

## CHAPTER VI.

### Armoured Trains and Aeroplanes.

1. It appears that on the 15th of April an armoured train which had machine guns and searchlights, in charge of a British officer and British soldiers, was sent from Lahore to Sheikhpura. At Sheikhpura Lala Sri Ram Sud, sub-divisional officer,

**Firing from armoured train on the 16th of April not justified.**

Sheikhpura sub-division, got into the train and proceeded to Chuharkana station. Some of the residents of Chuharkana and other adjoining villages had on the 14th and 15th done considerable damage to the railway lines and the railway station. The armoured train proceeded slowly from Sheikhpura and arrived near Chuharkana station in the early hours of the 16th April. Near the distant signal they found an obstruction placed on the line. After removing this destruction they were proceeding further when they found men about the line and opened fire; and one man was killed. The armoured train then proceeded to the Chuharkana station, but none of the rioters were there then. Lala Sri Ram Sud and the military escort got down from the armoured train, and went into a factory where it was suspected that some men were in hiding. Some rifle shots were fired in the dark with a view to terrify the village people. There were no casualties. On the morning of the 16th, the armoured car proceeded a mile further and pulled up in the vicinity of Chuharkana. It may be mentioned that the Chuharkana railway station is not near the village but near what is known as the Chuharkana market. From this point the machine-gun was fired from the armoured train into the village and later the party seems to have gone into the village and done some further firing. The people in the village who were thus fired at, were not at that time engaged in any acts of violence and we think that this firing was not justified. We set out below the examination of Lala Sri Ram Sud about this firing.

Q. So you moved your armoured train from the station to a place beside this village and pulled it up there ?

A. Yes.

Q. And then you fired into the village, did you ?

A. I have said in my statement that while we were in the armoured train we noticed the movement of a number of people in the village.

Q. Yes, I will deal with that in a minute. How far were these people whose movements you saw from the train ?

A. So far as the eye-sight could reach.

Q. How many yards from you ?

A. I cannot give the number of yards. It was as far as my eyesight went.

Q. You were on the railway line ?

A. Yes, and I could see the movement of the people.

Q. You were in your armoured train opposite to the village ? The village consists of houses ?

A. Yes, but we discovered the movements of the people on the outskirts of the village.

Q. That is between the village houses and the railway line ?

A. No, on the other side.

Q. There must be several rows of houses, there cannot be only one row ?

A. Yes, but I am speaking of the outskirts of the village. The outskirts could be seen, but not the inside of the village.

Q. Where were these people, on the other side or where ?

A. By other side, I do not mean a place which I could not see. I mean they were near the village, but on the outskirts of the village, and that I could see them from the armoured train.

Q. Were they between you and the village houses ?

A. No.

Q. Between you and the village houses there was nothing ?

A. No.

Q. Where were these people ?

A. These people were on one side of the village.

Q. What do you mean by other side, do you mean behind the houses

A. No, I do not mean that, I mean a side that I could see myself

Q. They were in some outskirt that you could see ?

A. Yes.

Q. How many were there ?

A. I could see movements of people.

Q. You could not see the people at all ?

A. I could see the people. Some of them could be seen moving on horseback a little further away. I could not give an exact idea of their number.

Q. You must have formed some idea ? You cannot say whether they were 5 or 10 or 100 ?

A. No, I say I discovered movements of people.

Q. You saw the people and you cannot tell me whether there were five or a 100 ?

A. I cannot tell you. There might have been a hundred people hidden behind.

Q. I am asking you about the people you saw ?

A. There were a good many people. They were considerably more than five certainly.

Q. Could you see their faces from there very well ?

A. Yes.

Q. What were their movements ?

A. They were moving.

Q. I want to know what you mean by saying you saw their movements, what movements ?

A. They were not committing any mischief, I do not say that. They were probably in consultation.

Q. They were not committing any mischief ?

A. No, not at that time.

Q. What were their actual movements ?

A. People were coming into and going out of the village.

Q. You did not know what their object was ?

A. As I came to know later their object was to attack us in the armoured train.

Q. Their object was to attack you ?

A. Yes, they were collecting and some were going to call other people.

Q. From looking at them in the distance you made out they were going to call people from the village to attack you ?

A. No, I did not say so, I said I learnt about it later, but we could guess that they were meaning some mischief to us.

Q. It is true that you learnt that afterwards ; I am dealing now with what happened.

A. Unfortunately I cannot eliminate things that are in my brain ; I have to take things together.

Q. What we are dealing with now is what you did at that time and what materials you had then and what was your frame of mind. For that purpose what you learnt afterwards is utterly useless. When you refer to their movements, what were their actual movements ?

A. As I said they were coming and going, I fancied they were collecting for some object.

Q. You saw some people going into the village and some people coming out of it and from that you concluded that they were collecting to attack you ?

A. Yes, they were collecting with some sinister purpose.

Q. From the mere fact that some people were going into the village and some coming out at the time, you concluded that they were assembling for some sinister purpose ?

A. Yes, I know what their temper was before. We were still there and they had collected and had not gone into hiding.

Q. May I take it in this way, that because when you arrived in your armoured train they did not go into hiding, you thought they were out for some sinister object ?

A. Not exactly. I knew these men had done mischief, and on the arrival of the armoured train they did not disperse and so as they were still moving about I knew some mischief was intended.

Q. You say these people had done this mischief ?

A. The whole village was there I could not make any distinction.

Q. You did not make any distinction ?

A. No, certainly not, and as a matter of fact, the whole village was there.

Q. And you considered the whole village to be guilty ?

A. Yes.

Q. And because they were not in hiding and were still showing themselves you thought you were entitled to fire ?

A. Those people ought to have dispersed in the ordinary course.

Q. Your view was that when your armoured train arrived opposite the village, no villager ought to be seen, is that your idea ? That is what it comes to ?

A. It does not come to that, that no villager should be seen.

Q. When the armoured train came there you noticed certain movements ?

A. Yes, I noticed certain movements and I concluded those movements were intended for some sinister object.

Q. What I want to know is why did you conclude that ?

A. They were not there in the morning ; they had collected then ; why were they there ?

Q. What time of day was this, early in the morning ?

A. It was about 12 or 1.

Q. And your idea was that they had no business to be going out of or coming into the village at that time ?

A. Not going out and coming in. They had some horses with them, why had they these with them ?

Q. These village people should not have any horse at all ?

A. No, but they should not be on their horses at that time.

Q. Your reason for concluding that you must fire was because you saw some people on horses, is that so ?

A. As I say this was one of the factors. Do not take things in an isolated manner.

Q. One of the factors on which you decided to fire was that you saw people on horses ?

A. Yes, some coming and some going.

Q. And you thought these people had no business to be on horses at all ?

A. Not at that time.

Q. And on that you fired ?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you do next ?

A. We went out and saw a number of people and the British soldiers fired, but it did not take effect.

Q. Where did you see them ?

A. On the outskirts of the village.

Q. At the same place as you had seen those people before ?

A. On the same side.

Q. When you saw the people what were they doing ?

A. I cannot say.

Q. You did not notice what they were doing ?

A. I have already said what they were doing.

Q. But you now came near them, you had first seen them from the train ; you had now alighted, did you see what they were doing ?

A. At that time I did not notice what they were doing.

Q. You did not care to enquire what they were doing ?

A. I did not care to enquire.

Q. You at once decided to fire ?

A. Yes.

Q. Why did you decide to fire ?

A. Because we knew they were out for mischief. I had already come to know these men were doing some mischief.

Q. Because you had the fixed idea in your mind that these people were bent on mischief you fired ?

A. Yes.

Q. When you reached near them you did not enquire what they were doing at the time ?

A. No.

Q. Or look at them ?

A. We were looking at them.

Q. You did not care to see what they were doing, you straightaway opened fire at them ? How many shots were fired ?

A. I do not know, some shots were fired.

Q. How many people were killed ?

A. I do not think anybody was killed ; one man was wounded.

Q. And did you do this also to teach the people a lesson and strike terror ?

A. I said to avert that danger.

Q. To avoid the danger of their doing further mischief ?

A. And attacking, and eventually, it was found that they were ready to attack.

Q. After having done this, did you go back to the train ?

A. Yes.

The above extracts show that Lala Sri Ram Sud considered the whole village as guilty and resorted to this firing with a view to inflicting punishment and making an impression. In this connection may be noticed the evidence of Lieutenant Abdul Rahim Khan and Bawa Budha Singh, Executive Engineer, Lyallpur. They arrived at Chuharkana from Lyallpur by an ordinary train. But as the train was unable to proceed further, they were kept in the market by one Iqbal Singh, pleader, for the night. Next morning they boarded another armoured train which had arrived there, and when this train proceeded and arrived near the Chuharkana village, the armoured train in which Lala Sri Ram Sud was, came up from behind and stopped at a distance of 200 yards. Both these witnesses testify to the firing in the village from the armoured train No. 3 and the subsequent firing by the parties that went into the village. The armoured train in which Sri Ram Sud was, then returned to Sheikhpura where he alighted and from there went back to Lahore. It again returned from Lahore on the 17th, and taking Lala Sri Ram Sud at Sheikhpura, went to Chuharkana. There was no firing this time.

2. Then on the 18th the armoured train with Lala Sri Ram Sud again went from Sheikhpura and pulled up near the village of Mahnianwalia. The party went to the village and fired into a crowd of about 25 people found there. L. Sri Ram Sud said that he did not know and did not see what they were doing but opened fire. We set out below the evidence of Lala Sri Ram Sud on this point.

A. We went to Mahnianwalia village, a village which had taken considerable part in the disturbances.

Q. You came with soldiers ?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you do there ?

A. On the way, a crowd was seen and they were fired on.

Q. Where ?

A. Near Mahnianwalia.

Q. Outside it ?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the number ?

A. I cannot give the number. It was a crowd.

Q. Will it be 10 or 15 people ?

A. More than that.

Q. How many ?

A. More than 25.

Q. What were they doing ?

A. There was the crowd. They did nothing. I cannot say they were doing anything.

Q. At what distance were you from it ?

A. About 2 furlongs, I should say.

Q. You did not see what they were doing ?

A. No.

Q. You did not care to see ?

A. No.

Q. In what direction were they going ? Were they standing or moving ?

A. They were probably standing.

Q. You were not sure ?

A. They were probably standing.

Q. What do you mean by ' probably ' ? You were not sure ? They might be moving in some direction ?

A. They were there.

Q. What were they doing ? Were they standing there or moving ?

A. Some might be standing and some might be moving.

Q. You do not know what they were doing ?

A. No.

Q. And you opened fire on them ?

A. Yes.

Q. Who decided that ? Yourself ?

A. Myself and the Commanding Officer.

We are of opinion that this firing on the 18th was not justified. The action of Lala Sri Ram Sud was intended to be punitive and for the purpose of creating an impression. The following are further extracts from his evidence :—

Q. Where is that village Mahnianwalia ?

A. It is between Moman and Dhaban Singh.

Q. Did anything occur there ?

A. Yes, as both the villages of Mahnianwalia and Pucca Dulla were concerned in the mischief in the case of Dhaban Singh, and had looted that station, myself and the Officer Commanding took counsel together and thought it advisable that some lesson must be taught to these villagers. Then we walked into the village. I had no occasion to go into Pucca Dulla village, because it is further away. Mahnianwalia is nearer at a distance of one mile. Myself, the Officer Commanding and some soldiers walked together and on the way a crowd that was on the fields was fired upon.

Q. Was that crowd bent on mischief in your opinion ?

A. Yes, the whole countryside was bent on mischief in those days. It was only after this firing had been done that they came to their senses.

3. There was another case of firing which we think it is difficult to justify. Captain Flowerdew on the 17th April

**Another firing on the 17th of April.**

under official instructions came to Chuharkana. He wanted to arrest a person called Ram Singh, but he found that he had left the village of Chuharkana and was near a well two miles away in company of some other people. When Captain Flowerdew's party proceeded in that direction, Ram Singh's party observing them from a distance of half a mile, ran away. It is not clear whether Ram Singh was among the party. Captain Flowerdew was told in the village that he was. Fire was opened when one of the party was killed. The person killed was not Ram Singh who does not appear to have been traced that day. The fugitives apparently then got divided into two parties. The main party was followed by Captain Flowerdew, and the other party by Sergeant Davies. Sergeant Davies, it is said, came upon an armed party some of whom were mounted; and Sergeant Davies opened fire and killed four. Captain Flowerdew in his evidence before us said that when Sergeant Davies came upon the armed party one of them fired at Sergeant Davies and thereupon Sergeant Davies opened fire. This attack on Sergeant Davies has not been mentioned in the report made by Captain Flowerdew on the 17th April (which is appendix IX to General Beynon's report of the 5th September 1919) or in any other contemporaneous document. We give below the explanation given by Captain Flowerdew of the omission.

Q. There is one more fact. Neither this report on which you have been examined nor any other thing mentions the fact that anyone fired upon Sergeant Davies ?

A. No.

Q. And today you add this statement that one man fired upon Sergeant Davies and upon that he returned the fire ?

A. Yes; I may explain it. At the time I wrote this report there was no need to prove to anybody that there were riots on. It was a self-evident fact.

Q. Because there were riots on, therefore to your mind it was quite clear that any party of soldiers that would go to any village would be fired on ?



A. No.

Q. The mere fact that there were riots does not necessarily prove that Sergeant Davies must have been fired upon ?

A. I did not refer to it because it was self-evident that there were riots at the time.

Leaving aside the firing by Sergeant Davies, we are of opinion that the firing on the people who left the vicinity of the well on seeing the party of Captain Flowerdew from a distance is difficult to uphold.

4. On 14th April 4 aeroplanes from Lahore visited Gujranwala.

**Aeroplanes.** One of them dropped eight bombs and also used its Lewis Gun, another only machine-gunned, the third also used machine-gun, and the fourth took no action. In all, 10 bombs appear to have been dropped, but two have not been accounted for. The total number of rounds fired by two of the aeroplanes was 980. The total number of casualties was 9 killed by the aeroplanes as given in the Government case ; the number of the wounded by the police and the aeroplanes are not separately given ; but they were in all 27. It appears that Major Carberry in charge of one of the machines first went to Gujranwala and having hovered over it, went to Dulla village. He found there a crowd of 150 people on the road, and, as he says, walking in the direction of Gujranwala. He dropped three bombs on them and when they ran away in the village, he fired 50 rounds of machine-gun into the village. The following extract from Major Carberry's evidence about the incident shows that he was trying to produce a moral effect :—

**Bombs dropped on outlying villages.**

Q. Those bombs you dropped on particular crowds that you saw there ?

A. Yes.

Q. Where were those crowds, in the streets or outside the village ?

A. They were on the road outside the village.

Q. That crowd consisted of how many people ?

A. I reported 150, I cannot tell you exactly.

Q. How many miles was this village from Gujranwala ?

A. About two miles north-west of Gujranwala.

Q. What was this crowd doing ?

A. They were going towards Gujranwala.

Q. How were you able to ascertain that they were coming to Gujranwala ?

A. They were walking in the direction of Gujranwala.

Q. And you dropped three bombs at them ?

A. Yes.

Q. Then you say in your report that you fired machine gun into the village itself ?

A. Yes.

Q. That firing was not at any particular crowd ?

A. It was at the people on whom I dropped the bombs and who ran back to the village.

Q. When you first dropped bombs on a party of 150 strong they began to run away into the village ?

A. Yes.

Q. And you fired machine gun into the village also ?

A. Yes.

Q. That was over the houses in the village ?

A. I suppose some of the shots hit the houses.

Q. You say that the people when they were fired at began to run away, i.e., after you dropped the bombs they began to disperse and got into some of the houses. That is what they attempted to do ?

A. Yes.

Q. You fired machine gun into the village and threw bombs on those people who took shelter in the houses but there were other innocent people in those houses.

A. I could not discriminate between innocent and other people who were, I think, doing damage or were going to do damage.

Q. You say that on 150 people, that were seen there, you dropped three bombs with the result that they dispersed and ran into the village. Was not your object accomplished ? Was there any further need of firing machine gun ?

A. The machine gun was not fired indiscriminately. It was fired on the people who were running away.

Q. You fired machine gun into the village ?

A. I said the crowd scattered and ran back into the village, and I have said that 50 rounds machine-gun were fired into the village. I fired at the men.

Q. When the crowd split up and there could not be on the spot particular people in the village ; they must be running away and entering the houses ; then you fired machine-gun into the village which hit the houses in which there were perfectly innocent people ?

A. I was at a height of 200 feet. I could see perfectly well and I did not see anybody in the village at all who was innocent.

Q. What I mean, Captain, is this. When you threw the bombs on them they began to run away. Was not your object really accomplished ?

A. No.

Q. What was the further need of machine-gunning them and killing them ? Your object was to disperse the crowds that had assembled and were attempting to proceed to Gujranwala. The throwing of bombs

must have resulted in some casualties. Was there any further need of firing of machine-gun ?

A. Yes, to do more damage.

Q. But then the object seemed to be to hit or kill more people in that crowd, although they had begun to disperse and were running away after the bombs had been thrown on them ?

A. I was trying to do this in their own interests. If I killed a few people they would not gather and come to Gujranwala to do damage.

Q. Do I take it then, although by the first throwing of the bombs they began to disperse and run away, you still machine-gunned them in order to prevent the possibility of their re-assembling, the idea being to produce a sort of moral effect on them ?

A. Yes. Quite right.

Then Major Carberry appears to have gone to another village and there fired the machine-gun on 50 people who, **Bombs on Gujranwala** he saw, were coming to this village from Gujran-  
**Khalsa Boarding House.** wala. According to Major Carberry, he did not see any casualties. Then Major Carberry returned to Gujranwala and dropped a bomb which evidently fell over the Khalsa Boarding House. He further fired 30 rounds of machine gun into the people in the precincts of this building. Then he dropped two further bombs somewhere about the railway station and fired 150 rounds of machine-gun into the crowds in the city of Gujranwala.

Another aeroplane from Lahore, in charge of Second-Lieutenant Vincent, fired about 25 rounds of machine-gun into a crowd of 20 or 25 near the level crossing. Lieutenant Vincent appears to have flown round the outlying villages and fired about 700 rounds of machine-gun on small crowds who had according to him dispersed and taken cover. This appears from Lieutenant Vincent's statement embodied in the report of Lieutenant-Colonel Minchin, Wing Commander.

We are of opinion that looking to the inherent difficulties in regulating the operations of an aeroplane on a town consisting of a large number of innocent people, the danger of a person in the aeroplane unfamiliar with the town not being able to make out unmistakably whether any particular people are peacefully engaged or otherwise and the consequent risk of hurting innocent people, are so grave that the use of aeroplanes in case of such disturbances is to be deprecated. It is said that when no other means were available of sending relief the use of an aeroplane was the only means that could be adopted. It is difficult no doubt to lay down any general proposition applicable to all conditions, but as we have said above, the danger inseparable from the use of aeroplanes for bombing is so considerable that it should as far as possible be deprecated. It appears that two days before these aeroplanes were sent to Gujranwala, there was a discussion at Government House where Sir Michael O'Dwyer says it was decided that when aeroplanes were to be used they should not drop bombs in any city or thickly populated area because they could not do so with discrimination. The suggestion to send aeroplanes

to Gujranwala on the 14th was made by Sir Michael O'Dwyer. The following entry appears in the Government House War Diary :—

“ General Staff Officer, 16th Division, asked to send aeroplanes and drop bombs if necessary and a good target presents itself. The opportunity for an aeroplane seems good.”

The following entry appears in the General Staff Diary :—

Private Secretary to Lieutenant-Governor telephoned to me as follows :—“ Deputy Commissioner, Gujranwala, 12-30. *Hartal* still going on, mob active, more expected. Bridges on either side station burnt. 15 Up Passenger stopped by mob. Police force insufficient.

His Honour considers this to be good opportunity for aeroplanes to use bombs as there is little opportunity of hurting friends.

I repeated this immediately to the General Officer Commanding and received orders to send what aeroplanes available.”

We are unable to uphold the action of Major Carberry in dropping bombs on the Khalsa High School and on the people in the two villages. It is said that Major Carberry was merely carrying out the orders given to him by Lieutenant-Colonel Minchin, which were to the effect that the crowds were to be bombed if in open, and that gatherings near the local villages were to be dispersed if coming or going to Gujranwala. General Beynon's evidence shows that the orders originally emanated from him. He says “ I can give you the exact orders. I can remember them fairly well. They were to proceed to Gujranwala and break up any gathering found doing damage to the civil lines or station and disperse any crowd within, I think, two miles either proceeding to or coming from Gujranwala. I think so far as I remember these were the orders.” We think that the latter part of the order was unfortunate and looking to the evidence of Major Carberry, sufficient discretion was not used in carrying them out. The two bombs that did not explode, by whatever machine they were dropped, were clearly against the instructions not to drop bombs in the native city. That they did not burst was merely an accident and cannot justify the action of the aeroplanes in dropping them. On the evidence we do not think it clear that the bombs which exploded near the level-crossing were dropped from Major Carberry's machine. His action in firing from the machine gun into crowds in the street of the city we consider excessive.

5. On the 15th of April, Lieutenant Dodkins flew over Gujranwala and its vicinity. He says he noticed about 20

**Aeroplane dropping bombs  
on the 15th of April.**

people in a field about 1 mile away from the town of Gujranwala, and he fired at them 148 rounds with a Lewis gun. In a village, half mile west of Gujranwala, he dropped a bomb at people about 30 to 50 in number who were standing at the door of a house. Lieutenant Dodkins says he noticed someone addressing from the door. The 20 people that Lieutenant Dodkins saw were, it appears, not on any road, but in a field, and they were not armed with sticks, and Lieutenant Dodkins says they were doing no work but were standing and talking to one another. When asked how he justi-

fied firing at people who were in a field and doing nothing wrong he said, "My orders were to disperse any crowd and that gathering of 20 people was a crowd and so I dispersed them." We presume that Lieutenant Dodkins did not in going to Gujranwala on the 15th act on any specific orders for that is not alleged. He apparently acted under the general orders that were issued to the Royal Air Force. General Beynon's report of the 5th September shows that when information arrived of attacks on railway communications on the 12th and the 13th certain orders were issued to the various units of the military force. Paragraph 36 of the said report says :—"Orders were also issued then to the Royal Air Force that the pilots were to keep a look-out when carrying messages or reconnoitring for any gangs damaging the railways and they were to fire on them immediately." If Lieutenant Dodkins was acting under these instructions, it is obvious he exceeded them. If on the other hand his orders were "to disperse any crowd" without reference to the place where it was and what it was engaged in doing, the authority who gave such an order was wrong in giving such orders.