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'Collection of private Telegrams between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, prior to the Outbreak of War with Turkey'

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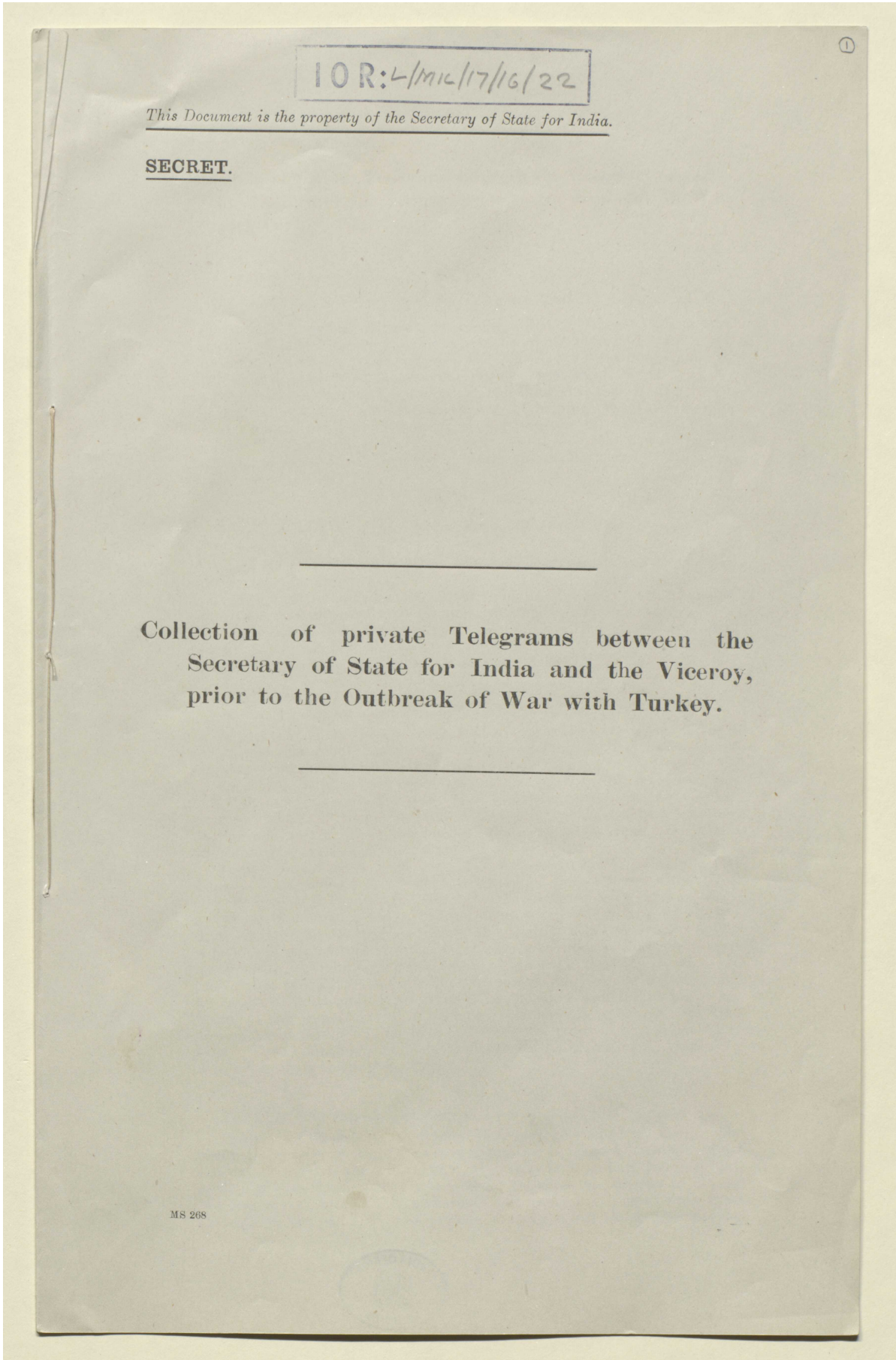


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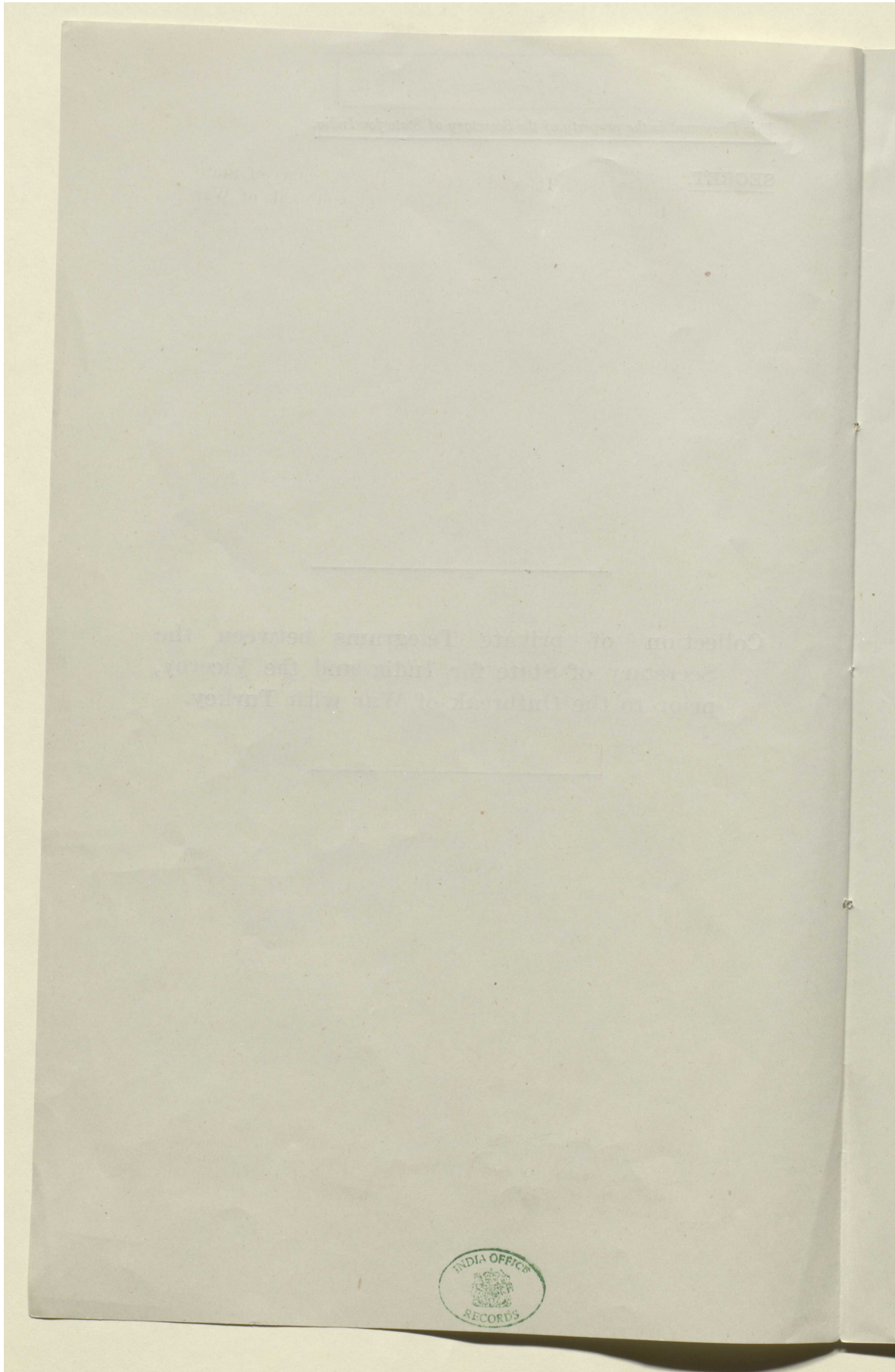
The file contains a collection of twenty telegrams between Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes (Secretary of State for India) and Charles Hardinge (Viceroy of India) during August-September 1914 prior to the outbreak of war with Turkey.

It concerns the contribution and use of troops from India, and drafts on the army; considerations of maintaining the safety of India, and the strain put on the Indian defence of the frontier; troop movements and mobilisation - including the despatch of Imperial Service Troops and Cavalry, and the sending of troops to German East Africa, and Europe.

'Collection of private Telegrams between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, prior to the Outbreak of War with Turkey' [1r] (1/8)



'Collection of private Telegrams between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, prior to the Outbreak of War with Turkey' [1v] (2/8)



'Collection of private Telegrams between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, prior to the Outbreak of War with Turkey' [2r] (3/8)

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Collection of private Telegrams between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, prior to the Outbreak of War with Turkey.

No. 1.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 7th August 1914.

Private. My official telegram of to-day. British Officers. I am sure you will understand supreme importance of adequate number to train great number of recruits to be embodied here. Clearly we must do nothing to impair your defence or endanger your internal tranquility, but we have to run some risks in all parts of the world, and I am sure that your military advisers will not place obstacles in the way of helping our War Office to utmost extent, even if some temporary depletion of your establishment is involved. You should make every effort to utilise retired or volunteer officers for suitable work. It is sound maxim that main theatre of war must be first consideration.

No. 2.

Telegram from Viceroy, dated 8th August 1914.

Private. Officers.

Your official telegram number 370 and your private telegram, both received this morning.

I quite agree that every other consideration is, for moment, of minor importance, and only yesterday evening I agreed to give two more officers from each British battalion and each British Cavalry regiment in India, making 122 in all, and also to agree to War Office retaining the 15 Staff College officers of the Indian Army whom they asked for.

No. 3.

Telegram from Viceroy, dated 12th August 1914.

Private Personal. You will remember that the Government of India agreed that they could supply two divisions and a cavalry brigade for active service abroad and a third division in case of emergency.

Since then we have been asked not only to keep the third division intact but, without being consulted, have been told to supply troops for German East Africa, which our military authorities estimate could not be less than two brigades in all. Upon this point we shall probably address you officially after discussion in Council on Friday.

To-day you informed us in your official telegram No. 428, that you had detained no less than 277 officers, nearly all of Indian Army, without our concurrence being even asked, thus making 560 officers from India in all.

We are indeed most anxious to do all in our power to help, of which I think we have already given ample proof. But we as a Government have a very serious responsibility for the maintenance of order in India and upon the Frontier, and although we are ready to run some risk and to do all we can to meet your wishes and the requirements of the War Office, I do think we ought to be consulted before steps of the kind enumerated above are taken. I am sure you will understand peremptory action of this kind creates dissatisfaction and tends to undermine the goodwill that undoubtedly exist. The Commander-in-Chief complains that he is absolutely crippled by this last measure relating to officers.

No. 4.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 13th August 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of yesterday. Troops from India. The heavy drafts on your army, especially in matters of officers, have been great concern to me, but the raising of a new army here and its training have created a special emergency which taxes resources of Empire to utmost. We know you realise this and Kitchener expresses himself with great gratitude to you and Duff. As regards keeping intact third division, this

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was really designed in your interests partly in order not to denude it of officers, partly because we thought you could more easily meet urgent East African demand with troops less important for your schemes of external and local defence. There is no probability of any demand being made for this third division so far as we can see into future, but it would be well to keep it mobilised in case of emergencies possibly affecting your interests.

No. 5.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 15th August 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 13th instant. Troops from India. My private telegram of 12th August was due to my anxiety and that of the Commander-in-Chief as to procedure adopted at home by which resources in officers and war material on which we had reckoned in making our plans were taken from us without previous consultation. We have, however, never wavered in our readiness and anxiety to assist Empire to the utmost of our power, limited only by considerations of safety of India. Preparations for despatch of Expeditions A, B and C are being pushed forward. As stated in my public telegram No. H 266 of yesterday, troops for Expedition B are being drawn from 6th division, it being understood that division will not be required for Expedition A, and this course being that which allows of the most rapid despatch of Expedition B. As explained in my above-quoted public telegram, instead of four Indian infantry battalions we are sending a complete brigade, the 16th, with its British battalion and three Indian infantry battalions. We think from a political point of view it would be unwise to send a purely native force to attack Europeans, and that from a military point of view this increase to the fighting value of the force is necessary having regard to the opposition you have warned us as likely to be encountered. We are mobilising another brigade to replace the 16th.

No. 6.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 15th August 1914.

Private. Commander-in-Chief has asked War Office whether any Imperial Service Cavalry would be acceptable with Expedition A. Politically the despatch of Imperial Service Troops to Europe is desirable, and as infantry are being employed with Expeditions B and C, I would like to send at least one regiment of cavalry, but preferably two or three, that are known to be really serviceable, with Expedition A.

Would you ascertain War Office views.

No. 7.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 17th August 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 15th instant. Imperial Service Cavalry. War Office glad to accept one regiment of Imperial Service Cavalry with Expedition A forthwith. It is possible that others may be asked for later.

No. 8.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 24th August 1914.

Private. Force B. While all our other efforts to help the Empire are progressing satisfactory, the Commander-in-Chief represents to me that he is anxious about Force B which is intended to conquer German East Africa. He regards this expedition as a side-show, and as having no real bearing on the final result of the war. In this view he is right as far as I can see. He would prefer to retain troops detailed for possible requirements which might become much more pressing should Turkey join Germany. We recognise, however, that you in England are in a much better position than we can be to appreciate the situation as a whole, and we are quite prepared to send the troops asked for to German East Africa if it be decided in the interest of the Empire that course is desirable. He tells me, however, that he has not been consulted as to strength or composition of force, that it is to be composed largely of Imperial Service troops, and that any preliminary failure would therefore have a political effect. It is obvious that to effect a successful landing, naval co-operation will be essential, but I have ascertained that neither Admiral commanding East Indian squadron, nor Admiral com-

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manding Cape squadron have received any orders to assist, or even any information that such an expedition is intended. If the expedition is to go, and if it is to be run from England, and if our responsibility is to be limited to finding the troops, &c. which you may ask for, I have no more to say, but if responsibility for results is to rest on us then the entire preliminary arrangements must be left in our hands. Divided responsibility in this case can only mean certain failure.

No. 9.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 25th August 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of yesterday. Force B. Colonial Office cannot regard this as side-show, since they look to it to avert possible serious consequences in British East Africa and Nyasaland, even affecting final settlement at close of war, though, of course, main result will be decided in Europe. As regards strength and composition of force we have to rely largely on Colonial Office information, and also as regards railways and native transport, but selection of units was, of course, left to Commander-in-Chief in India, and we understood that you also thought this a specially suitable theatre for employment of Imperial Service Troops, of which proportion to whole does not seem unduly large. Meanwhile Expedition B has to remain in abeyance for the time because European situation has made precedence for whole of Expedition A necessary, and there is further advantage which you point out that definite junction of Turkey with Germany might possibly though not necessarily so affect position in India as to oblige us to retain Force B and sacrifice gain in East Africa. I gather from Admiralty that escort accompanying B will be amply sufficient to secure landing. As regards preliminary arrangements and conduct of actual expedition, it seems imperative to follow precedent of China expedition of 1900, when the force in all matters of policy corresponded direct with this Office, and to let all responsibility rest on His Majesty's Government, since you have no means of working in concert with the Colonial Office or War Office, and of thus determining scope of expedition and extent to which operations may be carried. I feel sure that Commander-in-Chief will recognise that this is only possible way of working this expedition.

No. 10.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 26th August 1914.

Private. Force B. I accept your views as to responsibility of His Majesty's Government on the distinct understanding that Government of India have no responsibility whatever for policy or execution of programme beyond providing, as far as we are able, requirements of His Majesty's Government for proposed expedition.

I would point out that our opinion as to the suitability of German East Africa as a theatre for employment of Imperial Service troops was never invited, and we have simply met the requirements laid down in detail in your telegram, No. 375, of 8th August. (See No. 11.)

No. 11.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, No. 375, dated 8th August 1914.

The sending of a force to take and hold the ports is being considered. If such a force is sent it will be quite separate from that for any other destination, and the latter is to be kept intact. Such a force will be managed by India entirely, in a similar manner to the China Expedition.

Naval consideration will determine the date of despatch. The Admiralty, India Office, War Office and Colonial Office are considering details. Most likely the force required will be 1 squadron Imperial Service cavalry, 1 field battery, 1 mountain battery, 1 company Imperial Service sappers, 4 battalions Indian infantry, and 2 battalions Imperial Service infantry.

As 3rd Division should be kept intact the Indian infantry should be found from 9th or 5th Divisions.

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As well as the above it will most likely be necessary to send one battalion of Indian infantry and two battalions of Imperial Service infantry for protection (local).

You must clearly understand that this telegram is sent as a warning only, in order that you may have opportunity of considering the situation.

No. 12.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 27th August 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 26th instant. Force B. Second paragraph. Your contention is no doubt true, taken literally, but it must be remembered that it was your Government in last paragraph of your official telegram of 30th July who first recommended acceptance of offers of Imperial Service troops. You moreover laid down limiting condition as to their non-employment against organised European troops, and thus threw on us the *onus* of suggesting suitable theatre. This we endeavoured to do in proposing on the 8th instant their employment with Expeditions B and C, suggestions to which you did not demur at the time. Statement in your private telegram of 15th August that despatch of Imperial Service Troops to Europe is politically desirable was both at variance with and subsequent to above.

No. 13.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 16th September 1914.

Private. British officers. Kitchener tells me he is telegraphing to Duff about a further demand for officers from British regiments. It is a serious matter, and I was taken aback when I heard the details, but the urgency of the need cannot be disputed, partly because it is clear that in modern warfare on this scale the part played by experienced officers is more important than ever before, and partly because the unknown future of the war obliges us to keep here, for training new troops, many who might otherwise fill vacancies at the front. The officer's casualties seem to be fearfully heavy. I am sure you and Duff will do all you can; as a civilian I do not venture to give any opinion on the margin you can venture to touch, but the general conditions, and the present attitude of Turkey, seem to render possible some risks which a fortnight ago we should have hesitated to face.

No. 14.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 17th September 1914.

Private. Your private telegram of 16th instant. British officers. In view of seriousness of emergency and the need for officers in France I have agreed with the Commander-in-Chief to give eight officers per British Infantry battalion as desired by Lord Kitchener.

No. 15.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 17th September 1914.

Private. Troops from India. Kitchener has to-day sent me a further proposition of so serious a character that I let you know of it at once for your personal information and shall be glad of your own opinion, even before you are able to answer after consulting your military advisers. I do not know whether Kitchener will have informed Duff, but probably he may. The suggestion is that of the 42 British battalions left you after the three divisions have sailed you should only retain the Second Division intact, but exchange the remaining 39 battalions for territorial troops from England, thus giving three divisions of regular line regiments for the war. You will no doubt wish to examine the proposal from the standpoint of frontier defence, considering how far territorials can be substituted in the two other frontier divisions, and also whether you are prepared for internal order practically to rely on the loyalty of the Native army, which is what it comes to. On these points I do not profess to hold an opinion worth considering, as I am prepared to run considerable risks, but cannot estimate the

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magnitude of these particular risks. I have, however, pointed out to Kitchener that this plan involves the abandonment of the large loan of officers to which you have agreed, as they would be needed for their own units. This of course is a purely British argument.—CREWE.

No. 16.

*Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State,
dated 18th September 1914.*

Private. Troops from India. I have just received your private telegram of yesterday which has filled me with concern. Although I have practically met all the demands that have been made upon me even at some risk, there is, I am sure you will agree, a limit beyond which risk becomes a serious danger. That limit is now very nearly reached. I will now give you my personal opinion on Kitchener's proposition before consulting my military advisers who have at present no knowledge of these proposals.

Under no circumstances could I agree to any weakening of first, second, and fourth divisions in numbers (of) personnel or material. It is absolutely essential that they should be maintained intact in view of uncertainty of possible developments in Afghanistan during course of war, and of attitude of tribes. Only yesterday I received a report of a Mahsud jirga being held at which it was stated that forces on the frontier had been weakened and an attack was advocated on the Wana Agency. No decision was taken owing to absence of one of leaders. This is an example of inflammatory material that we have on the frontier with which it is necessary to have an efficient and adequate force to deal. The three divisions are only sufficient to form a containing force over so long a frontier, and would be insufficient for reprisals or an incursion into hostile territory. My impression is that Commander-in-Chief will also never agree to any weakening of these frontier divisions.

As regards forces detailed for internal defence my first impression is that I would try withdrawal of the British regiments, provided that with the British regiments Indian regiments were taken battalion for battalion, and that two territorial regiments were substituted for each pair of British and Indian battalions thus withdrawn. In this manner internal security could be maintained, and several divisions of trained troops could be obtained for service in Europe.

These are my ideas which I give you at once, without prejudice to the opinion of my military advisers, who have not yet been consulted, and to whose views I must naturally give weight that is due.

No. 17.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 19th September 1914.

Private. My private telegram of yesterday. On further consideration I am of opinion that, provided an Indian battalion is withdrawn to Europe or elsewhere simultaneously with a British battalion, I could manage safely for internal defence with a smaller proportion of territorial battalions than I said in my telegram of yesterday. This is without consultation of Commander-in-Chief.

No. 18.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 19th September 1914.

Private. Your two private telegrams received yesterday and to-day. Indian troops. I hope it may be possible to devise an arrangement on the lines you suggest. It would be a further magnificent contribution from India. I shall await a formal communication from you before discussing subject further with War Office. At present I have only a private letter from Kitchener.—CREWE.

No. 19.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, dated 19th September 1914.

Private. Following from Prime Minister:—"I attach great importance to Kitchener's request for early exchange of India's regular battalions for Territorials. Most important that high reputation won by our regular troops with Sir J. French should be maintained, and at this stage of the war a large reinforcement of them may prove decisive. Matter very urgent.—ASQUITH."



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No. 20.

Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 20th September 1914.

Private. Indian troops. Two private telegrams of yesterday.

At the present time it seems desirable that it should be clearly understood at home, and even published, what troops India is providing to meet present emergency.

We have already despatched over seas, or have mobilised and are waiting for transport to send, 1 Cavalry Division, 3 intact Infantry Divisions and the equivalent of 1 Infantry Division scattered in Europe, Egypt, and East Africa. Of Imperial Service Troops $1\frac{3}{4}$ brigades of Infantry and $1\frac{1}{4}$ brigades of Cavalry are being despatched. As regards Artillery the 3 intact Divisions take with them, in addition to their own, 4 brigades of Field Artillery, and I have further offered 18 complete batteries to be replaced by Territorial Artillery. In addition to the above we are sending Regular and Volunteer units such as 15-pounder and Maxim batteries, Railway Companies, Sappers and Miners, and Camel Corps. This is already, I think, a handsome contribution from India.

I have now put Kitchener's proposition before the Commander-in-Chief and we have arrived at the following decision: out of 52 Regular British battalions in India we have already sent or are sending 11 over seas. We must retain 9 battalions for the 3 Divisions on the Frontier, since we cannot regard Territorials as fit to cope with Pathans in hill warfare, and we consider maintenance of 1st, 2nd, and 4th Divisions intact on the Frontier as the bed-rock of military security in India. On this point Commander-in-Chief and I are absolutely of one mind. We are willing to send home remaining 32 Regular British battalions and in addition 20 excellent Indian battalions. If there is any doubt as to accepting 20 Indian battalions it will be necessary, in the interests of internal security, to reduce number of British battalions that we now offer to send. The formations in which these troops should go can be discussed later. We shall then have no British battalions in India except the 9 on the Frontier, and we shall have sent over seas exactly half of our Indian Infantry, viz., 69 out of 138 battalions. In return we must ask for 43 battalions of Territorials, and these must begin to arrive before the British battalions sail. Indian troops can start earlier.

The danger zone is Afghanistan and the Tribes, and against these we must always be fully prepared, but I have no feeling of anxiety as to internal security in the rest of India if British battalions are withdrawn, provided that more Indian regiments go over seas and a greater number of Territorials are sent to replace British units.

His Majesty's Government must remember that no such risks have ever been taken before. We are sending away more than half our Regular Army and we have nothing in this country to fall back upon. We cannot raise new forces, because we have given up to the Imperial Army all our new rifles and practically all our artillery, and owing to number of our officers given to meet demands in England we are already very short and with no possibility of replacing them.

Of course any idea of an expedition to Basrah will be out of the question since we could not send Territorial Infantry and Artillery against the Turks.

An official telegram with the substance of the above will be sent, addressed to you.

Please thank the Prime Minister for his message and assure him that I am sparing no effort, and am always ready even to take some risk to meet his wishes.