

Corps was to seize El Afule, sending a detachment to Nazareth, the site of the Yilderim General Headquarters. Sufficient troops were to be left at El Afule to intercept the Turkish retreat there. The remainder of the Corps was to ride down the Valley of Jezreel and seize Beisan.

I ordered Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode, Bart., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., commanding the XXth Corps, to advance his line, east of the Bireh-Nablus road, on the night preceding the main attack, so as to place the 53rd Division on his right flank, which was somewhat drawn back, in a more favourable position to advance and block the exits to the lower valley of the Jordan:

I ordered him to be prepared to carry out a further advance, with both the 53rd and 10th Divisions, on the evening of the day on which the attack in the coastal plain took place, or later, as circumstances demanded.

10. The main difficulties lay in concealing the withdrawal of two cavalry divisions from the Jordan Valley, and in concentrating, secretly, a large force in the coastal plain.

To prevent the decrease in strength in the Jordan Valley being discovered by the enemy, I ordered Major-General Sir Edward Chaytor, K.C.M.G., C.B., A.D.C., to carry out, with the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, the 20th Indian (Imperial Service) Infantry Brigade, the 38th and 39th Battalions Royal Fusiliers, and the 1st and 2nd Battalions British West Indies Regiment, a series of demonstrations with the object of inducing the enemy to believe that an attack east of the Jordan was intended, either in the direction of Madeba or Amman. The enemy was thought to be anticipating an attack in these directions, and every possible step was taken to strengthen his suspicions.

At this time a mobile column of the Arab Army, accompanied by British armoured cars and a French mountain battery, was assembling at Kasr el Azrak, fifty miles east of Amman. The real objective of this column was the railway north, south and west of Deraa. There was always the possibility, however, that this concentration might be observed. Should this occur it was hoped that the demonstrations by Chaytor's force would strengthen the enemy's belief that a concerted attack on Amman was intended.

The concentration in the coastal plain was carried out by night, and every precaution was taken to prevent any increased movement becoming apparent to the Turks. Full use of the many groves round Ramleh, Ludd and Jaffa was made to conceal troops during the day. The chief factor in the secrecy maintained must be attributed, however, to the supremacy in the air which had been obtained by the Royal Air Force. The process of wearing down the enemy's aircraft had been going on all through the summer. During one week in June 100 hostile aeroplanes had crossed our lines. During the last week in August this number had decreased to eighteen. In the next few days a number were shot down, with the result that only four ventured to cross our lines during the period of concentration.

11. That the enemy expected an offensive on my part about this date is probable. That he remained in ignorance of my intention to attack in the coastal plain with overwhelming numbers is certain. On the morning of September 19th, when the attack in the coastal

plain was launched his dispositions were normal.

12. Whilst the concentration in the coastal plain was nearing completion the enemy's railway communications at Deraa were attacked by the Royal Air Force, and by the Mobile Column of the Arab Army, which, after concentrating at Kasr el Azrak, 50 miles east of Amman, had moved into the Hauran.

The railway line and station buildings at Deraa were damaged by the Royal Air Force on September 16th and 17th. On September 16th the Arab column, which had been joined by the Shalaan sections of the Roalla, Anazeh, and by a number of Druses, attacked the Hejaz Railway, fifteen miles south of Deraa, destroying a bridge and a section of the railway. On the following day the line was attacked both north and west of Deraa, extensive demolitions being carried out. As the result of these demolitions all through traffic to Palestine ceased, and a considerable quantity of transport, which had been intended for the Hejaz, was diverted to bridge the break in the railway.

13. The concentration in the coastal plain had been completed by the morning of September 18th. During the night of September 18th/19th, the XXth Corps swung forward its right on the east of the Bireh-Nablus Road. The 53rd Division descended into the basin at the head of the Wadi Samieh, captured Kh. Jibeit, El Mugheir, and the ridge on the far side of the basin, and all its objectives with the exception of one hill Kh. Abu Malul. Considerable opposition was encountered, and hand-to-hand fighting took place in which over 400 prisoners were taken.

In the early hours of September 19th El Afule and the headquarters of the Turkish VIIIth and VIIIth Armies at Nablus and Tulkeram were bombed by the Royal Air Force with a view to disorganising their signal communications.

At 04.30 the artillery in the coastal plain opened an intense bombardment, lasting fifteen minutes, under cover of which the infantry left their positions of deployment. Two torpedo boat destroyers assisted, bringing fire on the coastal road to the north.

14. The operations which followed fall into five phases.

The first phase was of short duration. In 36 hours, between 04.30 on September 19th and 17.00 on September 20th, the greater part of the VIIIth Turkish Army had been overwhelmed, and the troops of the VIIth Army were in full retreat through the hills of Samaria, whose exits were already in the hands of my cavalry.

In the second phase the fruits of this success were reaped. The infantry, pressing relentlessly on the heels of the retreating enemy, drove him into the arms of my cavalry, with the result that practically the whole of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies were captured, with their guns and transport.

This phase also witnessed the capture of Haifa and Acre, and the occupation of Tiberias, and of the country to the south and west of the Sea of Galilee.

As the result of the rout of the VIIth and VIIIth Armies the IVth Turkish Army, east of the Jordan, retreated, and Maan was evacuated.

The third phase commenced with the pursuit of this army by Chaytor's Force, and