. 321
11. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-10) French, p. 283
12. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-11) French, p.385.
13. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-12) in French, p. 402.
14. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Younghusband#cite_ref-13) French., p. 364

## Further reading

* Allen, Charles. (2004) *Duel in the Snows: The True Story of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa*. John Murray (Publishers), London. [ISBN 0-7195-5427 6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0719554276).
* Broadbent, Tom *On Younghusband's Path: Peking to Pindi* ([ISBN 0-9548542-2-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0954854225), pub. 2005).
* Candler, Edmund *The Unveiling of Lhasa*. (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd ?1905)
* Carrington, Michael Officers Gentlemen and Thieves: The Looting of Monasteries during the 1903/4 Younghusband Mission to Tibet, Modern Asian Studies 37, 1 (2003), PP 81-109.
* Fleming, Peter *Bayonets to Lhasa* (ISBN 0-583881-583861-9, reprint 1986).
* French, Patrick *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* ([ISBN 0-00-637601-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0006376010), reprint 1997).
* Hopkirk, Peter *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* ([ISBN 1-56836-022-3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/1568360223), reprint 1994).
* Younghusband, Sir Francis *The Epic of Mount Everest* ([ISBN 0-330-48285-8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0330482858), reprint 2001).
* Younghusband, Sir Francis *Modern Mystics* ([ISBN 1-4179-8003-6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/1417980036), reprint 2004).
* For an academic article relating to the Tibet Mission read: Carrington, Michael: "Officers Gentlemen and Thieves: The Looting of Monasteries during the 1903/4 Younghusband Mission to Tibet", Modern Asian Studies 37, 1 (2003), PP 81-109.
* Younghusband wrote 26 books in all between 1895 and 1942. Subjects ranged from Asian events, Exploration, Mountaineering, Philosophy, Spirituality, Politics and more.

## External links

* [India and Tibet (1910)](http://www.archive.org/details/IndiaAndTibet)
* [Works of Francis Younghusband](http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/y#a32545) at [Project Gutenberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Gutenberg)
* [Archival material relating to Francis Younghusband](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/searches/subjectView.asp?ID=P31601) listed at the UK [National Register of Archives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Archives)
* [World Congress of Faiths' own account of their origins](http://www.worldfaiths.org/Beginning.htm)
* [Royal Geographic Society photograph of Younghusband's Mission to Tibet](http://images.rgs.org/search.aspx?view=dDw0OTk0MTgzODU7O2w8c2VhcmNoX2N0bDppbWFnZVN1Ym1pdDtzZWFyY2hfY3RsOnNlYXJjaFBob3RvZ3JhcGhPclBlcnNvblNob3duOjA7c2VhcmNoX2N0bDpzZWFyY2hQaG90b2dyYXBoT3JQZXJzb25TaG93bjoxO3NlYXJjaF9jdGw6c2VhcmNoUGhvdG9ncmFwaE9yUGVyc29uU2hvd246MTs%2BPi0zuGD4Dm6hTZYHYIHKs3%2Fw3xgS&search_ctl%3Akeyword=younghusband&search_ctl%3Aimage_type_list=0&search_ctl%3Acollection_list=-1&search_ctl%3Adate_range_list=0&search_ctl%3AregionEvent=0&search_ctl%3AdropdownThemes=0&search_ctl%3AsearchPhotographOrPersonShown%3A0=on&search_ctl%3AsearchPhotographOrPersonShown%3A1=on&search_ctl%3Arefine_keyword_field=&isAdvancedSearchDisplay=&search_ctl%3Acollection_choosed=&search_ctl%3AisButtongotoPressed=no&search_ctl%3AimageSubmit.x=12&search_ctl%3AimageSubmit.y=1)
* [1st King's Dragoon Guards (regiments.org)](http://www.regiments.org/regiments/uk/cav/DG1kdg.htm)
* [The heart of nature (1921) (scanned book)](http://www.archive.org/details/heartofnatureorq00youniala)

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