

Telephone: VICTORIA 4006.

6
2
Mesopotamia Commission,
28, Abington Street,
Westminster.

CORRESPONDENCE
with
LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST.

6

3

Foreign Office,
July 16, 1917.

Dear Sir,

I am desired by Lord Hardinge to say that he would be grateful if you would send him three additional copies of his evidence before the Mesopotamia Commission.

Yours faithfully,



The Secretary,
Mesopotamia Commission.

cautions

and no one else and I executed it; in those operations I commanded the 6th Division and the naval flotilla

100 MAYFAIR.

I have sent the
copy of the wire
with the
Examination
permission.

24, GLOUCESTER PLACE,
PORTMAN SQUARE, W.

July 29. 1917.

4
6
5

Dear Mr. Duff,

Also

Will you kindly send
me a copy of the telegram from General
Cropper, (in General Nixon's name), which
provoked the telegram from the C. in C. ^{let}
by my instruction warning General
Nixon of the generous tone of his telegrams.
I understand that General Cropper used it
in his evidence, and as the India Office
cannot provide a copy, I shall be
grateful if you would send me a copy
at once to the Foreign Office. Reference is
made to it on page 107 of the Report.

Yrs: very truly
Hardinge J.P.

50,
y. be

rations

tions

2428

6
5

Foreign Office,
February 28, 1917.

Sir,

I am desired by Lord Hardinge of Penshurst to request that he may be furnished with a copy of the revised version of his evidence before the Mesopotamia Commission.

Yours faithfully,

R. H. Campbell

50,
y be

The Secretary,
Mesopotamia Commission.

rations

FOREIGN OFFICE,

January 23rd, 1917.

Sir:-

I am desired by Lord Hardinge of Penshurst to return to you the proof of his evidence before the Commission which he has revised to the best of his ability.

I am also to forward to you a copy of Lord Hardinge's statement in which he has marked certain passages in his private correspondence (see pages 30, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 46) which he desires may be deleted from any published version.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

R. K. Campbell

The Secretary,

Mesopotamia Commission.

pursuit 90 miles to Amara; it was my plan of operations and no one else and I executed it; in those operations I commanded the 6th Division and the naval flotilla for

7
11
FOREIGN OFFICE,

January 4th, 1917.

Sir:-

I am desired by Lord Hardinge of Penshurst to return you the proof of his evidence before the Mesopotamia Commission which he has corrected to the best of his ability.

Lord Hardinge would be glad if he could be given an assurance that the final proof will be submitted to him again before publication in the event of his evidence being published.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

R. Campbell

Smison

The Secretary,

Mesopotamia Commission.

a.
ion.
d
rts
ed,
t
my
l,
na

8
11
General Townshend's letter to the
Viceroy as to the strength of his
force before Ctesiphon.

FOREIGN OFFICE,

January 16th, 1917.

Sir:-

I am desired by Lord Hardinge of Penshurst to acknowledge the receipt of your letter H/28 of the 11th instant and to forward to you, as requested, a copy of the letter addressed to him by General Townshend on November 2nd, 1915. The whole of the letter has been copied and is sent for the confidential information of the Commission, as being typical of the writer, but in the event of publication Lord Hardinge would wish to stipulate that only paragraphs 8-21 inclusive should appear.

As a further indication of the strength of General Townshend's battalions Lord Hardinge finds in a letter from General Nixon from Kut, dated October 1st, the following sentence:- "Now this morning

The Secretary,

Mesopotamia Commission.



morning I saw all Delamain's brigade; the 117th had half a battalion engaged - 225 men of whom they lost 114, which is 50% loss and when....." The strength of an Indian battalion is 820 men and half a battalion should therefore have been 410 men instead of 225.

~~With reference to the last paragraph of your letter Lord Hardinge wishes me to say that he will be glad to receive you any day at 2.30 at the Foreign Office.~~

Dart

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

R. H. Campbell.

a.
ion.
nd
orts
ed,
I
e,
t
my
l,
na

11

From Major-General C.V.F. Townshend, Commanding 6th
Division, British Expeditionary Force, Mesopotamia.

CAMP AZIZIAH, HEAD QUARTERS, 6th Division.

November 2nd, 1915.

My dear Lord Hardinge:-

I was indeed grateful to receive your wire and telegraphed Sir John Nixon at once to tender my most grateful thanks. I felt that you appreciated my efforts and constant work for the good of the service demanded, and I am more grateful than I can say.

2. I felt I had been left out on purpose; I asked myself why Gorringe is given a K.C.B. before me, my junior officer with not nearly so much active service record as myself. I have had the C.B. 20 years now and won it as a very junior captain for my defence of Chitral Fort. I conducted the Kerna-Amara operations before Gorringe conducted the Nasiriyeh operations - if his K.C.B. was given for Shaiba c'est une chose pour rire, since he was not at Shaiba at all, but was doing work on the lines of communication like Davison has been doing all the time he has been out.

3. I have now commanded two distinct operations, the first in which I beat the Turks in the Kerna position and destroyed their force advancing in pursuit 90 miles to Amara; it was my plan of operations and no one else and I executed it; in those operations I commanded the 6th Division and the naval flotilla, for I told Sir John Nixon plainly I would have none of any poisonous divided command - no Walcheren business for me and the navy must be under me and Nunn was told

and

and it was done. For those operations naval officers serving under me have already been rewarded, vide the cuttings I enclose: in one I see Mr. Palmer's exploit is rather like the story of the skilled witness, the fact is the battalion in question had already surrendered to me! and I told Palmer and two blue-jackets to "march them on board that lighter there"!! This part I see has been omitted in the despatch. But I, who commanded the whole operation, am not rewarded, but have to wait. Major Reilly of the Aviation Corps was not in the country on the 14th April any more than I was (I arrived about the 22nd April) then why is he promoted in that gazette is what I ask - he has been recommended by me in the Kerna despatches.

4. The difficulties I had in that Kerna-Amara operations were very great, the 6th Division thought I was leading them to useless slaughter! They thought it was murder to order them to do what I did, viz. to attack island forts in the middle of a great sea and they attacking in boats! Had I been in the enemy's place I'd had wiped out the British force. When Sir John Nixon gave me that task to do, I said to him - "Wolfe's job at Quebec was nothing to what you have given me to do". In many ways it was like the Quebec adventure where you know my great great grandfather George, 1st Marquis, Townshend succeeded to the command when Wolfe was mortally wounded. It is true I was lucky, so was Townshend at Quebec who, in reply to their asking for an armistice, gave the garrison four hours after which he would order the assault, but it was the luck that favours the pilot, who knows the depth of the water and the whereabouts of the dangerous

dangerous shoals and the strength of the current.

5. In the same way, the Kut-el-Amara operations and battle was commanded and planned throughout by me. The only way of winning that victory was to carry out a wide sweeping turning movement like at Wagram and drawing in my turning attack like a fishing net on to the enemy's flank and rear, this is what I did.

6. Sir John Nixon and his staff at the Kut-el-Amara action were only spectators, as he would tell you if you asked; he only came up from Amara as he wired to me because questions of future policy demanded his presence up at Kut after the action.

7. During the battle Sannaiyat Post behind me, being attacked by the Arabs some 7 or 8 miles, kept begging on the wire for help. I told them - "I'd not send a man the help I was giving my lines of communication, was beating Nureddin here", that of course relieved all that anxiety. You know how night saved the enemy from annihilation. And now it is the same for our final advance on Baghdad.

[8. Sir John wired me a few days ago that liberal reinforcements are promised and has asked me for my project of operations and told me I am to command as I have done up till now.

9. My project this time is as follows en bref:-

The enemy's position at Ctesiphon is now a very strong one, some eight miles of entrenchments and redoubts astride of the Tigris, six on the left bank, and about two miles on the right bank, much stronger on the left bank than on the right: the enemy think I am wedded to the left bank.

10. I estimate the enemy at 11,000 men and 30
guns

guns just as at Kut.

My field state yesterday is just 9,000 combatants, but I shall be nearly 11,000 or over 10,000 when I move forward about 14th November.

11. I am doing all I can to induce Nureddin to think I am coming by the left bank, and on the 27th October accordingly I made a night march from here and surprised a covering force he had pushed stupidly too far forward to El Kuturrie some seven miles from me at Azizieh and "houked" them out of it: in consequence Nureddin has withdrawn his covering force of 4,000 men and 12 guns at Zeur to Ctesiphon and has only got his light detachment at Zeur to keep in contact with me.

12. Thus when I have united all my division in my hand and received my far too scanty transport, I shall move forward to Zeur, with my ships accompanying me, on the river and bringing my boat-bridge, a few miles beyond Zeur I shall throw across a bridge in the night and cross to the right bank and move rapidly north on Baghdad.

13. The reason for this is to avoid running my head into all these Ctesiphon fortifications (and these troops of mine are tired and their tails are not up, but slightly down; the Mahomedans are not pleased at approaching the sacred precincts of Sulman Pak at Ctesiphon and I have only yesterday found a bundle of Arabic and Urdu pamphlets calling on all Mahomedans to save themselves from hell fire by forsaking us! the bundle of papers printed in the press at Baghdad and signed by the Nakib of the Mosque of Abd-el-Kadr at Baghdad were thrown down in the scrub outside the Norfolk trenches on the river bank)!

14. Thus you can understand I am against running my head against modern earthworks, redoubts and
trenches

trenches more than I can help when I am invited so to do by the enemy, and it is why I am always asking Sir John to get some reinforcements into the country - the troops are not confident and have had enough. This is absolutely true of course, but it would all be altered if they hear reinforcements are in the country.

15. My principal objective is naturally the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field and to seek to destroy them, by crossing to the right bank Nureddin must cross also to oppose me, and I hope there to take him in the open where he has few entrenchments and destroy him, for the Turk equally with the Turkish Arabian battalions are no good in the open.

16. Another reason for avoiding Ctesiphon position on the left bank is, that the enemy have now prepared a second position at Diala above Ctesiphon, where that unfordable river (at this time of year) falls into the Tigris - this will be the most formidable obstacle.

I have my boat-bridge with me and can cross anywhere.

17. I hope then to knock out the Turkish force this time and then place my "battering-ram" at the gates of Baghdad as Belisarius would have done when he was manoeuvring on the Tigris where I am now.

18. But we ought to have more troops in the country. Kemball says that Sir John does not know how many troops are coming or where from, so I can't ascertain what "reinforcements on a liberal scale" mean.

19. The means at the disposal of the enemy is as follows:-

He has practically no transport but his steamers and barges. I estimate his force at 11,000 combatants

combatants and 30 guns.

20. What is the enemy likely to do? I think it is probable that he will continue his policy of the pure defensive, since he has not the mobility nor the power of manoeuvring necessary for him to change the defensive to the offensive.

Since I advanced to attack at Kerna, the Turkish Generals have been on the passive defensive throughout, as their history has been for the last century or more; from the time of the defence of Acre against Bonaparte up to the defence of Plevna and the defence yesterday of the famous lines of Tchatalditcha covering Constantinople, the Turk fights well and only well when behind defences and has been mediocre to say the least of it in the open.

His strategy in Mesopotamia after Shaiba has been to retire from defensive position to defensive position into the interior of his country, so as to gain time, during which those factors which in Europe constantly tend to weaken the tide of the offensive (such as want of reinforcements, i.e. a copious flow of them with munitions, &c.) and in the East in addition those factors peculiar to the East alone such as heat, disease, &c., have time to operate on the attacker. He has been slowly withdrawing, but approaching meanwhile his sources of supply Baghdad.

And in strategy the action of the Turks is absolutely in accordance with the fundamental principles of the art of war; the greatest principal of all economy of force demands that they should unite every soul to fight in their principal field wherein the real decision is being fought out, i.e. the Gallipoli Peninsula and defence of Constantinople, whilst their secondary or defensive fields of operation such as

Syria

Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia should only be held on the defensive by minimum forces. Therefore I do not expect the Turks to take the offensive against us in Mesopotamia until they are successful in the Gallipoli Peninsula, and in that case the offensive in overwhelming numbers will be taken in Mesopotamia at once.

Such action as I sketch above would be good strategy (and in this connection I have always been amazed at our engaging those large forces of ours in a secondary field!! when every soul in the Empire should be in France and Flanders), and as their strategy is directed by German officers I think that the above is a correct appreciation.

21. I have begged Nixon that he will make every effort to bring in all those men detached from my division at Basrah and so forth, and urge the authorities in India not only to send at least another division but quickly, as long as more troops come into the country even the Arabs will remain tranquil and we have confidence. As it is now the British soldier and the sepoy as the Roman soldier did under Belisarius look over their shoulders and are fearful of the distance from the sea and go down in consequence with every imaginable disease - we now have 59 cases of Berri Berri amongst the British troops - only three or four have proved fatal.]

22. After the occupation of Baghdad I hope that these troops of the 6th Division, who have been a year now in this climate, can be relieved. If I had the Pindi Division here with its eagerness for battle as they have hardly been on service, I should laugh at

at

at all these fortified positions; as it is I have to be deeply concerned about them.

This letter has been a long one, but I feel it will interest you. I am so grateful to you for your efforts in my behalf, you do not know how grateful, it is kindness that touches me so much. Of course I covet and long for promotion, as there are cases of my juniors going over my head in France and Flanders because there of course they do not delay despatches for a year or more, but reward at once.^X We suffer under a heavy injustice here as things are at present. We are doing our duty on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates as well as those on the Marne or the Sambre or the Lys.

The K.C.B. though is the finest military honour and of course I feel that it would be a great thing and satisfaction for my family and my record.

I am, my dear Lord Hardinge,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Charles Townshend.

^X I have just seen that Birdwood is promoted Lieutenant-General over my head.

H/28

12.1.1917.

My Lord,

Referring to the conflict of evidence as to the strength of General Townshend's battalions immediately prior to the battle of Ctesiphon, I am directed by my Commission to request that you will be good enough to furnish them with a copy of the letter from General Townshend on this subject, which you referred to ~~you~~ in your evidence as having been received by you some time before the battle of Ctesiphon.

If you have any objection to submitting the whole of this letter, it will be sufficient for the Commission's purpose, if you can furnish them with verbatim extracts of such parts of it, as have any bearing on the condition of General Townshend's forces, or his general attitude towards an advance at that time.

I have also been directed by the Commission to confer with you on the subject of the inclusion in the Commission's evidence of some or of all of the extracts from the private letters which you submitted with your statement of evidence.

I should be glad if you could find it convenient for me to have an appointment with you or your private Secretary on this subject, on some day other than Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday, which are the days of the Commission's meetings.

Yours faithfully,

(Sd.) R.G.Duff

Rt.Hon.Lord Hardinge of Penshurst
Foreign Office

6/50

83/11

14.12.1916

My Lord,

I beg to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of
20 copies of a Statement for the information of the
Commission.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

Assistant Secretary

Rt. Hon. Baron Hardinge of Penshurst

Foreign Office.

I beg to remain, My Lord,

Your obedient servant,

Sept. 2nd 1916

My Lord,

As it is important that I should see you with reference to your giving evidence before the Mesopotamia Commission, I should be very much obliged if you would let me know where and when it would be most convenient for me to wait upon you. As the Commission is meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 5th and Thursday Sept. 7th, I am afraid that neither of those days will be available, but I should be pleased to see you on any other date.

I beg to remain, my Lord,

Your obedient servant,

Secretary.

The Rt. Hon. Baron Hardinge G.C.B. etc.