

3/8

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783 General Sir Neville Lytton: England was becoming the base.

A England was becoming the base and India was ceasing to be the base.

784 Sir Archibald Williamson: But I rather gather that India remains the base.

A It must remain the base, largely, for supplies of food and for certain other things it must be the base.

785 Q Are we now managing this expedition through officers representing the London War Office outside of the Indian Military system altogether.

A Yes. The personnel in India is not under the War Office in any way, but the personnel in Mesopotamia is under the War Office.

786 Q If an order is sent to India for supplies by the War Office in London it is sent to the Commander-in-Chief in India?

A It is sent to the Commander-in-Chief in India.

787 Q And he carries it out as agent for the London War Office.

A If he can he carries it out.

788 Q Without responsibility on his part for taking the lead.

A It comes to that. If he cannot carry it out then the War Office ^{must} do so.

789 Q At the time when this transfer was made there was nothing to indicate dissatisfaction with the management by India of the expedition, was there? Was there any correspondence or anything of that kind at that

time pointing to that.

A I think that we were beginning to be very doubtful about it.

26/9
790 Sir Archibald Williamson: It seems to have been ^{she} really very abrupt.

791 Chairman: Was it not because there had been a break down?

792 Sir Archibald Williamson: On the 3rd February there is a telegram from the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy Book 7, Page 20 :- "The War Committee had before at meeting today had before them Note prepared by Chief of General Imperial Staff." There is a note on the control of operations in Mesopotamia and so ^{on} and then it goes into detail. Reasons are given: "It is in accordance with sound military principles," ^{and so on.} They do not reflect apparently on the past at all.

A No. I think that the main reason that influenced the India Office in January with regard to the transfer was that it was getting beyond our capacity to deal with the situation, because we had not any troops to send.

793 Q The India Office here wished for the transfer?

A Yes: it was Mr Chamberlain's proposal. He proposed it at ^{the} previous War Committee.

794 Chairman: Was there not also the advantage that the General Staff would be able to communicate direct.

A Yes. To a certain extent we authorised the General Staff to communicate direct before that.

795 Q The actual operations were not under the actual control of the General Staff before that. A No: the actual orders used to emanate from the Secretary of State.

796 Q In Book No 6 at page 12 there is a telegram at the top of the page, No 178^a from Mr Chamberlain to the Viceroy dated the 4th October, written evidently immediately after your memo^s had been presented.

A Yes

Commander Wedgwood: That telegram is quite clear. It refers to a private letter of the 10th September. We have not that letter.

I wonder whether we could get it. I think that ought to be before us.

Chairman: Mr Chamberlain said that he would give us anything of the kind

797 Commander Wedgwood: (To the Witness): You see that there it is urged that General Nixon's advance should be stopped, and two days later it is urged that it should go forward or rather on the 5th, the following day, a Committee is appointed with the War Office, the Foreign Office and yourselves represented on it.

A Yes

798 Q Now, it is said — I do not know whether there is any truth in it at all — that there was delay on the part of that Committee. I think that their proceedings took 19 days, and it is said that that delay was one of the factors which were responsible for the delay in the advance.

A I do not think that it was at all responsible for the delay in the advance because preparations continued to be made by General Nixon for getting his supplies.

It did not stop preparations.

799 Q General Nixon was not waiting on the leash for ^{the} word to go.

A He could not have gone on the 3rd October because neither the troops were up nor the supplies.

800 Q So that you do not think that the Committee delayed it.

A No.

801 Q There is a telegram on the question from the Secretary of State asking the Viceroy whether the delay due to the appointing of the Committee would inconvenience operations, and there is a reply I think from the Viceroy saying that it would not inconvenience them.

A The reason why it would not inconvenience them was because a certain amount of time was necessary to collect both troops and supplies.

802 Q So that there was no loss of time due to delay in the report of the Committee

A No.

803 Q They cannot be held responsible for finding the Turks entrenched at Ctesiphon.

A No. It would have been a great advantage to go on straight from Kut-el-Amara and attack the Turks at once, but he was not in a position to do so.

804 Q Probably because the river was low and

the

The transport could not get up.

Artes

805 Q That disposes entirely of any suggestion of the sort. The Committee was really rather quick in reporting

A I think they reported on the 19th.

Commander Wedgwood: On the 23rd.

Lord Hugh Cecil: The War Committee's decision ~~she~~ was on the 23rd

Earl of Donoughmore: The Order is the 23rd October.

The Witness: The interval between the 23rd October and the battle of Ctesiphon was over a month, so that if it took him a month to attack after he got the order, obviously it made no difference whatever.

806 Lord Hugh Cecil: He was not really ready to go before.

A No. He was not a month's march away from Ctesiphon

807 Commander Wedgwood: ~~In~~ The Minute of the 4th October dealing with the Bagdad advance is at Page 31 of the red précis. It is a very full précis but it is not all given ~~there~~ here.

A I omit in this précis all details which are unnecessary for consideration by the Government

808 Q One thing that is omitted is any mention of whether transport was available.

A We assumed that it was, and that if it was not the General would never

have made the proposal.

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J
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809 Q A war like this depends on transport even more than Kitchener's advance on Khartoum did, does it not
A Undoubtedly. You would assume that the General if he recommended a certain operation had the means of carrying it out

810 Q Including getting up the two new Divisions
A No; at that date there was no question of two new Divisions

811 Q You would not have regarded this as a circumstance which you here need consider in the least
A. Here we naturally assumed that he had the means of carrying out the operation that he recommended.

812 W. Stodge: And if he had not he blundered
A Undoubtedly

813 Commander Wedgwood: Putting yourself in the position of the General and putting to yourself the question "Is it worth while pressing on to Bagdad or not?" what would you say

A. In that Minute of the 4th October you will see that I was opposed to going on to Bagdad.

814 Q I wonder that you did not bring in the question of transport as a final and crushing argument

A. But then I did not know anything about it. I was not in a position to use that as an argument

815 Sir Archibald Williamson: Were not there urgent telegrams for boats to be sent out

A. No, I do not think there was much demand up to that date

816 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: Look at No 4 of the Red Book at page 39 from General Nixon on the 25th November. He says "if my transport is augmented"

A. The 25th November is two months afterwards

Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: That is the first time I think that it is mentioned.

817 Commander Wedgwood: There is one from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State on the 9th October. That is before orders were sent to start. At the bottom of page 34 of the Red Book the Viceroy, after consulting the Commander-in-Chief, says: "We will keep the Indian units full. We may add that reinforcing troops should reach Baghdad not later than one month after its capture." Now is not that absolutely dependent on having the transport for those divisions to get up to Baghdad

A. Yes, but naturally that only made us assume that he had the transport. I never had the slightest doubt about it at the time

818 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: Would not India know whether he had the transport or not

A. India ought to have known

819 Mr. Hodge: He himself ought to have known

A. The General on the spot, of course, is the person who really ought to have known

820 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: He said on the 3rd October that it was impossible to send laden ships ~~up~~ up the river then

A. That is above a certain point, Aziziyah. He did not say that there were any great difficulties below Kut

Lord Hugh Cecil: That was from General Townshend to General Nixon. There is no evidence that it reached the office

Commander Wedgwood: The Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief on the 3rd October evidently had not heard of the difficulty about transport at all

The Witness: I cannot answer with regard to India, but we had not heard of it

821 Q. They could not have heard of it. They say that their difficulty is in keeping the Indian units up to

to strength. That implied that they were not aware of other difficulties. It was practically impossible to get the two Divisions up, was it not.

29

822 A. If the force was already in Baghdad, transport for moving troops would not be required

Q. But the stores?

A. A vast amount of stores can go on one ship

823 Commander Wedgwood: At page 37 of the Red Paper is the Commander-in-Chief's appreciation of the different courses open: "(1) Take and occupy Baghdad. This will present no difficulty whatever, provided that we are guaranteed reinforcements of a full division, troops reaching Mesopotamia within two months from now." Again they had not thought of transport then

824 General Sir Neville Lytton: Was of the lengthening of the line

A. No, apparently not.

825 Commander Wedgwood: No. Whose business is it to deal with that sort of thing? Is it the Commander-in-Chief's or the Viceroy's? You knew of the navigation troubles before then

A. Yes, above Kut

826 Q. It does not say where it is. I suppose that it is above Kut: "No probability of catching and smashing the retreating enemy".

A. That was our telegram

827 Q. There is no mention of a shortage of transport
A. No

828 Q. The first mention that we get of that is what the Admiral has called attention to. On the 26th November after the retreat, or in the middle of the retreat, General Nixon says "provided my

river transport is immediately augmented to the maximum extent possible". That is the first notice that the Government here got that there was any difficulty about transport

Yes

Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge : Once or twice General Nixon says : "As I have already pointed out, there is a deficiency of transport".

for Archibald Williamson : He says that he has pointed it out repeatedly since July.

The Witness : That was the first date

829 Commander Wedgwood : Then the Indian Government must have known of it by October

A. The Indian Government knew of it in July, because he made his reports by telegram

Commander Wedgwood : Then there is less excuse than ever

830 for Archibald Williamson : It appears from the Red Book that he had repeatedly pointed it out since July

The Witness : No, I think that that is not in the Red Book. I think that it is not in the Précis.

831 Q. Look at page 43. This is headed the 12th December : "Want of adequate river transport is more acute than ever. The net result of my demands in this direction since July last is one ship from India promised at the end of this month." I have a note here that that seems to be almost the first reference

Chairman : That would be after the defeat. Only one vessel had been supplied.

for Archibald Williamson : It is interesting from the point of view of ~~assuming~~ ^{showing} that he had made representations in July

Commander Wedgwood .. Of which we have no record whatever

832 for Archibald Williamson : The Government of India in London apparently gave authority for these advances

to be made without knowing of the difficulties of transport

Witness: We knew that there were difficulties about transports reaching Mesopotamia because most of them had sunk

833 Q They had sunk in the Bay?

A These river steamers are unfit for ocean going

834 ~~Q~~ Earl of Darnley: They cannot get across because of the monsoon

A No, they were sunk on their way up. Mr Collier, the Director General of Supplies, can tell you all about that. He will tell you the number of ships ordered in the summer of 1915 and the number of ships that were lost.

835 Commander Wedgwood: On the 6th December the Viceroy wires just before he got the telegram from General Niscon of the 12th at page 41: "It is now a matter of vital urgency that Niscon should receive a large accession of river craft without delay."

A Yes

836 Q That is the first time that you had official news of it. Other cases had not got to you before at all

A We had heard of indents for ships

837 Q Indents had been made?

A Yes, indents had been made, but they could not have been out there by that time

838 Q No. When were they first made?

A In July or August I think, but you will get all that from the Director General of Stores. He can tell you the exact dates

839 Q They were ordered in England because they could not be supplied by India

A Because they could not get suitable boats in India or Egypt

840 Q. Was that after the other ships had been sunk, or before

A. I think that it was after the other ships were sunk that they began to ask, but I would not like to say positively.

Adjourned for a short time

841 Chairman: There is a question that I would like to put to you as part of your examination. To the best of your belief have you furnished us with the papers which are germane to our inquiry?

A Yes, in the charge of my Department

842 Q. If you find out that you are mistaken, you will send any that you have omitted to send which are in any way necessary for our inquiry?

A Yes

843 Q. As regards other papers, what Departments do they come from?

A. The papers that you will mostly require will be with the Director General of Stores

844 Q. And the Political Department

A Yes, there are the political papers. Those will come from Sir Arthur Hirtzel

845 Q. There are no other Departments concerned?

A No, there are no other Departments of the India Office concerned

846 Q. The Private Secretary would have to provide all the private communications of the Secretary of State; he would be responsible for those

A Yes. A great number of private telegrams are already embodied

847 Q. You do not provide those but he does?

A I got them from him. Although they were private telegrams of the Secretary of State a great many of them were dealt with in the Military Department

848

Q. Assuming that Mr. Chamberlain were to retire tomorrow, could he take with him the whole of his private telegrams?

A. Yes

849

Q. And there would be no record of them
A. No, except to the extent that they ~~have~~ ^{have} crept into this.

850

Q. But as regards the official files those private communications do not appear at all

A. No. The private telegrams do not go on to any official files

851

Q. This is perhaps an awkward question, but I would like to put it: do you not think that if the system of private telegrams and private communications gets beyond certain dimensions, it is an obstacle to good administration

A. You know exactly, of course, Lord George, the system. It was in vogue in your time I imagine

852

Q. Yes, it was in vogue, but it seems to me to have very greatly developed

A. Perhaps that would be in consequence of the war. You must remember that the whole system has altered a great deal at the India Office in consequence of the War. My cases, for instance, are never submitted to the Military Committee that you were speaking of yesterday. Ordinarily, as you know, all papers from the Military Secretary's Department would go up through the Under-Secretary to the Secretary of State, and they would be ordered for Committee. They would then go to the Military Committee and be dealt with there, - that is to say all papers of any importance. All that has ceased since the war began under an Order, I suppose you would call it, of the Defence Committee.

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The proceedings of the Defence Committee were, I believe, under the authority of the Prime Minister. Under certain proceedings of the Defence Committee drawn up before the War but with the contingency of war in view - not this particular War but any war - the Military Secretary was directed to deal with all war operations and to submit ^{matters} ~~them~~ direct to the Secretary of State, otherwise there would have been great delay. Supposing that any particular telegram came from India or elsewhere connected with military operations, it would necessarily have to be dealt with at once and therefore the Military Secretary was authorised to take the telegram direct to the Secretary of State and get his orders thereon.

853 Q. The Military Committee practically does nothing?
A. It has ceased to exist for purposes of the War

854 Q. And the Council too
A. And the Council too

855 Q. Why should these telegrams be private?
A. When private telegrams have been sent I think they have generally been sent because the Secretary of State wants some information, or the views of the Viceroy, direct and he does not wish the papers, I suppose, to go into the Departments.

856 Q. If they were sent officially as secret they would still be confidential but there would be a record of them
A. Yes, that is true

857 Q. It looks to me as though this system of private telegrams is an evasion of the Government of India Act
A. Yes, it is undoubtedly, because, of course, the cases are no longer dealt with in the statutory manner.

858 Q. The Statute deals with all communications

passing from the Secretary in Council to the Viceroy in Council. This system of private telegraphing may be necessary but it seems to me to put on one side the Councils both of the Viceroy and of the Secretary of State

A Yes, but when official action has to be taken then an official telegram is sent. The Secretary of State having learnt something privately from the Viceroy sees that the moment has come for official action, and he then sends an official telegram, or he says: "Please treat my private telegram as official"

859 Q. Suppose that expenditure is sanctioned by private telegram?

A. But I think, my Lord, that expenditure never is sanctioned by private telegram

860 Q. Where an operation entailing expenditure is sanctioned by private telegram how does the expenditure come before the Council?

A. The expenditure ~~may~~ ^{would} not come before the Council because it is Imperial expenditure; it is not Indian expenditure. All expenditure connected with the war over and above normal expenditure is Imperial

861 Q. I forget whether through the Secret Committee the Secretary of State can incur expenditure without his Council

A Yes, I think he can but these military operations did not go to the Secret Committee

862 Q. The Secret Committee was really for all purposes
A. I thought that it was more for political business

863 Q. For political and other purposes. Quite a revolution of procedure has taken place, perhaps owing to the exigencies of the War.

Yes, and necessarily. If you remember, my Lord, cases had to be laid on the Table for a week under normal procedure. Well, you could not wait a week to decide a military matter

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864 I quite agree that the old procedure would not do now, but it seems to me that the present system has summarily swept away the provisions of an Act of Parliament specially passed in order to associate the Secretary of State with a trained Council of administrators. That, I gather, is very much the effect of it

Yes she

Chaurinaw: We will ask the Secretary of State about it when he comes

865

General Sir Neville Lyttelton: You do not know that you get all private telegrams shown to you
No, but I think both Lord Crewe and Mr. Chamberlain have been in the habit of letting me see all private telegrams connected with the War, at least I believe so

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Chaurinaw: You practically draft a great many of them, do you not?

I did draft a good many. I do not know that I drafted many of the private telegrams. I could not tell what I drafted without looking at the original papers

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Commander Wedgwood: In Yellow Book No 5 at page 43 at the bottom of the page and the top of the next page there are Telegrams Nos 211 and 212; they are from the War Office to General Nixon and they are dated the 16th and 17th November, warning him that a Turkish Expedition is on the way to Baghdad, and the last is that Von der Goltz left for

70

Baghdad

Baghdad on the 10th November with 30,000 men
 A Yes. Marching from Erzeroum with 30,000 men
 A Yes

868

A Yes

Q. If you had been Sir John Nixon would those telegrams have stopped you?

A I will not say that they would have stopped me but they would have influenced me greatly. I should have felt a little sceptical about my own information.

869 Q. Is it difficult to stop a movement which is moving, so to speak?

A No, not necessarily. You can always arrest a movement if you come to the conclusion that it is not advisable for it to go on, and therefore should stop.

870 Q. The 17th was three days before the attack on Ctesiphon

A Five days, was it not

871 Q The 23rd?

A Yes

872 General Sir Neville Lyttelton The 21st and

22nd

Q. What was the first day's fighting?

General Sir Neville Lyttelton The attack was

on the 20th I think

873 Commander Wedgwood (To the Witness) Do

you think that Sir John Nixon made

a mistake in not re-considering

the attacks when he got those

wires

A I think that you will see

a telegram of a later date in

which he said: "I do not accept their

reports as conclusive for

various reasons"

874 Q Yes, I know.

A He evidently thought his own information was better than we could get.

875 Q Normally speaking 30,000 men marching from Erzeroum would be enough to knock him out before he could get any support.

A Yes, but I do not think it has been confirmed that that is correct.

876 Q On the whole you do not know what you would have done if you had been in his place.

A No. I do not know the amount of his local information nor do I know the source of it, or the persons he employed

877 Q If you had had no information whatever contrary to that would you have held up the advance.

A If I had had no information except those two telegrams I certainly should not have made it

878 Q You would not.

A Not if I was told that all these troops were coming down, and there was nothing to contradict that.

879 Q As far as you can see it comes to this: Sir John Nixon made two mistakes — first in saying that he could go ~~up~~^{on} to Bagdad without bothering about the question of transport.

A I think that he could have got to Bagdad. He was within 20 miles of Bagdad.

880 Q Do you think that he made a mistake in reporting that he could go on and take Bagdad with what he had got, and

hold

hold it with an additional division for the simple reason that he had no river transport.

A I think that he could have got there all right if his information had not proved erroneous.

881 Q Apart from his information altogether do you not think that his omission to consider the transport question was a mistake.

A I think that not considering it was a grievous error, but it would not have prevented his getting there.

882 Q He might have had to wait another month or so for his transport.

A For his reinforcements, yes; but he would have got to Bagdad if it had not been that his information was incorrect, and that there were a great many more Turkish troops in the vicinity of Bagdad than he thought. I think he could have got there on the 24th or 25th.

883 Q ~~Of~~ His blunders, if I may call them so, were first of all neglect of the transport question, and secondly, pushing on after he got these wires, trusting to his own information rather than to the War Office and to the Secret Service.

A I cannot say what the nature of his ~~the~~ Secret Service was.

884 Q No. 216 says that Halli Bey's forces left Bitlis about the 16th October for Bagdad. That was a long way off.

A Yes, a month's march.

885 Q It might have stimulated General Townshend
A Certainly. He might have thought: "I can
dash into Bagdad"

886 Commander Wedgwood: It is not a month's
march from Bitlis to Bagdad.

A A month to bring down troops.

887 Q A telegram on the 18th might have been
too late because he had already gone
too far, but on the 16th it was a
different pair of shoes, was it not.

A No.

888 Q Could he have stopped it on the 18th.

A Of course he could have stopped it on
the 18th.

889 Q Apart from those mistakes you do not
think that he did wrong in neglecting
the warning? If you had been in his
place you would not have held up the
advance on account of the difference
between two divisions, and one and two-
thirds divisions.

A No, I do not think that would have
made me hold up the advance at all.
If my information had been good and
I had been told that the Turks had
only 9,000 men in the vicinity of
Bagdad I should have made up my
mind that I could smash them.

890 Q Therefore the only mistake really that
General Nixon made, the question of the
Secret Service warning being doubtful, and
being balanced by his own private informa-
tion, was in considering that he could
take Bagdad, and hold it with the addition
of

of a division, without considering the question of whether he could get the division up, and the stores for the division.

A Yes. I think that that was certainly an error because he could not really

she count on the division ever reaching him.

891 Chairman: And that is the only error?

If you had been in Sir John Nisou's place, would you have done exactly what he did right through except with regard to making certain of transport.

A Not if I had been in Sir John Nisou's place, because as you see from the précis I was opposed to going on.

892 Q But if you had been out there and had had the responsibility of having the last word in the matter —

A If I had had the responsibility?

893 Q Would you not have pushed on?

A Well, I was against pushing on.

894 Mr Hodge: I think that the whole thing is summed up in this way — that the

view of the General Staff was that it would be a great mistake to go to Bagdad unless it could be held. Was it not the view of the General Staff that if they pushed on to Bagdad and had to retreat it would be as big a disaster as not going forward at all.

A No, I do not think that was altogether the view of the General Staff because if you remember the point was considered whether we should make a raid on Bagdad, get what we could out of it,

the shipping, the stores, and that sort of thing, and come back. I do not think that that possibility was altogether out of consideration.

895 I But in view of all the statements made by the General Staff do you look upon it as a great blunder to have gone forward with insufficient troops and insufficient transport.

A I look on it as a great blunder now knowing that the transport was insufficient certainly, and knowing that the information was bad; but at the time, not knowing that the information was bad and not knowing of the deficiencies of transport, I was not convinced at all that it was bad policy to go forward, in fact I was rather in favour of it because of the effect that it would have on the Persian side, or rather the effect that would be exercised on the Persian side by a Turkish advance in that direction.

896 Lord Hugh Cecil: May I ask you this question in connection with what Mr Hodge is asking you. 180A in the Yellow Addendum, near the top of page 12, is the only place where your name occurs, and that is why I want to put it to you: "Barrow thinks we might be able to capture Bagdad, but that forces weakened by further losses would be insufficient both to hold the town securely against counter attack and to maintain communications."

I suppose that that correctly represents your opinion at the time.

A Yes, it does absolutely by.

897 Commander Wedgwood: That was before the Committee sat.

A Yes, that was on the 5th October. That was before the Committee sat.

898 Lord ~~Robert~~^{Stanhope} Cecil
General Sir Neville Lyttelton: Your opinion

was that it was possible to capture Bagdad, and that the prudence of the manoeuvre depended on how far the forces were sufficient to hold Bagdad.

A Yes, that is absolutely correct. I remember that when that telegram was written Mr Chamberlain read it over to me and said: "Does this correctly represent your views?" and I said, "Yes, it does."

36

Warden of Sred

~~Warden and I said "yes it does"~~

899

Mr Hodge. On page 34 at the bottom ⁱⁿ of the Red Book if states "I think that Nixon is in the best position ^{to judge} as to the number of troops required," and as on

A. "After consulting the Commander in Chief I think that Nixon is in the best position to judge as to the number of troops required."

900

Q I think it is a fair assumption to say that ^{General} Nixon being on the spot and being in the best position to judge, if he made a requisition for all the necessary transport and did not find it, the Government of India would be responsible and if he did not make the requisition he would be responsible?

A. The Government of India of course were responsible for providing the transport, but you must remember that he had not got the transport when he recommended the advance on the 3rd October

901

Q. Then that places the responsibility upon him

A. Undoubtedly; he had neither got the transport, nor could he expect to get it; it had not left India.

902

Q. That was just the point that I wanted to get at - that if he undertakes an obligation ^{operation} without being fully equipped he must take the responsibility of failure or disaster

A. In my opinion, yes

903

Lord Hugh Cecil: Can you tell me at all, what were the movements of the Russians in Asia Minor at the time that the advance ~~on~~ on Baghdad was under consideration in October

A. The advance of the Russians had not begun, I think. It is rather difficult to ^{take} project my mind back to October; there had been so many operations

904

General Sir Neville Lyttelton. They were still in the Caucasus.

through Persia at that time if they once got past
There was nothing to stop them. The Russians
came down and saved the situation there.
They came down to a place which was a
march beyond.

37

912 Q That was not until much later, was it?
During the critical months, October to January
which we are mainly considering now, the Russian
element was not material, ~~accepted so far that~~
we were afraid that they could not stop them
a Quite so

913 Q There was ~~not~~ ^{no} positive advantage from Russian
assistance
a No, we had nothing much to hope for from Russia
at that time. The Russian advance in Armenia
had not commenced.

914 Q You have already explained that ~~major~~ ^{strategic} mis-
= calculation ^{that the principal strategic miscalculation was} in underrating the Turkish forces,
apart from the question of transport

a Yes

915 Q That is apparent from the telegrams, now that
miscalculation was common to everyone.

a Yes. The information the War Office got was
fairly correct

916 Q But according to the information of the War
Office the danger ~~by~~ though approximate was not
immediate

a no

917 Q As the matter looked to London, the advance
on Baghdad was sanctioned in the hope that
General Townshend and General Nixon would
get through before this great concentration
of Turkish troops took place

a undoubtedly; we never doubted their power

of getting to Baghdad

918 Q It was anticipated that the Turks would not concentrate in great force until after the occupation

a No

919 Q Therefore the whole success of the Expedition depended on the calculation that the Turks would not be able to concentrate a great army before a certain time

a Yes

920 Q Was that not rather a reckless gamble

a It has proved so, but at the time, although we had this information of a Turkish concentration and of troops coming down from Armenia or Syria or wherever it was, our General on the spot told us that his information was totally different

921 Q Might it not have been even worse than it was if the Turkish concentration had been only a little slower and we had just got to Baghdad but there had not been time to bring the two divisions from Europe? Might not the whole of Nisour's force have then been imperilled

a It would depend entirely on the date of the arrival at Baghdad. If he had arrived before the Turks coming down the Tigris and the Turks coming down the Euphrates could have concentrated, it is quite possible that he might have gobbled them up one after the other

922 Q Even before the new divisions arrived, a It would depend on the way in which the troops were brought down by the Turks. Ordinarily speaking they were brought down

on

5 4

detachments

38

on rafts I understand in ~~battalions~~ of 2000
or 3000 men at a time

923

Earl of Donoughmore; I am a little sceptical about
the line^{the} my colleagues are taking in examination
with regard to the deficiency of transport in
the advance to Bagdad. Is it so to speak
finally accepted that deficiency of transport
in any way caused the loss of the battle of
Ctesiphon

a No, not at all. It certainly did not ~~because~~ it

924

Q And therefore bad transport is not
responsible for the failure to get into Bagdad

a No I do not think it is

925

Q It is at any rate not yet proved

a No

926

Q We have not enough evidence to go on with
regard to that

a No

927

Q I do not know if it is fair to put this to you
but I notice in Document 7 Supplement A,
which probably you prepared —

a Yes

928

Q On page 6 we have just after Ctesiphon (telegram
no 14) a ^{good deal} report of detail as to what river transport
there was available

a Yes; that is in paragraph 8 is it not

929

Q I have not worked it out in detail but it ~~is~~
would rather seem to suggest that for the
small force that General Townshend had there
was a good deal of transport

a There was sufficient for the advance because
his troops were marching by land you see

930

Q So I gathered

a The transports simply carried his supplies of
all

all sorts

931 Commander Wedgwood But they were not sufficient for bringing down the sick

a They were sufficient for bringing down the sick, because they did bring down the sick, but ^{they were} not sufficient for bringing them down in proper form

932 Q They did not take up ambulances
a No

933 Q It was an ill-equipped expedition

a It was an ill-equipped expedition undoubtedly

934 Sir Archibald Williamson; ~~I should not think they~~ ^{could they not have} pursued the Turks at an earlier date if there had been more transports. They took a month.

a They had to accumulate their supplies

935 ~~Q~~ : That was because of shortage of transport?

a They had to get up their supplies from Amara, not from Kut-el-Amara. ~~not very good oil country~~. There was nothing at Kut-el-Amara. We fought a battle and got there and all the supplies had to be brought up from Amara

936 Q ~~and you~~ ^{I have not} made myself clear. If there had been a larger ^{amount} ~~supply~~ of transport ^{instead of} ~~except~~ that which existed the supplies and the troops could have been moved more rapidly than was otherwise possible

a The troops could have been moved more rapidly if the supply of transport had been larger certainly

937 Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge: Ctesiphon on the first day was a victory

a Yes

938 Q If they had had an abundance of transport and reinforcements could have been counted

on

on quite certainly as coming within a ^{reasonably} short time that would have facilitated the advance on Bagdad a No, because the reinforcements could ^{not} have been up certainly within a month of the Ctesiphon whatever the amount of transport. The first

39

^{the} reinforcements arrived I think on December 6th

939

Earl of Donoughmore: From where?

a From Egypt

940

Sir Archibald Williamson: When General Townshend was at ~~Japahon~~ ^{Assissi} he was there for some weeks while a Commission sat here deciding whether he might advance

a Yes

941

It is said that he was making preparations during the time, but after the order was given for him to advance he was three weeks before he could reach Ctesiphon

a Four weeks

942

So it must have been something like seven weeks from the time he got to ~~Japahon~~ ^{Assissi} before he fought the battle of Ctesiphon

a Yes

943

a large portion of that delay was in ~~waiting~~ ^{waiting} for men or for supplies

a Probably for both. He was waiting probably for drafts and supplies of ammunition

944

It is supposed that ~~that is exhausted~~ ^{those existed} down the river

a Yes. Probably they were at Amara and ~~and~~ other places on the line or most of them

945

Earl of Donoughmore: we have no documentary evidence of the fact that ^{he was kept waiting} ~~they got nothing for~~ for three weeks through shortage of supplies

or ammunition

a No, we have no documentary evidence

946 Q We assume that he was kept for some reason, but that reason is not clear to us yet

a No. He got his ~~orders~~ ^{Orders} on the 23rd October and he did not fight for a month afterwards.

~~Q He had~~ ~~three miles from Jopshan~~
~~Assisi~~
Q ~~But~~ he had not concentrated at ~~Jopshan~~ when he got his orders. He had a couple of brigades up there or something of the kind

947 Q He was 100 miles from Kut

a Yes

948 Q So he had to make his concentration at ^{Assisi} ~~Jopshan~~ and advance

a Yes

~~Q I do not know whether I ought to approach this after we but he discussed the next paragraph, but even if the transport was ^{short} there~~ Commander

949 Q Wedgwood has referred to the Khartoum Expedition and to a certain extent they are parallel; both are expeditions up a very difficult river to negotiate. Probably this was the more difficult of the two, but that is a matter of opinion. As I understand, roughly what happened in the Khartoum Expedition was that the river was only used as, so to speak, an auxiliary method of transport and the real transport was done on the railway.

950 General Sir Neville Lyttelton: You mean the last ^{Khartoum} ~~fort~~ Expedition

Earl of Donoughmore: Yes the 1898 one, ~~the~~

The witness Lord Kitchener's, not the Abu Klea one

951 Q The Omdurman one. The railway was built and as the railway was built the army

advanced a few miles

a yes

40

952

2 Probably ^{the} time would not admit of an exact

parallel here but has there been a discussion

of the building of a railway to supplement

the unsatisfactory water transport

a no

Wheeler

Chapter 3 Small

No because at that time we did not know ^{that} it was unsatisfactory. You may take it as a general rule that water ~~transport~~ ^{transport is} better than railway transport. If the river had been like the Irrawaddy, a good river, we ~~should have made the railway~~ ^{not} but ~~transport~~ ^{we should have} ~~entirely~~ ^{could} trusted to boats entirely.

953 Q Besides the geographical position of the Lower was not the condition of the Lower ^{is} ~~is~~ well known

A Yes, it was well known, but not the insufficiency of boats

954 Q Is there not insufficiency of water at certain times of the year

A I do not think that ~~the~~ insufficiency of water up to say Kut - al ~~Alara~~ ^{Alara} would have been very material

955 Q Not at any time of the year

A No. I might read out the statement to you ^{Commander Wedgwood} ~~Commander Wedgwood~~ The first expedition to ^{Onduhman} ~~Onduhman~~ failed because we did trust to the river ~~that is what I really understand.~~

the Witness @ ~~that was for~~ ~~_____~~ Shall I read this out. It is about the river

the Chairman Yes please

956 General Sir Neville Lytton We did not go all the way by railway in 1898 - not nearly - we had to take ^{to} the river again

the Witness A Yes

957 Q The railway cut a corner of ~~and there~~ we had to go by river

A "Generally speaking the Irgis is fairly full from January to June. In March the snows up country began to melt and the river begins to rise, as much as 3 feet being

recorded in a single night at Bagdad (that is the upper part of the river) "In April the river is at its highest. In July and August it falls gradually because the melting of the snows on the higher ranges keeps up a fairly constant supply of water. In August, September and October the river is at its lowest."

It is now August and we had a telegram only yesterday I think saying that they were beginning to experience difficulties owing to the river falling "About the middle of November, snow or lakes according to the season, the rain causes the first rise in the river and navigation begins to improve". So that August, September and October are the worst months, and particularly September and October.

"Speaking generally, vessels which draw more than 4 to 5 feet cannot ascend the river beyond ^{Qurnah} ~~Cutnash~~ except in flood."

958 In Frederick Williamson 4 or 5 feet
to go, 4 or 5 feet "Between ^{Qurnah} ~~Cutnash~~ and Amara is the most difficult stretch of the river for navigation", but difficult not on account of the depth of water but difficult on account of the tortuous nature ^{I understand} and the current

959 I The shifting banks
to Yes, I need not go on about ^{Qurnah} ~~Cutnash~~ because you all know about that

960 ~~The~~ Earl of Donoughmore We could not foresee months before so to speak what the course ^{that the crisis} of these operations ~~was~~ to capture Bagdad would be in September and October when the Tigris is at its worst