

4. World War One – and the Gallipoli Campaign

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A. WWI: Introduction

Rather than attempting to cover all aspects of the WWI conflict, I’ll focus on but five topics. First, on the origins, course and outcomes of the Gallipoli Campaign. Secondly, to enquire what drove Australia’s politicians to back Britain’s war effort throughout World War I (Essay 5A). Thirdly, to reflect on the nature of the underlying economic motives that have impelled so many nations to support war(s).(Essay 5B) Fourthly, to outline the overall human costs of WWI, their basis in the new WMD weapons of the day, and some other ‘bottom lines’.(Essay 6A, B) And finally, to consider another of the war’s outcomes, the outside hostility to the Russian socio-economic ‘experiment’ of Communism. (Essay 6C)

B. The Gallipoli Campaign: Origins and Outcome

(a) Background- Australia and the Turkey option

“The writer of the Australian Official History has thought it right to epitomize the story in the following concluding sentence:- ‘So, through a Churchill’s excess of imagination, a layman’s ignorance of artillery, and the fatal power of a young enthusiasm to convince older and slower brains, the tragedy of Gallipoli was born.*

It is my hope that the Australian people, towards whom I have always felt a solemn responsibility, will not rest content with so crude, so inaccurate, so incomplete and so prejudiced a judgement, but will study the facts for themselves.”

Winston Churchill in *The World Crisis*, v 2, p. 122, (WC1ii,122)

(*Charles Bean, Australia’s Official Historian of World War I- see CB1i, 201)

For Australians the Gallipoli military campaign of WWI holds a very special place.

Indeed for some it is said to be the event which above all others brought Australia to nationhood - through which 'we came of age'. Yet for that in reality to hold true it would have to mean that Australians, through their government, had exhibited *independent* judgement in their *own* best interests. Clearly that did not apply to Australia's decision to join Britain in its war against Germany (or Turkey). In fact Australians then and for long thereafter remained ignorant of the factors behind Britain's decision for war and, needless to say, they were not consulted on its wisdom or conduct. An Australian government had simply gone along with the British declaration, adding one of its own, as it did at the outset of WWII. Further, when in November 1914, our first volunteer troops left Albany, W.A. for France (as they were given to understand) the decision to disembark them in Egypt, then commit them to an invasion of Turkey was entirely British. Now while it goes without saying that from beginning to end of that campaign our troops fought most valiantly and selflessly under the most difficult conditions, that very real sacrifice can in no sense obscure or justify the total lack of independent Australian decision-making. After all, this would have required a close background knowledge of Britain's strategic thinking, genuine Australian agreement to become involved, and full participation in the planning of all operations involving Australian troops, none of which applied.

(b) Motivations for Attacking Turkey

In trying to understand the origins and course of the Gallipoli Campaign as it finally eventuated, we need first to see the motives of the British planners - what they were trying to attain, motives well explained by Churchill and others. Then we'll be better able to follow the further evolution of those plans from January 1915, - first, as to how in the expectation of strong involvement by troops from Greece and other Balkan states (lured by promises of 'spoils of war') there would be a straightforward military victory, - clearly the preferred option. Second to the less-favoured option of an all-naval assault, British and French ships pushing through the Dardanelles to Constantinople where their naval guns would force Turkey's surrender. And only then, when finally by March 18 it had become all too clear that that plan had also failed, to the ever-so-rushed third option, the military campaign involving two divisions of Australians and New Zealanders, French-Colonial, Indian and Newfoundland contingents and Britain's 29th plus Marines, division.

Commenting on Australia's ignorance of what the campaign was all about, historian Denis Winter in his book, "*25 April 1915: the Inevitable Tragedy*", began "*Training in Egypt and fighting Turks on Gallipoli seemed inexplicable to most Australians in 1915*".(DW, 3) Since for most Australians that is as true today as it was then, it is important to outline some 'diplomatic-military' historical background as revealed by Churchill, Gilbert, Allfrey, Noel-Baker, Winter and others.(WC1i, WC1ii, MG1, AA, N-B1, DW)

As we know, at the outbreak of WWI each of the major European Powers maintained that with the right sort of 'fighting spirit' and 'dash' the conflict would be settled in 'a few months', the troops 'home by Christmas'. But in Europe, by November 1914 both

Western and Eastern Fronts had degenerated into the frightful stale-mated carnage of trench warfare. Not surprising then, the question of whether there might be easier victories elsewhere. A directly related issue was how could more nations be induced to join the Entente side, Britain's Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener arguing that an assault on Constantinople could bring in Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania - providing they were offered Turkish territory.(MG1, 362)

Indeed territorial and resource prospects were very powerful lures not only for the lesser powers, but for Britain, France and Russia as well. For example, Sir Edward Grey, Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was convinced that a successful naval assault on the Dardanelles, pushing through to Constantinople, could result in a coup d'etat, with Turkey joining the Allies and other benefits (derivable from its Ottoman Empire territories) to follow. And while Lord Kitchener emphasised the annexation of key Syrian towns, Aleppo and Alexandretta, the Admiralty looked further east, towards a takeover of the entire Euphrates valley (Mesopotamia), from Mosul in the north to Basra in the south.(MG1,363) Since the Royal Navy's ships had recently converted from coal- to oil-burning, acquisition of that oil-rich territory would result in a key resource for Britain. For Czarist Russia, a secret Allied agreement at this time promised control over Constantinople, the Dardanelles and more than half of 'Turkey in Europe.'(MG1,363) And for France, a later secret agreement (Sykes-Picot, 1916) promised it Syria and the Lebanon, Britain to acquire Palestine/Trans-Jordan and Mesopotamia (now Iraq).(see below)

A revealing illustration of the resource and other motivations underlying Britain's invasion of Turkey emerges from a letter to the Admiralty's First Lord, Winston Churchill, from his flamboyant First Sea Lord, Lord 'Jackie' Fisher, - as quoted by Churchill - excerpts as follows:

"January 3, 1915

Dear Winston,

I've been informed that War Council assembles next Thursday, I CONSIDER THE ATTACK ON TURKEY HOLDS THE FIELD!-but ONLY if its IMMEDIATE!"
(Fisher goes on to propose his 'Turkey plan', which includes:-)

"II. Immediately replacing all Indians and seasoned troops from Sir John French's command with Territorials, etc., from England (as you yourself suggested) and embark this Turkish Expeditionary Force ostensibly for protection of Egypt! WITH ALL POSSIBLE DESPATCH at Marseilles! and land them with troops now in Egypt at Haifa and Alexandretta, the latter to be the REAL occupation because of its inestimable value as regards the oil fields of the Garden of Eden, with which by rail it is in direct communication,

III. The Greeks go for Gallipoli at the same time as we go for Besika, and the Bulgarians for Constantinople, and the Russians, the Servians, and Roumanians for Austria (all this you said yourself!)

But as the great Napoleon said, 'CELERITY'-without it-'Failure'!

*Yours,
F."* (WC1ii,95-6)

All this may sound like Boy's Own Adventure stuff, but seeing it reproduced in full in (Volume 2 of) Churchill's own record of World War One, *'The World Crisis'*, we have to take it seriously since it truly represents the sort of thinking which, sadly, affected many in high places and hence so many young lives.

Going further back, Denis Winter's research of documents from Britain's *Committee of Imperial Defence* (CID), its War Council, and other government sources, show how plans to reshape Turkey's Ottoman Empire in Britain's favour had been forming ever since the end of the Boer War.(DW,4-13) As indicated above, through the Entente Cordiale of 1904, Britain had recognised France's pre-eminent interests in Morocco *provided* that France recognised Britain's interests in Egypt.(WC1i, 22) For some decades Egypt, although part of Turkey's Ottoman Empire, was far enough removed from Constantinople to have allowed Western Powers, principally France and Britain, to dominate there. However, from the turn of the century Germany had continued its remarkably rapid economic growth and, like other aspiring Imperial powers, it too had been looking not only for more colonies, but for other overseas trade opportunities. One of its aims was to exploit trade outlets through Morocco, but as we have seen, with Britain's support, this was vehemently opposed by France, the result being a confrontation, the Algeiras crisis of 1905 which went very close to European war.(see above, 3B(b)) Then in 1906 when a German scheme to build a rail line from Berlin through Turkey to Baghdad and Mecca emerged, Britain felt its dominant position in Egypt and the Suez Canal threatened, especially when that year a border fracas at Tabah led to Turkey re-stating its suzerainty over Egypt.(DW,5)

Now the Turks were known to be tough fighters, Egypt's Islamic peasants were not sympathetic to Britain's cause and there were few 'loyal' troops to meet any possible attack. In 1910, Lord Kitchener, newly appointed to the Committee of Imperial Defence, toured Egypt and Turkey before taking up his appointment in Egypt as British Agent and Consul General, a position he held through to 1914. Not surprisingly, much attention was given to planning the defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal. Then in 1911, due to a second Moroccan crisis (Agadir) which also went close to war, a General Staff paper appeared which concluded that in that event, Turkey might join with Germany. As revealed in Major General Sir Ian Hamilton's papers, he was appointed area commander - Commander in Chief Mediterranean in 1910.(DW, 7, 11, 13)

Winter gives many other details of the earlier background to the Gallipoli campaign, including motivation for the eventual assault on Turkey, but enough has been cited to indicate considerable contingency planning towards possible naval-military operations both to defend British interests in Egypt (including the Suez Canal) and to acquire territory (plus oil) from Turkey's Ottoman Empire. In short, it is clear that the Gallipoli

campaign was not, as claimed at the time and frequently since, simply a hastily improvised last minute affair stemming from Russia's appeal for supplies via the Dardanelles - as for example by Australian historian Gordon Greenwood in his one-sentence explanation: "*Early in 1915 the Allies determined to capture Constantinople in order to release Russia from the isolation to which she was condemned by the Turkish control of the Straits.*" (GGord,179) Any doubts on this issue are swept away by Churchill's own accounts of the Gallipoli Campaign's background and unfolding events from 1914 through 1915, as portrayed in his series on World War I, "*The World Crisis*". (WC1i & WC1ii)

Turning now to the final precipitating factors. Within the pre-war Turkish government led by its Committee of Union and Progress (the 'Young Turks') there were two factions, one pro-Entente, the other pro-Triple Alliance. When in 1911 Italy (then a member of the Triple Alliance) invaded and took possession of Tripoli, an Ottoman province, Turkey proposed (through Churchill who was visiting at the time) a formal Anglo-Turkish Alliance. Although Britain's subsequent refusal increased the influence of the pro-German faction, Turkey remained neutral.(WC1i, 479-81; AA,135) Indeed it was determined not to become involved in any European war, maintaining its effective neutrality until late 1914 when, through a clever device, (see below) it was tricked into siding with Germany.

In reviewing this period one needs to bear in mind that, like Italy, other European powers had long seen Turkey with its extensive resource-rich Ottoman territories as the 'Sick Man of Europe', an Empire no longer able to fully secure its borders. Accordingly, many were hovering, just waiting their opportunity. As Churchill wrote to Prime Minister Asquith on December 31, 1914, "*I wanted Gallipoli attacked on the declaration of war.*" (WC1ii,92) But, why? At that stage Turkey was effectively neutral. However, as Churchill explains, on August 10, 1914, Greece's Prime Minister, Venizelos, with his King's consent had, "*..formally placed at the disposal of the Entente powers all the naval and military resources of Greece...*", including some 250,000 troops. Churchill then goes on, "*This magnanimous offer greatly attracted me. No doubt on the one hand it was a serious risk of adding Turkey to our enemies. On the other hand, the Greek Army and Navy were solid factors; and a combination of the Greek armies and fleet with the British Mediterranean squadron offered a means of settling the difficulties of the Dardanelles in a most prompt and effective manner.*" (WC1i,485) Difficulties? – or opportunities!!

Then, as Churchill continued, "*If we were not going to secure honest Turkish neutrality, then let us, get the Christian States of the Balkans on our side.*" (WC1i, 486) Since Turkey had no reason to involve itself in Europe's war, this may have seemed a strange argument. At all events, as both Prime Minister Asquith and Foreign Secretary Grey were aiming to keep Turkey neutral, Greece's offer was not immediately taken up. Indeed the neutrality status must have been most attractive to Turkey since at the outbreak of war Britain together with France and Russia had offered "*to guarantee the integrity of the Turkish Empire in return for her faithful neutrality.*" (WC1i,486) Sounds good, - but with the urge to gather allies, territories, and resources, just how

many promises would or could be kept?!

On August 31, 1914, approved by Grey, Churchill wrote to Noel Buxton (who was about to undertake a 'propaganda tour' of the Balkans) to emphasise that what was needed was a Balkan Confederation of every Christian State, Bulgaria, Serbia, Roumania, Montenegro and Greece. England, he claimed, "*...has been the friend of every Christian State in the Balkans in all their years of struggle and suffering. She has no interests of her own to seek in the Balkan Peninsula. By acting together in unity and good faith the Balkan States can now play a decisive part, and gain advantages which may never again be offered.*"(WC1i,487)

And fully expecting war against Turkey, Churchill began to prepare for it. Writing on September 1, 1914 to Sir Charles Douglas, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Churchill called for "*...a plan for the seizure by means of a Greek army of adequate strength of the Gallipoli peninsula with a view to admitting a British Fleet to the Sea of Marmora.*", further indicating, "*...the matter is urgent, Turkey may make war on us at any moment.*" (!)(WC1i,487-8) (Striking parallels with today's Iraq spring to mind!) Since the Director of Military Operations, General Cresswell's reply, although stressing difficulties, gave in-principle approval, Churchill telegraphed Admiral Kerr, head of Britain's Naval Mission to Greece, instructing him to make all necessary naval and military plans pending final decisions by the respective governments. On September 6 Venizelos indicated his continuing enthusiasm, but in the absence of military support from Russia to assist Greece's troops, Foreign Secretary Grey still held back.(WC1i, 489-90)

On September 9 Britain withdrew its Naval Mission to Turkey. Churchill then requested that its head, Admiral Limpus (also titular head of the Turkish Navy!) be transferred to command the British naval squadron assigned to watch the mouth of the Dardanelles. But, as Churchill put it, "*This project was not, however, pursued, it being thought that it would be unduly provocative to employ on this station the very officer who had just ceased to be the teacher of the Turkish Fleet the Admiral who knew the Dardanelles with all its possibilities.*" (WC1i,491)

My God! what was that all about?! Well, let me explain. Since 1911 there had been in Turkey a British Naval Mission, the role of which, together with an Armstrongs' and Vickers' subsidiary, '*The Imperial Ottoman Docks, Arsenal and Naval Construction Company*', was to modernise, to strengthen that country's naval defences.(N-B1,179; AA, 95, 135) Further, by late July 1914 two modern battleships, the *Reshadieh* and the *Sultan Osman*, had been completed for Turkey at Armstrongs' and Vickers' yards in Britain. But at Churchill's instigation, although fully paid for and with their Turkish crews ready to board, these were at the last minute requisitioned for the Royal Navy.(WC1i,208-9) Foreign Secretary Edward Grey, later acknowledging Turkey's financial and other losses, conveyed his government's 'sincere regret', indicating that compensation for such losses would be given 'due consideration'.

While all this made Turkey's leaders more than a little unhappy, it pleased Germany's

war planners who, keen to take advantage of the situation, directed two battleships they had in the Mediterranean, the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, to head for Constantinople. Although a much stronger British Naval force had noted the German ships' presence near Sicily, it was assumed that once war broke out they would attempt to escape to the west. However, since they sped eastwards, attempts to follow them failed and ultimately they sought and received refuge in the Sea of Marmora. And at that stage, 'ever so cleverly', Germany supplied Turkey with these two battleships as 'replacements'. That was just fine, but the catch for Turkey was that they came complete with German crews under German command!(BT2,158-9) Hence the British naval watch at the Dardanelles' entrance, Churchill's distress, and his claim of Turkey's hostility in accepting the German ships.(WC1i,492) When Allied ambassadors in Constantinople protested at its breach of neutrality, Turkey requested Germany disarm its ships, but this was refused. Instead the compromise reached was that the ships were 'sold' to Turkey, being renamed, *Jawus* and *Midilli*! (BT2,160)

As Churchill admits, this incident undoubtedly strengthened the influence of the pro-German faction, Talaat Bey, political boss of Turkey's ruling Committee, on August 2 signing in secret a military alliance with Germany promising mutual support should either party be at war with *Russia* – a long-time enemy of Turkey.(BT2,140-2; WC1i, 494) However, notwithstanding German pressure, the Turks, totally averse to becoming embroiled in any *European* war, kept postponing the required war declaration.(BT2,142, 160) And for nearly three months, while the Allies (both by bluster and bribe, including promises of 'Ottoman territorial integrity') attempted to gain Talaat's support, - and the Germans continued to press their reluctant 'ally' to fight on *their* side, the Turks stood firm, unwilling to become combatants.(BT2, 160-1; WC1i, 486) Ultimately, however, on October 28 Germany tipped the balance, effectively forcing Turkey into the war by ordering its Admiral Souchon, still in command of the 'Turkish' ships, to sail across the Black Sea and bombard Odessa and other Russian ports. As Talaat Bey pointed out, although a majority of the Turkish government was appalled, disavowing the act, they remained powerless to disarm the German ships whose guns menaced their capital. At all events, on November 4, first Russia, then Britain and France, declared war on Turkey.(BT2,160-1). For a full description of this incident, see Barbara Tuchman's "*August 1914*", her wonderfully written account of the first month of the First World War.(BT2,139-162)

It was indeed a dismal outcome for Turkey whose people were to suffer so greatly. Such was (and is) the fate of small powers unless they take great care not to become ensnared and shamelessly exploited by Great Powers. In this case both Turkey and Britain were tricked by Germany. And to make things worse for Britain's war plans, already by mid September Greece's enthusiasm for war against Turkey was cooling, notwithstanding Churchill's continuing attempts to gather support from the Balkan 'Christian States' through promises of later spoils.(WC1i, 491-3) At this stage, following discussions with Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey who still advised caution, Churchill saw a gloomy prospect: "*England, without an army, with not a soldier to spare, without even a rifle to send, with only her Navy and her money, counted for little in the Near East. Russian claims to Constantinople directly crossed the ambitions of King*

Ferdinand and of King Constantine. In all the Balkans only the clairvoyant eye, only the genius of Venizelos, discerned the fundamental moral issues of the struggle, measured justly the relative powers of the mighty combatants, and appraised at their true value both the victories of the German army and the Sea Power under which were slowly gathering the latent but inexhaustible resources of the British Empire.” (WC1i,493-4) So much for "the fundamental moral issues" as viewed from the top!

According to Churchill, in October 1914, Turkey was about ‘to invade’ one of its ‘own’ territories, Egypt, a threat which by late October had become imminent.(WC1i, 494-7) Seemingly that remained so until about the third week of November when it turned out that “*The Turkish attack proved however to be only of a tentative character.*”(WC1i, 498) At this very time the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACS) “*...had been steaming steadily towards France.....*” by November’s end reaching the Suez Canal. And since “*...the Turkish invasion of Egypt was still threatening, Lord Kitchener Began to disembark the whole Australian and New Zealand Force at Suez for the purpose of completing their training and defending the line of the Canal.*” At this point the plot begins to thicken even more, Churchill revealing that due to quarrels between Venizelos and King Constantine, Greece “*...had fallen far from the high resolve of August.*” Nor did Serbia, Roumania or Bulgaria appear likely to help out by sending their armies to defeat Turkey.(WC1i, 498-9)

Yet for Churchill, in his account of the approaching end of 1914, there remained ‘the vision splendid’, for “*...as this act in the stupendous world drama comes to its close, we see already the scene being set and the actors assembling for the next. From the uttermost ends of the earth ships and soldiers are approaching or gathering in the Eastern Mediterranean in fulfillment of a destiny as yet not understood by mortal man. The clearance of the Germans from the oceans liberated the Fleets, the arrival of the Anzacs in Egypt created the nucleus of the Army needed to attack the nucleus of the Turkish Empire.*” (WC1i,499-500) Much more in this vein follows but only direct experience of the text can convince the reader of its authenticity. It is as if we are in the presence of a poetic Rumsfeld, Bush or Cheney conjuring up visions of glories and victories just around the corner.

(c) Moves Towards an All-Naval Assault

Yet for Britain and the Admiralty’s First Lord, the new year held much uncertainty. Stagnation on the Western Front continued and ambitious schemes for naval support to encourage a Russian attack on Germany from the north were in abeyance. So the possibilities of Turkey remained on Churchill’s mind. As he wrote, “*The alternative to Borkum and the Baltic was, of course, an amphibious enterprise to strike down Turkey and to influence and rally the Balkans.*” (WC1ii,46) Amphibious, yes, but whose forces could now be obtained for the job? Certainly there were in Egypt 39,000 ANZACS, two divisions, plus a British territorial division, which could form a nucleus, but more would be needed, General Callwell having specified 60,000. So what about Italy? Well, for Churchill, “*The momentous importance of exciting the interest and ultimately obtaining the adherence of Italy was ever in my mind. But I felt that the Dardanelles and Turkey*

were the real 'motor muscles' of Italian resolve. If in addition to all her anti-Austrian feelings, Turkey, with whom Italy had only just ceased to be at war, and from whom she had newly wrested the Tripoli province, was to be vigorously attacked and possibly overthrown; if the whole Turkish Empire was to be cast on to the board, plunged into the centre of the struggle, with all its rich provinces and immense Italian interests perhaps an easy prey, could Italy afford to remain indifferent?" (WC1ii,111-2) How revealing, for enticed in that way, how could Italy refuse?!

The outcome was that Italy, formerly a member of the Triple Alliance (allied to Germany and Austro-Hungary) but currently neutral, was promised full possession of the Dodecanese Islands and control over the southern provinces of Turkish Asia Minor, including the ports of Marmarice and Antalya. Yet before agreeing to join the Entente side, it further demanded control over the 'Independent Muslim State of Albania', as well as Austro-Hungary's Trentino, Gorizia, Istria and Dalmatia – most of which was 'generously' granted. However, notwithstanding all that lure, Italy's troops did not become involved in the Gallipoli campaign. (MG1, 364)

The proceedings of Britain's War Council Meeting of January 28, 1915 were recorded by its Secretary, Colonel Maurice Hankey.(WC1ii, 163-4) Aware of the failure to gain support from the 'Balkans Christian States', Mr Churchill emphasised Russia's and France's enthusiasm for such a campaign. But since troop numbers were insufficient for a combined naval-military attack, a proposal emerged for a purely naval assault on the Dardanelles - thus to force a way through to the Sea of Marmora and Constantinople. Although Lord Fisher, Britain's First Sea Lord, held great reservations as to its feasibility, Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War (who wanted to retain *all* seasoned British troops for France) considered it to be 'vitaly important'. Mr Balfour saw in it many advantages, including that Constantinople 'would be brought under our control' and that it would open a passage to the Danube; indeed, it was difficult to imagine 'a more helpful operation'.(WC1ii,163) (According to historian Martin Gilbert, War Council Secretary, Hankey was himself greatly taken with the idea precisely because it would give the Anglo-French naval forces access to the Danube "...as a line of communication for an army penetrating into the heart of Austria, and thus bring British sea power to bear in the middle of Europe."!!(MG1,362)) Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary was also in favour since it would "...finally settle the attitude of Bulgaria and the whole of the Balkans." And of course all were reassured by the knowledge that with the necessary ships already heading for the Dardanelles, the operation could be accomplished in 3 to 4 weeks, Mr Churchill explaining the plan of attack on a map.(WC1ii,163-4)

Yet, and in accord with all previous strategic studies, Lord Fisher's firm view was that to succeed, a *combined* naval-military attack was essential. True, Churchill had attempted to obtain sufficient troops from many seemingly likely sources, but the problem remained. So, at the War Council meeting of February 9 it was decided to make available Britain's 29th. division (still in England) plus a French division *provided* Greece would join the Allies, but Venizelos declined. However, Fisher was perfectly clear, insisting the Peninsula be stormed and held by the army, for as he wrote to

Churchill on February 16: “*I hope you were successful with Kitchener, in getting divisions sent to Lemnos to-morrow! it will be the wonder of the ages that no troops were sent to co-operate with the Fleet with half a million soldiers in England.*”(!) But, still on February 16 existing military limitations stood, just the one British division, the 29th (and even that offer soon withdrawn) plus the Australian “*force from Egypt*” - in case of necessity - to support the naval attack.(WC1ii, 179-181)

That result, insufficient numbers of supporting troops, led inevitably to the decision for a purely naval assault, an attack that was due to begin on February 19, - in just three days time, - well before Lord Kitchener’s actual release of the 29th division on March 10.(WC1ii,188-9) Had it been successful, it would have been a most ‘economical’, operation, ships alone penetrating the Straits to the Sea of Marmora, threatening and (if necessary) bombarding Constantinople, Turkey’s seat of government and thus forcing the Turks to sue for peace ‘on our terms’. Yes it was indeed a very bold move, especially as it appeared not to take account of Turkey’s naval defences of the Dardanelles built over some years with the assistance of the *British Naval Mission* and *The Imperial Ottoman Docks, Arsenal, and Naval Construction Company!*

As mentioned above, that was the company set up by two British firms, Vickers and Armstrongs, to strengthen Turkey’s naval defences.(N-B1, 350; AA, 95, 135) Among its British-majority Directors was Admiral Sir Charles Ottley who had served as Britain’s Director of Naval Intelligence from 1905 to 1907 before becoming Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence (1907-11). Ottley then left to join Armstrong-Whitworth’s Board and a little later the ‘Ottoman’ company which he served through to 1914. Beginning in 1911, the plan was to bring Turkey’s navy up to date by providing it with modern ships: - ‘dreadnoughts’, cruisers, destroyers and submarines, as well as supply a range of other armaments relevant to protecting the Dardanelles’ Straits: search-lights, trawlers, land-based torpedo-tubes and ammunition, - including torpedoes and mines.(N-B1,190-1; AA,95)

Besides all this, another baffling thing was that although the British Cabinet was well aware that Turkey’s naval defences had been greatly strengthened, and while this must have been especially well understood by Britain’s First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Fisher, and Winston Churchill (who had been the Admiralty’s First Lord since 1912) these two nevertheless planned and undertook, with France, this purely naval assault. The sequence of events is well described in Alan Moorehead’s book, *Gallipoli*.(AM, 42-56)

(d) The Naval Assault

For this assault the Anglo-French navies came up with an impressive array of battleships, Britain with 14, including 2 semi-dreadnoughts, *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*, the battle cruiser, *Inflexible* and the newly-completed *Queen Elizabeth*; the French squadron with 4 battleships and their auxiliaries.(AM,44) The attack began on February 19, 1915, with a prolonged naval bombardment of the Turkish protective forts and gun emplacements. Under this cover mine-sweepers were to clear a channel up to the entrance to the Narrows. Due to bad weather and short winter days progress was

slow, the sweepers having problems making headway against the current – not tidal, simply one-way outflow from rivers entering the Black Sea. Nevertheless, they had advanced six miles without finding any mines.(AM,45)

The casualties were said to be “*trifling*” and following Admiral Carden’s message to London on March 2 reporting that he estimated reaching Constantinople ‘in about 14 days’, the mood at the Admiralty and War Council was one of “*elation*”. Indeed, many who had doubted then wanted to be associated with the enterprise, Lord Fisher speaking of going out to take command of the next stage.(AM,46) The effect on potential allies was also profound. Earlier, in November 1914, to encourage Russian support, Sir Edward Grey had privately agreed that “...*the question of the Straits and of Constantinople should be settled in conformity with Russian desires.*” By February 1915, however, with the prospect of imminent Allied success, Russia wanted that commitment made public. Of course this would complicate attempts to enlist as allies Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania since all had claims on Turkish territory which competed with Russia’s. At all events, after deep consideration Britain and France made the agreement public on March 12.(WC1ii,197-200)

Despite that, with the prospect of later rewards, the attitude of the three Christian Balkans’ States changed remarkably.(WC1ii,199) Most stimulated by the successful naval advance was Greece. Indeed on March 1 Venizelos offered 3 divisions to support the Gallipoli assault, an offer that by March 3 had increased to 5! And as Churchill commented, “*Behind all lay Bulgaria and Roumania, determined not to be left out of the fall of Constantinople and the collapse of the Turkish Empire.*” All seemed set for an extraordinary ‘multilateral triumph’, but then on March 3 came the spoiler, Russia’s Foreign Minister announcing that “*The Russian Government could not consent to Greece participating in operations in the Dardanelles, as it would be sure to lead to complications.*” Notwithstanding attempts by Venizelos to gain Russian agreement to the participation of a smaller Greek force, that was refused and Greece’s King Constantine, feeling rebuffed, withdrew his support for the compromise, this finally causing Venizelos and his cabinet to resign.(WC1ii, 200-4)

But the failure to gain Greek support was not the only problem because Admiral Carden’s estimate of 14 days to reach Constantinople proved far too optimistic. The difficulty was in underestimating the Dardanelles’ defences. You see, for while the continued firing of Turkey’s shore batteries and mobile guns had little affected those on the distant battleships, it had profound effects on the crews of the close-in unprotected minesweepers, especially at night when they were picked up by the shore searchlights. Indeed, these ‘sweepers’ were very much the Achilles Heel of the operation because, quite unlike armoured naval ships, they were highly vulnerable North Sea fishing trawlers! More than that, their crews were North Sea fishermen!! (AM,46; WC1ii, 261) It is not stated whether these men had volunteered but if so, being civilians, they were equally free to un-volunteer.

Indeed, these fishermen said that while they were prepared to risk being blown up by mines, they had not agreed to work under fire. And although Churchill directed steps be

taken to replace civilians with volunteer naval personnel, the Turkish mine, torpedo and artillery defences were such that *“From March 3 onwards the progress of Admiral Carden’s attack became continually slower.”* (WC1ii, 205; AM, 46-7) Over succeeding days and with some new crews, further efforts were made to clear the mines in preparation for a full-scale naval assault on the Narrows planned for March 17 or 18. However, by this time, with all the difficulties and delays Admiral Carden had become highly stressed, indeed too ill to continue in charge of such a crucial operation. Better perhaps it had been Admiral Limpus, the man who, as former head of Britain’s Naval Mission to Turkey, *“.... knew all their secrets to blockade the Dardanelles.”* (AM,48) But he was elsewhere, so Admiral De Robeck took over for the assault set for March 18. To get past the Narrows, beyond Chanak, all was to depend upon clearing a band of water scarcely a mile wide and five miles long.

The entire Anglo-French naval force was to take part. It was planned that by concerted battleship fire all forts as far as the Narrows would be so disabled within the first day that the mine-sweepers could clear a channel that evening, ready for the ships to pass into the Sea of Marmora the following day. Indeed, no battleship was meant to venture into waters not cleared of mines.(WC1ii, 223-4; AM, 50) So from early on the morning of the 18th, the battleships advanced, firing according to plan, the attack being maintained until virtually all shore guns were silenced. At 4pm, from the mouth of the Straits, Admiral de Robeck directed the sweepers in, first 4 then another 2, but met by heavy shore fire all eventually were forced to retire.(AM,53)

For the prospects of a successful assault, however, it was even worse because late in the day a number of battleships returning towards the mouth of the Straits on the Asiatic side had been sunk or severely damaged. In summary, as de Robeck reported to his senior, Admiral Wemyss, *“We have had a disastrous day owing either to floating mines or to torpedoes from shore tubes fired at long range. HMS Irresistable and Bouvet sunk. HMS Ocean still afloat, but probably lost. HMS Inflexible damaged by mine. Gaulois badly damaged by gunfire. Other ships all right, and we had much the best of the forts.”* (WC1ii, 241) Ah!, to be so able ‘to look on the bright side’!

For reasons which escape me, though it could have been the result of a delusional form of battle fatigue, Admiral Keyes, (who had indeed played a very active role throughout the event) looking back wrote , *“I had a most indelible impression that we were in the presence of a beaten foe. I thought he was beaten at 2 pm. I knew he was beaten at 4 pm – and at midnight I knew with still greater certainty that he was absolutely beaten; and it remained for us to organize a proper sweeping force and devise some means of dealing with the drifting mines to reap the fruits of our efforts.”* (AM, 56) But while he, Churchill, and others would have persisted in the all-naval assault, Admirals de Robeck and Wemyss, meeting to review the situation with Major-General Sir Ian Hamilton, decided on the absolute necessity of changing tack. In their judgement the purely naval efforts had to be set aside in favour of urgent preparations for a military campaign, one to be led by Hamilton.(WC1ii, 242-3)

(e) 'Third Thoughts' - to a Rushed Military Campaign

But, towards this military campaign, again what extraordinarily unreal optimism! For long, Secretary of State for War (yes, they called a spade a spade in those days) Lord Kitchener, aiming to retain all experienced British troops for the Western Front, had insisted on the practicality of the all-naval assault, characterising it as only "...*a cruise on the Sea of Marmora..*". On that assumption, and believing that the Australian troops then in Egypt would be quite sufficient for the military tasks, he had held off agreeing to the release of Britain's 29th division – indeed, until March 10! Moreover, although it was known that military support *would* be needed at *some* stage, Kitchener did not appoint General Hamilton as his Commander-in-Chief of the military campaign until March 12. Having then given Hamilton the brief message: "*We are sending a military force to support the Fleet now at the Dardanelles, and you are to have command.*", Kitchener sent him off the following day.(WC1ii, 208) He arrived at the Dardanelles on the 17th, but since no preparations were in train Hamilton, who until that time had been in command of Britain's Central Force, faced a truly daunting task.(WC1ii, 239) Both Churchill and Hamilton recorded the state of disarray which had to be overcome. As Hamilton noted, "*Here am I still minus my Adjutant-General, my Quartermaster-General and my Medical Chief, charged with settling the basic question of whether the Army should push off from Lemnos or from Alexandria. Almost incredible really, we should have to decide so tremendous an administrative problem off the reel and without any Administrative Staff. I must wait for the 29th division....*" Yet the much-needed 29th division *was not due to arrive* until the first week in April! (WC1ii, 240) April!!

Indeed, there seemed abroad a sense of total unreality. As Churchill wrote, "*When Lord Kitchener undertook to storm the Gallipoli Peninsula with the Army, he was under the impression that a week would suffice to prepare and begin the operation, He was astonished at the date of the military attack having to be put off so late as the 14th April, and he sent there and then from the Cabinet room the following telegram to Sir Ian Hamilton:- 'I am informed you consider the 14th April as about date for commencing military operations if fleet have not forced the Dardanelles by then. I think you had better know at once that I consider any such postponement as far too long, and should like to know how soon you will act on shore.'*" (WC1ii, 249-50) (It brings to mind a scene from 'Blackadder', Stephen Fry as the absurdly inflated wooly-headed red-tabbed General on the Western Front – an image we might have thought only *half* true!) Hamilton's reply was pertinent, yet as we know, since the invasion in fact went ahead on April 25, 1915, that is, in little more than a month from Hamilton's appointment on March 12, then clearly *far far* too little time was left for anything like adequate preparation.

And here it should be further emphasised that the same lack of preparation applied to the preceding naval assault. Not only the issue of Britain having previously strengthened Turkey's Dardanelles' defences but the plan's Achilles' Heel, the use of North Sea trawlers as mine-sweepers, the speed of which was inadequate to make full headway against the current, the protection of which against fire was non-existent, the civilian

crews of which were totally inappropriate. Indeed, in retrospect, Churchill freely admitted that the force of mine-sweepers was “...inadequate both in numbers and efficiency. There were only available twenty-one trawlers, whose speed was too slow for sweeping against the current. These were manned by fishermen, unsupported by trained and disciplined naval personnel. By the middle of March it was realised that large numbers of sweepers fast enough to sweep against the current, cutting up the mines as they advanced, and manned by highly trained and disciplined crews, were needed.” (WC1ii, 261) But of course by the middle of March it was too late.

(f) Military, Political and Human Outcomes

Comprehensive accounts of the military campaign and its effects on all those Australians, and New Zealanders, as well as British, French-Colonials, Indians, Newfoundlanders and Turks directly involved are given by Australian historian, Charles Bean in his 12-volume *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*; see, Vol. 1, *The Story of Anzac* (CB1); also Bean's retrospective *Gallipoli Mission*, (CB2) (published after WWII); Moorehead's *Gallipoli*,(AM) as well as Andrews' *The Anzac Illusion* (EA) and Denis Winter's *25 April 1915: The Inevitable Tragedy*, (DW) overall records which, in turn, provide many additional references on the campaign and the ANZAC's experience.

In no sense was it a successful campaign for any involved. Before long, like the European Fronts, it too became stale-mated with troops of both sides dug into largely immovable lines. Even the smallest advances were made at awful cost. Again, as in France, the advantages lay with the defence. Not only were the ably-led Turks defending their homeland but, having had ample warning, they were well positioned and otherwise prepared on totally familiar territory. Further, they had heavier artillery than the invaders and perhaps even more critically, they had at least three times the number of machine guns.(DW, 219-20)

Again it was a case of bizarre overconfidence leading to lack of preparation. You see, despite the fact that British firms, initially the Maxim Gun Co. Ltd.(1884), then Maxim-Nordenfellt (1888) (both linked to Albert Vickers) were manufacturing the revolutionary 600-shot-per-minute Maxim gun in Britain, the latter company was at the same time selling its production rights internationally, including to Krupps (1888). And as things turned out, whereas by the onset of WWI the British Army had some 2,000 of these (re-named 'Vickers') machine-guns, Germany had 50,000 - 25 times as many! (AA,44-6, 57, 69; DW,219-20)

The overall effect of the Gallipoli stalemate, however, was that while the Turkish defenders were unable to dislodge the invaders, the Allies were equally unable to penetrate far enough to dominate the Straits and allow the navy's ships to pass, let alone advance and capture Constantinople. Moreover, the totally unproductive campaign was allowed to linger on, the men of both sides suffering terrible hardship and casualties for 8 miserable months, until following the onset of winter with its heavy rains and blizzard snows, the decision was finally taken to evacuate.(MG1, 377,381)

According to Gilbert, the cost in lives of this mutual failure was high, more than 28,000 British, 10,000 French Colonials, 7,595 Australians, 2,431 New Zealanders and 'more than' 66,000 Turkish soldiers killed.(MG1, 369) Winter includes a chapter, *The Human Cost*, which also gives information on the wounded and the bereaved. Bean, who for the Australian War Memorial researched the losses most assiduously after the war, gave the total number of Australians killed, including those who died of wounds, as 8,000.(CB1i, 380)

Notwithstanding these losses and the lack of anything that could be described as 'success', given more young men, Hamilton would have continued. This may seem hard for us to understand, but we may get a glimmer of what had long driven Hamilton from his writings in "A Staff Officer's Scrap Book" of 1905.(IH1), and his diary. For example from the latter, "*Once in a generation, a mysterious wish for war passes through the people. Their instinct tells them there is no other way of progress and escape from habits that no longer fit them. Whole generations of statesmen will fumble over reforms for a lifetime which are put into full-blooded execution within a week of a declaration of war. There is no other way. Only by intense suffering can the nations grow, just as snake once a year must with anguish slough off the once beautiful coat which has now become a straight jacket.*" (Hamilton's emphasis) (IH2)

Bean's historical assessment of Gallipoli's outcome for Australians (see CB1i, 201 - backed by his full account, - see CB1, 166-201) were not well appreciated by Churchill. Again I quote Churchill's response in full. "*The writer of the Australian Official History has thought it right to epitomize the story in the following concluding sentence:- 'So through a Churchill's excess of imagination, a layman's ignorance of artillery, and the fatal power of a young enthusiasm to convince older and slower brains, the tragedy of Gallipoli was born'.*

It is my hope that the Australian people, towards whom I have always felt a solemn responsibility, will not rest content with so crude, so inaccurate, so incomplete and so prejudiced a judgement, but will study the facts for themselves." (WC1ii,122)

Indeed! one can only hope they do! - at the same time admitting that many besides Churchill must bear equal responsibility for that ill-conceived tragic disaster.

And of course the cost to Turkey of becoming involved in the first place was in every sense extremely high, a national and human calamity. Not only the deaths of so many of its young men and the bereavement of their families, but the vast numbers wounded, so many permanently disabled with the inevitable loss to their family's support. And then, post-war, the 'punishment' of the Allied-sanctioned occupation of Anatolia by Greek and Italian troops (part of the promised rewards for joining the Allied side) plus the loss of all its Ottoman territories and resources to Britain and France, all part of the 'spoils of war'.(see 7B(b) below)

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