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The 1915 Allied campaign to the Dardanelles was intended to reopen the straits and force Turkey out of the war. Although the campaign cost some 250,000 Allied casualties and ultimately failed to achieve its military objectives, many consider it to have been a golden opportunity to have defeated Germany through a peripheral front. The initial portion of this paper discusses the strategic soundness of the campaign while the major portion discusses its two phases and evaluates its causes for failure at the operational level. Special emphasis was placed on the Suvla Bay landing which occurred during the joint phase of the operation. Similar to the Dardanelles Campaign, it too was considered only a secondary mission whose potential was never truly recognized. This evaluation concluded that the strategic vision of the Dardanelles Campaign was extremely sound, but operational weaknesses and inept leadership were the principle causes for its failure. Remedies are suggested that would have greatly improved its operational soundness, but there are no claims that such changes would have guaranteed success. It is strongly felt, however, that had the initial assault in mid-February been conducted as a true joint navy and substantial ground force operation, the effort to force the straits would have succeeded. Whether this action would have caused the fall of Constantinople and shortened the war is uncertain					
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GALLIPOLI 1915 - OPPORTUNITY LOST?

BY

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT

The 1915 Allied campaign to the Dardanelles was intended to reopen the straits and force Turkey out of the war. Although the campaign cost some 250,000 Allied casualties and ultimately failed to achieve its military objectives, many consider it to have been a golden opportunity to have defeated Germany through a peripheral front.

The initial portion of this paper discusses the strategic soundness of the campaign while the major portion discusses its two phases and evaluates its causes for failure at the operational level. Special emphasis was placed on the Suvla Bay landing which occurred during the joint phase of the operation. Similar to the Dardanelles Campaign, it too was considered only a secondary mission whose potential was never truly recognized.

This evaluation concluded that the strategic vision of the Dardanelles Campaign was extremely sound, but operational weaknesses and inept leadership were the principle causes for its failure. Remedies are suggested that would have greatly improved its operational soundness, but there are no claims that such changes would have guaranteed success. It is strongly felt, however, that had the initial assault in mid-February been conducted as a true joint navy and substantial ground force operation, the effort to force the straits would have succeeded. Whether this action would have caused the fall of Constantinople and shortened the war is uncertain.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the early consequences of Turkey's entry into World War I was the closing of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus to Allied shipping which prevented the flow of grain to Europe and severely restricted the flow of arms and equipment to Russia. It was imperative to the Allied war effort that Russia keep Germany occupied on the eastern front. The need to reestablish this critical line of communication to Russia and the hellish stalemate which existed on the Western Front in France became the genesis of a peripheral military action in the Dardanelles.

The 8 1/2 month Gallipoli Campaign which was born out of this concept ultimately failed to achieve its military objectives of opening the straits and forcing Turkey out of the war. At the cost of some 250,000 Allied casualties, the 1915 Dardanelles Campaign was a military disaster characterized by disjointed combat operations, severe physical hardship and ineffective leadership. In essence, the campaign failed at every level of warfare - strategic, operational, and tactical.

The purpose of this paper is to first evaluate the strategic soundness of the Dardanelles concept and then with the aid of several well known accounts to evaluate the design, organization and execution of the operational level of this campaign. The campaign is discussed in its two phases; the naval attack to force the Dardanelles and the joint land-sea operations to take the Gallipoli Peninsula and is evaluated against the principles of war and combat functions currently espoused in Army Field Manual FM 100-5. Chapter III includes a special look at the Suvla Bay landings which many consider a truly "golden opportunity" which was wasted by the Allies to take control of the peninsula. This paper will not address the operational details of the evacuation of the Allied troops from Gallipoli at the end of the campaign other than to mention its masterful execution in stark contrast to the campaign's operational failings.

Although many characterize the failure for Gallipoli as "too little, too late," it is my personal conviction that the basic concept of the Dardanelles Plan was extremely sound, if not brilliant. It's true cancer was operational ineptness. This paper will identify the operational shortcomings and provide some remedies which would have greatly improved the campaign's operational soundness. There is, however, no claim that such changes would guarantee success, for the predictability of battlefield actions and resultant reactions are simply too complex to forecast.

We tend to paint the Dardanelles Campaign in such a negative light that we forget the benefits provided from its lessons learned. The available facts surrounding the campaign, from the ineffective naval gunfire to the successful withdrawal, were sifted through and became the basis for the first Navy/Marine Manual for Landing Operations (1934). It was this same manual that provided the basic amphibious doctrine successfully used by the Navy/Marine Corps team during the Pacific campaigns of World War II.¹

Notwithstanding its disastrous operational shortcomings, the Allied effort in the Dardanelles came excruciatingly close to success at a number of selected moments. Had the navy again bombarded the Narrows forts on 19 March or had the IX Corps aggressively supported the assault on Sari Bair after the Suvla landings, Allied success may very well have occurred. Instead, a desperately fought campaign ended in a strategic defeat whose failure ended any hope of quickly defeating Germany by peripheral means.

CHAPTER II

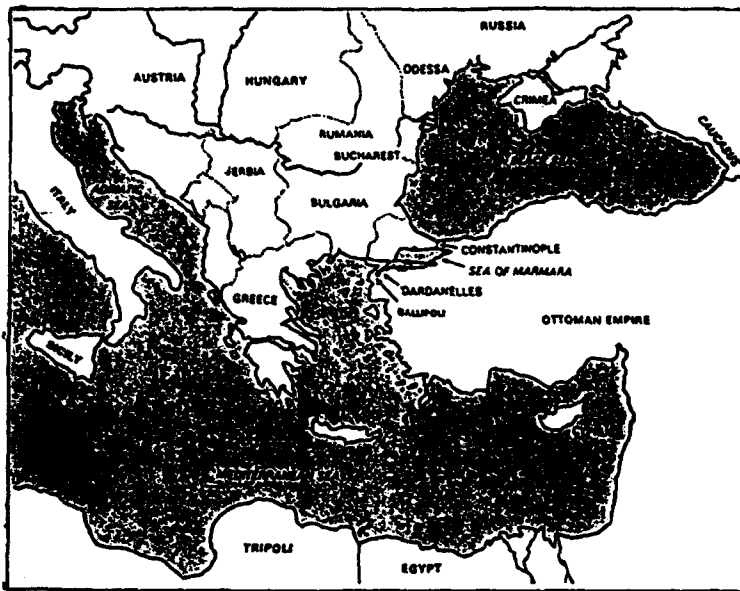
THE DARDANELLES STRATEGY - INCEPTION AND SOUNDNESS

Events prior to the commencement of World War I found both England and Germany courting the young Turks. Both countries had military missions in Constantinople and Turkey used her wavering neutrality in the opening weeks of the war to play the competing rivals against one another. Following Great Britain's declaration of war against Germany on August 4, 1914, a series of events which included Britain's seizure of two newly constructed Turkish warships and Turkey's approval for two German warships (Goeben and Breslau) to pass safely through the Dardanelles helped to force the alignment of the Turks with Germany. The decisive act occurred October 31, when under German command, the Turkish fleet bombarded a number of Russian Black Sea coastal cities.¹ Like it or not, Turkey had joined the list of belligerents. Three days later, in response to this action and worried about the security of Egypt, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, directed the British fleet in the Aegean to briefly shell the outer forts of the Dardanelles. The results were surprisingly impressive, for a lucky shot hit one of the fort's magazines, destroying several guns in the vicinity. For the next six weeks nothing of significance occurred. The Turks, however, were thus warned and the British would later return to find the enemy at the ready and much more formidable.

By the end of November 1914, Britain and France had suffered almost a million casualties in the west. Their leaders and their war efforts were trapped by the geography and the sheer mass of manpower stalemated on the Western Front. Facing a press that called for a strategy with some degree of imagination and frustrated in their own right, the British leadership desperately looked in all directions for another battleground.²

The only viable alternatives seen were Borkum Island on the North Sea coast of Germany, or a campaign in the eastern Mediterranean on the vulnerable edge of the shaky Turkish Empire. Borkum Island was close and if seized, could be used as a staging area

for an amphibious landing on the German coast only 20 miles away. Churchill favored this plan for he felt it would force the German High Seas Fleet from its bastions in the Baltic and provide the British the opportunity for a large naval battle which Churchill so badly wanted.



The eastern Mediterranean possibilities included Greece and Syria, but control of the Dardanelles was the plan that was ultimately agreed upon. If successful, it would re-establish the critical line of communion with Russia and hopefully foster new allies in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Montenegro;

all of whom hated the Turks. The plan in fact had been initially suggested by the Greeks in the second week of the war. Political maneuvering had scuttled this early idea, but the initial seed had been planted.³

Now resurrected, a plan to force the Dardanelles was formally presented, by Churchill, to the British War Council, November 25, 1914. The plan was not however approved due to War Minister Lord Kitchener's confirmation that ground forces were not available to support the operation. Alternate proposals continued to be considered through late December until the situation in Russia finally forced the British to make a decision. By this time, the Russians too had lost a million men and had suffered a number of crushing defeats by the Germans. They were running short of equipment and ammunition and the Turks now threatened the Caucasus. If the Allies did not soon put

pressure on Turkey, the Russians would be forced to turn south against the Turks, thereby reducing her commitment to the eastern front and allowing the Germans to reallocate troops to the west.⁴

In early January 1915, Kitchener's thoughts returned to the Dardanelles and he asked the War Council to again consider the plan. Although initially rejected by the First Sea Lord Admiral Fisher and several members due to the lack of troop support, an endorsement by Vice Admiral Carden, Commander of the British Squadron in the Aegean, stating that a naval attack alone on the straits could be successful and strong encouragement by Churchill led to unanimous approval of the plan by the council. Thus, the die was cast.

Although Churchill is frequently cited as the architect of the Dardanelles Plan, it is only fair to say that no single person was responsible for this decision. Churchill was surely its most visible advocate, but the fact remains that Kitchener formally proposed the plan in January and the War Council unanimously approved it.

Churchill has been accused of being too eager, almost impatient, to generate a peripheral front. It is important to appreciate, however, that contrary to many of his peers, the starting point of Churchill's strategic vision was total victory over Germany. Many saw the key to victory through German attrition on the Western Front, but that assumed that more Germans than Brits were dying, which was not true in early 1915. With a stalemate firmly in place, Churchill believed in a defensive strategy in the west up to the point of being able to deliver the decisive blow -- attrition was not the way. He hoped to revive maneuver and strategic outflanking, and since there was no backing for his first choice, the Borkum Island Plan, the Dardanelles became his focus.⁵

At the strategic level, the Dardanelles concept was very sound, if not brilliant. In its initial form, the plan called for two phases: a naval force in concert with a land force to capture Gallipoli; and then warships to proceed to Constantinople where the threat of

naval guns would cut the Europe-Asia link and bring down the tottering Turkish regime. Such action would force Turkey out of the war, gain Allied control of the straits to reestablish the line of communication to Russia and establish a Balkan-wide front supported by France and Great Britain.

The Dardanelles Plan was not a struggle over the primacy of a southern front over the Western Front. It was the synergism of the simultaneous fronts that was the key. For a rather modest investment of resources against a very beatable Turkey, Great Britain could protect her investment in the Middle East (Egypt, Suez, Kuwait) and turn the Balkan front into a decisive theater which could push through Austria and legitimately threaten the southern flank of Germany. By early 1915, France was an unmovable tangle of trenches, the Russians were bogged down, the German fleet refused to fight, and the world's finest navy was idle.⁶ The Dardanelles Plan was not just available, it was a cunning gamble that if reasonably supported, was worth the risk.

CHAPTER III

NAVAL BOMBARDMENT

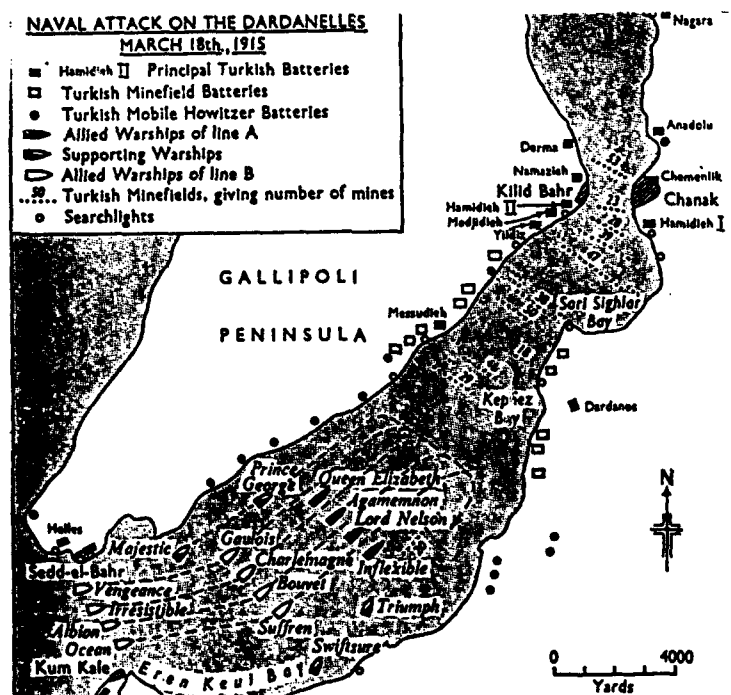
The Dardanelles Plan was originally conceived as a joint land-sea operation requiring some 150,000 men, but by the end of February, the plan to force the straits had evolved basically into a naval action based on Vice Admiral Carden's recommendations. The naval task force to be led by Carden included the newly commissioned battleship HMS Queen Elizabeth, a French squadron of four battleships, thirteen older battleships and cruisers. Carden believed the straits could be successfully forced with sufficient minesweepers and warships. He proposed to neutralize the Turkish forts, sweep the mines within the straits and then steam into the Sea of Marmara to threaten Constantinople.¹

The naval bombardment of the antiquated outer defenses of the straits started February 19. Although Carden's ships received only limited fire from the Turks, the bombardment of the shore batteries was equally ineffective. On the international scene, however, the operation created a great sensation and several of the Balkan states wanted to join the action against Turkey. Turkey was apparently in a panic and clandestine word reached London that some members of the Turkish government wanted secret discussions regarding peace. For Kitchener, there was no turning back now -- a single bombardment had the tottering Turks close to crumbling.² Bad weather, however, postponed further naval bombardment for the next several days. Meantime, the Turks effectively used this respite to reinforce their positions and now had approximately 25,000 troops in place on the peninsula.

Carden resumed the assault of the outer forts on February 25, with much better results. The long range guns were silenced and the others were abandoned by their crews. The following day, bombardment of intermediate defenses was started from inside the straits by three warships who for the first time were receiving reasonably effective fire from the Turkish six inch mobile howitzers. In the meantime, small parties of marines had

landed against minimal resistance and destroyed 20 shore battery guns before being withdrawn. Over the next five days, similar landings occurred which destroyed 30 more such guns. The operation was proceeding satisfactorily, but the lack of a sizable Allied ground force allowed Turkish reinforcements to retake many of the vacated gun positions and ultimately forced the marine demolition parties to withdraw on March 4.³

Operations continued for the next nine days, but by the 13th, a stalemate was reached in the straits. The intermediate and inner defenses, although battered, were still protecting the vital minefields and the minesweepers were still being harassed by the increasingly accurate fire of the howitzers. The short-lived tactical gains were consistently being nullified by poor weather, insufficient ground forces, and an inability to clear the minefields. After the disastrous loss of four minesweepers on the night of March 13, Carden decided to revise his strategy. The suppression of the Turkish batteries by the heavy guns of the battleships must precede, rather than follow the sweeping of the channel. A full scale naval attack on the straits was planned for March 18. By that point, however, the desperate Turkish defenses along the straits had been vastly improved and were under the able command of German General Liman von Sanders.



On the morning of March 18, the British and French warships moved up the straits to the Narrows. Carden, who was suffering from extreme stress on the eve of the battle, had been replaced by Vice Admiral John de Robeck. No less than 18 battleships surrounded by an array of cruisers and destroyers steamed towards the Narrows and opened fire at 14,000 yards. By 2:00 p.m., several ships had been hit by Turkish guns, but they were not badly damaged and the bombardment continued. When the frontline battleships swung right to allow the minesweepers to start operations, the sweeps were greeted by a hail of howitzer fire and fled. Before the afternoon was over, three battleships were sunk and one badly damaged by an unknown string of mines and three disabled warships were still under fire by Turkish batteries. De Robeck ordered the naval forces out of the straits and by midnight, the engagement was over.⁴ The unlocated Turkish howitzers and unswept minefields had carried the battle. Both de Robeck and London came to the realization that the straits could not be forced without a joint naval and large land force operation.

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION

Although strategically sound in concept, what evolved as the Dardanelles Plan lacked clear operational design. The culprit was the total absence of strong leadership in Britain's War Council. As a body, it provided no connected plan of action, no sense of timing, and made no requirement for the General Staff to provide detailed and well-scrutinized plans. Had adequate staffing been conducted, the council would have had a much clearer appreciation for the difficulties which confronted this operation and made available the resources required and exhibited the strength of purpose to carry out the operation to its fullest extent. As it was, the War Council simply drifted into a half-hearted commitment to the Dardanelles Plan based on a suggestion by Kitchener, the

professional endorsement of one fleet admiral and the persuasive oratory of Churchill. It is somewhat puzzling that although almost everyone involved in the discussion recognized that it must be conducted as a joint navy-land force operation, they nevertheless approved a concept to force the straits and the fall of Constantinople with naval power alone. This approval was strongly opposed by Churchill's technical advisor, Lord Fisher, who didn't understand how a fleet could take a peninsula and was contrary to a General Staff study conducted 10 years earlier that concluded a joint operation was the only feasible method to force the straits.⁵ Equally as startling is the fact that Kitchener, less than a month before, had established that the operation would require 150,000 men to be successful. The War Council was simply too eager to be diverted from thoughts of the grisly Western Front to the brighter prospects of success. It was like women going to a dress sale -- they weren't going to leave without a dress!!

Later, when many of the council members started doubting the wisdom of naval action alone and the need for a strong landing force, an apparent rift between Churchill and Kitchener caused Kitchener to cancel some 60,000 troops which he had only days before agreed to provide in support of the operation. When pressed by Churchill, Kitchener was adamant and foolishly stated that he doubted that the Turks would even defend the peninsula.⁶ Had these troops been made available and employed jointly with the naval bombardment in mid-February, it is hard to imagine that the operation would not have been a success.

In evaluating the operational level of warfare, one assesses the operational commander's ability to link the tactical employment of forces to the strategic objectives. This so called "operational art" focuses on the design, organization, and execution of major operations and requires the military commander to think through the ends, ways, and means of the military situation.⁷ An evaluation of the operational level of the naval

action to force the Dardanelles highlights a number of operational shortcomings which significantly detracted from this phase of the campaign.

First, there was little attention given to the prospect of achieving surprise. The brief naval bombardment of the outer defenses in November 1914, in response to the Turkish shelling of the Black Sea ports, was ill-timed and of no military significance. This action not only alerted the Turks of possible future military intentions, but also reduced Allied force security by providing the Turks the time to strengthen their peninsula defenses. As stated previously, the campaign lacked a clear operational design to achieve its stated objectives and thus placed a significant burden for planning on the operational commanders. In simple terms, the situation facing the Allies in the Dardanelles was that shore batteries (fort guns and mobile howitzers) protected the minefields, the battleships could not pass through the straits until the mines were cleared, but the minesweepers could not clear the minefields until the shore batteries were silenced. This was the problem of a purely naval action to force the straits and one the British never seemed to have fully understood.⁸ As a result, the War Council expected an easy military victory without an adequate commitment of resources (e.g. land forces or better minesweepers).

Unity of effort suffered by the lack of conceptual congruence between Kitchener, Fisher, and Churchill. Kitchener's failure to provide ground forces seriously jeopardized mission success and immediately alienated Fisher's support. Although Churchill too was initially opposed to the navy only plan, once approved, he gave it his total attention. Had Fisher energetically supported Churchill, their combined efforts in support of Carden and de Robeck may have proven more fruitful. At the operational level, Carden and to some degree de Robeck lacked unity of effort in the ineffective application of the resources at hand. Since fall of shot was extremely important to the effectiveness of naval gunfire, the use of spotters on the peninsula and/or the employment of available seaplanes as spotters could have greatly increased the accuracy of the bombardment as well as helped to locate

the mobile howitzers. The minefields represented the single greatest threat to the fleet and should have been the true objective of the operation. To this end, naval gunfire should have concentrated on those Turkish batteries protecting the minefields and the minesweeping force reorganized under the leadership of an officer with extensive minesweeping experience and manned by crews that would not flee in the face of hostile fire.

Since no ground troops were supposedly available due to the requirements of the Western Front, and soon to be retired battleships were utilized, it would be fair to label this campaign as an economy of force operation. The tragedy was that forces were available (e.g. 29th Div, ANZACs) and the fact that economy of force is not a virtue if the resources provided are not adequate within a reasonable risk to achieve the military objectives. The lack of supporting ground forces was contrary to military logic, negated the synergism of the joint land-sea attack and constrained the military commanders' options of maneuver to those of a one dimensional naval attack. This inability to mass combat power on the shore batteries protecting the minefields was a significant operational weakness.

Given that the operation was to be conducted by naval forces alone, three significant factors affected the military commander's ability to seize and maintain the offensive. The first is the inherent weakness of naval gunfire which is disadvantaged by its unstable platform; poor observation of fall of shot; flat, high velocity trajectory; limited ammunition supply; and conspicuous firing point. The shore battery, on the other hand, is reasonably well protected, concealed, sometimes mobile, fires from an elevated observation post overlooking a known and measured field of fire.⁹ The second was the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the minesweepers. They were slow and underpowered fishing trawlers with questionable crews. They were inadequate in number (7), directed by an officer-in-charge (OIC) with no previous sweep experience, had a draft greater than the depth of the

mines from the surface, and consistently fled in the heat of battle.¹⁰ The third and possibly the most important element detracting from the offensive was the military commander Vice Admiral Carden. He was near 60 years of age, lacked the aggressive temperament of a fighter, and when pressed, was somewhat unsure of himself. When he gave way to de Robeck, things did not significantly change. Following the major assault on March 18, de Robeck was overly concerned by his losses and lamented the fact that his career was ruined. Others present, such as Rear Admiral Keyes realized that losses were expected in an operation such as this and sensed that the Turks were close to being beaten. The shore batteries were almost silent and all that was needed was reorganization of the sweep effort.¹¹

The staff's failure to correctly analyze the cause of the battleship losses (mine string No. 11) and de Robeck's own lack of confidence marked the end of the naval action to force the straits. No amount of encouragement by the War Council, including the availability of additional ships, would convince de Robeck to continue without the support of land forces.

CHAPTER IV

JOINT OPERATIONS

The Navy's failure to force the Dardanelles precipitated the dispatch of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) under the command of General Sir Ian Hamilton. The force numbered close to 75,000 men and was made up of the British 29th Division, an Australian/New Zealand Corps (ANZAC), a French Division, some British Royal Marines, and a mix of Senegalese, Indian, and Gurkha forces.¹

Following a brief personal survey of the straits, Hamilton, de Robeck and portions of their respective staffs met aboard the Queen Elizabeth and agreed that a joint land-sea operation was required to gain control of the straits, but in accordance with Kitchener's instructions "not until all forces were ready." When the Admiralty was informed that a landing would not occur until mid-April, both Kitchener and Churchill were shocked. Churchill had expected naval attacks to recommence as soon as possible and Kitchener thought the landings would occur in about a week, while in the meantime, the navy would continue to bombard the forts. To placate London, de Robeck informed the Admiralty, on March 25, that the navy would resume a vigorous offensive including indirect shelling and minesweeping operations until the army was ready, but as it turned out, no such action was ever carried out. Hence, by the end of March, although the basic concept of joint operations had been agreed to, the exact nature of the operation had not been defined. Infact, Hamilton assumed his forces were to operate in conjunction with another naval assault while de Robeck had decided that his naval forces would not again attack the forts until the army occupied the peninsula.²

Hamilton was reasonably aware of the difficulties of the task ahead. Not only was he short of manpower, but he had received only one-third of the normally expected artillery and almost a total lack of trench mortars, grenades and high explosive ammunition. It was somewhat disconcerting to a soldier that his lack of firepower was to

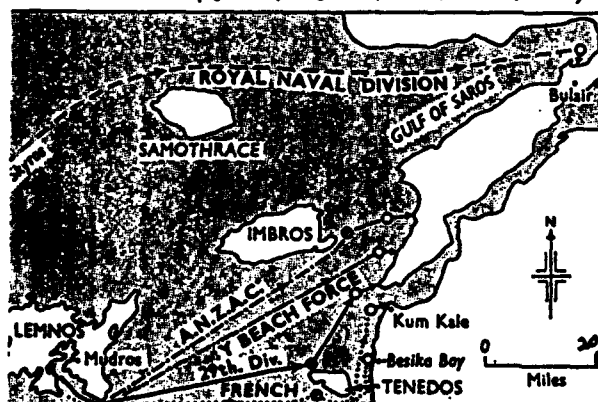
be made up from naval gunfire support. Hamilton not only lacked adequate resources, he lacked adequate campaign guidance and up-to-date intelligence information. Even after the fiasco of the naval attacks, the General Staff in London again failed to provide a general plan for the operation and simply assumed that Hamilton and de Robeck would work it out in theater.³

Hamilton took a month to ready the MEF to move against the peninsula. Although the time was no doubt needed for planning, reorganization and training; it provided the Turks equally critical time to reinforce and resupply their defenses. Had Hamilton landed his forces on the peninsula in mid-March, he would have faced no more than 25,000 troops. By early April, however, von Sanders had 60,000 troops at his disposal, which he divided into roughly equal thirds at Besika Bay, protecting the Asiatic shore, a second group at Bulair, and the third posted on the Gallipoli peninsula.⁴ Unfortunately for the Allies, a lack of operational security had compromised the intent of the landing. German and Turkish agents in Egypt had gathered critical information on the operation and von Sanders was aware of Hamilton's presence and the landing force build-up on the nearby Greek islands of Imbros and Lemnos. On the eve of the first landings, the naval build-up was impressive and totaled 19 battleships, 2 armored cruisers, 11 light cruisers, 27 destroyers, 5 torpedo boats, 29 trawlers and sweepers, a depot ship, a balloon ship, and an airplane carrier in the Aegean.⁵

GENERAL DEPLOYMENT OF LANDING FORCES, APRIL 23rd-25th

● Assembly points, April 24th. - ○ Final positions, April 25th.

(Note: This map gives only a general picture of these dispositions)



Hamilton's intentions were to land along the southern portion of the peninsula, near Ari Burnu and Cape Helles. His forces were to join up and push up the peninsula, capturing the prominent ridges along the way. As

diversions, the French would land at Kum Kale on the Asiatic side of the straits and the Royal Naval Division would conduct a feint at Bulair.⁶ As was Hamilton's way, he delegated full authority to his corps commanders for the tactical conduct of the operation. Lieutenant General Hunter-Weston commanded the British corps destined for Cape Helles and Lieutenant General Birdwood commanded the ANZAC forces to be landed at the Gaba Tepe area near Ari Burnu.

At 0500 on April 25, the landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula took place. Due to the narrowness of the beaches, a shortage of landing craft, and the lack of room to maneuver troops from a single point, Hamilton chose to land on the peninsula at five different places near its southern tip (designated X,Y,Z,S,V beaches).⁷ The deception plan was apparently effective as indicated by the relatively small number of Turks which were encountered in the first 24 hours. The landings, however, were beset by confusion and were characterized by British inexperience and Turkish resilience. Most of the officers and men knew little of their objectives, had not seen a map of the area, and were disoriented first by the sun and then the glaring sunrise. Ships lost their way, troops were landed in the wrong places, temporary landing wharfs failed, and supporting gunfire proved ineffective.⁸ What Turkish troops were encountered defended with unexpected fierceness.

To the north, ANZAC forces mistakenly landed a mile north of the intended landing site and were hampered by sheer cliffs rising from the beach. ANZAC forces unsuccessfully attempted to move inland toward the prominent ridge Chunuk Bair (850') and fought the remainder of the day to establish a small beachhead below the enemy's high ground. By campaign's end, nearly 50,000 men on both sides would die in attempts to control this ridge.

The British 29th Division landed at various Helles beaches throughout the day and suffered an inordinate number of brigade commander casualties. Nevertheless, Hunter-

Weston remained aboard ship almost the entire day and provided embarrassingly little leadership to his forces ashore. Even after nearly 30,000 of his forces had landed, he failed to order them inland to take the high ground. Warships eagerly awaited calls for support fire, but poor communication and possibly confusion resulted in few calls being made. Ironically, only 2,000 or so Turks opposed the landing and although the Brits heavily outnumbered the defenders, they accomplished little more than the establishment of a beachhead at Helles.⁹

By the end of the first day, the Allies had established narrow beachheads at both ANZAC Cove and Helles, but faced a night of harassing attacks and heavy casualties. Battles continued through April 28, and although Hamilton was optimistic and considered the really difficult business done, the fighting drifted into a stalemate with no appreciable gains made by either side.



The fighting continued for the next three months and focused near the town of Krithia, at the base of Achi Baba, a peak which provided a commanding position over the straits. Fighting was characterized by broad daylight frontal assaults and ghastly casualties on both sides. When not fighting, home was a shallow trench and each day was marked by extreme boredom, oppressive heat, the stench of rotting corpses, and countless flies. Cases of dysentery multiplied daily due to poor sanitary conditions, poor nutrition, and high

humidity. It was estimated that some 80 percent of the Allied troops on the peninsula

were suffering from some form of the disease.¹⁰ By the end of July, the Allies were still three miles from the summit while both sides had suffered over 100,000 total casualties. Hamilton was nevertheless confident that with reinforcements he could capture this critical high ground.

And so it was, reinforcements were on the way, for men were easier to find than shells. The British 52nd Division came from Egypt, and by late July, five additional divisions of new recruits and inexperienced officers came from England to form the 120,000 man IX Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Frances Stopford. A large portion of the IX Corps was to be landed at Suvla Bay, five miles north of ANZAC Cove, in early August. The corps was to link up with the ANZACs, create a single enlarged beachhead, and then mount a major offensive to sever the peninsula at its center.

Rather than continuing a summation of the many battles that raged for the next several months, I intend to highlight the operations at Suvla Bay 6-10 August. This operation provides a striking example of the British failure to exploit a remarkable opportunity and clearly illustrates the basis for British failure throughout the campaign. Additional detail is provided to help the reader generate sufficient frustration over British inaction.

Suvla Bay is a long, curved stretch of sand backed by a large flat plain which rises to several low hills and lies at the end of a mountain chain that commands the center of the Gallipoli Peninsula. With the offense stalled at the southern tip (Helles), it was for the possession of this chain and particularly the heights of Sari Bair that Hamilton planned to cut the peninsula. Unfortunately, the Suvla Bay landings were perceived as a secondary operation to ANZAC Cove and never got the full attention it deserved from Hamilton's staff.¹¹

The inherent difficulties facing IX Corps were seen by Hamilton as significant for this force of new recruits lacked doctrine, experience, and most importantly, time.

Hamilton had requested a battle-experienced commander from France, but was instead given Stopford, a man of inferior health and a career administrator. On this issue, Hamilton erred in two respects by not pressing harder for a more qualified commander and by subsequently failing to keep a close eye on a general he thought only marginally suitable.

Stopford's initial orders specified his primary objective as securing the beachhead at Suvla Bay, taking the heights above the plain, and if possible, to provide flanking support for Birdwood's ANZAC assault on Sari Bair. After complaining to Hamilton about a lack of howitzers, Stopford's orders were modified to indicate that the establishment of the beachhead "might" require all his troops, but if he had troops to spare, they would be used to support the Sari Bair assault. These modified orders were totally inadequate for not clearly emphasizing the primary objective on Sari Bair and did not convey Hamilton's intent to take advantage of every opportunity provided by the enemy. A more aggressive commander would not have needed such direction, but Stopford was not such a man. Stopford's pessimism towards the operation was magnified as orders passed down the chain of command to the fighting units, where the concept of seizing key geographical positions, completely disappeared. This failure to clarify intent placed a very heavy burden on the troops in the field and ultimately resulted in several lost opportunities.¹²

In support of the ANZAC assault on Sari Bair, 20,000 additional troops were secretly landed at ANZAC Cove. On August 6, the 40,000 troops, now packed into the crowded beachhead, began the three-prong siege of Sari Bair. By day's end, furious fighting, oppressive heat and a lack of water left the main portion of the ANZAC forces thoroughly exhausted and still in the midst of the assault on the summit. There, they patiently waited for the IX Corps support forces coming ashore at Suvla Bay.

The landings of IX Corps began just before dawn on August 7 and quickly bogged down. One brigade was landed in the wrong place, the direction of the attack was

inappropriately altered twice and men/equipment initially piled up on the narrow beach in a confused mass. Stopford was only concerned with getting his forces ashore and before the end of the day, 20,000 men were safely landed. His inexperienced troops, however, failed to move rapidly inland, and lost their chance for any significant tactical success. Indecision and confusion plagued their efforts, yet Stopford remained onboard his command ship, Jonquil, throughout the day, focused solely on getting the remaining forces ashore. Although there continued some scattered shooting on the perimeter, the beachhead itself was struck by a mood of calm and a good many soldiers simply sat around. The few units that tried to push inland were tactically disjointed and at one point three units tried unsuccessfully to launch an attack on one of the local hills, all three without leadership of their respective commanders.¹³

On the evening of August 7, following some prodding by Hamilton's staff, Stopford inferred he wanted to start moving inland but was told by two divisional commanders that their men were exhausted and further movement was not possible. Accordingly, he postponed any further assault inland for 24 hours.

By the second day, after a growing concern over the lack of progress, Hamilton went to see for himself what was going on. To his chagrin, he found Stopford still onboard the Jonquil, but was assured the assault would commence the following day. Urged by Hamilton to press the attack that day, Stopford objected. Hamilton then went ashore without Stopford, who supposedly had a bad knee, to talk to the divisional commanders. Once there, he was informed that no assault was possible until the next day, for the troops were too scattered about, the terrain was bad and had not been reconnoitered and orders could not be distributed in time for junior officers to study them.¹⁴ The solider in Hamilton sensed the waning opportunity and in an effort to instill some degree of combat initiative, personally ordered the brigade to attack the heights toward Sari Bair that same night. His efforts, however, did little good, for the brigade

spent most of the night to getting organized. When the assault was launched early the next morning, it was easily broken by Turkish reinforcements who had seized the high ground only hours before. With this defeat, any real hope of capturing the Sari Bair high ground and cutting Gallipoli in half was gone.

The assault on Sari Bair cost 12,000 British casualties, with a comparable number of Turkish losses. Stopford attempted one last major assault from Suvla Bay 12 days later, but it too failed at the cost of 5,000 additional Allied casualties. Although various attacks continued on the peninsula for several more months, the wasted Suvla Bay operation represented the Allies' single greatest opportunity for success during joint portion of the campaign.¹⁵

Following the outcry from Parliament and Kitchener's refusal for additional troops, the Dardanelles campaign was drawn to a close with a complete evacuation of Allied forces from the peninsula January 8, 1916. Ironically, not a single man was lost in the withdrawal.

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION

Clearly defined objectives are the glue that holds an operation together. In the heat of battle, when command/control breaks down and the fog/friction of combat takes root, it is the unifying concept of purpose that focuses combat power towards the objective. Similar to the vague objectives defined in phase one, Kitchener failed to provide Hamilton with adequate guidance, up-to-date intelligence, adequate resources or an operational plan. Kitchener assumed that the two commanders would work it out when they got together. Although Hamilton and de Robeck agreed to a joint operation, their conceptional understanding of what that meant differed greatly and resulted in an almost complete lack of naval involvement in the campaign after March 18 with the exception of supporting the amphibious landings. The Navy could have renewed its assault on the Narrows.

Hamilton similarly failed to clearly identify his objectives and exercise adequate control of his subordinates throughout the campaign. As exemplified in the Suvla Bay operation, Hamilton failed to perceive the possibility of a significant opportunity and his reluctance to push his subordinates also allowed Stopford to maintain an unjustified lack of aggression and misstate objectives to his subordinates. This action turned an integrated three-front battle plan into essentially three independent battles, fought on three fronts by three independent commanders.¹⁶

The vagueness of campaign objectives was both exacerbated by and in some cases caused by the failure to achieve unity of command/effort. From the very start, the joint phase was plagued by having two separate commanders in Hamilton and de Robeck. Added to the equation was General Maxwell, who commanded the Allied forces in Egypt and was the source for a significant amount of the manpower on Gallipoli. As previously discussed, Hamilton and de Robeck were on different operational tracks which was not helped by the fact that the two staffs were not co-located and by Hamilton's administrative staff which was so late to arrive in theater that the General Staff had to draw up the logistic plans with essentially no such experience. The situation was even further complicated by a very compartmentalized planning process that isolated critical portions of the staff that should have been working together and that Hamilton's General Staff and Administrative Staff were not located together. This lack of command unity and effort may best be portrayed by Maxwell begrudging reinforcements to Hamilton, de Robeck refusing to involve the navy until Hamilton captured the high ground, Hamilton not asking for reinforcements for political reasons and Kitchener thinking things were just fine.¹⁷

As previously mentioned, the month it took for Hamilton to ready the MEF greatly compromised surprise and security. The warning provided by the March naval action and the intelligence provided from Egypt allowed the Turks adequate time to build up their

defenses. Although for the most part, tactical surprise was achieved at many of the landing sites, the lack of Allied initiative failed to turn this to their advantage.

Kitchener strongly believed the primacy of the Western Front and only allowed half the troops required and a third of the howitzers expected for the Dardanelles Campaign. Though Hamilton should be gauged on how well he utilized the resources he was provided, it should be noted it was three months of tactical stalemate and excessive casualties before he ever asked Kitchener for reinforcements. The fault may lie in his unjustified optimism, politics, or simply his inability to properly assess his military requirements. Nevertheless, inadequate resources was one of two major factors which significantly reduced his ability to seize or maintain the offensive through maneuver and massing of combat power. The second factor was poor command and control caused by ineffective communications and lackluster leadership. The details of several battles on the peninsula indicated an overall inability to optimize maneuver and mass as a force multiplier. A great many of the battles were simply daylight assaults with very high casualties as evidenced by the June/July offenses at Helles which netted 500 yards at the cost of 17,000 casualties.¹⁸ The tough terrain and slender peninsula profile precluded easy maneuver. Hamilton's lack of reconnaissance and the unavailability of accurate maps kept many of the units lost a good part of the time. With such geographical constraints, it's surprising that a flanking amphibious maneuver wasn't considered after the many early offensive failures. The failure to mass firepower was further demonstrated by the poor coordination of naval gunfire and maneuvering forces during the amphibious landings; the failure of the navy to recommence the bombardment of the Narrow's forts, both before and after the amphibious landing; the ineffective use of reserves to retain the initiative; the failure to more effectively utilize Allied air supremacy and the use of submarines in the Sea of Marmara. It additionally seemed very short sighted of Hamilton to press the ineffective

June/July offenses when 120,000 new troops were soon to arrive in preparation for the August offensive.

The ineffective management of maneuver and mass coupled with misunderstood objectives, poor command and control, and complacent leadership made any notion of seizing and exploiting the offensive initiative an impossibility. This is not meant to infer that many units did not fight courageously, for there are numerous accounts of brilliant fighting, much of it hand-to-hand. The issue at hand is that over half of the troops were new recruits with little training, no experience, and a lack of proper fighting equipment (trench mortars and grenades). New recruits lacked the drive that equally inexperienced junior officers and less than inspiring senior leadership could provide. There was an overriding feeling of pessimism in the officer corps and a large number of brigadiers and colonels who had been on the peninsula less than two weeks, went home with shattered nerves.¹⁹ Ineffective leadership was at every level as evidenced by Stopford remaining onboard Jonquil during the fiasco at Suvla, and Hamilton's hands-off style that wouldn't allow him to intervene even when it was obvious that operations were going badly. There was an attitude that prevailed throughout the entire campaign where confusion and lack of aggressive leadership kept the troops short of the summit or still on the beach waiting for someone to give them orders.

Simplicity of the operation was sacrificed by the excessive concern for secrecy, which greatly reduced the availability of information and intelligence at a time when they were needed most. Units needed maps, clearly defined objectives, good communications, and effective command and control to have a reasonable chance to successfully carry out even the simplest assault; especially when notified only hours before the mission, as was frequently the case on Gallipoli. At the far end of the "simple" spectrum was the Suvla Bay landings where 100,000 men deployed on three separate fronts, landing 20,000 men on a hostile beach, while secretly landing another 20,000 men at ANZAC beach on three

successive nights, and all while trying to supply three armies from the sea. It was simply too much for Hamilton and his staff who made almost the same mistakes at Suvla as had occurred in the April landings.

Beyond the principles of war, there were a number of degraded operational combat functions which also contributed to the failure at Gallipoli.

Intelligence collection and distribution at all levels was ineffective. When Hamilton left London, he was given virtually nothing useful to aid his preparation for the campaign and wasn't even briefed by a staff member who had spent the last several years studying Turkish defenses on the peninsula. Knowing that information was scarce, there was no apparent special effort by Hamilton's staff to at least provide as much information as was available. When information was available, such as aircraft reconnaissance of the Turkish trench works above Suvla Bay, Hamilton failed to provide photographs to satisfy Stopford's concerns.

Ineffective command and control was compounded by poor communications systems. The hands-off leadership style of several of the senior commanders significantly reduced the overall combat effectiveness of the troops. Hamilton felt obliged to stay out of his commanders' business once the general objectives had been established. This may have been appropriate in ideal conditions, but once it was sensed that his subordinates were lacking, he was reluctant to compensate by getting more involved. The differing location of the staffs coupled with a poor system of communications exacerbated the problem. This was extremely crucial in trying to direct inexperienced troops and became painfully obvious during the Suvla landing when Hamilton was at Mudros (1 hour away), Stopford was on his command ship, Jonquil, and the staff was ashore scuttling back and forth with information. There was inadequate information available to explain why wireless telegraphy messages were not used more extensively. Without effective

communications it was simply impossible to maneuver in sync, coordinate fires, or effectively handle unexpected advantages or setbacks.

Logistics played a significant role in the ineffectiveness of the ground campaign. With the exception of a critical shortage of trench mortars and grenades, however, it was not a decisive factor. The problem of logistics surfaced quickly in that the loading of the initial troops for the MEF was so haphazard that the ships had to be unloaded and repacked again in Alexandria. Battalions were split up, many were separated from their equipment, horses were without wagons, guns without ammo, and shells without fuses.²⁰ Problems were very slow to be identified because the Administrative and Logistics Staffs were very late to arrive in theater and once there set up shop at three different locations: Mudros, Lemnos, and Alexandria.

Although many brigadiers felt a need for more artillery, the real need was for trench mortars and grenades to support the close-in fighting. At the end of May, there were only 12 grenades per company. In June, there were only four trench mortars in the whole ANZAC position. The mortar problem was never solved and it was not until the end of August that there were enough grenades for two per man.²¹

Landing craft were totally inadequate during the April landings and resulted in needless casualties. Though requested for March, it was not until August, during the Suvla landings, that the bullet-proof, 500 man, motorized-lighters were available.

Although there were disagreements over the significance of the water shortage, there is no doubt that there were major delays in its delivery, a lack of receptacles to receive it, and a lack of alternate arrangements when normal supply plans went amuck. Suvla was a prime example in that the staff ordered the necessary water-lighters for the landing, but they were mistakenly left behind at Imbros. The navy never intended to supply water to so many troops and many of the brigadiers felt no such responsibility, for it was up to the staff to get it there.

Simply put, the medical planning was unsatisfactory and arrangements for transporting the wounded broke down under the excessive numbers. There was no system of allocation for departing ships, some ships even refused to take casualties, while others were filthy but loaded to the gunnels with wounded. By week five, there were far too few doctors and not enough medicine to handle the 60,000 Allied casualties which clogged every major Allied hospital from Gallipoli to London.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Few issues in western military history conjure up more emotion and bile than the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915. The naysayers, and there were many, felt that the loss of life was needlessly expended on a half-baked idea that was more of an adventure than a creditable strategy to defeat Germany. However, the hindsight of three more years of bloody attrition on the Western Front and Turkey's postwar admission that they were close to collapse on three separate occasions lends strong validity to the plan. My personal conviction is that with the war in a virtual stalemate and the need for the synergism of a peripheral front, the plan had exceptional merit and was a sound military risk.

Although the Dardanelles Plan was conceptually sound, its single greatest flaw was that it lacked a clear operational design. Inadequate staffing understated the extreme difficulties inherent in the operation, and a vague plan evolved which lacked an operational concept, adequate resources and a sincere commitment from London. What the British never seemed to fully understand was that the mines were the real threat. Had adequate land forces been made available during the initial phase of the campaign to quickly force the straits in a surprise attack, the massed combat power of a joint land-sea attack focused on the shore batteries protecting the minefields would have provided the greatest possibility of success.

A large portion of this study focused on the operational level of warfare. Of the many operational shortcomings that were highlighted in this campaign, three broad weaknesses permeated almost every aspect of its failure: ineffective leadership, the inability to articulate an operational concept and clearly defined operational objectives, and the inability to effectively integrate the navy into the joint phase of the campaign. It was

this lack of a concept of operations that placed a significant burden on the operational commanders Carden, de Robeck and Hamilton, none of whom appeared up to the task.

After the navy's failure to force the straits, the MEF under Hamilton was ordered to support the operation. Although Hamilton clearly saw the second phase as a true joint operation, this concept never seemed to have been understood by de Robeck. Contrary to expectations, the fleet never again battered the Narrows forts with gunfire and, with the exception of amphibious operations, were basically invisible after mid-May. The supposed joint phase never saw the combined power of land forces and the navy focused on the real threat - the mines.

The campaign lacked the binding force of a concept of operations. Brigadiers were all too often unsure of both their priorities and military objectives and this vagueness translated all the way down to the foot soldier. Inexperienced troops require direction, motivation, and clearly understood objectives. There were simply too many ill-conceived tactical operations, too many assaults where the advantage was lost, and too many instances where the units were waiting for someone to give them an order.

The most damning problem was ineffective leadership which for the most part prevailed at all levels of the campaign. The "really good officers" were in France, so Gallipoli seemed to get what was left. Senior leadership was lethargic and uninspired. There was no force to counteract the personal deficiencies of the elderly or flustered brigadiers. At the top of the list was Carden, who was unsure of himself when things got tough; de Robeck, who seemed more concerned that his career was ruined; and Hamilton, who believed very strongly in hands-off leadership of his subordinates. Hamilton's problem to a fault was that he would not interfere with his brigadiers even when things went badly. Gallant he was, but also very inflexible. Regardless of repeated failures, he never seemed capable of changing his approach to fighting the Turks. The problem was further exacerbated by the lack of combat experience of his officer corps. When short of

resources and in a difficult fight, the genius of inspired leadership can often bridge the gap. For the most part, on Gallipoli, such leadership was not available. German Field Marshal von Hindenburg expressed it more bluntly when he described the British soldiers as "lions led by donkeys."

The sum of ill-defined objectives, ineffective leadership, poor communications, and inadequate command/control all combined to produce an operation that could not quickly respond to military opportunity or misfortune, that never achieved its potential of combat power, and never maneuvered in a fashion to truly seize the offensive initiative. Without effective use of the navy, this was a one-dimensional campaign that was doomed to failure.

On the other side of the trench line were the lowly Turks who fought honorably and fiercely for the protection of their homeland. Von Sanders had the luxury of setting his men to a definite task, within their capabilities and held them to it regardless of the losses. His troops were well deployed and near the end, the Turks could furnish all the troops needed to defend the homeland.

As flawed as the Dardenelles Campaign was, it still almost succeeded. Had the Allies been able to correct many of its operational deficiencies, it is fair to assume that the campaign had a reasonable chance of success. And if it had succeeded - would the fall of Constantinople have shortened the war by two years and spared millions of lives?¹ I will leave this question unanswered, for the "what if" game becomes an endless fascination that best ends with the truth - Gallipoli was lost and the war continued for three long years.

NOTES

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- 3 Ibid., p. 512.
- 4 Ibid., p. 516.
- 5 Ben-Mosche, Tuvia, "Churchill's Strategic Conception During the First World War," The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1989, p. 9.
- 6 Ibid., p. 10.

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- 2 Manchester, p. 532.
- 3 James, p. 44.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 63-64.
- 5 Manchester, p. 524.
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- 12 Ibid., pp. 141-142.
- 13 Ibid., p. 143.
- 14 Ibid., p. 145.
- 15 Ibid., p. 146.
- 16 James, pp. 246-247.
- 17 Ibid., p. 225.
- 18 Ibid., p. 234.
- 19 Cohen and Gooch, p. 160.
- 20 Gillum, p. 45.
- 21 Cohen and Gooch, pp. 151-152.

CHAPTER V

- 1 James, p. 352.

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