

extended for some five miles along the crest of the Jebel Hamrin. Opposite the junction of the Lesser Zab with the Tigris, the Turks had constructed a second strong position astride the Jebel Khanuka and Jebel Makhul, as well as trenches to defend the line of the Lesser Zab, a bridge at El Humr giving them free movement between both banks of the Tigris.

4. The exigencies of the Persian line of communication, which extended to Enzeli on the Caspian Sea, and the collection of the harvest, had denuded me of a large amount of transport, but for which facts I should have hesitated to adopt a line of advance against positions such as I have roughly outlined, and would have preferred that the main operation should take place via Kirkuk, and so make the Turks fight on ground of my own choosing. The distances from railhead by this route, however, were, in view of the available transport, an absolute deterrent, and there was nothing for it but a direct attack up the Tigris.

A good deal of preliminary movement of troops not required for the operations was necessary in order to get them on to the railways, and so enable them to give up 2nd line transport to form supply columns. The 56th Infantry Brigade was also sent up from the Euphrates to construct the railway line in advance of Tekrit, the latter place being then railhead, and 35 miles distant from the Turkish position at Fatha.

5. I entrusted the conduct of the main operations on the Tigris to Lieut.-General Sir A. S. Cobbe, V.C., K.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., Commanding I Corps, and placed at his disposal (in addition to the 17th and 18th Divisions) the 7th and 11th Cavalry Brigades.

To protect the right flank of General Cobbe's advance a small column from the III Corps, under command of Brig.-General A. C. Lewin, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., A.D.C., was detailed to advance on the line Tauk-Kirkuk-Altun Keupri, and to prevent the Turkish forces in that area from moving down the Lesser Zab.

6. It was impossible, as previously stated, for troops, other than light armoured motor cars, to operate against the Turkish right flank, and a direct attack on the main Fatha position would certainly have proved very costly. The plan adopted, therefore, was to turn the left of the Turkish position on the Tigris and force a crossing of the Lesser Zab, thus getting their right bank positions in enfilade, and so enabling our troops on that bank to attack with greater chances of success. Having cleared the left bank of the enemy, it was then intended to cut his line of retreat on Mosul by means of cavalry working up the left bank and by light armoured motor cars moving round the enemy's right.

There could, unfortunately, be little element of surprise in our attack, because the Turks had been confidently expecting it for some time, in addition to which dumps of ammunition and supplies had to be formed at Jift Post, 20 miles in advance of Tekrit. Bold and repeated reconnaissances against the enemy's right flank were, however, carried out to try to induce him to put his strength on that side.

7. By drawing on all possible sources for transport both cavalry brigades and half the infantry brigades were made sufficiently mobile to carry out the intended operations. By October 18th the forward dumps at Jift Post had been completed, and two crossings of the

Jebel Hamrin were also occupied, owing to the necessity for developing the wells at these points, in view of future requirements. On the same date Brig.-General Lewin moved from Tuz Khurmatli and occupied Tauck, and the important bridge four miles N.E. of that place, capturing 25 prisoners and some animals.

8. The dispositions for the attack on the Fatha position were as follows:—

On the right bank Tigris, the 17th Division and attached troops, under Major-General G. A. J. Leslie, C.B., C.M.G., and on the left bank the 18th Division and attached troops, as well as 7th Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General C. E. G. Norton, A.D.C.), under the command of Major-General H. D. Fanshawe, C.B. Special missions were also assigned to the light armoured motor batteries on the right bank and to the 11th Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General R. A. Cassels, C.B., D.S.O.) on the left bank. The R.A.F. were retained to work under the direct orders of the I. Corps.

9. Both the divisions detailed for these operations were new formations, and, with the exception of a few units, had had no previous war experience. Each infantry brigade had recently been reduced by one Indian battalion withdrawn for service in another theatre of war, and from each of the remaining Indian battalions of these Brigades one company had been taken away for the purpose of forming nuclei for newly raised battalions in India. In addition many officers and non-commissioned officers had been sent away to assist these new formations.

A serious outbreak of influenza which occurred at this time also greatly reduced the fighting strength of all units. Special influenza camps had to be improvised in order to free medical units in the field for the reception of the wounded. It is a curious fact that as soon as the operations started there were practically no further cases of influenza.

10. By the morning of the 23rd October General Cobbe had completed all his preliminary moves and was in touch with the enemy both on the right and on the left banks of the Tigris, and Brig.-General Lewin had reached Taza Khurmatli, 12 miles S.E. of Kirkuk. That afternoon a column under Brig.-General M. R. W. Nightingale, C.M.G., D.S.O., moved along the crest of the Jebel Hamrin against the Turkish left; whilst the 7th Cavalry Brigade moved round the north of those hills. The vigorous action of these two columns during the night of October 23rd/24th caused the Turks to abandon the very strong Fatha position before daylight on 24th.

11. On the 24th October the 11th Cavalry Brigade (which had concentrated at Ain Nakhalla on the previous day) after a 45-mile march through a waterless country, reached the Lesser Zab, some 20 miles above its confluence with the Tigris, at about 3 p.m. The Turks were holding the right bank in some strength, but in spite of opposition a crossing was forced over a deep ford in the neighbourhood of Uthmaniya with surprisingly few casualties. On the same day the 17th and 18th Divisions followed up the retreating Turks, maintaining a continuous pressure, whilst the R.A.F. co-operated with low flying aeroplanes which bombed and machine-gunned the enemy columns. The artillery of the 7th Cavalry Brigade also found good targets from their