"THE WORLD CRISIS" AS HISTORY

BY

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SUMMARY

This thesis is an analysis of Winston Churchill's history of the First World War, *The World Crisis*. My method of approach has been, either to construct a narrative of events from the primary sources and compare Churchill's account with it or to summarise Churchill's main arguments and test them against the available documentary evidence. On occasion Churchill's construction of *The World Crisis* has been thought more interesting than the actual material included. In these instances an historiographical approach has been preferred.

The thesis can be divided into three main areas, preparations for the war and the naval war, the Dardanelles Campaign, the war from 1916 to 1918. On investigation it was revealed that most of Churchill's writing on the naval war was concerned with battles, many of these were of an extremely trivial nature and their results were frequently exaggerated. These "important" victories can then be contrasted with the set backs suffered. In these areas the consequences of the defeats is not minimised but the relative contributions of the Admiralty and the local commanders to the losses is usually distorted in the Admiralty's and thus Churchill's favour. Other defects were found to be the omission of important facts which did not fit Churchill's case and the tendency to excessively praise naval Commanders such as Keyes and Beatty - with whom Churchill had some temperamental compatibility to the detriment of those like Jellicoe with whom he did not.

Despite Churchill's attempt to prove his case concerning the Dardanelles operations by the quotation of an enormous number of documents it was found that his account was misleading. In the initial phase he understated the importance of other operations under investigation, then claimed a consensus in favour of Gallipoli which did not exist; concealed two major fluctuations in his own opinion about the operation, ignored the influence of his opinion on others, continually claimed against the weight of evidence both that the campaign was on the verge of success and that great results would have flowed from it had it succeeded. It was also found that Churchill's friendship with Hamilton weakened fundamentally his military descriptions which also contained little grasp of logistic and organisational difficulties.
The third section was found to be a curious mixture. There were powerful and generally well argued chapters on the Somme and casualty statistics but also some important areas such as Passchendaele omitted and too much space taken up with Churchill's own memoranda which during this period were of minor importance. The descriptions of the final battles were shown to be more reliable than Churchill's previous efforts but less exciting because of his lack of involvement with his subject. The influence of a wider range of advisers on *The World Crisis* was revealed including such unlikely collaborators as Haig and Edmonds.

In conclusion, *The World Crisis* was revealed to be a flawed book full of dubious interpretations of events often supported by documents carefully selected to give only one side of the story. It was also found however that unlike other books of this type continual, and I believe genuine, efforts were made by Churchill to take a more detached view of events. This often served Churchill's purpose in eliminating embarrassing disagreements from the book but also raised the whole intellectual level of the discussion. Finally the book was found to contain a thread of humanity and breadth of vision which together with the power of the writing will ensure it remains one of the classic accounts of the war.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of four years' study I have accumulated many debts of gratitude to individuals and organisations who aided me in my research. Foremost among libraries was the inter-library loan service of the Barr-Smith Library, Adelaide, which, under the efficient direction of Marjolyne Jones provided me with innumerable books and articles. I would also like to thank archivists and librarians from the Australian War Memorial Library, the Imperial War Museum, the Ministry of Defence, the British Library, the House of Lords Record Office, Kings College, London, the Public Record Office, Kew, the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich and especially Mr. Pearsall for several conversations on naval construction, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Churchill College Cambridge and in particular Mrs. Pat Bradford for all her help.

Various people kindly gave me permission to look at groups of papers in their possession. I wish to thank Mrs. Nutting for permission to use the Beatty Papers, the Broadlands Trust for permission to use the Papers of Prince Louis of Battenberg, Major C.T. Wilson for permission to use the papers and diaries of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Lord Keyes for permission to use the papers of Baron Keyes, and C & T Publications for permission to see the Churchill Papers.

Martin Gilbert first encouraged me to seek permission to use the Churchill Papers, guided me through that huge collection and gave much of his time, despite his many commitments, to talk to me about Churchill. His help and kindness were greatly appreciated.

Two people deserve special thanks. My supervisor, Professor Trevor Wilson, first suggested the topic to me. Over four years he gave me every help and encouragement and made the time spent on this thesis a pleasure. I remember particularly the many stimulating and invaluable conversations we had about the First World War. My debt to him is immense.

My greatest debt of gratitude is to my wife. Without her help and encouragement at every stage, this thesis could never have been written.
THIS THESIS CONTAINS NO MATERIAL WHICH HAS BEEN ACCEPTED FOR THE AWARD OF ANY OTHER DEGREE OR DIPLOMA IN ANY UNIVERSITY AND TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF CONTAINS NO MATERIAL PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED OR WRITTEN BY ANOTHER PERSON, EXCEPT WHEN DUE REFERENCE IS MADE IN THE TEXT.
INTRODUCTION

Winston Churchill wrote The World Crisis 1911-1918 between 1919 and 1926 during which time he was variously Secretary of State for War, Colonial Secretary, out of Parliament, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The first volume of the book was published in April 1923 and was an instant best-seller, the first printing of 7,500 copies being sold out before publication day. A further 2,500 copies were printed within three days of publication. By 1933, 14,669 copies had been sold. Volumes II and III were almost as popular and by the thirties had sold 12,603 and 12,894 copies respectively. The book made Churchill a rich man. Such was his literary reputation and such was the eagerness with which the public awaited his disclosures, that he was able to drive extremely hard bargains with his publishers. The pre-publication serial rights for volumes I and II netted him £5,000. In this instance Churchill was also able to insist on "an assurance that the joint enterprise on which I shall be engaged with The Times will not only be protected from adverse criticism in the editorial column of that newspaper, but also that it will be consistently treated in a spirit of good will and helpfulness." From his British publisher (Thornton Butterworth) Churchill received for volumes I and II an advance payment of £9,000 (non-returnable if the book failed) and 10/6 a copy over

(2) Thornton Butterworth to Churchill 29/3/23, Churchill Papers, 8/50.
(3) Ibid.
(6) The Times to Churchill 21/11/20, Churchill Papers, 8/38.
(7) Churchill to The Times 11/12/20; Wickham Steed to Churchill 14/12/20, in Ibid.
10,000 copies.\(^1\) By the end of 1923 his royalty payments totalled nearly £10,000\(^2\). An American contract for these volumes was worth £12,500 excluding serial rights.\(^3\) Furthermore the book was to remain in print. In 1931 a one volume abridgement appeared and in 1933-4 an illustrated edition in fortnightly parts was issued.\(^4\) In 1939 a two volume edition of the full version was published with some new material and this was reset in four volumes in 1950.\(^5\) Because the 1950 edition is the most recent and complete version it is the one used here. A paperback edition of the abridgement first appeared in 1960, a two volume edition of which is still in print, making *The World Crisis* the only general survey of the war published in the twenties to be currently available. Over the years the book was translated into French, German, Italian, Swedish, Spanish and Yugoslavian and rather surprisingly, given the nature of the book, the film rights were sold to Paramount in 1960.\(^6\)

Obviously then *The World Crisis* has been popular over a long period of time but the book would clearly need to possess some other quality than longevity to justify the intense scrutiny to which it is being subjected here.

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(1) Churchill to his wife 4/2/22. In Gilbert, M. Winston S. Churchill V4 Companion Documents, London, Heinemann, 1977, p. 1753, [Hereafter CV4]. Despite these rigorous terms Churchill's relations with his publisher remained good. As the last volume neared publication Churchill requested the final proofs to work on while taking a cruise in the Mediterranean. He wrote to Butterworths, "Dear Mr. Bourne, "Straight away, without delay, I want the page proof day by day on January four I leave this shore, nor will you catch me anymore!" Bourne replied "To do thy will, shall be my best endeavour still, but if I cant, you must opinethespeinters' and not mine." Churchill to Bourne 12/12/26; Bourne to Churchill 15/12/26; Churchill Papers, 8/206.


(4) Churchill to Thornton Butterworth 15/6/30, Ibid, 8/274.


(6) Ibid.
In fact there are many reasons for undertaking a detailed analysis of *The World Crisis*. Firstly, the book has been and continues to be influential in a number of ways. In a period in which many of the documents it contained were not generally available to historians *The World Crisis* was used almost as a primary source. For example Paul Guinn cites the book no less than 38 times in the course of a chapter on the Dardanelles.¹ Later, when the primary sources became available we still find *The World Crisis* being extensively quoted for Churchill's comments and opinions on various phases of the war by such historians as Robert Rhodes James, Arthur Marder and George Cassar.

It seems certain that the book has been greatly influential among the general public. This is indicated by the fact that the book has remained continually in print since 1923. Popular views on such matters as the Dardanelles, the use to which the tank was put during the war, and the competence of the British Generals often seem to coincide with views put forward in *The World Crisis*, suggesting a causal link between the two.

Thirdly, the book raises many important questions fundamental to the course of the war, and a study of the book involves inquiring into these questions.

Fourthly, a study of *The World Crisis* raises the important question of Churchill's own role in the war, especially his influence on the navy and the part he played in the inception of the Dardanelles Campaign.

Finally, although *The World Crisis* has been much quoted, it has, as Robert Rhodes James remarks "received inadequate critical analysis".² Only two attempts have been made in recent years to assess Churchill's historical works. Maurice Ashley, a specialist in 17th century English history and a former research assistant of Churchill's has written a book on the subject³ and J. H. Plumb, an expert on 18th century history, has contributed an

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essay on Churchill the Historian. However, neither of these studies attempts a substantial analysis of any particular work of Churchill's. Ashley merely summarizes the various themes running through The World Crisis and in the main eschews critical comment. Of course historians of the First World War have often made particular criticisms of The World Crisis but these have not been central to the purpose of the books in question. Certainly no overall picture of the defects or merits of The World Crisis emerges from these studies.

For the above reasons it has seemed worthwhile to attempt a detailed analysis of The World Crisis. In embarking on this task I have been guided in my approach by the structure of Churchill's book. The World Crisis does not deal with all phases of the war in the same detail. Thus it will be found that two-thirds of this thesis is concerned, as is The World Crisis, with the events of 1914-15 and only one-third with the remaining years of the war. However, where appropriate a discussion of the motives which led Churchill to treat one phase of the war in detail and leave another out altogether has been included.

Some explanation is needed for the methods adopted to analyse the various chapters. At times, usually where a subject has been examined in great detail by Churchill, I have found it necessary in the first half of my chapter to construct a narrative of events, based on the primary sources, which seeks to establish exactly what happened and also (where appropriate) what Churchill's place in these events was. In the second section of these chapters Churchill's version of events in The World Crisis is compared with this narrative. On other occasions, where Churchill's treatment of events is more sketchy or episodic it has seemed more appropriate simply to summarise Churchill's main arguments and then compare them with the major documentary sources. Thus a uniform structure is not employed but this seems amply justified by the varying treatment accorded to different phases of the war by Churchill.

A word of explanation or apology is perhaps also needed about the length of this thesis. In answer to the question of why my task took over 700 pages to complete I can only point to the huge range of source material available, observe that it has been necessary to provide a narrative of almost the whole of the war, and emphasize that The World Crisis is an exceptionally long book of some 750,000 words and almost 1,500 pages.

It has not been thought worthwhile to attempt to cover all the subjects discussed by Churchill in The World Crisis. In deciding whether to include a particular subject I have been constrained by the treatment given to that subject by Churchill. Thus topics of importance in themselves such as the cabinet crisis of July 1914, the ocean convoy system and the "Dunkirk Circus" have been omitted because of the brief treatment they receive in The World Crisis.1

Of course The World Crisis consists of two more volumes than those dealt with here. The final volumes deal with events in Europe from 1919 to 1922 (The Aftermath) and the war on the Eastern Front. The Aftermath has been omitted because, as Churchill himself said, it "is in a sense a separate publication" and only "affiliated to the rest of the series",2 and the Eastern Front is also something of an appendage to the main work.

The enormous amount of source material available has already been mentioned. This thesis is based on a study over 50 collections of private and public papers as well as a wide range of secondary sources. The major public documentary collections used are the Admiralty, Cabinet, War Office, Foreign Office and Munitions records. Of the private papers the more important have been the Battenburg, Kitchener, Keyes, Jellicoe, Ian Hamilton and Beatty Papers. Eclipsing all these in importance and scope, however, are the Churchill Papers. The selection from them published for the period covered by this thesis amounts to 2,500 pages of documents. Even more extensive is the unpublished material at present stored in the Bodleian

(1) For a discussion of omissions from later volumes see Introduction to Volume III.
(2) Churchill to Curtis Brown 16/1/28, Churchill Papers, 8/207.
Library at Oxford and in Churchill College Cambridge. These papers contain the first drafts of most chapters of The World Crisis, several series of galley proofs containing Churchill's comments or those of his advisers, and Churchill's correspondence with his advisers and friends concerning the writing of the book. This material has been of inestimable value in tracing the various stages through which sections of the book passed, in indicating which material Churchill chose to omit, in establishing which advisers Churchill used to help him with the book, and in assessing the influence of the advisers on it.
"It was the custom in the palmy days of Queen Victoria for statesmen to expatiate upon the glories of the British Empire, and to rejoice in that protecting Providence which had preserved us through so many dangers and brought us at length into a secure and prosperous age. Little did they know that the worst perils had still to be encountered and that the greatest triumphs were yet to be won.

Children were taught of the Great War against Napoleon as the culminating effort in the history of the British peoples, and they looked on Waterloo and Trafalgar as the supreme achievements of British arms by land and sea. These prodigious victories, eclipsing all that had gone before, seemed the fit and predestined ending to the long drama of our island race."\(^1\)

In these rolling sentences, so reminiscent of the opening passages of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, does Churchill begin *The World Crisis*. His prose now carries a rather archaic air but the manner of the introduction tells us that, despite the disclaimers in the preface, the work is meant to be something more than a personal memoir. This impression is confirmed by the fact that Churchill's own actions do not intrude greatly in the first two chapters of the book. In contrast the memoirs of Lloyd George, although they cover a similar time span to *The World Crisis*, have a distinctly personal flavour from the first page. Churchill, it seems is trying to achieve a different effect. Before proceeding with what is essentially his own story he is endeavouring in the manner of the academic historian to sketch in the background to the period when his own actions will dominate the narrative. This method has a curious result which may have been partly intentional. When the reader arrives at the more "personal" chapters there is a tendency to continue to read them as "history". This is a phenomenon which will recur again throughout the book.

The transition from general diplomatic history to a personal account is accomplished by Churchill in two stages. From the European scene of Bismarckian alliances in chapter one we descend to the realm of British politics in the Edwardian age, still however, with the emphasis on foreign

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\(^1\) *The World Crisis*, p.1. Because the volumes of the 1950 Odhams reprint used here do not correspond to the original volumes only the page numbers will be quoted.
affairs. From there we proceed to Churchill's more personal involvement with events from the Agadir crisis onwards.

It is unnecessary to test Churchill's material in these opening chapters against the diplomatic documents of the period. His account provides only the briefest of summaries of the main events from 1870 to 1911. One aspect of these chapters is however, worth exploring. The Churchill papers provide a useful insight into the procedures adopted by Churchill when he was confronted by events in which essentially he had played no part. As we will meet this situation later in the book, especially in volume 3 of The World Crisis, and as Churchill's response remained fairly consistent, it might be useful to see at an early stage exactly how he approached the problem.

When Churchill commenced writing the early chapters of The World Crisis he was Colonial Secretary. As a member of the government Churchill obviously had a degree of influence and an access to the records of other departments denied to the conventional historian. It is not surprising then to find Churchill writing to the Foreign Office to ask them to prepare a digest of diplomatic history for the pre-war years to aid him in constructing the opening chapters of his book.1 This task was apparently entrusted to a member of the Foreign Office staff, Headlam-Morley, who had been a member of the British delegation at Versailles in 1919 and was now the historical advisor to the Foreign Office.2 The result was a document by Headlam-Morley entitled "Note on the Relations between Germany and England from the Accession of William II to 1906."3 That Churchill had a high regard for Headlam-Morley and was taken by his style of writing is indicated by the fact that Churchill's first chapter from p. 5 to p. 13 is based on Headlam-Morley's "Note". To take just one example, the following passage from Headlam-Morley will be compared with a passage from The World Crisis.

(1) Churchill to Tyrrell 6/12/21, Churchill Papers 8/41.
(3) Churchill Papers 8/180. All reference numbers in the Churchill Papers, except where they obviously refer to files of correspondence, relate to either draft Chapters of The World Crisis or galley proofs.
"The result of this [the dropping of the reinsurance treaty with Russia by Germany] was very serious. After long negotiations, at the end of 1892, what was in effect an alliance was made between Russia and France. That had happened against which the whole Bismarckian policy was directed. Though the effects of this were long in showing themselves, it meant a complete change in the whole European situation. Instead of the undisputed predominance of Germany we get the rivalry of two opposed alliances."¹

In The World Crisis Churchill wrote

"In 1892 the event against which the whole policy of Bismarck had been directed came to pass. The Dual Alliance was signed between Russia and France. Although the effects were not immediately visible, the European situation was in fact transformed. Henceforward for the undisputed but soberly exercised predominance of Germany, there was substituted a balance of power."²

Obviously Churchill's account closely follows that of Headlam-Morley.

There are numerous other examples which could be given but it would be repetitious to include them all.³

The original title and structure of Churchill's second chapter shows that at quite a late stage he had not decided on the basic theme on which his opening chapters were to concentrate. As it now stands the chapter is entitled "Milestones to Armageddon 1905-1910" and although it deals briefly with events leading up to the great Liberal election victory of 1906 (in perhaps a Freudian slip called a "Conservative" landslide by Churchill)⁴ its main theme is foreign affairs. It concentrates particularly on the Algeciras conference and the growth of the German Navy. Originally this chapter was called "Party Politics" and the section on domestic politics, reduced to four or five pages in the published version, was much longer.⁵

Clearly Churchill made a decision that he should concentrate on foreign affairs and that the domestic political material intruded upon his narrative. He therefore drastically cut down this section, omitting a long pen portrait of Campbell-Bannerman and much detail about Chamberlain's protection

(2) The World Crisis, p. 7.
(3) Another good example occurs on p. 6. Churchill's paragraph from "In 1879 he formed an alliance with Austria" to "Austrian interests in the Balkans" closely follows Headlam-Morley's paper. See Churchill Papers 8/180.
(4) The World Crisis, p. 18.
(5) Churchill Papers, 8/111.
campaign. In the process many forceful passages were lost. For example, in discussing the Conservative split in 1903 Churchill originally wrote,

"Mr. Chamberlain and the Free Trade Ministers quitted the Cabinet simultaneously by different doors for opposite reasons and in ignorance of each others' action. The Duke of Devonshire, who had been mystified into remaining for a few days, made haste to follow his reproachful Free Trade friends; and the Prime Minister was left, with the remnant of a Government and no policy that anyone would listen to, to face the end of his Administration and the end of an epoch."2

Churchill's motives for omitting this material were mixed. As will prove to be the case on subsequent occasions the passions of pre-war politics were too proximate for Churchill to write about them with detachment. In those years Churchill had been a Liberal firmly opposed to the actions of the Conservatives. When he wrote these chapters of The World Crisis (1921) many of his colleagues in government were those same Conservatives. Thus by deleting many of the sections on domestic politics he would not only improve the balance of his chapters but would avoid the revival of old feuds, in his immediate political circumstances definitely best forgotten. Thus potentially embarrassing passages such as the following could be deleted, "One would have thought that after twenty years of office and such a formidable condemnation by the electorate, the Conservative leaders would have been content, at any rate for a few years, to allow some satisfaction to the legislative wishes of the immense Liberal electorate."3

Also omitted as possibly embarrassing were details of Lloyd George's proposal for a centre party in 1910 and Churchill's own discussions on this topic with several of his Tory friends.4 Other subjects deleted were a description of Joseph Chamberlain's violent attacks on the Liberals during the Boer War,5 the Conservative policy of importing Chinese labour into the Transvaal,6 and a statement to the effect that Churchill considered

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(1) Churchill Papers, 8/111.
(2) Churchill Papers 8/55. This paragraph followed the sentence ending, "artificial compromise." on p. 17.
(3) Ibid. 8/111.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid, 8/55.
that the bitter party warfare of the pre-war years had its origins in the partisan actions and legislation passed by the Conservative Government of 1901-5.\(^1\)

To describe the main international events of the period Churchill once more turned to Headlam-Morley. Headlam-Morley supplied three papers, "Note on Delcasse and Algicaras", "Austrian Annexation of Bosnia & Herzegovina", and a summary of Austro-Balkan relations to the outbreak of war.\(^2\) Churchill again drew heavily on these papers and many passages in *The World Crisis* are taken word for word from Headlam-Morley's work.\(^3\)

The "Crisis of Agadir" introduces the more personal part of Churchill's story and marks the end of Headlam-Morley's influence on this section.\(^4\) Towards the end of the chapter Churchill gives a brief account of how he became First Lord and as an introduction to the next chapter this subject is worth a brief discussion. In *The World Crisis* Churchill states that in October 1911 he was invited to stay with Asquith in Scotland. The Prime Minister then "quite abruptly" asked Churchill to go to the Admiralty. After a discussion with Haldane, who arrived the next day, the matter was settled and later in the month Churchill replaced McKenna at the Admiralty.\(^5\)

No explanation is given by Churchill in *The World Crisis* for the reason behind this change but it is now known that the performance of McKenna and the First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, in explaining the Admiralty War Plans at a C.I.D. meeting had convinced Asquith that they must be replaced.

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1. Churchill Papers, 8/Ill.
2. Ibid, 8/41.
3. See for example p. 18. From "Their language and actions" to "in the name of Europe" is virtually identical with Headlam-Morley's draft (Churchill Papers, 8/41). The section on the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina on p. 21-3 is based on Headlam-Morley's paper and replaces a passage on Churchill's and others opinion (c. 1904-9) that there would be no more European wars (Churchill Papers, 8/55). Churchill became convinced later that he had not made enough of the 1908 crisis (Churchill to Vansittart, 3/5/31, Churchill Papers, 8/287) and rectified this in *The Eastern Front* where a whole chapter is devoted to the subject.
4. An incident concerning the threatening attitude of the Kaiser at one of the annual German Army manoeuvres which Churchill obviously got from Sir John French was eventually omitted (Churchill Papers, 8/112). On p. 32 for the "iniquities" of the Lloyd George budget Churchill originally had "monstrous criminality" (Churchill Papers, 8/56).
5. *The World Crisis*, p. 49.
He told Crewe, "The present position in which everything is locked up in
the brain of a single taciturn Admiral, is both ridiculous and dangerous.
Nothing will be done in the right direction so long as McK and Wilson
remain."\(^1\) However the decision to replace McKenna with Churchill was not
the smooth procedure that The World Crisis suggests. Haldane, the War
Minister, was also keen to go to the Admiralty.\(^2\) According to his own
account Haldane put his case to Asquith strongly. Asquith returned from
Scotland undecided but after consulting the King it was decided that it
would be too great a snub to the Admirals to transfer the War Minister to
the Admiralty. In addition there would have been the disadvantage of
having the First Lord in the House of Lords. Churchill therefore got the
job.\(^3\) Thus it can be seen that in dealing with a rather delicate matter
Churchill chooses on this occasion to gloss over the unpleasantries and re-
tain the stance of the "dispassionate" historian. Of course in doing this
he also conceals the fact that there was opposition to his appointment and
therefore to some extent his method is self-serving. This is a phenomenon
which will be encountered again in the section of the book on the pre-war
Admiralty, to a consideration of which we must now turn.

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\(^1\) Asquith to Crewe 7/10/11, Asquith Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford,
46/191.

\(^2\) Haldane to Asquith n.d., quoted Maurice, Sir F., Haldane: The Life of

\(^3\) Ibid., p.285-6.
THE PRE-WAR ADMIRALTY

Churchill and the Admirals

Five chapters and 100 pages of The World Crisis are devoted to Churchill's pre-war administration at the Admiralty. Churchill's general theme is the preparation of the Navy for war but within this subject a bewildering array of topics is discussed, ranging from warship design to foreign policy. Only the most important will be examined here.

Churchill's opening chapter on the pre-war Admiralty in The World Crisis contains a series of character sketches of the leading Admirals of the day and his relations with them. It will be necessary to examine this section to see if Churchill has given an accurate picture of these men, to see why he has included some Admirals and not others and to see if a clear picture of the relationship between the First Lord and his professional advisers emerges.

Five Admirals are chosen by Churchill for inclusion, Lord Fisher, Sir Arthur Wilson, Prince Louis of Battenberg and Admirals Beatty and Pakenham. Because of their importance, Fisher and Wilson need to be treated separately.

Churchill begins his section on Fisher with a description of the main reforms of the Fisher era (1904-1910). The Fisher-Beresford feud, which divided the service in those years, is summed up in an account remarkably fair to all sides.¹ Churchill then describes the impact Fisher had on his naval policy in the pre-war years.

"Most of all was he stimulating in all that related to the design of ships. He also talked brilliantly about Admirals, but here one had to make a heavy discount on account of the feuds. My intention was to hold the balance even, and while adopting in the main the Fisher policy, to insist upon an absolute cessation of the vendetta."²

But was this the line which Churchill followed? In the case of naval appoint-

¹ World Crisis, p.53-5.
² Ibid., p. 57.
ments there is evidence to suggest that he did "heavily discount" Fisher's suggestions. When Churchill became First Lord, Fisher bombarded him with lists of suitable candidates for high office within the Admiralty. On the 26th October he suggested Captain Mark Kerr as Churchill's Private Secretary.\(^1\) Two days later Kerr was to be Fourth Sea Lord with Admiral Pierse as Controller.\(^2\) More proposals were soon received via J.A. Spender; Prince Louis for First Sea Lord, Sir G. Callaghan for Second, Briggs for Third and Jerram for Fourth.\(^3\) These ideas only held the field for a few days. On November 9th Fisher was pushing for Prince Louis as Third Sea Lord, Admiral Poe as First and Jerram and Mark Kerr as Second and Fourth respectively.\(^4\)

In fact, none of these ideas was accepted by Churchill. The only Fisher proposition to be adopted was Sir John Jellicoe for eventual High Command.\(^5\) All the other members of Churchill's board seem to have been his personal selections based on advice from within the Admiralty. Later Fisher was to break off relations with Churchill because he appointed three of Fisher's "arch enemies" to important posts.\(^6\)

From Churchill's statement quoted earlier, the one area in which we might expect Fisher to have been more influential is that of warship design. However, even in this field it is noticeable that Churchill was as cautious about Fisher's ideas as he was over naval appointments. Thus, although Churchill at first obtained the basic idea for the Queen Elizabeth class battleships from Fisher,\(^7\) he subsequently favoured the Admiralty modification in spite of Fisher's objection to it.\(^8\) Similarly Churchill consulted the


\(^{2}\) Fisher to Churchill 28, 29, 30/10/11, C.V.2, p.1300-03.

\(^{3}\) Note by Churchill on Lord Fisher's proposals in a letter to J.A. Spender C.V.2, p.1316-7.


\(^{5}\) Fisher to Churchill 26/10/11, C.V.2, p.1298-1300.

\(^{6}\) Fisher to Churchill 22/4/12, Churchill Papers 8/177.


\(^{8}\) Churchill to Fisher, 2/11/11, Churchill Papers, 8/177.
Admiralty experts on a new class of cruiser, ignoring Fisher's pleas that light cruisers were obsolete. Finally, although Churchill appointed Fisher to head the Royal Commission on oil fuel, partly to pander to his desire to investigate the application of diesel engines to battleships, it is noticeable that this part of the report was ignored. When Fisher pestered Churchill on this subject Churchill replied,

"I know nothing which justifies the belief that a motor battleship can be constructed, or that internal combustion engines can be made of sufficient power in proportion to the weight...[and] realise the great speed you claim. It is a matter which cannot be disposed of unless Moore, Oram, Watts and d'Eyncourt, [i.e. the Admiralty experts] have agreed that it is practicable."

There were other areas of disagreement. Fisher opposed the decision made by Churchill and the Board to continue with the fortification of Rosyth. He was antagonistic to Churchill's submarine policy and of course he entirely disagreed with Churchill's acceptance of the Army's case on the future use of the British Expeditionary Force.

Thus the two men often disagreed on fundamentals. Yet only one of these differences (that over cruiser design) is mentioned in The World Crisis. It is obvious that Churchill's contention that in the main he adopted the Fisher policy can only be accepted with a good deal of reservation.

When Churchill was appointed to the Admiralty Sir Arthur Wilson was First Sea Lord. In The World Crisis Churchill wrote of Wilson, "My opinions were divided between an admiration for all I heard of his character and a total disagreement with what I understood to be his strategic views." This indeed seems to have been the case. The two men disagreed over the formation the Admiralty war staff, the decision to send the B.E.F. to France in a

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(1) Fisher to Churchill 16/1/12, Churchill Papers 8/177.
(2) Fisher to Churchill 4/9/12, in Ibid.
(3) Churchill to Fisher 15/9/12, in Ibid., 8/178.
(4) Fisher to Beatty 6/1/15, Beatty Papers, Beatty Family, Newport, Pagnall.
(5) Fisher to Churchill 16/1/14, Churchill Papers 8/177.
(6) World Crisis, p.108.
(7) Ibid., p.58.
(8) See Memorandum by Churchill on the Naval War Staff 28/10/11 and Wilson's reply 30/10/11 in C.V.2, p.1303-12 and p.1512-16.
future war,¹ and airship policy.² After one meeting of the C.I.D. Churchill wrote to Asquith, "I cannot feel implicit confidence in Wilson. No man of real power can have answered so foolishly."³ Only the outlines of these disputes are given in The World Crisis and then there follows a character sketch very flattering to Wilson in which his selflessness, courage, seamanship and technical contributions to the navy are emphasized.⁴ The final impression given is that Wilson was indeed a man of "real power". What is the explanation for this seemingly contradictory approach? The answer is not difficult to find. In May 1915, after Fisher had resigned as First Sea Lord, Wilson indicated that he would be prepared to take the post, but only if Churchill remained as First Lord. As this was perhaps the only mark of approval received by Churchill during this period, it obviously had a great effect on him. This is confirmed by The World Crisis in which the incident is recounted twice, once in Volume 1 and again in Volume 2.⁵ The letter written by Wilson to Asquith indicating his decision to serve only under Churchill is reprinted in full in both volumes. We now find that Wilson, rather than "foolish" is "competent" and "instructed".⁶ The reason for Churchill's flattering portrait of Wilson in Volume 1 now becomes clear. Churchill could not afford to have the man who came to his rescue in 1915 thought of as anything but a first-class naval officer, whereas a full recital of differences between the two men might have had the opposite affect. Therefore, Wilson's policies are understated in The World Crisis and it is his character which is given prominence. (At one point Churchill says, "Everyone knew the story of his V.C. when the square broke at Tamai in the Soudan." In fact, Churchill did not know it himself. The story was supplied by Admiral Oliver when the book had advanced beyond the first proof

(2) Ibid., 6/12/12, Cab. 38/22/42.
(3) Churchill to Asquith 13/9/11, C.V.2, p.1124.
(4) World Crisis, p.59-60.
(6) Ibid., p.773.
Furthermore, although Churchill is correct in stating that he was in fundamental disagreement with Wilson over the destination of the B.E.F. in other areas of strategy they basically agreed. Thus they both believed that it would be essential in wartime to capture an island off the German coast and force the German Fleet to fight a decisive battle. The only difference between them was on which island it should be. Wilson favoured Heligoland, Churchill Borkum.

Churchill now turns to the career of Sir David Beatty whom he appointed as his Naval Secretary in 1912 and to the command of the Battle Cruiser Squadron in 1913. Churchill introduces Beatty with a flattering description. "His mind has been rendered quick and supple by the situations of polo and the hunting field, and enriched by varied experiences against the enemy on Nile gunboats, and ashore." Perhaps Churchill hoped that his readers would drawn obvious parallels between this portrait and his own career. Churchill then proceeds to make large claims for Beatty. He states that he continually discussed with the Admiral "the problems of a naval war with Germany" and that he was "increasingly struck with the shrewd and profound sagacity of his comments". He claims that "the decisions which I had the honour of taking in regard to him were most serviceable to the Royal Navy and to the British arms". It is not easy to assess whether Beatty had as much influence on Churchill as is claimed in The World Crisis. Beatty's biographer is virtually silent on that point. However, there are several documents in the Beatty papers which would seem to support Churchill's statement. The first is a paper written for Churchill on the 1912 manoeuvres.

In it Beatty drew the First Lord's attention to the weaknesses of the
observational blockade and to the disadvantages of Rosyth as a base. He suggested Cromarty as an alternative.¹ Soon after this the observational blockade was dropped and work began on the Cromarty defences. A further paper by Beatty for Churchill suggested that in the event of a war with Germany, the Battle Fleet be located in northern waters and move south to cover the transportation of the B.E.F. to France. The 10th Cruiser Squadron was to maintain the blockade. He also advocated the capture of an island near the German coast to act as a base for the Fleet.² Once again the first three suggestions were put into practice and as will be seen the fourth became part of Churchill's wartime strategy. Thus, on the basis of these papers it seems reasonable to assume that Beatty was the source of several of Churchill's strategic and tactical ideas.

What of Churchill's larger claim that his promotion of Beatty over the heads of many others to command the Battle Cruisers was "most serviceable to the Royal Navy"? Beatty's reputation has suffered in recent years and as these pages will show he made many blunders and mistakes in the course of the war. However, Churchill is undoubtedly justified in his opinion on two grounds. Firstly, that there was probably no other Admiral who could have performed Beatty's task so well, and as Commander-in-Chief from 1917 to 1918, a period of inactivity and frustration, his personality was an important factor in keeping up morale in the Grand Fleet.

Churchill's portraits of his Second and Fourth Sea Lords, Prince Louis and Captain Pakenham, are almost entirely anecdotal and add little to our knowledge of these men. In the case of Prince Louis, this treatment is probably justified for many of the areas in which the two men co-operated (e.g. the Naval War Staff) are discussed elsewhere. It is not obvious why Churchill included Pakenham. As Fourth Sea Lord he was responsible for the transport service and naval stores,³ hardly the areas one would think

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¹ "Lessons From 1912 Manoeuvres" - Undated memorandum, Beatty Papers.
² Untitled Paper by Beatty, "Easter 1912" - Beatty Papers.
would excite Churchill's imagination. Perhaps Churchill reasoned that Pakenham's later career (he was promoted to the command of the Battle Cruisers in 1917) justified his inclusion. Perhaps he recalled the extremely flattering terms in which Pakenham had described Churchill's pre-war work at the Admiralty on the occasion of his resignation in May 1915. On the other hand, there is a strong possibility that he was written up because Churchill just happened to know two anecdotes about him - that he spent a record amount of time at sea during the Russo-Japanese War and that when at sea he invariably went to bed fully clothed to be ready for any emergency - and that this was exactly the type of eccentricity the British public expected their Admirals to exhibit.

This completes the list of Admiralty personnel mentioned in the opening chapters of *The World Crisis*. Considering the large number of advisers and experts whom Churchill had around him, the list is surprisingly short. When checking the proofs of the book the former Secretary of the Admiralty, Sir W. Graham-Greene noticed this deficiency and pointed it out to Churchill. In return Churchill asked him for "about a dozen names of Admiralty worthies whom he might mention in his book". Greene found the task impossible and merely sent him a complete list of Admiralty personnel for the appropriate years. Apparently Churchill then tired of the task and the book was allowed to remain as it stood.

There are however some surprising omissions from Churchill's group

(1) Pakenham said,"While I was at the Admiralty you supplied the whole originating concepitive power of the Board, and I can recall no improvement of the conditions of service of officers and men, or in material, which did not emanate from you." Pakenham to Churchill 1/6/15. Gilbert Martin, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume III, Companion Documents*, London, Heinemann, 1972, p.977, (hereafter C.V.3).


of Admirals. Churchill's Third Sea Lords, Briggs and Moore, were responsible for ship design. Here is an area in which Churchill had a great interest yet neither rates a mention in The World Crisis. One possible explanation is that both men seem to have been particularly stodgy personalities and, given Churchill's commitment to the anecdotal style of description, there were probably no stories about them of a colourful nature which he could recount.

There are more important omissions. Sir Francis Bridgeman who was initially chosen by Churchill to be First Sea Lord is not mentioned. The explanation for this could be that the two men never seem to have got on. From the first Bridgeman disliked Churchill's style of administration and soon after his appointment he was complaining about the way in which his predecessor, Sir Arthur Wilson, has been dismissed.\(^1\) Also he disapproved of Churchill's taking into his own hands the bulk of the negotiations concerning Canadian contributions to the British Fleet.\(^2\) Later he complained of the way Churchill sent "round the office the most peremptory orders to the Sea Lords."\(^3\) On this occasion Bridgeman claimed that he warned Churchill "that he must mind his manners or his Board would have to take action."\(^4\) By the end of 1912 Churchill had decided to remove Bridgeman, not because of these petty irritations but because he needed a First Sea Lord with more drive and initiative and because Bridgeman had absented himself from the Admiralty for long periods due to sickness.\(^5\) On the 28th November Churchill asked him to resign.\(^6\) Bridgeman claimed he has recovered\(^7\) and finally Churchill had

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(1) J. Sanders to A.J. Balfour 14/12/11, Balfour Papers, British Library, London, Add/Mss 49768. Sanders was Balfour's Private Secretary and confidant of Bridgeman.
(2) Bridgeman to Sanders 4/12/12, Sanders Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, C 764/14-19.
(3) Sanders to Balfour 10/10/12, Balfour Papers, Add/Mss 49768.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Bridgeman to Prince Louis 14/9/12, Battenberg Papers, Imperial War Museum, London, DS/Misc/20/144. On this occasion he spoke of not being able to come to the Admiralty for 10 to 14 days.
(6) Churchill to Bridgeman 28/11/12, Battenberg Papers DS/Misc/20/167.
(7) Bridgeman to Churchill 29/11/12, in Ibid.
to insist. Bridgeman now complained to Sanders that he was being removed "because I have kept a tight hand on the 1st Lord which he much resents". Sanders passed this on to Balfour with the suggestion that something be done about Churchill's "treacherous behaviour". Eventually details of the dispute were leaked to the Press, possibly with Bridgeman's connivance. The matter was taken up in Parliament by Lord Charles Beresford who claimed that Bridgeman had been forced to resign over differences of policy. This seems unlikely as no policy differences between Churchill and his First Sea Lord have ever been brought to light. The affair was finally ended by the intervention of the King.

We can now deduce the reasons for the omission of Bridgeman from The World Crisis. He was even more colourless than Briggs and Moore and therefore could not be treated in an anecdotal way. He seems to have brought forward no major policy initiative and there was therefore nothing to say on that score. In fact, the only areas of interest regarding Bridgeman are his disputes with Churchill. No doubt Churchill decided that this was not a proper basis for inclusion in The World Crisis.

A more serious exclusion from these pre-war chapters is any mention of the work of Jellicoe. Initially the two men got on well and Churchill had orders drawn up which ensured that Jellicoe would succeed to the Command of the Grand Fleet in time of war. Churchill met Jellicoe early in 1912 and was impressed by his ideas on ship design. Later he wrote to Fisher, "My confidence in Jellicoe has increased every time I have seen him. We have been working a gt deal together". Churchill was so impressed with

(1) Churchill to Bridgeman 2/12/12, in Ibid.
(2) Bridgeman to Sanders 4/12/12, Sanders Papers, C765/14-19.
(3) Sanders to Balfour 5/12/12, in Ibid., C764/20-21.
(4) Churchill to Bridgeman, 14/12/12, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/167.
(5) House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series 20/12/12 Col 1898-9.
(6) Bridgeman to Churchill, 23/12/12, C.V.2, p.1694.
(7) Admiralty Note 13/11/12, Adm. 1/8275.
(9) Churchill to Fisher, 27/4/12, C.V.2, p.1547.
Jellicoe's grasp of technical subjects that at the end of 1912 he brought him to the Admiralty at Second Sea Lord. In this position Churchill was able to use Jellicoe's expertise to combat the anti-airship policies of Sir Arthur Wilson. In July 1913 Churchill told Fisher, "Jellicoe has done wonders & fully justified all your confidence in him." From this point relations between the two men deteriorated, largely because of the Poore dispute. This arose over Churchill's taking the part of a junior officer in the Naval Air Service against his senior and his habit of interrogating officers about their knowledge of the men under their command. The Commander of the station at which these incidents occurred, Admiral Poore, wrote to Prince Louis to protest. Prince Louis passed this letter on to Jellicoe who, as Second Sea Lord, was concerned with naval discipline. Jellicoe thought Poore's remarks on the First Lord intemperate and returned his letter with suggested revisions. Churchill then learned of Poore's letter, got it back from the Post Office and informed Jellicoe that he intended to ask Poore to haul down his flag. Jellicoe retaliated by leading a revolt of the junior Sea Lords who all threatened to resign if Churchill did not revise the "very serious & humiliating punishment" which he proposed to inflict on Poore. Prince Louis tried to temporise but when that failed he too threatened to resign. Finally a compromise was worked out whereby Poore apologized and Churchill withdrew his threat to remove him from his post. Jellicoe claimed that as a result of this dispute he gave up responsibility for the Naval Air Service.
pressure of work seems to have been the real reason why this duty was given to the Fourth Sea Lord.¹ There were other disputes. Jellicoe refused to allow that Churchill had the right to promote naval officers without consulting the Sea Lords.² He also thought that in preparing the 1914 estimates Churchill was grossly under-estimating the strength of the German Fleet.³ Finally Jellicoe was annoyed that Churchill had cut the manning requirements, the oil reserve, and the light cruiser programme in the 1914 estimates.⁴ Despite these differences it is clear that Churchill retained his confidence in Jellicoe's ability for on the eve of war he had no hesitation in appointing him to the command of the Grand Fleet.⁵

It is obvious that Churchill would not wish to include these disputes in The World Crisis. As well as the potential damage they might have done to his own reputation, there was the consideration that these matters had no place in what, after all, purported to be a history of British naval policy in those years. However, this does not completely explain why Churchill chose to exclude Jellicoe. There were many areas of agreement, on ship design and airship policy, which could have been emphasized while the areas of dispute were left out. Of course, Jellicoe too was a very poor source for anecdotes and lovable eccentricities and this may have been a factor. A more satisfying explanation that would explain Jellicoe's omission and, at the same time, indicate why Churchill adopted the anecdotal approach to the Admirals is provided by Graham Greene in a letter mentioned earlier. Greene says,

"One general effect left on my mind by the perusal of the various chapters so far sent to me is that the Board of Admiralty is almost non-existent in the narrative. It is true that reference is made to one or two First Sea Lords and individual members of the Board, but there is hardly anything throughout which points to any real initiative on their part. Not even in the case of Lord Fisher are there any references to his putting forward this or that suggestion

(1) Prince Louis to Churchill 12/11/13, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/245.
(2) Minute by Jellicoe 3/7/13, in Ibid., DS/Misc/20/262.
(3) See Folder in Adm. 116/3486.
(4) Jellicoe, "A Reply to Criticism", Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 49041.
(5) Jellicoe was surprised. He thought conflict with Churchill had ruined his chances. See Jellicoe, Autobiographical Notes, in Ibid., Add/Mss 49038.
or proposal."¹

Greene seems to have got to the nub of the matter here. Churchill chose the anecdotal style so that he could avoid doing what Greene advocated. By confining the material on his advisers to character sketches he could write of policies only in terms of his own initiatives. This had the advantage of concentrating the attention of the reader on Churchill and his activities and away from the work done by the rest of the Board. If there was a personality such as Jellicoe who could only be discussed in terms of policies, then he was left out. Thus this section of The World Crisis does not give an accurate picture of the Admiralty under Churchill's administration. On the one hand, the impression is given that virtually all facets of Admiralty activity were initiated by Churchill and, on the other hand, that at all times Churchill smoothly led his team of advisers forward in a spirit of co-operation in the best "band of brothers" style.

Churchill and Technical Design

Churchill devotes an entire chapter of The World Crisis to the subject of warship design. Much of the chapter is taken up with a discussion on the evolution of the 15" gunned Queen Elizabeth Class battleships. After discussing the 1909 increase from the 12" to the 13.5" guns, Churchill writes, "I immediately sought to go one size better. I mentioned this to Lord Fisher at Reigate, and he hurled himself into its advocacy with tremendous passion."² Thus Churchill claims an important and, indeed, an initiating role for himself in the development of these ships. He states that "the difficulties and the risks were very great....No such thing as a modern 15-inch gun existed. None had ever been made."³ Nor could a test model be made in time for the 1912-13 programme and there was adverse advice from "several responsible authorities". "I went back to Lord Fisher. He

¹ Graham Greene to Churchill 21/7/22, Churchill Papers 8/41.
² The World Crisis, p.95.
³ Ibid.
was steadfast and even violent. So I hardened my heart and took the plunge. The whole outfit of guns was ordered forthwith.\(^1\) In the event the guns proved to be a success and Churchill argues that in the battle of Jutland the ships more than justified the risks taken in their construction.\(^2\)

Churchill also claims a role for himself in the development of the smaller ships. When he arrived at the Admiralty he found the prevailing destroyer designs to be the Acasta and Acheron Class. He considered these ships too slow and "gave directions to design the new flotilla to realize 35 knots speed without giving up anything in gun-power, torpedoes or seaworthiness."\(^3\)

"The cruisers were much more difficult....We had already in existence a few unarmoured light cruisers carrying 4-inch guns called the Blondes. We had also an experimental destroyer of enormous size, nearly 2,000 tons and about 36 knots speed, called the Swift....I therefore called for designs of an improved Swift and an improved Blonde [and]...remitted these designs to a conference of Cruiser Admirals."\(^4\) Churchill states that Fisher was opposed to both types on the grounds that aeroplane reconnaissance had made cruisers obsolete but he thought the super-Swift the better of the two.\(^5\) However, the Cruiser Admirals, Churchill continues, favoured the super-Blonde and it was this type that was built. They had six 4-inch guns and two 6-inch (Churchill personally insisting on the inclusion of the latter) and made 30-31 knots.\(^6\) Churchill concludes that "Judged by its popularity in peace and war this type may claim success."\(^7\)

Could Churchill, the civilian head of a Service Department, have had the influence on technical design which is claimed in The World Crisis? We can be fairly certain that Churchill came to the Admiralty largely ignorant of the finer points of ship design. It is surprising, therefore, to read his

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(1) Ibid., p.96.
(2) Ibid., p.105-6.
(3) Ibid., p.106.
(4) Ibid., p.106-7.
(5) Ibid., p.108.
(6) Ibid., p.110.
(7) Ibid., p.111.
assertion that it was he who first suggested that the 15" gun (and consequently the Queen Elizabeth Class ship) be built. Nor is this assertion borne out by the available evidence. The first mention made by Churchill of the new type is in a letter to Prince Louis on the 10th November 1911. Here he speaks of a 30 knot 8 x 15" gunned vessel.\(^1\) Yet a week earlier Fisher had written to Hankey, "I have proposed to Winston a type as follows:--

*To cost only £1,990,000 instead of £2,400,000. To go 30 knots - instead of 21 knots... to carry eight 15 inch guns. I know this can be done."\(^2\)*

Obviously Fisher and Churchill were talking about the same ship. Given Fisher's part in developing the 13.5" gun, his interest in technical design and his predilection for ever faster ships carrying ever heavier guns, it seems likely that the chronology given above is more accurate than that stated by Churchill in *The World Crisis*. That is, it was Fisher who first suggested the design and Churchill who merely passed on this data to his naval advisers.\(^3\) In fact, the design as finally adopted only retained the 15" gun of the Fisher-Churchill prototype. The 30 knot speed was sacrificed in favour of heavier armour. Also 16 x 6" guns and 21" torpedo tubes were added. These features were the work of the Director of Naval Construction, Sir P. Watts.\(^4\) Moreover, the design was not as revolutionary as claimed by Churchill in *The World Crisis*. It was rather the next logical step forward in dreadnought design, incorporating the speed of a battlecruiser with the strength of a battleship. The 15" gun was already under discussion in naval circles at that time.\(^5\) Nevertheless, there was some risk in ordering guns for the whole squadron untested, and Churchill is justified in taking the credit for this step. His statement that the ships proved a great

\(^{1}\) Churchill to Prince Louis 10/11/11, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/46.

\(^{2}\) Fisher to Hankey 5/11/11, Hankey Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, 5/2A.

\(^{3}\) This theory is opposed to Richard Hough's view that, by suggesting a new design to Prince Louis, Churchill was meddling in technical affairs. If he was merely passing on Fisher's design, no such interference could be claimed. See Hough Richard, *Louis and Victoria: The First Mountbattens*, London, Hutchinson, 1974, p.251.

\(^{4}\) "Queen Elizabeth Class - Statement of Dimensions", 16/7/12, Adm. 136/10 Part 1 and Note by P. Watts in Adm. 138/340.

\(^{5}\) See *Brassey's Naval Annual 1912*, London, Brassey, 1912, p.272-5.
success is also well-founded. Roskill writes that "it can confidently be stated that in [the Queen Elizabeth Class] the arts of the big ship and the big gun designer reached their peak of success."¹ The ships took a tremendous hammering at Jutland without showing any of the structural weaknesses which were a feature of the earlier dreadnoughts. They remained in service in the British Navy throughout the Second World War, the Queen Elizabeth acquiring "the longest battle record of any battleship".²

The second series of dreadnoughts built during Churchill's administration is hardly mentioned in The World Crisis. These were the Royal Sovereign Class. They marked a return to coal burning and were essentially an Iron Duke type with 15" guns. Probably economy played a part in the decision to build these ships as they were each ¼ million pounds cheaper than the Queen Elizabeths.³ The Royal Sovereigns never caught the public imagination in the same way as the Queen Elizabeth's and it was clear from the cursory treatment given them in The World Crisis that Churchill was not enthusiastic about this aspect of his administration's naval construction.

Churchill is correct in stating that the destroyers produced in 1910 and 1911 were inferior in design. They lacked stability, their guns were constantly awash, steering was difficult and many failed to reach the designed speed, which was in any case only 30 knots.⁴ It also appears that he took the initiative in ordering a new design. He minuted to the D.N.C., "I cannot say how serious and urgent this question seems to be. We should get on without delay with the design for the 1913-14 destroyers...nothing less than 36 knots will be satisfactory".⁵ The new "M" Class came up to their expectations. They proved good sea boats, vastly superior to their predecessors and their designed speed was reached in most cases.⁶

Whether Churchill initiated the move for a new type of cruiser, as

³ Ibid., p.149 and 152.
⁵ Ibid., p.144.
⁶ Ibid., p.143-50.
claimed in The World Crisis, must remain a matter for conjecture. It seems possible that this was the case for very early in his administration Jellicoe prepared a report for him on super-Blondes versus super-Swifts. It was Jellicoe's advocacy of the super-Blonde which largely influenced Churchill in this direction. It is clear that Fisher opposed the designs but was powerless to prevent their adoption. It is also possible that Churchill was responsible for the introduction of the 6" guns, for Jellicoe's report favoured an all 4" armament. The ships were not quite the success claimed by Churchill. Some of the guns could not be fought in rough weather and they never attained the 30 knots desired. However, they were by no means failures and did useful service in Tyrwhitt's Harwich Force and with the Grand Fleet.

One intervention in the area of cruiser design is not mentioned in The World Crisis. Churchill insisted that the D.N.C. design a Torpedo Cruiser on lines first suggested by Admiral Bayly. In a critique of the design Admiral Tudor wrote that the ship was too slow and under-gunned; that it would roll considerably and was too large a target and was very vulnerable to torpedo attack.

The World Crisis is silent on other aspects of naval design. The design of mines, torpedoes and shells was no less important than the design of ships but much less glamorous. Development in these areas ground to a halt under the apparently incompetent Third Sea Lords, Briggs and Moore (both appointed by Churchill). In the case of mines, one critic has written, "No one at the Admiralty had been given responsibility to think out the use or value of mines in terms of naval strategy [and]...no one had been

(1) Undated Paper by Jellicoe [Probably March 1912], Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 48990.
(2) Churchill to Fisher 9/3/12, Churchill Papers 8/144.
(4) Conversation with Mr. Pearsall, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.
(5) "Remarks on design of Torpedo Cruiser got out by D.N.C. in accordance with verbal instructions from First Lord and originated by Admiral Bayly", Adm. 1/8397/365.
charged with the technical development of mines.\(^1\) As a result, "The
mines commonly failed to explode when struck by a ship, and if they did
explode, frequently did little damage. Many German warships carried a
British mine mounted on a stand as a souvenir!\(^2\) British torpedoes were
just as bad. In the case of shells Jellicoe called for the development of
"an armour piercing shell which would penetrate armour at oblique impact"
as early as 1910.\(^3\) Under Churchill's administration nothing was done
although it was known in 1914 that British shells were defective.\(^4\)
Obviously Churchill would not want to publicize these "materiel fiascoes"
by including them in *The World Crisis*.

**Airship Policy**

Considering the rapid development of the Royal Naval Air Service under
Churchill's pre-war administration it is noteworthy that almost no mention of
this aspect of Admiralty policy is to be found in *The World Crisis*.
Virtually the only aspect of naval flying discussed is the airships versus
aeroplanes controversy. Churchill is quite unequivocal as to where his
sympathies lay.

"I rated the Zeppelin much lower as a weapon of war than almost
any one else. I believed that this enormous bladder of combustible
and explosive gas would prove to be easily destructible. I was
sure the fighting aeroplane, rising lightly laden from its own
base, armed with incendiary bullets, would harry, rout and burn
these gaseous monsters. I had proclaimed this opinion to the
House of Commons in 1913, using the often-quoted simile of the
hornets.

I therefore did everything in my power in the years before the war
to restrict expenditure upon airships and to concentrate our
narrow and stinted resources upon aeroplanes. I confined the
naval construction of airships to purely experimental limits, and
in April 1915, when the slow progress and inferior quality of
our only rigid experimental airship were manifest, I gave orders
that it should be scrapped, the plant broken up and the labour

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(1) Kemp, P., "Balance of Naval Power August 1914", *Purnell History of the
First World War*, V.1, No.7, p.176.
(4) Shell Committee - First Interim Report n.d., Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss
48892.
and material devoted to increasing the output of aeroplanes.\(^1\)

Let us now examine Churchill's airship policy to see if he was such an unambiguous opponent of airships as this passage would lead us to believe. When Churchill arrived at the Admiralty airships were out of favour.

In 1911 the unfortunately named *Mayfly*, a rigid airship built as a result of a decision by the C.I.D.,\(^2\) had been damaged beyond repair prior to its testing flight.\(^3\) A Court of inquiry set up to investigate the accident recommended that no more airships be built.\(^4\) This opinion was confirmed by the new Board of Admiralty\(^5\) and by a sub-committee of the C.I.D.\(^6\) The newly-appointed Naval War Staff, however, took a contrary view. They advanced the usual arguments put forward by airship enthusiasts; that airships could serve as scouts for the Fleet, that they could be used offensively against enemy ships and naval installations and that Britain could not afford to fall behind other countries in their development.\(^7\) These arguments, and especially the last, seemed to convince Churchill.

He told a meeting of the C.I.D. in April 1912 that, although the Admiralty was "reluctant to embark on further expenditure [for airships]...it appears to be inevitable."\(^8\) Developments in Germany were given as the main reason.\(^9\)

As a result of this meeting the C.I.D. Sub-Committee was reconvened to consider the airship question. It reported in July 1912. Its main recommendations were that the navy should purchase some small airships abroad and also interest British firms in their construction.\(^10\) Approval

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(1) The World Crisis, p.265-6.
(2) "Aerial Navigation" - Report of a Sub-Committee of the C.I.D. 28/1/09, CAB 38/15/3.
(4) Ibid., p.174.
(7) Troubridge Rear Admiral E., "The Development of Naval Aeroplanes and Airships 23/1/12. Quoted in Roskill, Naval Air Service, p.29-33.
(8) Minutes of the C.I.D. 25/4/12, Cab. 38/20/9.
(9) Ibid.
(10) "Aerial Navigation" - Report of a Sub-Committee of the C.I.D. 30/7/12, Cab. 38/21/32.
of this report was delayed because of a disagreement within the C.I.D. between Sir Arthur Wilson and the Admiralty representatives. Wilson thought airships would be of doubtful utility to the navy. He questioned their ability to navigate out of sight of land, thought that the bomb load they could carry would be ineffectual, and suggested that they would be an easy prey for aeroplanes. Asquith agreed with these views and adjourned consideration of the report. Up to this point Churchill had been a very reluctant advocate of airships. However, because of developments in Germany he was prepared to back the C.I.D. decision. With the help of the Secretary of State for War, Seely he was able to convince Asquith and the C.I.D. to approve the acquisition of foreign airships for experimental purposes.

Perhaps as a result of the long debate with Wilson and Asquith, Churchill now became a more enthusiastic supporter of airships. In February 1913 he wrote to the First and Second Sea Lords,

"It appears to me essential, apart from other measures, to start and encourage at once the building of airships in England, and if any great firm or substantial business will enter upon this work, I should be quite prepared to give them an order for a dozen airships in the next three years...You may be quite sure that whether or not they can do what is claimed for them today, they will be able to do it to-morrow...I have been told that the Germans propose to have an airship with each of their battle squadrons...I do not see the answer to this if we have not got...[airships] with our fleet."4

There is no hint here of undue "restriction of expenditure" or of confining construction to "purely experimental limits."

Just one month later Churchill appeared to change his mind. He told the House of Commons that development of the high angle gun had "greatly encouraged those who disbelieved in airships as effective machines of war."5

This contradiction was more apparent than real. Churchill's probable aim

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(1) Minutes of the C.I.D. 6/12/12, Cab. 38/22/42.
(2) Ibid.
(4) Churchill to 1st Sea Lord and 2nd Sea Lord 26/2/13, Adm 1/8831.
(5) House of Commons, Parl. Deb, 26/3/13, Col. 1776.
in this debate was to allay the fears of those who felt that Britain was falling behind other countries in airship development.

In private he did all he could to hasten the building of airships. In June he accepted an Admiralty report which recommended that two airship squadrons of four ships be formed for the purpose of scouting, attacking enemy aircraft, bomb dropping and searching for submarines. He expressed his concern to Asquith. "We are already so far behind other countries, that we cannot afford to allow more time to slip away. We must begin the construction of at least two Zeppelins....If we do not begin now, we shall find ourselves...hopelessly behind everyone else." This stirred Asquith to action. Later in the month he reported to the King that Cabinet had authorized the Navy to obtain two rigid and four non-rigid airships. This programme was announced by Churchill to the House of Commons during the debate on the 1914 supplementary estimates for the Navy.

Between this date and the outbreak of war Churchill underwent a further change of heart. In May he told the C.I.D. that they "had been well advised in not pushing on too vigorously with an airship policy." Due to recent improvements in the performance of seaplanes he thought there was no doubt that they could destroy an airship. The reasons for this reversal must remain speculative. Churchill had learned to fly in late 1913 and this may have brought the potential of aircraft more strongly to his notice. Furthermore, there had been two airship disasters in Germany in the latter half of 1913. Whatever the reason the change was this time permanent and led to the cancellation of the Admiralty airship programme in the early months of 1915.

It should by now be obvious that Churchill has rather misrepresented

(1) "Aerial Navigation" - Report by the Admiralty quoted in Roskill, Naval Air Service, p.87-96.
(2) Churchill to Asquith 12/6/13, C.V.2, p.1881.
(3) Asquith to the King 26/6/13, CAB 41/34/23.
(4) House of Commons, Parl. Deb., 2/3/14, Col. 89.
(5) Minutes of the C.I.D. 14/5/14, CAB 38/27/23
(6) Ibid.
(7) "Development of The Airship Service", Adm. 116/1335.
his airship policy in *The World Crisis*. However, it should be noticed that at times Churchill's policy did take on the characteristics which he mentions. Occasionally he did seem to rate airships very low as weapons of war, and to favour a cautious, experimental approach to their acquisition. However, for most of this period, he was seen as the enthusiastic supporter of airships and his resolve to have a dozen built in England went far beyond experimental development. It is clear from the above survey that he underwent at least two comprehensive changes in attitude and that the main characteristic of his policy was vacillation. However, at the time this section of *The World Crisis* was written (1922) it was obvious that the airship had failed as a weapon of war and this may have influenced Churchill to concentrate on the more negative aspects of his policy in the pre-war years.

**Oil**

The decision to build the Queen Elizabeth Class battle ships meant that for the first time some of the ships on which British naval supremacy rested would be powered by oil. This was a serious step to take as Britain had no known oil reserves. In *The World Crisis* Churchill lists the advantages conferred by oil fuel; increased speed, a greater radius of action for the same weight as coal, easier and faster refueling and the ability to refuel at sea, and more convenient storage.¹ He then goes on to recount how the Royal Commission on Fuel & Engines was set up under Fisher, how an Admiralty investigation into the oil resources of the Persian Gulf was instituted and how eventually the Government bought a controlling interest in the Company set up to exploit these reserves. Churchill calculated that in 1923 this investment was worth £40 in sterling.²

The most controversial facet of oil policy discussed is the struggle to establish oil reserves for war. Churchill states that the Royal Commission

(1) *The World Crisis*, p.100.
(2) Ibid., p.104.
recommended four years' reserve and the War Staff and Jellicoe (2nd Sea Lord) lesser amounts but still "very large increases". He was not able to agree to these estimates because of pressure from Cabinet to reduce the 1914 estimates and eventually "reduced scales...were in the end accepted by all concerned. These conclusions stood the test of war."

There is little doubt that Churchill's decision to convert the Fleet from coal to oil fuel was correct and even inevitable. The advantages listed for oil in The World Crisis were proved accurate and indeed were taken by Churchill direct from the Report of the Royal Commission on Fuel and Engines. The accuracy of Churchill's estimates of the return to the British Government on its investment in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (later B.P.) is difficult to verify but there is no doubt that it was enormously profitable. A recent calculation suggests that the original outlay of £2m. was worth £600m. by 1969. In his discussion of the oil reserve question Churchill did not state the reserve recommended by the War Staff and Jellicoe. It is now known that they both recommended six months. Churchill asked that the question be examined again. This was done but six months' reserve was still recommended. Churchill was now convinced by this argument and he successfully pressed his Cabinet colleagues to accept a reserve of this amount. However, one of the items to be cut during the Estimates crisis of 1914 was the oil reserve. Britain thus entered war with a compromise reserve of 4½ months. Churchill is not correct in saying that this was accepted by all concerned. Jellicoe never accepted it and lists it as one of the more unfortunate interventions by Churchill on a technical

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(1) The World Crisis, p.136
(2) Ibid., p.137.
(5) War Staff; "Memorandum in Regard to Outline Scheme of Supply of Oil Fuel", Adm. 116/1219; Jellicoe, Autobiographical Notes, Add/Mss 49034.
(7) Asquith to the King 12/7/13, Cab. 41/34/26.
(9) Memorandum by the Naval War Staff: Revised Oil Estimates, Adm. 116/1219.
However, Jellicoe's criticism takes no account of Churchill's political difficulties. As will be seen the Estimates crisis almost broke up the Government and it is hard to see how Churchill could have obtained more money for oil. What of Churchill's claim that the 4½ month reserve stood the test of war? Jellicoe claimed that this was not the case and that in 1917 he had to issue orders to restrict the movements of the Grand Fleet and to reduce the speed of various classes of ships because of this inadequate reserve of oil. However, in a paper on the oil reserve written in 1917 the 4th Sea Lord, Admiral Tudor, stated that the sinking of oilers by enemy submarines was the major factor in the shortage of oil. If this was the case it is obvious that without the unrestricted submarine campaign which was not foreseen by Jellicoe or Churchill, the fuel reserve would have been adequate. Therefore the inadequacy of the fuel reserve was caused by extraneous factors which were not taken into account in the pre-war debate and it can perhaps be said that Churchill's policy would have stood the test of the type of war that was foreseen in 1914. Jellicoe's criticism therefore can hardly be accepted on the basis on which it is made. However Churchill's statement implies that the reserve stood the test of war as it developed and it is equally clear that this also cannot be accepted.

Churchill's Naval Strategy

Increases in German naval building announced in early 1912 forced Churchill to redistribute the Fleet. This reorganization is set out concisely and lucidly in The World Crisis. Briefly it amounted to strengthening the Fleet kept in full commission in home waters. This was accomplished by withdrawing the squadron based on Gibraltar to the Channel and replacing it with the pre-dreadnought squadron from Malta, where only

(1) Jellicoe - "Remarks on Important Naval Matters: A Reply to Criticism", Add/Mss 49041.
(3) Marder, A.J., Scapa Flow V.1, p.271.
(5) The World Crisis, p.90-1.
a cruiser squadron was to be retained. Thus for the first time in centuries there would be no British capital ships in the Mediterranean. Churchill's redistribution of the Fleet was a major policy change and obviously a serious step to take. However, it receives scant attention in The World Crisis. Churchill merely says,

"We saw ourselves compelled to withdraw the battleships from the Mediterranean. Only by this measure could the trained men be obtained to form the Third Battle Squadron in full commission in Home Waters. It was decided by the Cabinet that we must still maintain a powerful force in the Mediterranean, and ultimately, four battle cruisers and an armoured cruiser squadron were accordingly based on Malta. It was further decided that a Dreadnought battle squadron should also be developed in the Mediterranean by the year 1916 equal in strength to that of the growing Austrian battle fleet."

This brief paragraph conceals more than it tells about the origins and implementation of this facet of Churchill's naval policy. Much of the trouble which the Admiralty had with the implementation of this policy stemmed from the fact that it was announced by Churchill without former consultation with the Foreign Office, the C.I.D. or the Cabinet. All of these bodies met the proposed reductions with a storm of protest. The Foreign Office complained that the withdrawal of British naval forces would alienate Italy and weaken British prestige in the Middle East. Lord Kitchener, then Governor of Egypt, made the same points. Haldane was concerned lest the Mediterranean passage be denied to Britain in time of war.

Because of this opposition Asquith and Churchill met with Kitchener at Malta to discuss the whole problem. The result was a compromise plan whereby two or perhaps three battlecruisers would be left at Malta in addition to the cruisers, destroyers and submarines. This plan did not

(1) For Churchill's original exposition of this policy see House of Commons Parl. Deb., 28/3/12, Col. 1564-66.
(2) The World Crisis, p.86.
(4) "Situation in the Mediterranean" - Foreign Office Memorandum 9/5/12, Cab. 38/20/14.
(7) "Note of a Draft Agreement concluded with Lord Kitchener", Cab. 38/21/25.
satisfy Churchill's critics in the Cabinet. McKenna circulated a paper advocating a greatly strengthened Mediterranean fleet to consist largely of the pre-dreadnoughts in home waters. Churchill answered this with a paper of his own. Sending ships from home waters to the Mediterranean would dangerously lower the margin of safety against Germany. In any case the pre-dreadnoughts could not fight the powerful units being built by Italy and Austria. The alternative policy of building additional ships would not be acceptable to the Liberal Party. The Cabinet must face reality; Britain could not be strong everywhere.

The Cabinet was not convinced by these arguments and the matter was referred back to the C.I.D. At this meeting McKenna returned to the attack and argued for a greatly strengthened Mediterranean Fleet. Churchill, supported by Fisher, restated the Admiralty case. Finally, Asquith produced the compromise that was to become policy. There should be based on a Mediterranean port, a battle fleet equal to a one power Mediterranean standard, excluding France. Until this was achieved (in 1916) four battlecruisers were to be based on Malta.

Thus Churchill's Mediterranean policy had suffered a series of reverses. First he was obliged to send two or three battlecruisers to Malta to replace the pre-dreadnoughts. Then he was asked to increase this number to four and in future years to replace them with a "one power" standard fleet of four dreadnoughts, two battlecruisers and two pre-dreadnoughts. In fact this policy showed little appreciation of reality. In 1912 only three battlecruisers could be spared for the Mediterranean. To build the additional fleet would have involved an enormous increase in the Estimates and the Cabinet were to recoil from this expense in future years. Of course

(1) Cabinet Memorandum by Churchill 25/6/12, C.V.2, p.1573-8.
(2) Cabinet Memorandum by Churchill 26/6/12, Adm. 116/3099.
(3) Asquith to the King 27/6/12, Cab. 41/33/55.
(4) Minutes of the C.I.D. 4/7/12, Cab. 38/21/26.
Asquith could have realized these facts and designed a compromise around a fleet which he anticipated stood little chance of being built. Thus Churchill's critics would be appeased by the prospect of an increased Mediterranean fleet in the future, while for practical purposes Churchill's policy remained intact. However, the Admiralty policy was also unrealistic. Although it was formed on sound principles of naval strategy, it paid no attention to political factors or the long history of British naval power in the Mediterranean. Also, by announcing the policy without discussing it with other interested parties, Churchill ensured that opposition to the move would be maximised and intransigent.

It can now be seen that the paragraph devoted to Mediterranean strategy in The World Crisis is inadequate and misleading. Although both modifications to Churchill's Mediterranean policy are mentioned, it is not made clear that these changes were forced on a reluctant Admiralty by the C.I.D. and the Cabinet. Once again the use of neutral phrases like "It was decided" allows Churchill to gloss over a conflict and obscure the fact that he came out on the losing side. Nor is he correct in stating that ultimately four battle-cruisers were based on Malta. Only three were sent.

One obvious solution to the Mediterranean problem was to establish some form of closer association with France. While the British had been concentrating their fleet in the North Sea, the French had moved the bulk of their navy to the Mediterranean. This policy came about because of a realization that France would never be strong enough to face the German Navy alone and to counter the growing navies of Austria and Italy. The result was, however, that the French northern coasts were left without capital ships. It was soon realized that the new distributions of the French and British fleets complemented each other and it was, therefore, not surprising that in May 1912 the French asked that the Anglo-French Naval talks, which had been proceeding fitfully since 1911, be revived on a
more regular basis. Churchill agreed and on July 17th the talks began.

Churchill gives a brief summary of these talks in *The World Crisis*. He recalls that his major concern was "to try to prevent [the]... necessary recall of our ships from tying us up too tightly with France and depriving us of that liberty of choice on which our power to stop a war might well depend" and he states that ultimately "the French were obliged to accept this position." That this was indeed his stance is borne out by the documents. He insisted on affixing a preamble to the technical naval agreement which stated that the agreement "does not affect the political freedom of either government." When the French pressed for a British guarantee for her northern coast Churchill strongly resisted. He argued that the French decision to move their battleships to the Mediterranean had been taken independently and, therefore, did not require a British guarantee. In the end this view prevailed. The final agreement stated that the consultations were of a non-binding nature. The only common action to be taken was that the two governments agreed to consult in a crisis.

Having argued that the naval conversations with France left Britain with no obligations at all, Churchill completely reverses his position a few chapters later. He states that to some extent Grey's decision of August 2nd 1914 not to allow the German Fleet to come through the Channel to attack the French ports was based on the 1912 naval conversations. "Whatever disclaimers we had made about not being committed, could we, when it came to the point, honourably stand by and see the naked French coasts ravaged and bombarded by German Dreadnoughts.... the military and naval

(2) The World Crisis, p.86-7.
(4) Memorandum by Churchill 23/7/12, Adm. 116/3109.
(6) Minute by Churchill 24/7/12, Grey Papers, F.O. 800/94.
(7) See British and French exchange of notes (22 and 23/11/12) in F.O. 371/1368.
(8) The World Crisis, p.162.
conversations...had led us into a position where we had the obligations of an alliance without its advantages. Yet is is very doubtful if this was the case. Relations between States are very rarely conducted on the basis of moral obligations or questions of "honour" and if these impulses are involved it is highly likely that self interest is also involved. It is obvious that a move by the German fleet into the Channel would have been as much an attack on Britain as on France. Churchill himself states that "such a situation would be insupportable".

Clearly it was in Britain's own interests to prevent such a move and it is probable that this was the motive behind Grey's action rather than the Anglo-French Naval Agreement. The contradiction in Churchill's account in The World Crisis is explained by the fact that in 1912 he was trying to safeguard Britain's freedom of action but in 1914 his policy was to bring the country into the war on the side of France. It is likely then that during the crisis which led to war he stressed to his colleagues the obligations Britain was under as a result of the talks and that it is these arguments that are repeated in The World Crisis.

Anglo German Naval Rivalry

Churchill could only play a marginal role in foreign policy. Any initiatives in this area had to be first cleared with Grey and the Foreign Office. However, because naval rivalry was an important issue in Anglo-German relations during this period, Churchill was able to take an active part in moves to reduce tension between the two countries. He was in particular associated with two attempts to arrive at an understanding with Germany, the Haldane Mission and the proposals for a "naval holiday".

Of the Haldane Mission Churchill says in The World Crisis that in early 1912 it was known that Germany intended to make substantial increases in her navy. He thought he would have to ask the House of Commons to

(1) Ibid., p. 165.
(2) Ibid., p. 162.
increase the naval estimates to meet this challenge and that his position would be stronger if he could point to efforts "to secure a mitigation of the naval rivalry". Lloyd George was in agreement with this policy and "We therefore jointly consulted Sir Edward Grey, and then with the Prime Minister's concurrence we invited Sir Ernest Cassel to go to Berlin and get into direct touch with the Emperor. Sir Ernest was qualified for this task, as he knew the Emperor well and was at the same time devoted to British interests." Armed with a memorandum setting out the British position, Churchill continues, Cassel travelled to Berlin and saw Bethmann-Hollweg and the Emperor. On Cassel's return Churchill reported to Grey, "They were delighted with Cassel's rough notes of our ideas. They are most anxious to hear from us soon." According to The World Crisis the Cabinet then decided that if the Germans considered that the question of naval expenditure was open to discussion, they would be prepared to send the Secretary of State for War (Haldane) to Berlin for private and unofficial discussions. This being acceptable, Haldane set off for Berlin. While he was there Churchill made a speech at Glasgow in which he described the German Fleet as a luxury. This he says caused an outcry in Germany and was thought to have hampered Haldane. However "Contrary to general expectation...the Secretary of State for War declared that so far from being a hindrance to him in his negotiations, the Glasgow speech had been the greatest possible help. He had in fact used almost identical arguments to von Bethmann-Hollweg the day before." After the return of Haldane Churchill says that "the discussion was transferred to the question of a mutual declaration against aggressive plans". However, the Germans considered any such formula should contain a clause making British neutrality obligatory "if a war is forced upon Germany".

(1) The World Crisis, p.71.
(2) Ibid., p.71-2.
(3) Churchill to Grey 31/1/12, in Ibid., p.72.
(4) Ibid., p.76.
(5) Ibid., p.77.
(6) Ibid., p.79.
(7) Ibid.
British could not agree and the talks broke down.

In March 1912, Churchill continues, he tried another approach to Germany. He suggested in the Navy estimates speech that both countries refrain from building capital ships for the next year. However, the Emperor made it clear that Germany could not accept this proposal. In the summer of 1914 Churchill claims he tried again. On the suggestion of Alfred Ballin, a friend of Cassel and the Emperor, Churchill approached Grey with the idea that he should go to Germany and discuss a possible naval agreement or naval holiday. However, Grey was "apprehensive that more harm than good might result from such a discussion", and nothing came of it.

Churchill now sums up his policy towards Germany.

"I claim, as these pages show, that in my subordinate station I had in these years before the war done nothing wittingly or willingly to impair the chances of a peaceable solution, and had tried my best as opportunity offered to make good relations possible between England and Germany." 4

It is now time to investigate Churchill's version of his attempts to arrive at an understanding with Germany.

The origins of the moves which led to the Haldane mission are obscure but it is almost certain that they did not originate with Churchill and Lloyd George as claimed in The World Crisis. As far as the British knew the first approach came from Cassel in a letter to Churchill in early January when he suggested that the Emperor would welcome a visit from Churchill to discuss naval matters. The prevailing theory is that Cassel and Alfred Ballin, had engineered this move by telling the Kaiser that such an invitation would be welcomed by the British. In this way they hoped to get negotiations underway and hopefully improve Anglo-German relations. However, it is now fairly certain that it was Bethmann-Hollweg who first

(1) The World Crisis, p. 84.
(2) Ibid., p. 144.
(3) Ibid., p. 145.
(4) Ibid., p. 185.
(5) Churchill to Cassel 8/1/12, Cassel Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, also Koss, S., Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism, N.Y., Columbia U.P., p. 79.
suggested to Ballin that a British Cabinet minister should visit Germany. 

Certainly Bethmann's policy, declared as early as 1909, to offer Britain a naval agreement in return for a declaration of neutrality if war was forced on Germany bore a striking resemblance to the negotiations during Haldane's visit. Thus Churchill's claim to have been the joint originator of these overtures is without foundation.

It is also doubtful if Cassel was as well qualified for his task as an intermediary as Churchill states. For example, in his report to Churchill on the Berlin talks Cassel stated that the Germans were "delighted" with the British proposals. Yet it is hard to see how this could have been the case when those proposals contained a section which read, "Present German naval programmes and expenditure not to be increased but if possible retarded and reduced." However, Cassel himself might have been responsible for the alleged German euphoria on receipt of the British note for he told Bethmann-Hollweg and the Emperor that "I did not know how the inclusion of estimates for this year would be looked upon at home - however as Mr. Ballin had told me they were not material I supposed they would not prove to be a real objection". At the same time he told Churchill that he did not believe that the inclusion of the estimates was "a final or irrevocable position". Thus Cassel managed to misrepresent the positions of both sides while at the same time admitting that during the negotiations with Bethmann-Hollweg and the Emperor he "could not follow [their]... argument[s] very much" It is also possible that when Churchill came to write this section of The World Crisis he realized that Cassel had misinterpreted the German position. Thus, although he quoted his letter to Grey of 31/1/12 which summarized Cassel's conversations with the Germans, he omitted the sentence in which Cassel stated that the inclusion of the 1912 estimates

(2) Note by Bethmann-Hollweg 13/8/09, quoted in Fischer F. War of Illusions, p.64-5.
(3) Draft of a Note to be handed to Bethmann-Hollweg 27/1/12, Cassel Papers.
(4) Memorandum by Cassel 29/1/12, in Ibid.
(5) Churchill to Grey 31/1/12, Churchill Papers 8/85.
(6) Memorandum by Cassel 29/1/12, Cassel Papers.
was not final or irrevocable.  

What of Churchill's "Luxus flotte" speech and its effect on the mission? There was certainly a torrent of adverse criticism in the German press but Churchill seems to be correct in assuming that this had little effect on the negotiations. Eventually the talks were to break down on questions of basic importance to both countries. However, Churchill was not to know this when he made the speech and he made this clear in an earlier version of The World Crisis. There he had written

"Contrary to everyone's expectation, however, and as I will confess to my own relief, the Secretary of State for war declared that so far from being a hindrance to him in the negotiations the Glasgow speech had been the greatest possible help."  

It can be seen from the earlier quotation that Churchill omitted the section underlined from the published version. Thus it is clear that he showed questionable judgment in risking a breakdown in talks merely to re-state a policy of which the Germans were already well aware.

Churchill played one more part in the "Cassel-Ballin" negotiations which is not mentioned in The World Crisis. Later in the year Germany indicated that they were prepared to drop the condition that the 1912 Navy now be included before fleet reductions were negotiated in return for a political formula. Ballin, then in Britain, saw Churchill who expressed confidence that such a bargain could be struck. Ballin returned to Berlin and jubilantly announced that he had obtained "the alliance with England", that is, British neutrality in a future war. Clearly Churchill could have promised nothing of this kind as he was well aware of the type of formula being drafted at the Foreign Office, which went no further than guaranteeing Britain would make no unprovoked attack on Germany. When news of this

(1) Churchill Papers 8/58.
(2) Goschen to Grey 10/2/12, F.O., 371/1374.
(3) Churchill Papers 8/114 emphasis added.
(6) Memorandum by Von Muller quoted in Ibid., p. 195.
arrived in Berlin the euphoria collapsed as quickly as it had arisen and no doubt the incident was used by the anti-British party to drive home their point about British duplicity.¹

There is no need, however, to lay the failure of the mission at the British door. It is true that Churchill, Grey and the others showed a good deal of naivety in entrusting sensitive negotiations to such amateurs as Cassel, Ballin and Haldane. However, it is the German instigators of the talks who must bear the major share in the responsibility for their collapse. They never seemed to realize that "the aim of British policy was not only to limit German naval building...but to preserve the balance of power in Europe. [Therefore] the plan on which Bethmann's England policy was based, to ensure at least temporary British neutrality in a European war, was... illusionary".²

Churchill has given only a sketchy account of his naval holiday proposals in The World Crisis. Not only did he propose this form of reduction in armaments in 1912 but in March and October 1913.³ The latter two overtures, which Churchill does not mention at all, received much the same fate as the first. In fact, Churchill only made the October 1913 proposal because the Germans had announced publicly that they were waiting for British initiatives in this area.⁴ However, they showed no interest in this form of agreement.⁵ Churchill's reason for omitting these initiatives, which were by no means discreditable to him, from The World Crisis could only have been their total failure to produce a positive response from Germany. However, the proposals themselves have an air of unreality about them. For example, the "holiday" only applied to capital ships and would not have affected naval shipbuilding generally. Other powers such as Italy and Austria were not mentioned and would apparently have been free to

² Fischer Fritz, War of Illusions, p. 123.
³ House of Commons Parl. Deb., 26/3/13, Col. 1757.
⁴ Goschen to Grey 22/10/13, F.O. 371/1653.
⁵ Grey to Goschen 28/10/13, Grey Papers, F.O. 800/62.
continue to construct dreadnoughts. Problems such as the accumulation of stocks during the "holiday" period, which could have been used to accelerate building afterwards, were left untouched. There was also the question of the unemployment that such a policy would have caused. The reasons which led Churchill to repeat this proposal on three occasions are not known and it is probable that he meant the suggestion to be taken as a serious expression of British intentions. However, many on both sides of the North Sea could be excused for thinking that their principal aim was to placate the radicals and small navy men in his own party.

Nevertheless Churchill had an honourable public record in trying to reduce tension between Britain and Germany and few would now argue with his summary of that policy quoted above. However, he was aware that his fascination with war and with the mighty fleet which he had helped build was well known. Therefore in an early draft of The World Crisis he added a disclaimer that these tendencies had ever affected his policies. He wrote,

"If from time to time, absorbed in contemplation of the terrific machinery of British naval power, my mind had yielded to a sense of fascination in the prospect of its use, if foolish words had escaped my lips in light moments, I could at any rate feel that such moods had played no part in my responsible official action."\(^1\)

On reflection Churchill probably decided that this insight into his thoughts was too frank altogether. He therefore omitted it from the final version of The World Crisis leaving his readers to speculate on his darker thoughts and to judge him by his public pronouncements.

1914 Estimates Crisis

The struggle to have the Naval Estimates for 1914 accepted by Cabinet almost broke up the Government. Churchill was opposed by the National Liberal Federation, a group of back bench M.P.'s,\(^2\) and by a large number of

\(^1\) Churchill Papers 8/119.
the Cabinet. Churchill gives an account of these disputes in The World Crisis but while he does not underestimate the opposition, in several areas, his version of events is unreliable. These will now be investigated.

Churchill depicts the end of the Estimates crisis as a triumph for himself and the Admiralty. He says, "In all these months of bickering we had only lost three small cruisers and twelve torpedo-boats for harbour defence." In fact these were the only ships lost in the estimates but there were many other areas in which naval expenditure had to be reduced. We have already noticed that the oil reserve was reduced. The amount involved was £400,000. In addition the amount spent on the air service was reduced £200,000, a floating dock worth a similar amount was cancelled; by delaying repairs to ships a further £400,000 was saved and the intake of new recruits was scaled down from 5,000 to 4,000. Thus Churchill's victory was not as complete as his account in The World Crisis would indicate.

Another area of dispute which Churchill has omitted completely is his struggle to get the Admiralty Board to agree to the cuts forced on him by the Cabinet. The last we read of the Board's role in the Crisis is in December 1913 when they are supporting Churchill in resisting the cuts. However, when Churchill presented to them in mid February the cuts he was prepared to accept, they received a stormy reception. Churchill was very disappointed by this reception and threatened to release the Board from the responsibility of signing the estimates. Eventually this was not necessary but the Board, and in particular Jellicoe, remained most unhappy at having to accept the economies. Thus once more Churchill has omitted

(2) The World Crisis, p. 143.
(3) Asquith to the King 11/2/14, Cab. 41/35/3.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Admiralty Memorandum 27/1/14, Adm. 116/3152.
(6) Churchill to Prince Louis 13/2/14, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/283.
(7) The World Crisis, p. 139.
(8) Churchill to Prince Louis 13/2/14, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/283.
(9) Jellicoe, A Reply to Criticism, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 49041.
from The World Crisis, a dispute with his professional advisers.

With the exception of Lloyd George, Churchill manages to discuss the estimates crisis without revealing the composition of the opposition within the Cabinet. It is now known that Churchill's main opponents were McKenna, Simon, Runciman, Samuel, Beauchamp and Hobhouse, but none of these names is mentioned in The World Crisis.

Even Lloyd George only rates one mention. The notorious incident when he informed the Press of the fact that the Cabinet was split over the estimates is quoted by Churchill. However, he does not add that he publicly rebuked Lloyd George for making this statement. Churchill was clearly attempting to play down his dispute with Lloyd George for he has also omitted from a letter to Asquith a paragraph containing an unflattering reference to his colleague. Furthermore, there exists a whole range of Churchill's correspondence on the 1914 estimates with harsh criticisms of Lloyd George but none of it is quoted in The World Crisis. The reason for this approach is not hard to find. Churchill was serving in Lloyd George's Government at the time he wrote this section of The World Crisis and he no doubt felt that it would be better to deal with these events in general terms and to gloss over his past differences with his present

(2) The World Crisis, p. 142.
(3) Marder, A.J. Scapa Flow V.1, p. 319.
(4) Churchill Papers 8/61. The passage omitted reads, "you know the repeated efforts I have made to meet Lloyd George, and now the financial corner has been turned it is too stupid of him to throw the car off the track". No excision marks have been made to indicate that this paragraph has been omitted. It should be inserted after the sentence ending... "about my duty". Another paragraph has been omitted after..."Consider broad effects" but it has little bearing on the estimates controversy. On the same page (139) two paragraphs have been omitted from Churchill's letter to Prince Louis, one before and one after the paragraph quoted. Neither is of great importance but there is no indication that these deletions have been made.
(5) e.g. Cabinet Notes 16/12/13, Churchill to Lloyd George 19/1/14, Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Record Office, London, C/3/16/3; Churchill to Grey 8/1/14, Grey Papers, F.O. 800/88.
leader.¹

The main demand by the radicals in their attack on the estimates was that only two dreadnoughts instead of four be built in 1914-15.² Conversely it is Churchill's central contention in The World Crisis that the four ships represented an irreducible minimum. He quotes a letter to Prince Louis indicating his intention to resign if this policy was not carried out,³ and he mentions the fact that he had obtained a memorandum for use in Cabinet from Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister, which stated how embarrassed his government would be if the full British programme of dreadnoughts was not built.⁴ (Borden was at that moment engaged in a fierce party fight for money to enable Britain to build three extra dreadnoughts as an "emergency measure" to meet the increased German programmes). Thus in The World Crisis Churchill has placed his commitment to four dreadnoughts beyond doubt. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find in an earlier version of this chapter that Churchill reveals a plan, devised by himself, to cut down the number of dreadnoughts to two, and substitute for them small craft, mainly torpedo boats and submarines.⁵ It is not clear from the draft whether Churchill ever put this plan to the Board as a serious proposition or why it was eventually dropped but it is certain that its publication in 1914 would have caused an outcry among his

(1) Arthur Marder has pointed out that in a document quoted in the section on the 1914 Estimates crisis Churchill has omitted some key passages. The section reads,"we are not a young people with an innocent record and a scanty inheritance. We have engrossed to ourselves, in times when other powerful nations were paralysed by barbarism or internal war, an altogether disproportionate share of the wealth and traffic of the world. We have got all we want in territory, and our claim to be left in the unmolested enjoyment of vast and splendid possessions, mainly acquired by violence, largely maintained by force, often seems less reasonable to others than to us." The sections underlined have been omitted from The World Crisis (p.141) except "immense" replaces "altogether disproportionate". There is no indication that any words have been omitted. Marder, A.J. Scapa Flow V.1, p. 322-3. See also Churchill Papers 8/117.
(2) Asquith to the King 11/2/14, Cab. 41/35/3.
(3) The World Crisis, p.139.
(4) Ibid., p.142.
Cabinet colleagues and the press, not to mention the Conservative Party and the public. Indeed, it was probably the realization that even in 1923 the publication of the plan would have caused recriminations from at least some of these groups that led Churchill to delete it from his published version of events in The World Crisis.

The Naval War Staff

Another of the important tasks which Asquith entrusted to Churchill on his accession to the Admiralty was the formation of a Naval War Staff. This was considered by the Government to be of the highest importance because it was felt that the poor showing made by the Admiralty at the "War Plans" meeting of the C.I.D. in August 1911 was partly due to the fact that the Navy lacked a "General Staff".

In The World Crisis Churchill discusses the exchange of views between the First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, and himself on the formation of a staff. He states that when it was clear that Wilson was irrevocably opposed to a staff, the matter was left in abeyance until the formation of the new Board. The task was then taken up again and a staff organization was finally introduced, all the details of which, Churchill says, "were worked out by Prince Louis". Through the years, Churchill continues,

"I never ceased to labour at the formation of a true General Staff for the Navy....But it takes a generation to form a General Staff. No wave of the wand can create those habits of mind in seniors on which the efficiency and even the reality of a Staff depends....The dead weight of professional opinion was adverse. They had got on well enough without it before. They did not want a special class of officer professing to be more brainy than the rest....In this will be found the explanation of many untoward events."^3

Modern researchers have not accepted Churchill's version of events. While all agreeing that the Staff was ineffective, they tend to blame

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(1) The World Crisis, p.58-62.
(2) Ibid., p.67.
(3) Ibid., p.68-70.
Churchill for this state of affairs. It is Nicholas d'Ombrain's contention that "Churchill went out of his way to see that [the Naval War Staff] remained a subordinate body. He deliberately denied to it the best available brains. He insisted that it refrain from discussing all matters of policy. He refused to allow it any power of initiative."\(^1\) He has also claimed that this emasculation of the staff was responsible for the fact that there were no naval plans for combined operations prepared by the outbreak of war and, therefore, the Navy had no alternative but to meekly fall in with the Continental strategy of the Army.\(^2\) Churchill's account will not have to be examined on its own merits and in the light of these criticisms.

Churchill is correct in stating that the details of the staff organization were worked out by Prince Louis.\(^3\) However, it is not mentioned in *The World Crisis* that Churchill's original idea was that the Chief of Staff should be responsible directly to the First Lord.\(^4\) This was opposed by Prince Louis\(^5\) and by Admiral Bridgeman\(^6\) and was then dropped by Churchill. The Chief of Staff was to remain responsible to the First Sea Lord.

It will be noticed that Churchill's contention in *The World Crisis* that he "never ceased to labour" to form a true staff organization runs directly counter to d'Ombrain's criticisms. What of d'Ombrain's first.

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\(^3\) See undated paper by Prince Louis, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/242. Richard Hough in Louis and Victoria p.249-50 takes exception to Churchill paraphrasing the draft and presenting as his own to the Cabinet. I can see nothing exceptional in this. Any Admiralty paper for the Cabinet would always be issued under Churchill's signature and heads of departments often use papers written by their professional experts as a basis for their own reports. Moreover Hough is incorrect in saying that Churchill does not acknowledge the origin of the staff plan in *The World Crisis*. As we saw, Churchill attributes the scheme to Prince Louis on p.67. Furthermore, Hough wrongly states that Admiral Gretton held the same view, when all Gretton says is that there is no mention of the dispute over the powers of the Chief of Staff in *The World Crisis*. He does not say that Churchill failed to acknowledge the origin of the staff idea. (See Gretton P., *Former Naval Person: Winston Churchill and the Royal Navy*, London, Cassell, 1968, p.79.

\(^4\) Undated Memorandum by Churchill, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/46.

\(^5\) Undated Memorandum by Prince Louis, in *ibid.*, DS/Misc/20/63.

\(^6\) Undated Memorandum by Bridgeman, in *ibid.*
charge that Churchill denied to the staff the best brains? Churchill's
three Chiefs of Staff in the pre-war years were Troubridge, Jackson and
Sturdee. By their record in war time it will be seen that none of these men
could be regarded as brilliant. Yet the appointment of Troubridge owed as
much to Fisher,\(^1\) Bridgeman and Prince Louis\(^2\) as to Churchill. Churchill's
first choice was Ottley, the Secretary of the C.I.D. and a man highly
regarded for his intellectual powers, but this appointment was vetoed by
Asquith.\(^3\) Also Troubridge, Jackson and Sturdee were not complete failures
in their posts. It was Troubridge and Jackson who first pointed to the
advantage of Scapa Flow as a base\(^4\) and Sturdee who first suggested that
plans for combined operations in wartime be drawn up.\(^5\) At the same time
Churchill was well aware of the deficiencies of his Chiefs of Staff. When
a successor to Troubridge had to be found, he complained to Asquith, "I am
sorry to say I cannot find one who possesses fully the qualities necessary
for this most important post."\(^6\) Later Sir Henry Wilson reported, "Had 2
hours with Winston this evening. He is gravelled for want of a staff and
superior leaders. He wants to borrow a couple of my boys. He said that if
only he could have the General Staff that I have, he would have the finest
Navy in the world."\(^7\) None of this evidence suggests that Churchill had
deliberately promoted men whom he knew to be inferior. Much the same can
be said of the more junior members of the staff. It is true that men like
Commander Percy Beamish (assistant to Troubridge), Captain Ballard
(Director of Operations 1913), Captain George Hope (A.D.O.D. 1913) and
Captain Vyvian (assistant to Sturdee)\(^8\) did not leave an indelible mark upon

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\(^1\) Churchill to Prince Louis, N.D., in Ibid., DS/Misc/20/48.
\(^2\) Churchill to the King 31/12/11, C.V.2, p.1367.
\(^3\) Churchill to Prince Louis, N.D., Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/48.
\(^4\) See Note by the Chief of Staff on Scapa Flow 7/6/12, Adm. 116/1293 and
   Minute by Jackson 22/2/13, Adm. 116/1293.
\(^5\) Sturdee to Prince Louis and Churchill 21/7/14, Adm. 1/8386/213.
\(^6\) Churchill to Asquith 15/8/12, C.V.2, p.1633.
\(^7\) Diary of Sir Henry Wilson 12/10/12, Wilson Papers, DS/Misc/80/5.
\(^8\) For the personnel of the pre-war staff see the Navy List 1912, 1913,
   1914.
the Navy. However, the brilliant Captain Richmond, one of the most original thinkers on naval history and strategy of his time, was made Assistant Director of Operations in 1914 and Admiral Oliver was a competent director of Intelligence. In any case, who were the "best brains" whom Churchill was keeping from the staff? This criticism assumes that there was a pool of available naval intellectuals upon which Churchill refused to draw. A close examination of a list of available officers suggests that there were very few who would have been suitable for staff appointments. This was certainly the view of Admiral Slade who stated that staff officers were not available "in any electable quantity" and Admiral Dewar who said, "We had the opportunity but not the intellectual capital to float a staff".

Thus all the evidence points to the fact that Churchill was merely doing the best he could with the available material.

The second criticism made of Churchill's attitude to the staff by d'Ombrain is that he allowed them no initiative and kept them away from policy areas. The latter criticism certainly cannot be substantiated. The staff took part in the decision, to redistribute the fleet from the Mediterranean, to abandon the close blockade to establish bases at Cromarty and Scapa Flow. They were also involved in airship policy, trade protection and invasion planning. This is not to say that their advice was followed in all the above cases but all these issues were matters of policy and the staff were involved in the discussions on all of them.

It is of course true that the staff spent much of their time on minor matters such as the re-organization of destroyer flotillas and reporting on the

(3) See Minute by Troubridge 7/2/12 on Mediterranean Naval Situation, Adm. 116/3099.
(4) The Revised War Order for 1912 incorporating this policy would almost certainly have been written by the Staff.
(5) See Minutes by Troubridge and Jackson quoted below in Adm. 116/1293.
(6) See Paper by Troubridge, "The Development of Naval Aeroplanes and Airships 12/1/12 in Roskill, Naval Air Service, p.29-33.
(8) See Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/208.
(9) See Adm. 1/8271.
ports and harbours on the Albanian coast but this type of work is carried out by the best of staffs.

The charge that Churchill allowed the staff no initiative would seem to have more substance. Most of the staff papers already mentioned were prepared at Churchill's direction. However, it is the First Lord who, on behalf of the Government, would define the major areas of importance, and to that extent the criticism misses the point. Also, there are examples of the staff initiating subjects of importance for discussion. Thus Sturdee's papers on the lack of plans for combined operations was almost certainly written on his own initiative and Ballard submitted a proposal on the organization of the Admiralty War Room that does not seem to have been initiated from above.

The criticism that Churchill's enfeeblement of the staff led to the lack of an alternative to the Army's continental strategy is indeed a strange comment. It misses entirely the point that Churchill was sent to the Admiralty to guarantee that such alternatives would not be developed. It was his role to see that the Navy adapted their strategy to the plans of the War Office. However, this is not to say that no planning for combined operations was carried out. The Admiralty always had it in mind that small detachments of men might be available for such operations. To this end a "Manual of Combined Naval and Military Operations" was prepared in 1913 which laid down general rules for this type of undertaking. In the preparation of this the naval staff would certainly have played a part. Sturdee's letter already quoted is further evidence that this subject had not been forgotten by the Admiralty. Thus no plans for combined operations to rival the War Office plan of aid to France were prepared because the Government had decided that the War Office plan was to become official policy in time of war. However, within limitations the Staff attempted to

(1) See Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/155.
(2) Sturdee to 1st Lord and First Sea Lord 21/7/14, Adm. 1/8386/213.
ensure that any combined operations that did take place would do so on the correct lines.

Thus most of the criticisms of Churchill's attitude to the Staff would appear to be without foundation. However, this is not to say that his account of the War Staff in The World Crisis is adequate. For one thing, it is extremely brief and gives no real idea of the type of work on which the staff were engaged. Several disagreements Churchill had with the Staff over papers written by them on defence against raids and the draft manoeuvres for 1912 are not mentioned. In fact Churchill again resorts to his well tried method of merely inserting a vague general criticism of staff work. This was not however his first inclination, as the Churchill papers reveal. In a proof of The World Crisis Churchill included an example of poor staff work which he had noticed himself. In November 1914 Churchill observed that a naval vessel was lying off the harbour at Dunkirk. He gave orders to the Chief of Staff (Sturdee) to either send her into the harbour or bring her home because of the submarine danger. It was decided that the ship should return home but the captain was not instructed to sail at night or steer a zig zag course. As a result it set off in broad daylight, steering straight ahead and was torpedoed with the loss of 50 lives. Later Churchill deleted this episode, perhaps on the grounds that the victor of the Falkland Islands could hardly be shown up in this way, perhaps to avoid giving his critics another example of his interference with detailed ship movements, and he substituted the vague phrase about poor staff work, causing many "untoward events".

(I) Churchill to Jackson 1/5/13, Battenberg Papers, DS/Misc/20/208.
(2) Churchill to Admiralty 25/5/12 Adm. 116/1169 "C.O.S. Manoeuvre Plans Unsuitable. Await letter - Churchill".
(3) Churchill Papers 8/57.
(4) In the course of his discussion on the staff Churchill claimed that there was no moment when a naval officer was required to "read a single book about naval war, or pass even the most rudimentary examination in naval history" and that the Royal Navy had made no significant contribution to naval historical writing. (p.69) However, Captain Roskill has pointed out that naval history was taught at the Dartmouth and Osborne Naval Colleges and that Churchill's latter criticism ignores the work of Sir John and Philip Columb. See his Churchill and the Admirals, London, Collins, 1977, p. 28.
Co-operation with the Army

The low state of inter-service co-operation recorded by the C.I.D. meeting of August 1911 was partly responsible for Churchill being sent to the Admiralty. He was expected by Asquith and Haldane to ensure that plans were concerted with the Army for the transportation of the B.E.F. to France and in _The World Crisis_ Churchill lists this task as one of "prime importance".¹ It is surprising then to discover that this is the last we read of this important commitment. _The World Crisis_ is completely silent on any joint planning that might have taken place between the Army and the Navy. Why should this be so? Nicholas d'Oombrain provides one possible explanation. He argues that although joint planning was central to Churchill's appointment to the Admiralty, after taking up his post he soon lost interest in it. Never an enthusiast for the continental strategy of the Army, Churchill then deliberately delayed setting up co-ordinating machinery in the hope that troops would be left in England and could be used for any combined operations on which the Navy might later draw.² Is this then the reason for Churchill's silence on this issue in _The World Crisis_? In fact there was no initial delay in setting up co-ordinating machinery. The D.M.O., Sir Henry Wilson, saw Churchill, Troubridge and Bridgeman in January 1912 and found them to be in complete agreement with the Army's proposals.³ The next few months were presumably spent by the two departments in working out the basic details of the railway and shipping arrangements. In November 1912 the Navy caused a flurry by claiming that they could not transport the Army in the time proposed⁴ but some harsh words from Wilson brought them round⁵ and Wilson was able to report that all the arrangements for raling the troops to the embarkation points and then from the French ports to the concentrations areas

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¹ _The World Crisis_, p. 52.
² d'Oombrain, Nicholas J. _Churchill at the Admiralty and the Committee of Imperial Defence_, p. 39.
³ Diary of Sir Henry Wilson 13/1/12, 17/1/12, Wilson Papers,DS/Misc/80/5.
⁴ Ibid., 12/11/12.
⁵ Ibid., 21/11/12.
was completed. Then in December 1912 the Admiralty and War Office called on the major shipping companies to help devise a final plan for the shipping arrangements. A committee was set up and reported in April 1913. In November the War Office asked that a Naval liaison officer be appointed to keep "[the War Office] posted...in the detailed arrangements made for the transport of the Expeditionary force." On investigating how this work was progressing the C.O.S. (Jackson) found that "there is still much detailed work to be done in connection with the transport of the Expeditionary Force".

As a result of this discovery an interdepartmental committee was set up to finalise the transportation arrangements for the Army. The first meeting was held in March 1914. This committee met regularly for the next three months and it is clear from the list of subjects discussed that there was much work to be done. Indeed, it is obvious that until this moment plans could have only existed in a skeleton form. By June 1914 much had been done but there was still a formidable list of items that required action. The draft report did not appear until July 30th and was apparently still under consideration when war broke out. However, the bulk of the plan was obviously complete and it was implemented without a hitch in the latter half of August 1914.

Thus it had taken three years to finalise arrangements between the Army and the Navy. Yet, although this might seem to bear out d'Oombrain's
criticism, some of the facts do not fit his argument and there would seem to be other more reasonable explanations for the delays. For example, it is clear that the War Office was able to get a commitment to the plan from the Admiralty at once and that the remainder of 1912 was spent by the War Office in finalising their own railway timetables and by the Admiralty in adopting a skeleton transportation plan. Detailed shipping plans were then worked out by a joint committee. To this point then there seems to have been no unreasonable delay. However, no action was then taken for almost a year. It is possible that d'Ombrain's contention could apply to this period but, as there was no War Office enquiry on progress for 8 months, it is more likely that departmental inertia and lack of proper liaison was the explanation rather than any conscious attempt on the part of the Admiralty to undermine the War Office plan. Moreover, when planning did get under way it proceeded rapidly. Furthermore, if the Admiralty were scheming to use the Army in combined operations of its own choosing, it is curious that no plans for such operations existed at the Admiralty on the outbreak of war and that it was Churchill, the supposed mastermind behind the whole plot, who first suggested that the entire expeditionary force of six divisions be sent to France.

Thus d'Ombrain's thesis would not seem to be the explanation behind the omission of any reference to joint army-navy planning in The World Crisis. In fact a more likely reason has emerged from the narrative of the course of that planning. It is clear that the Admiralty had not shown any great energy or determination to expedite the completion of the plans. In fact co-operation between the two services, which Churchill had been sent to the Admiralty to improve, remained as bad as ever. However, it is suggested that this was a result of the long established habit of separateness and departmental inertia rather than a plot by Churchill and the Admiralty to subvert the War Office plan. It is obvious however that Churchill would not want to give prominence to what was a fairly tardy and inefficient effort on
the part of the Admiralty.

Blockade Policy

Until 1911 naval strategy against Germany was based on the policy of the close blockade. Its essential feature was that a line of destroyers and cruisers would close to within a few miles of the German coast, ready to warn the supporting heavier ships of any attempted sortie by the German navy. However, the development of the submarine and the mine had by this time rendered the waters off the German Coast far too dangerous for British battleships. Robbed of this support the destroyers and cruisers would have been vulnerable to attack by the entire German fleet and in any case Britain did not have enough of these craft to maintain the patrol line continuously. The whole plan, therefore, was abandoned.

Churchill states that one of his first acts when arriving at the Admiralty was to "revise altogether the War Plans and substitute, with the full concurrence of our principal commanders afloat, the policy of distant blockade set out in the Admiralty War Orders of 1912."¹ This meant moving the blockade line to the north to close the exit from the North Sea as well as blocking the Straits of Dover.² However, "the policy of distant blockade was not adopted from choice but from necessity. It implied no repudiations on the part of the Admiralty of their fundamental principle of aggressive naval strategy, but only a temporary abandonment of it in the face of unsolved practical difficulties; and it was intended that every effort should be made, both before and after a declaration of war, to overcome those difficulties."³

In line with this policy, "In 1912 the newly-formed Admiralty War Staff prepared, as an experiment, a plan for an immense cordon of cruisers and destroyers, supported by the Battle Fleet, from the Coast of Norway to a point on the East Coast of England."⁴ Churchill states that to him this

(1) The World Crisis, p. 114.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid., p. 115.
appeared unsound and in fact, when it was tried it completely broke down. 1

The Navy therefore fell back on the distant blockade. 2

This summary of events has been disputed almost in its entirety by

Arthur Marder. He claims that it was the observational blockade that was
instituted in the War Orders for 1912 3 and that this remained in force until just
before the war when the distant blockade was substituted for it. 4 He also adds
that from time to time between 1912 and 1914 Churchill argued for the re-
institution of the close blockade although the impossibility of the policy
was pointed out to him by his professional advisers. 5

In fact, as far as it goes, Churchill's account in The World Crisis
appears to be correct. The War Plans for 1912 speak of drawing a line of
cruisers "across the approaches to the North Sea." 6 This surely must apply
to the distant and not to the observational blockade for the latter system
called for a blockade line drawn from southern Norway to the Dutch coast, 7
hardly the approaches to the North Sea. Obviously the War Plans for 1914
quoted by Marder contain a re-iteration of the 1912 policy rather than a
departure from it. Thus the distant blockade was introduced in 1912 and
the observational blockade was only tried as an experiment as stated by
Churchill. 8 Churchill is also correct in claiming that he was opposed to the
latter policy for soon after it was tried he wrote, "a system of
intermediate blockade by means of a long and stationary cordon is not
practicable for the purposes of a war with a North Sea Naval Power and is to
be avoided on general grounds as involving a serious misuse of various
classes of vessels with great resulting waste of war power." 9 It is hard
to believe that with this attitude of Churchill's the observational blockade

(1) The World Crisis, p. 115.
(2) Churchill's section on blockade policy (p.112-114) was originally the
introduction to a chapter entitled "Naval War Policy 1917". The main
subject of that chapter was the capture of a German Island for the purpose
of re-introducing the close blockade, Churchill Papers 8/60.
(3) Marder, A.J., Scapa Flow V.1, p.371.
(4) Ibid., p. 372.
(5) Ibid., p. 373-377.
(6) Ibid., p. 371.
(7) Memorandum by Naval War Staff 16/9/12, Adm. 116/866B.
(8) See memorandum by the War Staff quoted above.
(9) "Notes on The Manoeuvres; Prepared For the Prime Minister by The First
Lord" 17/10/12, Adm. 116/3381.
could have remained as official Admiralty policy for another 20 months.

Nevertheless, Marder is correct in pointing to the fact that Churchill tried on occasions to re-introduce the close blockade. It was noted that in The World Crisis Churchill admitted to being unhappy with the distant blockade but no examples are given by him of his attempts to return to the earlier policy. For example, he could have quoted his memorandum to Prince Louis of 17th February 1913 in which he advocated a close blockade of the Elbe for the period in which the Expeditionary Force was crossing to France.¹

This proposition was demolished by papers from Jackson and Richmond but, as Marder says, this did not deter Churchill and on the eve of war we find him calling for plans for a close blockade on the German Coast with or without the capture of a German island as a base.²

East Coast Bases

It is a curious fact that in August 1914 the Grand Fleet "incomparably the greatest assemblage of naval power...in the history of the world"³ did not have an anchorage which was completely secure against attack by surface craft or submarine.

In The World Crisis Churchill offers two explanations for this state of affairs. The first is that coast defence was in the province of the War Office and they were very loath to spend money on fixed defences within Britain. This led to endless disputes with the Admiralty who finally had to undertake the defence of Cromarty themselves.⁴ The second explanation offered is "Up till the end of September, 1914, no one seriously contemplated hostile submarines in time of war entering the war harbours of either side and attacking the ships at anchor".⁵ If this had been foreseen and anti-

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¹ Cited in Marder, p. 373.
² Ibid., p. 377.
³ The World Crisis, p. 153.
⁴ Ibid., p. 121N.
⁵ Ibid., p. 343.
submarine defences recommended, Churchill states, he would have been prepared to proceed, despite the enormous expense involved.\(^1\) For example, had Jellicoe foreseen any of the dangers mentioned in "The Grand Fleet" he could easily have brought them to the attention of the First Lord.\(^2\) In any case "Scapa was believed to be protected by its currents from submarine attack."\(^3\)

Are these adequate explanations for the lack of defences on the East Coast on the outbreak of war?

The relative merits of Scapa Flow and Cromarty as bases and their defence were under consideration by the Admiralty in early 1912 and it was suggested by them that the whole question of east coast bases be referred to a sub-committee of the C.I.D., the Home Ports Defence Committee (H.P.D.C.).\(^4\)

It should be noted that in the letter to the HPDC the Admiralty mentioned that the defences envisaged were to be against cruisers and torpedo craft\(^5\) but at the first meeting of this body Churchill stated that the Admiralty were concerned at the cost of the defences. He said the Admiralty attached much greater importance to Cromarty than to Scapa and he was prepared to abandon the defence of the latter if the cost exceeded £400,000.\(^6\) In fact the cost as stated by the War Office was closer to £1 million.\(^7\) This Churchill refused to accept. At the next meeting of the C.I.D. he said that as far as Scapa was concerned the Admiralty were trying to come to "some less ambitious arrangements" but he advised that work be commenced at once on Cromarty as

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(1) The World Crisis, p. 344.
(2) Ibid., p. 345.
(3) Ibid., p. 342.
(4) Minute by Ballard (D.O.D.) 24/2/12, Adm. 116/1293. Work on the Rosyth base continued throughout this period but its completion was not envisaged before 1916 (Report of Standing Sub-Committee on North-East Coast Defences 29/11/12, Cab. 38/22/41). Work on the base commenced in 1903 and the reason for the long delay in its completion was that Fisher had work stopped on it for 5 years. He thought it "the most damnable spot on earth". (Fisher to Beatty 6/1/15, Beatty Papers). It was also obvious by 1912 that even when completed Rosyth could not accommodate the entire Grand Fleet.
(5) Admiralty to HPDC 23/2/12 and 28/2/12, Cab. 38/20/2.
(6) Minutes of Standing Sub-Committee on North East Coast Defences - 1st Meeting 2/5/12, Cab. 38/22/41.
(7) Memorandum by Troubridge (C.O.S.) 7/6/12, Adm. 116/1293.
the matter was very urgent. At this point Lloyd George complained that the Treasury had not had an opportunity to examine the Cromarty proposals and Asquith thereupon referred the whole question back to the Cabinet. There the matter rested until the C.I.D. Sub-Committee reported in November 1912. It recommended Cromarty be developed as a second class naval base with a floating dock and fixed defences. Scapa should not have fixed defences but "If required by the Navy for use as a temporary naval base, the Admiralty...[should] be responsible for its defence". To expedite the defence of Cromarty the Admiralty agreed to undertake the work.

As soon as this firm decision had been taken in favour of Cromarty, expert opinion at the Admiralty began to change. The new Chief of Staff, Sir Henry Jackson, stated that he regarded Scapa as an important base and recommended fixed defences be erected there as soon as possible. In fact this had been suggested as long ago as June 1912 by his predecessor Troubridge, but his report had been ignored. An Admiralty committee was set up and recommended fixed defences of guns, searchlights and a small garrison of troops. However, no agreement could be reached between the Admiralty and the War Office about who should pay for and install these defences. No action was taken and finally the War Staff wrote another paper urging that a decision be made. They argued that Cromarty was much inferior to Scapa as a war anchorage. This paper brought a stinging rebuke from Churchill. He reminded Prince Louis that it was on his and

(1) Minutes of the C.I.D. 1/8/12, Cab. 38/22/33.
(2) Ibid. Wilson says Lloyd George's intervention led to a "sharp disagreement" between him and Churchill. Diary of Sir Henry Wilson 1/8/12, DS/Misc/80/5.
(3) Report of Standing Sub-Committee on North East Coast Defences 29/11/12, Cab. 38/22/41.
(4) Minute by Jackson 22/2/13, Adm. 116/1293.
(5) Note by Chief of State on Scapa Flow 7/6/12, Adm. 116/1293.
Bridgeman's recommendation that the Admiralty had argued in favour of
Cromarty at the C.I.D. The Admiralty would destroy its credit with that
body in now arguing for Scapa. He suggested, "It ought to be possible to
make a case for some light armament at Scapa without reflecting upon the
Admiralty policy in regard to Cromarty." This policy was then adopted.
But by July 1914 the Admiralty appeared to have changed their mind again.
They then informed the C.I.D. that they were reluctant to abandon the idea
of protecting Scapa Flow and asked that the whole question be re-examined in
the near future. Unfortunately for the Admiralty time had run out and
Scapa Flow entered the war substantially undefended.

Meanwhile Admiralty work at Cromarty had run into several difficulties.
Although it had been decided in December 1912 to install guns, searchlights,
boom defences and a floating dock by April 1913 negotiations to acquire
the land on which these installations were to be built were still proceeding.
On the eve of war gun trials had to be cancelled because of a court case
involving the compensation paid for the land. Difficulties with the boom
defence meant that this was just in place when war broke out. However, the
defences here as they applied to surface craft were far in advance of those
at Scapa by the time the bases were occupied by the Fleet in August 1914.

Thus the sequence of events as unfolded here is substantially different
from that related by Churchill in The World Crisis. As far as Scapa is
concerned we have seen that it was the Admiralty, and not the War Office as
Churchill contended, who first objected to the cost of fixed defences. It

(1) This recommendation is contained in a paper "Establishment of a
Secondary Naval Base at Cromarty" in Adm. 1/8394/330.
(2) Churchill to Prince Louis 21/11/13, Adm. 116/1293.
(3) Minute by Jackson 24/11/13, Adm. 116/1293.
(4) Admiralty to the Secretary C.I.D. July 1914, Adm. 116/1293.
(5) Memorandum by Troubridge (Chief of Staff) on Cromarty 10/12/12, Adm.
116/1307.
(6) Minutes of a meeting of the Cromarty Co-ordination Committee (C.C.C.)
(8) See C.C.C. Progress Report 20/1/14, in Ibid.
Cromarty and then changing their minds. Then it was Churchill who retarded development even more by playing down the need for elaborate defences in order to save face with the C.I.D. Finally, when a correct policy was arrived at it was too late.

On the other hand Churchill's account is more reasonable in regard to Cromarty. The Admiralty tried to get work commenced there in early 1912 and finally undertook the work themselves to prevent delay. However, here it was the Treasury under Churchill's colleague Lloyd George rather than the War Office which objected to the cost. Difficulties with the purchase of the land and the boom defence hindered the work but at least it was well in hand by the Autumn of 1914.

Thus in relation to the provision of defences against surface attacks Churchill's account cannot be accepted. What of his contention that no one foresaw the need for defences against submarines because submarines had neither the range nor the capacity to penetrate harbours? It was known as early as 1910 that a submarine could traverse the North Sea and, indeed, under Churchill's administration plans had been drawn up to use submarines to maintain a close blockade of the German coast. After the 1913 manoeuvres Admiral May warned that locating the fleet in northern bases would not render them immune from submarine attack. Finally in June 1914 the Secretary of the H.P.D.C. (Barry Domville) suggested to the Admiralty that they might want the matter of submarine attack on ports re-opened in the light of recent submarine development. Thus there were many indications in the pre-war years that submarines would have the range to reach the northern British bases, and on this point The World Crisis is misleading. It surely needed not such a great effort of the imagination to surmise that if submarines could reach British bases, then they would attempt to penetrate the bases themselves on the grounds that the target was worth the hazard. However, Churchill seems to be correct in stating that he received no recommendations

(1) Manoeuvres 1913: Report of The Umpire-in-Chief [Admiral May], Adm. 116/3381.
(2) Secretary H.P.D.C. to Admiralty 11/6/14, Adm. 137/968.
even from Jellicoe to make these harbours submarine proof. (There is now evidence that the staff thought the tides on the approaches to Scapa would prevent submarines from attacking the base but this was never investigated and was later found to be false.) The Donville recommendation of course came too late to affect the position before war broke out and it is to Churchill's credit that after receiving this letter he recommended, against the advice of the staff, that a committee be set up to investigate the whole question of protecting harbours against the submarine.

**Invasion Planning**

Little need be said about Churchill's section on the Invasion Enquiry of 1913-14 in *The World Crisis*. It largely consists of three papers written by him on the problem of preventing German raids on forts or installations along the east coast. He says that two more papers on this subject "The Time-Table of a Nightmare" and "A Bolt from the Grey" have not been included because of lack of space. In fact these two papers were included in the original version of the chapter. However, one of Churchill's advisers wrote on the proof, "I think on no circs should the "nightmare" be included". Later it was put in an appendix and then dropped altogether. No doubt it was found that the publication of these papers on German raids into Britain which were cast in the form of "shilling shockers" would not enhance Churchill's reputation. Even at the time they were ridiculed by the Naval Staff. *Timetable of a Nightmare* was first published

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(1) See Note by the Chief of Staff on Scapa Flow 7/6/12, Adm. 116/1293.
(2) Churchill's statement that Scapa was protected by the currents must refer to the areas around the base. There are no currents within the Flow.
(3) Note by Leveson (D.O.D.) and Jackson (C.O.S.) against proceeding with Domville's suggestion 17/6/14, Adm. 137/968.
(4) Note by Churchill overruling them 10/7/14, Adm. 137/968.
(5) *The World Crisis*, p. 120-131.
(6) Ibid., p. 120.
in Volume II of the Official Biography in 1968.\(^1\) Bolt from the Grey has to my knowledge never been published.

**Conclusion**

Three major criticisms can be made of these chapters of *The World Crisis*. Perhaps the most important is that Churchill consistently over-emphasises his own role and initiatives at the pre-war Admiralty. This is particularly noticeable in his section on the Admirals in which we are regaled with nautical anecdotes about four or five of the leading figures without a balancing discussion of their work at the Admiralty. The work of Jellicoe, perhaps the most important of Churchill's Sea Lords during this period, is not discussed at all. By this method Churchill is able to discuss policy initiatives almost entirely in terms of his own ideas. In the field of technical design it was shown that on some occasions his role was not the central one that he later claimed. Finally in the areas of Anglo-German relations, Churchill's claim to be one of the originators of the Haldane mission has been found to be almost certainly erroneous while the importance of his naval holiday proposals is greatly exaggerated.

A second criticism is that subjects of importance are often omitted from *The World Crisis*. Thus in the section on material design there is nothing on the design of shells and torpedoes. Also omitted is the development of the plan to transport the army to France and the development (or lack of it) of the East Coast bases. It is worth noting that in all these areas it was found that the policies adopted by Churchill were open to serious criticisms.

Other topics which are included in *The World Crisis* are often misleading due to partial omissions. A good example of this is Churchill's treatment of his airship policy in which all the vacillations and changes in priority are concealed. Furthermore it is not clear from *The World Crisis* that

Churchill's Mediterranean policy received several setbacks or that the economies forced on him by the Cabinet during the 1914 estimates crisis were quite substantial.

In other areas Churchill's account is found to be more reliable than some recent critics would have us believe. It has been shown that Churchill's contention that the Naval War Staff failed to develop because of the lack of suitable personnel is correct and that his version of the development of blockade policy is to be preferred to that given by Arthur Marder. However, even in these areas it was seen that Churchill did not hesitate to omit material that was likely to be detrimental to himself. Thus there is nothing on his attempt to re-introduce the close blockade or on his conflicts with the War Staff.

The latter point brings us to an important feature of these chapters of The World Crisis. It is noticeable that Churchill has almost completely avoided mentioning the various conflicts involving him and his naval and Cabinet colleagues, which were found to be a fairly constant theme in those years. For example the disputes with Bridgeman which eventually led to his resignation are not mentioned; there is nothing on the Poore affair or other areas of disagreement with Jellicoe; the names of Churchill's opponents during the 1914 estimates crisis are not disclosed; McKenna's name is not mentioned in the 1912 dispute over the Mediterranean. Even when a conflict is admitted, as with Lloyd George over the 1914 estimates, the disagreement is minimized. Why has Churchill adopted this approach? The obvious answer is that it is to Churchill's advantage to exclude these disputes. The quarrel with Bridgeman was not very edifying whoever is held to have been in the right. The Poore affair perhaps showed Churchill at his worst, petulant and overbearing. Other disputes had perhaps more substance but a discussion of them would have revealed that Churchill had been defeated over the Mediterranean issue and had to make substantial concessions over the 1914 estimates. It was also suggested that Churchill had contemporary
political reasons for minimizing his conflicts with Lloyd George. These
then are excellent reasons for Churchill excluding these disagreements
from The World Crisis. However, there may be another reason. In a book
which purported to be about high strategy and politics Churchill could
easily exclude the Bridgeman and Poore affairs on the grounds that they
were too petty to be included. The World Crisis must not be allowed to sink
to such a level that Admiralty administration is seen in terms of
personalities. In other words Churchill the historian must stand back from
Churchill the participant to obtain a truer perspective on events. In
support of this supposition is the fact that Churchill also omitted from
The World Crisis facets of his work which have won much praise from
historians and which if included could only have enhanced his reputation.
These areas can perhaps be described as Churchill's social reforms. The
major improvements were increases in pay for the lower deck, the mate
system of promotion from the ranks, comprehensive reform and easment of
disciplinary procedures and a new system for the education of midshipmen
and cadets.¹ Not one of these important reforms is mentioned in The World
Crisis. Obviously Churchill thought that they would be out of place in a
work on strategy and politics. It is suggested that some of the conflicts
between Churchill and his colleagues fall into the same category and there-
fore their exclusion is not as self-serving as it first appears.

¹ See Gretton P., Former Naval Person, Chapter 5.
THE ESCAPE OF THE GOEBEN

It will be remembered that Churchill's decision to concentrate the bulk of the Fleet in the North Sea facing Germany left the British with only three Invincible class battle-cruisers and four heavy cruisers in the Mediterranean. The War Orders for this Fleet stated that its major task would be to watch the entrance of the Adriatic for the Austrian Fleet while the French transported their North African Army from Algeria to Marseilles. The British Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean was Sir Berkeley Milne whom Churchill had appointed to his command in 1912. At the time he assured the King that the appointment would "greatly conduce to the advantage of the Service". However the appointment was controversial. Milne had done little in his career to distinguish himself though he had commanded the Royal yacht. Fisher advised Churchill that Milne was unfitted for his command and by 1913 Churchill apparently agreed with this assessment. Towards the end of the year he told Asquith that he intended to terminate Milne's command one year early and offer him a posting ashore. These arrangements were about to be put into effect when war broke out. In the emergency it was decided that Milne should remain in the Mediterranean and his successor, Sir Henry Jackson, was seconded to the Admiralty.

During 1914 the British position in the Mediterranean was complicated by the presence of the German battle-cruiser Goeben. The Goeben was a more modern type than the British battle-cruisers, being faster and more heavily armoured. She was accompanied by the light cruiser Breslau and both ships

1. Churchill and Prince Louis - Comments on Instructions For Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean 9/12/12, and 27/12/12, Adm. 116/3109.
2. Churchill to the King 28/3/12, C.V.2, p. 1536.
3. Fisher to Churchill 22/4/12, in Ibid., p. 1545.
5. Note by Rear-Admiral Hood 10/7/14, Adm. 1/8384/184. Jackson was to be appointed from August 29th.
were stationed at the Austrian Port of Pola. It was realized by the Admiralty that unless the Goeben was closely watched, in the event of war she might slippast the slower British Squadron and fall on the French transports. Therefore on the 30th. of July, when it appeared that war between Germany and the Entente Powers was likely, the Admiralty amended the War Orders for the Mediterranean and sent the following telegram to Milne:

"It is especially important that your squadron should not be seriously engaged with Austrian ships before we know what Italy will do. Your first task should be to aid the French in the transportation of their African Army by covering, and if possible, bringing to action individual fast German ships, particularly Goeben, who may interfere with that transportation. You will be notified by telegraph when you may consult with the French Admiral. Do not at this stage be brought to action against superior forces, except in combination with the French, as part of a general battle. The speed of your squadrons is sufficient to enable you to choose your moment...and you must husband your force at the outset."

This telegram is worth quoting at length because future mistakes and misunderstandings can be traced back to the ambiguities which it contained. Confusion is always likely to result when a commander is told to accomplish one thing (protecting the French transports) by doing another (covering the Goeben). Also "covering" is a very vague word which might mean "shadowing" the German ship or merely guarding the approaches to the French Fleet. Throughout this period Milne chose the latter interpretation, which was certainly a legitimate reading of his orders.

A further ambiguity in the message was that the "superior forces" mentioned were not defined, although the Admiralty apparently meant the Austrian Fleet. This interpretation is arrived at in the following way; the Admiralty had discounted Italian involvement and they regarded the German Squadron as faster than both the British and the French. The Austrain Fleet was slower than both and therefore the Admiralty reasoned that Milne could "choose his moment" to engage it, using his superior speed to decline

(1) Admiralty to Milne 30/7/14, Adm. 137/19.
action "except in combination with the French". Not surprisingly Milne was not in the habit of subjecting Admiralty telegrams to this form of textual analysis and he apparently missed this point completely. It should also be noted that the Admiralty telegram contained two cautions for the British commanders; "do not be brought to action by superior forces" and "husband your forces at the outset". These cautions were to produce unfortunate consequences later.

As war became more likely, further instructions were sent to Milne. On August 2nd. he was told that when the Goeben was located (she was thought to be at Pola in the Adriatic) she was to be shadowed by two battle-cruisers and the watch on the Adriatic left to the cruisers and destroyers. Milne was to remain at Malta in the Inflexible.\(^1\) The next day this order was reinforced. "Goeben is your objective. Follow her and shadow her wherever she goes."\(^2\) Milne's original order, to protect the French transports, was not rescinded however, and Milne says he considered that this instruction still stood.\(^3\)

Later that day Milne learned that the Goeben and Breslau had arrived at the Italian port of Messina on August 2nd.\(^4\) He ordered a light cruiser to go through the straits and report but by this time the German ships had gone.\(^5\)

The Admiralty too had learned that the Goeben had left Messina. They became convinced that the ship was going to break into the Atlantic and signalled Milne, "The two battle-cruisers [Indomitable and Indefatigable] must proceed to Straits of Gibraltar at high speed to prevent Goeben leaving Mediterranean."\(^6\) The Admiralty now had apparently abandoned their plan to use the battle-cruisers to protect the French transports and although Milne

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(1) Admiralty to Milne 2/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
(2) Admiralty to Milne 3/8/14, Ibid.
(4) Milne to Troubridge 3/8/14, Milne Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MLN204.
(5) Chatham to Milne and Troubridge 3/8/14, Milne Papers, MLN. 204.
still considered this to be his primary duty, he did not query the Admiralty change of priorities.

The Goeben and Breslau had left Messina by the northern channel on August 2nd. On the 3rd. Admiral Souchon, the German Commander, was informed that France and Germany were at war and he proceeded to bombard the French North African ports of Bone and Philippeville. Soon after this action the Indomitable and Indefatigable, on their way to Gibraltar, fell in with the German ships. Britain was now on the brink of war with Germany and the Admiralty ordered Milne to "hold" the Goeben and await events. Later Milne was ordered to attack the Goeben if she attempted to interfere with the French transports. This was a very serious step for Britain and Germany were not yet at war and although it was supported by Asquith and Grey, Cabinet sanction had not yet been obtained. Nor were the Cabinet disposed to provoke Germany and after a meeting later on the 4th. Churchill was instructed to cancel those orders immediately.

In any case the Goeben showed no inclination to attack the French transports, and with the two British battle-cruisers shadowing, she turned and headed back towards Messina. Because of faulty boiler tubes the Goeben could only sustain a speed of 18 knots but by utilizing almost the entire ships company to stoke the boilers a speed of 24 knots could be reached for short periods. These bursts of speed proved too much for the British ships and gradually the Germans drew away. By 4.35 p.m. on August 4th. they were out of sight.

Britain and Germany were now at war and Milne, assuming that the Goeben

(1) Indomitable to Milne 4/8/14, Milne Papers, MLN. 204.
(2) Admiralty to Milne 4/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
(3) Admiralty to Milne 4/8/14, Ibid.
(6) Ibid. See also, Kopp G., Two Lone Ships, London, Hutchinson, 1931, p. 30. Kopp was a radio operator on the Goeben.
(7) Milne to the Admiralty 7/8/14, Adm. 137/879.
had returned to Messina, began to make his dispositions to bring her to action when she left. In positioning his ships he had to take into account an Admiralty telegram of August 4th, warning him to respect "rigidly" Italian neutrality and not to allow any of his ships to come within six miles of the Italian coast. This instruction obviously prevented Milne from following the Goeben into the straits of Messina and his position was further complicated by the fact that the Indomitable had to coal. Milne therefore sent her to the French port of Bizerta with orders to join the Inflexible and Indefatigable on a patrol line to the west of Sicily. The light cruiser Gloucester was sent to watch the southern entrance of the Straits of Messina. Clearly the need to protect the French transports was still dominant in Milne's mind. He had placed all three battle-cruisers in a position to protect the French but only one light cruiser to prevent the Goeben from breaking to the east. This decision could also have been effected by an earlier report that a German collier was anchored at Majorca, well to the west of Sicily. An alternative course was open to Milne. He could have sent the Indomitable to Malta to coal and then ordered her to join Gloucester at the southern end of the Straits. Admiral Troubridge and the heavy cruisers which were watching the Adriatic might have been called upon to support this force. However, Milne had no reason to suspect that the Goeben would attempt to break to the East. As far as he knew only neutral or countries potentially hostile to Germany lay in that direction. On the other hand the Admiralty were aware that a high state of tension existed between Britain and Turkey over the seizure by Britain of two battleships being built for Turkey. It was also known in London that the Turkish army had mobilized under German direction. With this

(1) Admiralty to Milne 4/8/14, Adm. 137/879.
(2) Milne to the Admiralty 4/8/14, Ibid.
(3) Milne to Indomitable 4/8/14, Milne Papers, MLN. 204.
information at their disposal it might be thought that the Admiralty would have informed Milne that Turkey was a possible refuge for the Goeben or at least passed on the available information to the Admiral. The Admiralty did neither. Nor did they comment on Milne's dispositions around Messina when he telegraphed them to London, although it must have been perfectly obvious that the eastern exit of the Straits was open. In the event Milne's dispositions were approved and he was merely told to maintain his watch on the Adriatic.\(^1\) Of course if Milne had sent Indomitable to the southern entrance to the Straits it does not automatically follow that a successful result would have been obtained. The ensuing contest would have been remarkably even with the odds slightly in favour of the Goeben because of her heavier armour.

In fact all through this period Milne had been tenaciously pursuing a totally unnecessary task for the French transports had not yet left port.\(^2\) As early as August 2nd. the Admiralty had told Milne to get in touch with the French Senior Naval Officer for "combined action"\(^3\) but despite persistent attempts by W/T, Milne had failed to contact the French and had neglected to inform the Admiralty of this breakdown in communications. Meanwhile the Admiralty had made no effort to communicate with the French independently. In Whitehall, the Foreign Office, through the British Ambassador to France, had known since midday on August 4th that the French transports were still in harbour, but they did not pass this information on to the Admiralty.\(^4\) Moreover the French neither wanted nor expected help from Milne. When transportation did begin the entire French Fleet was disposed along the transport line and the French considered this to be ample security. They even offered Milne the services of four cruisers, "if you can employ while

\begin{itemize}
\item[(1)] Admiralty to Milne 5/8/14, Adm. 137/879.
\item[(2)] The Mediterranean 1914-15, Naval Staff Monographs (Historical) No. 21, Naval Staff Training and Staff Duties Division, March 1923, p. 264.
\item[(3)] Admiralty to Milne 2/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
\end{itemize}
On the evening of August 6th, the Goeben and Breslau left the Straits of Messina by the southern exit. The light cruiser Gloucester began shadowing the German ships and reported that they were heading for the entrance to the Adriatic. However, their course soon changed towards the east and the Aegean Sea. Milne had been outmanoeuvred. He was still well to the west patrolling the channel between Sicily and Tunisia. The Admiralty immediately gave him permission to chase through the Straits of Messina but Milne's position was such that the more direct route lay around the south coast of Sicily.

At this point a naval action still seemed certain. Troubridge with the First Cruiser Squadron and eight destroyers was ideally placed to intercept the German ships. Alerted by Gloucester, he was travelling south from his patrol line at full speed. He informed Milne that he expected to meet Goeben at 6 a.m. on the 7th. However two hours later he signalled "Am obliged to give up the chase". Why had Troubridge declined battle? He apparently considered that his squadron would have been unable to close the Goeben because of her superior speed, and being outgunned he envisaged his ships being eliminated one by one without the chance of reply. He therefore regarded the Goeben as superior force, which according to the Admiralty telegram of July 20th, he was not to engage. As stated previously it was the Austrian Fleet to which the Admiralty were alluding in this

(1) French Vice-Admiral to Milne 7/8/14, Milne Papers, MLN. 204.
(2) Gloucester to Milne and Troubridge 6/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
(3) Gloucester to Milne and Troubridge 6/8/14, Ibid.
(4) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations, V.1, p. 64.
(5) Admiralty to Milne 6/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
(6) The light cruiser Dublin had attempted a torpedo attack during the night but had missed the Goeben by a few miles in the dark.
(7) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations, V.1, p. 64.
(8) Troubridge to Milne 7/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
(9) Troubridge to Milne 7/8/14, Ibid.
(10) Troubridge to Milne 7/8/14, Ibid.
message but the ambiguity was there and it was never clarified. Troubridge also stated that he was guided by the Admiralty instruction to husband his force at the outset. Another factor which may have influenced Troubridge was the Admiralty instruction of August 4th. to maintain a watch on the Adriatic. An engagement with the Goeben would have left the Adriatic unguarded. However this explanation was not put forward by Troubridge at the time. Finally, Troubridge claimed that he had told Milne on an earlier occasion that his squadron could do nothing against the Goeben and that Milne had said he would be safe as the two battle-cruisers would be with him. Of course Troubridge could have signalled to Milne for instructions, but Troubridge remarked at his court martial that he had learned from experience that the Commander-in-Chief did not welcome suggestions of that kind.

Was Troubridge correct in regarding the Goeben as a superior force? His squadron had a clear superiority in the number of guns (twenty two 9.2", fourteen 7.5", twenty 6") to the Goeben and Breslau, ten 11" and twelve 6" and they fired a heavier broadside (7,480 lbs. to 6,720 lbs. However the 11" guns of the Goeben outranged those of the First Cruiser Squadron although this was offset to some extent by the faster rate of fire of the smaller guns (five rounds per minute against the Goeben's three). Thus Troubridge was correct in thinking his squadron outranged. But he presented four targets to the German ships, and with the difficulty in hitting consistently at long range, it is hard to believe that he would have been unable to bring the German ship to action, and once in action, with

(1) Troubridge to the Admiralty 26/8/14, Adm. 156/110.
(2) Troubridge to Milne 21/8/14, Milne Papers, MLN. 214/7.
(4) Note by the First Sea Lord 7/9/14, Adm. 137/879.
(6) Ibid., p. 353.
(7) Ibid.
a minimum of 22 guns firing the odds were well in favour of scoring hits which at the very least might have disabled the Goeben and allowed Milne time to finish her off.

Partly Troubridge's calculations were bedevilled by the fact that he too assumed that the Goeben could reach her specified speed. Yet he never attempted to put this to the test by chasing her although he had received several readings from the Gloucester which indicated that for most of her journey Goeben was steaming at well under 20 knots, the median speed of his own squadron. ¹

Troubridge also had eight destroyers with him and even though some of them were short of coal, with the Goeben fully occupied by the heavy cruisers, it is possible that one of them could have made an attack with torpedoes.

The German ships had now passed Cape Matapan and entered the Aegean. However Admiral Souchon was not yet out of trouble. He had been informed of the signing of the Turko-German alliance while coaling at Messina, but he now found that the treaty was not yet in operation and permission to proceed through the Dardanelles had not been given. Furthermore he had insufficient coal to reach Constantinople and it would have been necessary to spend a full day coaling before he arrived. ² These facts gave Milne one last chance of catching the Goeben.

We left Milne to the south of Sicily steering east. He then took his three battle-cruisers to Malta to coal. In fact there was no need for Indomitable to coal as she had only completed coaling the day before at Bizerta. ³ Milne could therefore have sent her ahead to scout for the Goeben but his major concern was still the French transports and he wanted all three battle-cruisers in company to prevent the Goeben from breaking back to the west. ⁴ Nor did Milne show any urgency when he left Malta but

¹ See Gloucester to Troubridge 6/8/14, Adm. 137/19.
² Souchon, Admiral W., The Break Through of the Goeben and Breslau, p. 490-1.
³ Narrative of the Indomitable by Captain Kennedy, Kennedy Papers, Kings College, London, ².
⁴ Milne to the Admiralty 26/8/14, Adm. 137/879.
commenced his journey towards the Aegean at a leisurely pace. Even with these delays there was an outside chance that the Goeben could be caught but at this point the Admiralty intervened. A telegram was sent to Milne stating that Britain had declared war on Austria. This was not correct but in this eventuality all British forces had to concentrate against Austria so Milne turned his ships north to join Troubridge at the entrance of the Adriatic. A further telegram to Milne then told him that war had not been declared but yet a third stated that the situation between the two countries was critical. In these circumstances Milne maintained his course. Finally a telegram arrived from the Admiralty ordering him to continue the chase of the Goeben. It was too late. As Milne entered the Aegean Souchon took his ships through the Dardanelles and they arrived before Constantinople the next day.

This incident was the third occasion on which the Admiralty, despite their later claims, chose to make the Goeben a secondary objective. The first was in their original telegram to Milne on July 30th when they layed down that the protection of the French transports was his major function, the second when they approved of Milne's dispositions around Messina. Now in the event of war with Austria they were once again prepared to abandon the Goeben, a strange set of priorities given the importance which they seemed to attach to the German ship in their telegrams to Milne.

To what extent were Milne and Troubridge responsible for the escape of the Goeben or were they merely victims of muddled thinking on the part of their superiors? The case of Milne is instructive. Milne was clearly not a commander of the first rank. Throughout the period he never once sought clarification of his orders from the Admiralty. Nor did he make sure

(1) Narrative of the Indomitable by Captain Kennedy, Kennedy Papers, 2.
(2) Admiralty to Milne 8/8/14 (12.00), Adm. 137/19.
(3) Admiralty to Milne 8/8/14 (13.45) Ibid.
(4) Admiralty to Milne 8/8/14 (6.10) Ibid.
(5) Admiralty to Milne 9/8/14, Ibid.
that Troubridge understood clearly what was expected of him. Also his pursuit of the Goeben after he had coaled at Messina was lacking in vigour and determination. However Milne's difficulties should not be underestimated. In a very short space of time his small squadron was expected to carry out an extensive and bewildering array of tasks by the Admiralty. Thus he was expected to avoid serious engagement with the Austrians until the attitude of Italy was clear (when would that be?), aid the French in transporting their army, bring to action the Goeben in the context of aiding the French, avoid being brought to action by a superior force, and husband his forces. To these instructions were added in the next few days the following: prevent the Goeben breaking out into the Atlantic, avoid breaching Italian neutrality, and concentrate against Austria with which Britain was first said to be at war and said to be not at war but in a critical situation. It is not surprising that he fell back on what seemed to be his fundamental task-placing his force between the French transports and the Goeben. By doing this he also avoided the Austrians, remained outside Italian territorial waters, and was well placed to prevent the Goeben from breaking into the Atlantic. Viewed in this light his dispositions around Messina seem quite sensible, especially as the Admiralty had not informed him of the deteriorating diplomatic situation between Britain and Turkey.

At the time Milne's actions seemed to meet the approval of his superiors. Prince Louis, the First Sea Lord wrote that Milne had "fully grasped the spirit of his instructions and took the best measures with the force at his disposal". The Second Sea Lord also thought Milne's dispositions quite sound. However he was never employed at sea again.

Concerning Troubridge, it is hard to accept his contention that the two

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(1) Memorandum by Prince Louis 27/8/14, Adm. 137/879.
German ships were a superior force to his own eight or more effective units. Sheer weight of numbers must have given him some chance. To a certain extent, however, Troubridge too fell foul of the confusion which characterized the higher direction of the operation. He was never told what constituted a "superior force" and there is some doubt whether Milne intended Troubridge to fight the Goeben without the battle-cruisers. Finally Troubridge was expected to accomplish at least two major tasks (maintain watch on Adriatic, fight the Goeben) with a force barely adequate for one.

The Sea Lords were, however incensed at Troubridge's behaviour, Prince Louis called his action "shameful" and the continuation of his command "a danger to the State". He was therefore recalled and court-martialled but the defence gradually shifted the emphasis of the trial on to the actions of Milne, and Troubridge was exonerated.

As far as the Admiralty are concerned, this was the first operation which they had attempted to control by W/T from London. This lack of experience was obviously a factor in the series of ambiguities in the orders which flowed from Whitehall to the Mediterranean. Churchill must personally take some of this responsibility, for the message of July 30th which caused so much trouble and the reply to Milne's outline of his dispositions on August 5th were both drafted in his hand. Also the Admiralty never seemed to grasp that the bewildering array of orders despatched bore no relation to the size of the British squadron. Furthermore the Admiralty never made a decision on whether their first priority was the destruction of the Goeben, the protection of the French, or the neutralization of the Austrians. They also approved Milne's dispositions without comment and threw away a second chance of catching the Goeben with their series of telegrams about Anglo-Austrian relations. Finally they neglected to inform Milne about the tension existing between Britain and Turkey and thus ensured

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(1) Note by Prince Louis 7/9/14 , Adm. 137/879.
(2) Both documents are in Adm. 137/19.
that the Admiral's attention remained focused on the Western Mediterranean.

Of course the escape of the Goeben would not have mattered had not Turkey entered the war on the German side later in the year. Was the arrival of the German ships the decisive factor? A definite conclusion is not possible but it should be remembered that although the Turko-German alliance had been signed before the arrival of the Goeben it had not been put into effect. The next two months were to see a struggle between Enver and the war party and the pro-allied faction for and against the implementation of this treaty. In the end the situation was resolved by Enver. He sent the two German ships into the Black sea and ordered them to attack the Russian Fleet and shore installations. It was this act that caused the Allies to declare war on Turkey. Thus without the powerful weapon of the German battle-cruiser in his hand, Enver's resolve to enter the war on the German side would certainly have been made more difficult.

The escape of the Goeben shocked public opinion in Britain and damaged Churchill's reputation, the Admiralty being widely blamed for bungling the operation. Moreover the incident became more serious when it was realized that the arrival of the German ships at Constantinople was the first in a series of events which led Turkey into the war against Britain. The publication of The World Crisis gave Churchill his first opportunity to answer his critics. How convincing is his case for the Admiralty?

The Admiralty telegram of July 30th. to Sir Berkeley Milne, which, it will be remembered, contained several important ambiguities, is quoted in full by Churchill. However he is not prepared to admit that Admiralty instructions were anything but clear. He comments that "So far as the English language may serve as a vehicle of thought, the words employed appear to express the intentions we had formed". But if this was the

(1) Marder, A.J., Scapa Flow V.2, p. 41.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 180.
(3) Ibid.
case what was meant by the phrase "covering the Goeben". As was made clear earlier, it was certainly possible to interpret it in more than one way. Churchill also fails to realize that if the "first" task given to Milne was "to aid the French in the transportation of their African Army" and that he was only to bring the Goeben to action "if possible", it should not have been surprising that Milne chose to concentrate on the former task and not the later.

Churchill states that the "superior forces mentioned in the telegram was "clearly shown by the context to refer to the Austrian Fleet". However the only reference to the Austrian Fleet occurs three sentences earlier. In the immediate context of the statement there is no indication of which force was meant.

Further reservations about Churchill's narrative arise from his examination of Milne's dispositions around Messina on August 5th. Churchill does not approve of Milne's actions but he is not prepared to admit that Admiralty instructions may have influenced the Admiral. Churchill clearly expected Milne to close the Straits of Messina with the battle-cruisers but did this not conflict with the Admiralty instruction to respect Italian neutrality "rigidly"? Also what of Milne's contention that his first task was to protect the French transports and that in relation to this task his battle-cruisers were in the best position to achieve that object?

It was noted earlier that by not commenting on Milne's dispositions the Admiralty seemed to approve of them. Churchill attempts to explain this situation by stating that the Admiralty felt Milne needed no further instructions because "The exceedingly prompt manner in which the Goeben had been found, although in the open sea on the 4th had given...the feeling that the Admiral on the spot had a grip of the situation." However Churchill must have been aware that the Goeben had not been located on the 4th because of any actions of the Commander-in-Chief. It will be remembered that the  

(1) The World Crisis, p. 207. 
German ships were discovered as a result of an Admiralty telegram of August 3rd which ordered the *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* to Gibraltar to prevent the *Goeben* from escaping into the Atlantic. That the British fell in with the two ships was merely good luck and owed nothing to the alleged tactical grasp of Milne as Churchill implies. Moreover by not printing the Admiralty telegram of August 3rd Churchill gives the reader no chance of ascertaining the proper sequence of events which led to the location of the *Goeben*. This omission also conceals the fact that by ordering the two battle-cruisers to Gibraltar the Admiralty had at this point apparently abandoned the protection of the French transports.

Although Churchill is critical of Milne in *The World Crisis*, his criticisms are to a certain extent muted. For example in commenting on the alternative strategy open to Milne, of sending one of his battle-cruisers to the southern entrance of the Straits of Messina, Churchill merely says "some authorities have held that it would have been a sensible precaution."¹ and his only comment on Milne's dilatory actions after he had learned that the *Goeben* had escaped towards the east was that Milne proceeded to follow "at a moderate speed".² Yet in an early draft of *The World Crisis* Churchill had been much harder on Milne. It is revealed in the Churchill Papers that concerning Milne's actions while the *Goeben* was at Messina Churchill originally wrote

"He could at any moment after he first suspected that the Goeben was at Messina have telegraphed to the Admiralty in the following sense "I believe Goeben is at Messina. Submit since she has entered Italian territorial waters I may follow her, observing that otherwise I shall be much hampered in my operations." It would not have been unreasonable to expect a Commander-in-Chief to ask the Admiralty a simple vital question like this. One would have expected him to do so, if only for his own protection. He did nothing."³

Later, a further paragraph critical of Milne, which suggested that even after he had discovered that the *Goeben* was at Messina, there was still time

(2) Ibid., p. 209.
(3) Churchill Papers 8/64. The paragraph omitted came after "This belief was correct" on p. 201.
to send one of the battle-cruisers to the southern entrance of the Straits
was also omitted.¹

Why did Churchill omit these criticisms of Milne? There are two
possible explanations. As we noted earlier Milne was a Churchill appointee
and considering the controversy which surrounded the appointment Churchill
might have been concerned to temper his criticisms. For if Milne was made
to look too incompetent Churchill could always be blamed for having appointed
him in the first place. (The World Crisis does not reveal that it was
Churchill who appointed Milne.) Alternatively Churchill may have reasoned
that if he criticised Milne too harshly, critics would point to the Admiralty
statement, issued soon after the escape of the Goeben, which completely
exonerated Milne. Churchill could then be charged with inconsistency or
with being wise after the event. Indeed there is evidence which suggests
that these factors did weigh with Churchill. Initially Churchill did try
and reconcile his criticisms of Milne with the Admiralty communiqué and in
the section of The World Crisis which summed up the actions of Milne, the
Churchill Papers indicated that the following paragraph was originally
included.

"On August 30, 1914 the Admiralty issued a statement that; "The
conduct and dispositions of Sir Berkeley Milne in regard to the
German vessels Goeben and Breslau have been the subject of the
careful examinations of the Board of Admiralty with the result
that their Lordships have approved the measures taken by him
in all respects! I do not attempt to reconcile this statement
with what is written here. I say frankly that I did not have
the time in this intense period of the war to devote the many
hours required to the historical unravelling of this episode.
I had to face new emergencies every day. I therefore accepted
without original investigation the advice tendered me in [a]
... report by the First Sea Lord. The report stated [that Milne
fully grasped the spirit of his instructions and took the best
measures with the force at his disposal.] I cannot but feel
that this approval was couched in too sweeping terms. No doubt
the Admiral acted as he thought best: no doubt he was to some
extent baffled by his instructions: no doubt events happened
with a surprising suddenness: no doubt in a strict and literal
sense he carried out his orders. But the facts are upon record.
Sir Berkeley Milne was the first British Admiral in the Great

¹ Churchill Papers 8/64 The paragraph omitted came after the sentence ending,"the presence of the Goeben at Messina", on p. 201.
War to whom golden opportunity presented herself in vain. He was not to be the last.\(^1\)

On reflection Churchill drastically pruned this paragraph, omitting everything except the Admiralty statement. His reasons for this action are not difficult to find. The deleted paragraph contained the only admission by Churchill that Milne might have been "baffled by his instructions." This directly contradicted Churchill's confident statement earlier in The World Crisis that Milne's orders were quite clear. Furthermore, once the point is admitted that Milne's orders were unclear and indeed contradictory most of the criticisms made of him (that he should have closed up the Straits of Messina, that he should have concentrated at all times on the Goeben, that he should have ignored Italian neutrality) largely lose their force. Obviously Churchill could not let the admission stand without changing the whole tone of his account and this he was not prepared to do.

The deleted paragraph also contained a criticism of Prince Louis for summing up too favourably to Milne. Churchill have thought that it was injudicious and unkind, given the circumstances surrounding the removal of Prince Louis from office, to cast doubts about his professional ability. Also as the Dardanelles chapters will make clear, Churchill was anxious to avoid the charge that he was continually challenging or overruling the advice given to him by his naval colleagues. The line followed in The World Crisis is that far from ignoring his professional advisers he almost invariably had their support for the actions which he took. To foster this impression all mention of his disagreement with Prince Louis was removed from The World Crisis. Furthermore it will be seen that this was not the last time Churchill is solicitous of the reputation of Prince Louis in The World Crisis. Apparently his aim was to build up the idea of a small group of first rate men removed from office by ill-informed and malicious campaigns.

Alternatively Churchill may have wanted to show that Prince Louis represented (1) Churchill Papers 704. This paragraph was replaced by the second paragraph on p. 208.
a naval officer of the first rank with whom he had been able to work, thus proving that such a combination was possible.

Churchill's criticisms of Admiral Troubridge follow the same lines as those of Milne. Churchill argues that the First Cruiser Squadron was a force well able to engage the Goeben with a reasonable chance of success, which, as we saw earlier it probably was. However, Churchill is not willing to admit that confusing Admiralty instructions, in this case the "superior forces" telegram and the order to "husband your forces at the outset", might have played a role in the Admiral's decision to decline battle. Nor does he admit the force of Troubridge's contention that British naval interests would not be served by the elimination of the British Cruiser Squadron by a single German ship in the first week of the war. Once, again, however, Churchill is not excessively hard on the local commander. Churchill gives the impression that this incident was the one blemish in an otherwise distinguished career and he gives full acknowledgement to Troubridge's later work in the war. Of course Churchill knew Troubridge well. He had brought him to the Admiralty in 1912 as the first chief of staff in the new Admiralty organisation and the two men had worked together for almost two years. This fact may have had the effect of softening Churchill's criticisms.

The first draft of this chapter of The World Crisis throws some light on the way Churchill strove for effect in the phrases which he used. His initial comment on Troubridge's opinion that the Goeben was a superior force to his squadron was, "To the lay mind this seems an extreme view". He then obviously thought that this comment might be construed as an uninformed civilian criticism of a professional naval officer on a technical point. As this was a charge often levelled at Churchill he would clearly want to avoid it. So he changed the sentence to read "Some authorities hold this to be an

(2) Ibid., p. 203-4.
(3) Ibid., p. 204.
(4) Churchill Papers 8/64.
extreme view". Finally he decided that this too did not carry the required weight and in the published version of *The World Crisis* the sentence reads, "This is thought by some naval officers to be an extreme view".2

The modification of the criticisms of Milne and Troubridge in *The World Crisis* has the advantage for Churchill of giving his account the appearance of impartiality. He attempted to add to this effect by pointing to some instances where the Admiralty was at fault. These are identified as; the failure to get into touch with the French Admiralty at the beginning of the war and the failure to order Milne into the Straits of Messina as soon as it was known that the *Goeben* was there on August 5th.3 However these are rather hypothetical errors. The first assumes that Milne would have acted differently if he had been aware that the French transports were still in harbour. But we know from Milne's own statement that his main concern after leaving Malta to pursue the *Goeben* was that the German battle-cruiser would break back to the west and by this time he was well aware of the position of the French transports.4 The second "error" postulates that it would have been possible to fight a naval action either in Messina harbour or in the narrow waters of the Straits without irrevocably alienating the Italian Government, supposing of course that Cabinet approval could have been obtained for such an act in the first place. Both were in fact very dubious assumptions.

There is a further error on the part of the Admiralty which Churchill is prepared to admit. This was the incident in which the telegram was sent out wrongly informing Milne that Britain had declared war on Austria. Although Churchill states that this error took place at the Admiralty he places most of the blame on an unseen and malign force, The Fates, which even then was working against British policy in the Middle East. He wrote

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1 Churchill Papers 8/64.
"At this juncture the Fates moved a blameless and punctilious Admiralty clerk to declare war upon Austria."¹ This statement hardly leaves on the mind of the reader the impression of bungling by the higher echelons of the Admiralty. But if the clerk was blameless then whose mistake was it? Furthermore Churchill's account does not reveal that although "the mistake was repaired a few hours later"² the third telegram (situation still critical) directed Milne's attention back to the Austrian Fleet and that it took a fourth message to make the position clear.

In a memorable passage Churchill expands on his argument concerning the Austrian telegram and proceeds to blame the whole episode of the escape of the Goeben and Breslau on the Fates.

"In all this story of the escape of the Goeben one seems to see the influence/that sinister fatality which at a later stage and on a far larger of scale was to dog the enterprise against the Dardanelles. The terrible 'If's accumulate. If my first thoughts on July 27 of sending the New Zealand to the Mediterranean had materialized; if we could have opened fire on the Goeben during the afternoon of August 4; if we had been less solicitous for Italian neutrality; if Sir Berkeley Milne had sent the Indomitable to coal at Malta instead of Biserta; if the Admiralty had sent him direct instructions when on the night of the 5th they learned where the Goeben was; if Rear Admiral Troubridge in the small hours of August 7 had not changed his mind; if the Dublin and her two destroyers had intercepted the enemy during the night of the 6th-7th-the story of the Goeben would have ended here."³

But if any of these "interventions of fate" had not taken place would the results have been as decisive as Churchill would have us believe? To take Churchill's first "if"; would the presence of a fourth battle-cruiser in the Mediterranean have been decisive? or is it not more than likely that Milne would have used it to place a fourth battle-cruiser between the French transports and the Goeben, thus still leaving the eastern route open? Churchill's second third and fifth "if" postulate that the Cabinet would have acted in an entirely uncharacteristic way in precipitating war with Germany and condoning the flagrant violation of Italian neutrality. The fourth "if" rests on the supposition that the Indomitable would have sunk the Goeben.

(1) The World Crisis, p. 209.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid., p. 208-9.
single-handed and the seventh "if" on the fact that the Dublin could have successfully torpedoed the Goeben before being blown out of the water. Both were in fact very dubious propositions. Thus when these accidents of fate, the terrible "if's", are examined closely they tend to collapse rather than accumulate.

In The World Crisis Churchill assigns the responsibility for the escape of the Goeben to Milne, Troubridge and accidents of fate, with the Admiralty making a minor contribution. However, as has been shown a more impartial assessment would place much more emphasis on the actions of the Admiralty and how they affected the local commanders, greatly reduce the liability of Milne, and not seek refuge in paranormal explanations for perfectly ordinary events. Nevertheless Churchill has been able to construct a convincing case and it is worth investigating briefly how he has managed to do this. Firstly he has been aided by the fact that Milne and Troubridge were not the most brilliant of naval commanders. However much they were hampered by Admiralty instructions there is always the feeling that they could have exercised greater initiative. Secondly Churchill has given his account a semblance of impartiality. He has tempered his criticisms of Milne and Troubridge to the extent of not placing upon them the whole blame for the fiasco and he has not attempted to conceal the fact that errors were made by the Admiralty. However where his account is deficient is in his consistent claim that the Admiralty instructions were clear, in ignoring the extent to which the decisions arrived at by the local commanders were governed by the multiplicity and confused nature of those instructions, and in never grasping the fact that the British Mediterranean squadron was woefully deficient for the tasks it was set in the early weeks of the war.
Pacific Preliminaries

In the far east, the outbreak of war found the British China Squadron decidedly inferior to its German equivalent. The German Squadron, commanded by Admiral von Spee, consisted of the heavy cruisers, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, and the light cruisers Emden and Nurnberg. The armoured cruisers were relatively modern ships, built in 1907-8. Their armament consisted of 8 x 8.2" (range 13,500 yards) and 6 x 5.9" (range 11,200 yards) guns and they could attain the good speed of 23 knots.¹ The light cruisers were a knot faster, and had 10 x 4.1" guns which were modern in type and had a range of over 10,000 yards.² The squadron formed a compact, homogeneous unit. It had won prizes for gunnery and was trained to peak efficiency by von Spee.

Against this force the British could raise only a motley collection of three ships. Centrepiece of the British force was the battleship Triumph, a hybrid type built for Chile in 1902, and purchased by Britain a year later. Its 4 x 10" and 14 x 7.5" guns had a shorter range than von Spee's 8 x 8.2" and although the nominal speed of the Triumph was 20 knots it had been many years since that speed had been attained.³ Moreover the journey from England to Hong Kong in 1913 had revealed many faults in the ship and on arrival it had been demobilized for an extensive refit.⁴ The ship was quickly recommissioned on the outbreak of war but was manned by a scratch crew which could only be completed by using members of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.⁵ The Minotaur was a more modern ship, roughly equivalent to the Scharnhorst or Gneisenau, although its 9.2" and 7.5" guns were outranged

(2) Ibid.
(3) Jane Fred T., Fighting Ships 1914, p. 48.
(5) Jerram to the Admiralty 12/8/14, Adm. 1/8365/7.
by the German ships.¹ The Hampshire was an older type of heavy cruiser capable of fighting the German light cruisers but hardly able to stand up to the gun power of the heavier German units. It can be seen that the British squadron, with its three ships of varying speeds and armaments, did not form a fighting force capable of matching the crack German squadron. Yet it was supposedly British policy to maintain in China a fleet superior to that of the strongest European power.² How had this discrepancy come about?

Pre-war British naval policy in the Pacific had originally been based on the premise that by 1914 there would be three "fleet units" in the area. Each unit was to consist of 1 battle-cruiser, 3 other cruisers, 6 destroyers and 2 submarines. Canada and Australia were to control one unit each and the third was to be controlled jointly by Britain and New Zealand. Canada, however, with two coast lines to protect, refused to accept that the bulk of its fleet should be in the Pacific. The Canadians concluded that the plan was not appropriate to their needs and abandoned it. In relation to the German fleet, however, the key squadron was the Anglo-New Zealand unit. The battle-cruiser New Zealand, built with money provided by the Dominion in 1908, was to be the flag ship on the China station, thus ensuring British superiority over the Germans.³ Before this arrangement could be put into effect, however, Asquith and Churchill had made it clear to the New Zealand Defence Minister, Col. Allen, that because of the German naval challenge the ship would have to remain in the North Sea.⁴ The Dominion Government was very disquieted at this step and sought re-assurances from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lewis Harcourt. Harcourt was told by the Admiralty that any enemy ships in far eastern waters could be dealt with by vessels of a less powerful type than battle-cruisers and that the ships which had been provided were "more effectively adapted for the duties that will devolve

¹ Jane Fred T., Fighting Ships 1914, p. 55.
² Admiralty Memorandum 13/7/09, Cab. 38/15/18.
³ Sir Joseph Ward to McKenna 11/8/09, Cab. 38/18/41.
on them in war than if the original Fleet Unit disposition had been carried out." \(^1\) The New Zealand Government, however, remained sceptical. \(^2\)

Their misgivings were shared by Admiral Jerram, Commander-in-Chief of the China Station. As early as 1912 he had protested that while the Minotaur could take on one of the German cruisers, the Hampshire was "quite unfit to engage the other", \(^3\) and he asked that the heavy cruiser, Duke of Edinburgh, be substituted for Hampshire. He was told that because of the Mediterranean situation no other ship could be spared. \(^4\) The Naval Staff then suggested adding the battleship Triumph to Jerram's squadron, \(^5\) and this was done late in 1913. However both Richmond (A.D.O.D.) and Jackson (C.O.S.) were under no illusion that the ship would ensure British superiority in the Far East. \(^6\) Churchill, however, thought that the ship gave the British a fleet "superior to that of the strongest European Fleet in the Far East" \(^7\) and there the matter rested.

Nevertheless there was another fleet in the Pacific in 1914 that was available for operations against the Germans. This was the Australian Fleet. More independent of Britain than New Zealand, and closer to a perceived threat (Japan) than Canada, Australia had insisted on the completion of its fleet unit and its retention in home waters. At the outbreak of war the unit was practically complete. \(^8\) The force included the battle-cruiser Australia. With 8 x 12" guns and a speed of 25 knots \(^9\) this ship was virtually capable of defeating the German Squadron on its own. The other ships of importance were the fast light cruisers Sydney and Melbourne.

(1) Admiralty to the Sec. of State for the Colonies, October 1913, Adm. 1/8375/108.
(2) Their continuing debate with the British Government can be followed in C.I.D. Papers 38/24/19 and 38/24/20.
(3) Jerram to Bridgeman 28/11/12, Jerram Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, JRM.16/1.
(4) Jerram to Bridgeman 28/11/12, Jerram Papers, JRM.16/1.
(9) Preston A., Battleships of World War I, p. 128.
Thus, although their ships were widely scattered the British did have in the Pacific forces capable of catching and defeating von Spee. It remains to be seen how those forces were used.

Considering that von Spee was their major concern, it is remarkable that neither the Admiralty nor Jerram knew of the whereabouts of the German ships on the outbreak of war. Jerram thought that Scharnhorst might be at Yap and Gneisenau at Singapore, so he proposed to the Admiralty that he establish a blockade at Tsingtao to deny von Spee the use of his base.\(^1\) He thought that this would "ensure coming to action with the two big cruisers should they endeavour to return to Tsingtau".\(^2\) However the Triumph was still demobilized at Hong Kong and the Admiralty, concerned that von Spee might catch the British Squadron before they had concentrated, ordered Jerram, who was in the vicinity of Tsingtao, south to join his battleship.\(^3\) In fact one of von Spee's ships (Emden) was at Tsingtao and the others at Ponape in the Caroline Islands. When the British ships moved south to Hong Kong the Emden was able to leave Tsingtao and join the main German Fleet. This ship was later to destroy over 80,000 tons of merchant shipping\(^4\) and the Admiralty has been much criticized for removing Jerram's Squadron. However, if von Spee had caught Jerram, the depleted British force faced almost certain annihilation and the Admiralty can hardly be blamed for removing him from a precarious position. The fact that the Admiralty thought Jerram secure with the Triumph and that Jerram was willing to fight von Spee without his battleship are separate issues.

On August 11th. the Admiralty received news that Japan was about to declare war on Germany. They instructed Jerram to leave trade protection to the Japanese (note that, like Milne, Jerram had been given a double task, in this case protecting trade and pursuing von Spee) and "concentrating your

\(^{(1)}\) Bennet, Coronel and the Falklands, p. 52-3.
\(^{(3)}\) Admiralty to Jerram 30/7/14, Adm. 137/11.
attention in concert with the Australian squadron on destroying German
cruisers". This plan fell through when the Japanese declaration was
delayed until August 23rd. but Jerram continued the search for the enemy

cruisers near the German island of Yap. By this time von Spee had moved north
to the Marianas to meet Emden so Jerram destroyed the Yap wireless station
and returned to the vicinity of Tsingtao. The disappearance of von Spee
led Jerram to speculate on his whereabouts. On the 17th. August he tele-
graphed to the Admiralty "Possible objective of German squadron may be
Dutch East Indies but more likely Pacific coast of America, in latter case...
I suggest for consideration whether it may be possible to spare any cruisers
from home waters to meet the danger." The Admiralty were also of the
opinion that von Spee was heading east and although they ignored Jerram's
latter suggestion they ordered him to leave British interests in the China
Sea to Japan (now at war with Germany) and join the Australian Squadron
which they said was searching for von Spee in the vicinity of Samoa. This
telegram is mainly remarkable for the fact that it showed the Admiralty's
complete ignorance of the movements of the Australian Fleet, which was
nowhere near Samoa and not engaged in the search for von Spee. However, by
the time Jerram received this message he had changed his mind about von
Spee's destination. Information from a captured ship indicated that the
German squadron would double back and attack trade in the East Indies and in
the Indian Ocean. Jerram therefore took the Minotaur, Hampshire, Yarmouth
which had arrived from the American coast, and a French ship, Dupleix,
south to Singapore and began a systematic search of the islands. The
Triumph, as ordered by the Admiralty, was left to assist the Japanese in the
capture of Tsingtao. This was a curious decision. We know that Jerram had
a low opinion of the Triumph but why did the Admiralty now order the

(1) Admiralty to Jerram 11/8/14, Adm. 137/11.
(2) Jerram to the Admiralty 12/8/14, Adm. 1/8365/7.
(3) Jerram to the Admiralty 17/8/14, Adm. 137/11.
(4) Admiralty to Jerram 23/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
(5) Admiralty to Jerram 20/8/14, Adm. 137/11.
detachment of this ship and allow Jerram to search for the German ships with what they considered to be an inferior force? The likely answer is that it was desirable for political reasons for Britain to participate with Japan in the siege of Tsingtao and that this for the moment overrode the Admiralty's concern for the strength of Jerram's squadron.

Jerram now proceeded to make disaster more likely by dividing his squadron. The Hampshire was sent to the west coast of Sumatra while the Minotaur and Yarmouth searched the east coast. These extremely hazardous movements had the full concurrence of Churchill and Prince Louis. Luckily for Jerram his search proved fruitless. He now reverted to his original idea that von Spee was heading for America and signalled to the Admiralty, "I consider it is possible or even probable they will be heard of on our American coast & that they will attack our trade either off Straits of Magellan or off mouth of River Plate. [I am sending] Minotaur and Hampshire to join C in C Australia." Because of the difficulty in co-ordinating the movements of Japanese, French, Russian and British cruisers with the limited wireless facilities afloat Jerram now established his command onshore at Singapore. Jerram was now out of the chase and the only possible chance of intercepting von Spee before he reached the American coast lay with the Australian Fleet.

On the outbreak of war the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Fleet, Admiral Patey, had moved his force towards New Guinea in anticipation of orders to enter the Pacific and intercept von Spee. This move would have been in line with his war orders which made the destruction of enemy cruisers his primary consideration. However, Patey was to be frustrated by the failure of the Admiralty to decide what their priorities were in Australian waters. On August 2nd., Leveson, Sturdee and Prince Louis had

(1) Jerram to Admiralty 8/9/14, Adm. 137/34.
(2) Memorandum by Prince Louis 24/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
(3) Jerram to Admiralty 12/9/14, Adm. 137/11. The ships mentioned were diverted to hunt for the Emden and to guard the New Zealand convoy and never reached Patey.
(4) Ibid.
(6) Memorandum by Admiral King-Hall 15/1/12, Adm. 116/3132.
recommended to the Cabinet a plan to capture the German possessions in the Pacific.\(^1\) Two days later the plan was passed on to the Australian and New Zealand Governments in these terms; "If your ministers desire and feel themselves able to seize German wireless stations at Yap...Nauru...and New Guinea we should feel that this was a great and urgent Imperial service."\(^2\)

The Australian Government was reluctant to undertake any expeditions until von Spee's squadron had been located\(^3\) but on the 9th, they were informed that a New Zealand expedition was leaving for Samoa and that the battle-cruiser Australia would be required to escort it.\(^4\) Faced with this situation the Australian Government agreed to implement the British plan and assembled their own expedition to capture the German colony of Rabaul. Patey was now informed that two of his cruisers would have to be detached to escort the expedition to Rabaul and that following the completion of this operation his whole force would return south to escort the Australian and New Zealand troops on the first leg of their journey to Britain.\(^5\) However the New Zealand Government then decided to delay their expedition until the movements of the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were definitely known.\(^6\) The Admiralty endeavoured to reassure the New Zealanders,\(^7\) but they agreed only to move their expedition to Fiji and await the arrival of Patey in the Australia before continuing to Samoa.\(^8\) The Australian expedition therefore had to wait for Patey's return. These diversions meant that the Australian Fleet would be fully occupied during the next few weeks escorting first the New Zealand and then the Australian expedition and all thought of using it to intercept von Spee had vanished.

\(^{\text{It is hard to follow British thinking at this time. By insisting on the}}\)

\(^{(1)}\) Memorandum in Adm. 137/7.
\(^{(2)}\) Sec. of State for the Colonies to Govs. of Australia and New Zealand 6/8/14, Adm. 137/45.
\(^{(3)}\) Note by Senator Mullen (Min. of Defence) 8/8/14, quoted in Jose A.E., The Royal Australian Navy, 1914-1918, p. 49.
\(^{(4)}\) Admiralty to Australian Gov. 9/8/14, quoted in Ibid. p. 49. Admiralty to Patey 9/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
\(^{(5)}\) Admiralty to Patey 15/8/14, quoted in Ibid. p. 52.
\(^{(6)}\) S.N.O. Auckland to the Admiralty 10/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
\(^{(7)}\) Sturdee to S.N.O. Auckland 11/8/14, in Ibid.
\(^{(8)}\) Patey to the Admiralty 15/8/14, in Ibid.
capture of the German colonies they tied down the Australian Fleet at a time when it could have been better employed in searching for von Spee. The Pacific colonies were of little importance to Germany and could hardly have been used to barter against Belgium at a peace conference as has been suggested. The colonies were also of little use to von Spee; their coaling facilities were meagre and the radio link with the German ships could have been used to track them down. In any case the possessions could easily have been captured after the German Squadron had been destroyed. In fact most of these points were made in a paper by Sir Henry Jackson to the C.O.S. but there is no evidence that Sturdee even passed it on to his superiors.\(^1\)

Whatever the explanation, the policy of the Admiralty prevailed and from mid-August until mid-September the Australian ships were busy convoysing the expeditions to Samoa and Rabaul. Then on September 15th, von Spee bombarded Apia in Samoa. By this time the New Zealand expedition was in occupation of the island and the Australia had left for the Aden convoy. On the receipt of this news the battle-cruiser returned to cover an Australian expedition which was about to set out from Rabaul to capture Papua.\(^2\) On the completion of this service Patey at last held himself free to concentrate on von Spee. He strongly believed that von Spee was heading towards South America and he had expressed this view to Jerram as early as August 19th.\(^3\) Therefore on October 1st, he moved north from Rabaul hoping to learn something of the German squadron by intercepting their radio signals. The Admiralty, however, had other plans. On October 3rd. they telegraphed Patey "It is very possible that Gneisenau and Scharnhorst may... be expected to return towards Samoa, Fiji or even New Zealand. Making Suva your headquarters search for these cruisers in those waters".\(^4\) Thus Patey was given the enormous task of protecting the South Pacific Islands and

(1) Jackson to the C.O.S. 24/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
(3) Patey to Jerram 19/8/14, quoted in Jose A.E., The Royal Australian Navy 1914-1918, p. 22.
(4) Admiralty to Patey 2/10/14, Adm. 137/16.
guarding New Zealand against a sudden swoop by von Spee. For the next two weeks the Australian Fleet cruised fruitlessly between Fiji and Samoa. Then on the 15th of October the Admiralty learned that an intercepted wireless message placed the German ships in the Marquesas Islands well to the west of Papeete, the last positive sighting. All available intelligence now placed von Spee on a course towards America, and Patey who had also seen the Marquesas report pleaded to be sent to South American waters. However the Admiralty refused permission and held Patey in Fijian waters for another two weeks. Why did the Admiralty take this action? It was Churchill's view that by leaving Patey where he was all possibilities were covered. If von Spee doubled back towards the East Indies Patey would be waiting. If von Spee was heading for South American waters there was a squadron being assembled under Admiral Cradock that could effectively deal with him. Thus it was this over confidence in Cradock's force that kept the Australia in the Western Pacific.

There was a side issue which arose out of the failure of the British to catch the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and which strained relations between New Zealand and Britain at a crucial time. During August the New Zealand contingent of troops for Britain had been gathering for convoying to Australia. The escort arranged for the convoy by the Admiralty consisted of two obsolete P class cruisers. The cutting of the Pacific cable by a German cruiser led the New Zealand Government to enquire if a stronger escort could not be provided. They were informed that the Admiralty considered the situation was safe but as additional security the S.N.O. Auckland should concert movements with Admiral Patey. This did not satisfy New Zealand. They pointed out that it was difficult to communicate with the Rear-Admiral and

(1) Patey to the Admiralty 13/10/14, Adm. 137/16,
(2) Admiralty to Patey 14/10/14, in Ibid.
(3) Note by Jackson and Sturdee (Approved by L.B.) 31/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
(4) Liverpool (G.G. of N.Z.) to Harcourt 8/9/14, in Ibid.
(5) Harcourt to Liverpool 15/9/14, in Ibid.
that feeling was running so high that several ministers were threatening resignation unless a stronger escort was provided. They might have added that Patey already had an enormous area to cover and was in any case too far away to intervene quickly. This message brought a terse reply from the Admiralty, to the effect that troop movements should not be delayed "through undue apprehension of the situation". The New Zealand Government decided to bow before this pressure and announced that the expeditionary force would be despatched. Churchill thought this a wise decision, "It is a fair & good military risk", he minuted, "& nothing to what we are taking in other quarters". However next day von Spee was reported off Samoa. The New Zealand Government now thinking the risk anything but "fair and good", immediately cancelled the sailing orders for the troop convoy and the Admiralty was told that unless stronger escorts were sent it was doubtful if the Government could continue. Once again assurances were despatched from the Admiralty. This time, however their effect was nullified by a telegram from the Governor-General of Australia warning New Zealand of the "grave risk" their convoy ran from the German cruisers. Once again the sailing orders were cancelled. The matter was now taken up at Cabinet level in Britain. It was decided to defer to the wishes of New Zealand and the convoy was ordered to await the arrival of the Minotaur and the Japanese cruiser Ibuki. Then came the news of the bombardment of Papeete by von Spee. This event was interpreted in different ways by the New Zealand Government and the Admiralty. The Admiralty now considered that von Spee was so distant that the convoy could sail at once. In New Zealand it was taken to mean that the Admiralty had lost control of the situation.

(1) Liverpool to Harcourt 17/9/14, Adm. 137/7.
(2) Harcourt (written by Jackson) to Liverpool 19/9/14, in Ibid.
(3) Liverpool to Harcourt 21/9/14, in Ibid.
(4) Minute by Churchill, on above 21/9/14, in Ibid.
(5) Liverpool to Harcourt 22/9/14, in Ibid.
(6) Harcourt to Liverpool 22/9/14, in Ibid.
(7) Liverpool to Harcourt 24/9/14, Adm. 116/1336.
(8) Harcourt to Liverpool 24/9/14, Adm. 137/7. Asquith to the King 22/9/14, Cab. 41/35/46.
(9) Memorandum by Jackson 1/10/14, Adm. 116/1336.
that they had no idea of the movements of von Spee and that their assurances were therefore worthless. In reply the Admiralty stated that there was no such thing as absolute security in war, that enormous areas had to be covered and that their original assurances had been quite justified.

The next day they telegraphed to Liverpool, "Are your Ministers prepared to accept Admiralty opinion and to despatch contingent forthwith". This was too much for Massey the New Zealand Prime Minister. Liverpool wired back that the Cabinet refused to move and unless the promised escort was provided the Prime Minister would resign and make his reasons public. To this pressure the Admiralty deferred and the New Zealand troops left Wellington on October 16th, escorted by the Minotaur and the Ibuki.

In retrospect the Admiralty were probably correct in their estimation that the New Zealand contingent was safe from the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. To attack the convoy it would have been necessary for the Germans to move into waters where there was always a chance of meeting the battle-cruiser, Australia and where there were no accessible coaling facilities. However the Admiralty showed a remarkable lack of sensitivity towards New Zealand opinion and it now seems incredible that they were prepared to push their intransigence to the point where a Dominion Government was on the brink of resignation.

Coronel

Sir Christopher Cradock, the British commander who was to be defeated by von Spee at Coronel, began the war on the North American Station in charge of the 4th Cruiser Squadron. His main task was to hunt down the German cruisers Dresden and Karlsruhe which were known to be in Central

(1) Liverpool to Harcourt 1/10/14, Adm. 137/16.
(2) Harcourt (written by Jackson) to Liverpool 2/10/14, in Ibid.
(3) Harcourt to Liverpool 3/10/14, in Ibid.
(4) Liverpool to Harcourt 4/10/14, in Ibid.
(5) Jose A.W., The Royal Australian Navy 1914-1918, p. 158.
American waters. After an unsuccessful search through the West Indies, Cradock moved north to watch the New York trade routes and to pick up a new flag ship, the Good Hope, which had just been sent out from England as a reinforcement. Soon after the ship arrived it was thought that the German cruisers had moved south, so Cradock returned to the Caribbean and on August 27th. began a search of the north coast of Brazil with Good Hope, Berwick and Bristol. At the same time a search was being conducted along the east coast of South America by the light cruiser Glasgow, the newly arrived heavy cruiser Monmouth and the auxiliary cruiser Otranto.

By this time the Admiralty were in possession of Jerram’s opinion that South American waters were a possible destination for von Spee. They therefore ordered Cradock to take charge of the South American Station and assigned to him the cruisers Good Hope, Berwick, Bristol, Glasgow and Monmouth and the auxiliary cruisers Carmania, Otranto and Victorian. These eight ships were soon reduced to four. The area Cradock had to cover was so large that he had no choice but to detach the Berwick and Bristol to watch Brazilian waters. Then in mid-September the Carmania was badly damaged in a fight with the German auxiliary cruiser Cap Trafalgar. Meanwhile the Victorian had been sent to help the French quell a native rising in Morocco. Thus it was with a greatly depleted force that Cradock began his sweep down the South American coast in search of the German cruisers.

Since the arrival of Jerram’s appreciation, concern at the Admiralty had mounted that von Spee might appear in South American waters. In this eventuality it was urgently necessary to reinforce Cradock with heavier ships. Vyvian and Richmond suggested that three cruisers from home waters

(2) Cradock to the Admiralty 3/9/14, Adm. 137/1027.
(3) Jerram to the Admiralty 17/8/14, Adm. 1/8365/7.
(4) Admiralty to Cradock 4/9/14, Adm. 116/3486.
(5) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.1, p. 262.
(6) Ibid., p. 307.
(7) Ibid., p. 266.
should be sent to Cradock at once, 1 but Richmond claimed that this suggestion was pigeon-holed by his superior, Leveson. 2 However the day after this proposal was made one of the battle-cruisers off the Dardanelles was ordered to Gibraltar to coal and "await orders" and it is possible that this ship was to be sent to Cradock. 3 But in early September it was sent back to Port Said to convoy the Indian troops through the Mediterranean. 4 The Staff next proposed sending three heavy and one light cruiser from the Mediterranean to aid Cradock. 5 However it was decided that this would weaken the Mediterranean squadrons too much and it was decided as a compromise to send a heavy cruiser (Defence) from the Mediterranean and the old battleship Canopus from the Cape Verde Station. 6

The news of the reinforcements and the tasks assigned to Cradock were telegraphed to him on September 14,

"There is a strong possibility of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau arriving in the Magellan Straits or on the West coast of South America....Concentrate a squadron strong enough to meet...[them] making Falkland Islands your coaling base.... Unti1 Defence joins, keep at least Canopus and one County class with your flagship. As soon as you have superior force, search the Magellan Straits...or, according to information, search as far as Valparaiso. Break up the German trade and destroy German cruisers." 7

It should be noted that the Admiralty considered that Defence, Canopus, Good Hope and Monmouth were a superior force to the German squadron.

Before Cradock could act on these instructions another signal arrived.

"Situation changed. Scharnhorst and Gneisenau appeared off Samoa on 14 September...and left steering N.W....German trade on west coast of America ... is to be attacked at once. Cruisers need not be

(1) Note by Vyvian 18/8/14, Adm. 137/7.
(2) Lady Richmond Diary 19/8/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/16.
(3) L.B. & W.C. to Troubridge 19/8/14, Adm. 137/20.
(4) L.B. to Indomitable 6/9/14, in Ibid.
(5) Staff Appreciation of South American Situation 7/9/14, Adm. 137/26.
(6) Sturdee to S.N.O. Malta 10/9/14, and Admiralty to Cradock 14/9/14, Adm. 116/3486.
(7) Admiralty to Cradock 14/9/14, in Ibid.
concentrated. Two cruisers and an armed liner would appear sufficient for Magellan Straits and W. coast. Report what you propose about Canopus."¹

There were two mistaken assumptions in this message. After von Spee had bombarded Samoa he had steamed away to the north west but later had doubled back to the east and continued his voyage to South America. The Admiralty had therefore come to a very precipitate decision about von Spee on the strength of one sighting. Furthermore there was no German "trade" taking place on the west coast of South America. The increased activity noticed by the Admiralty arose from German supply ships and colliers preparing to meet von Spee. If this fact had been realised a stronger force could have been concentrated in South American waters at once. However the most important result of von Spee’s deception was that the Defence was ordered to return to the Mediterranean.² Faculty staff work resulted in this decision not being passed on to Cradock.

On September 18th., Cradock signalled his new dispositions to the Admiralty. In the light of the new situation he sent Glasgow and Monmouth to the west coast of South America to destroy "trade", remained in the vicinity of the Magellan Straits with Good Hope and Otranto to look for Dresden, which had not yet been located and which a local report had placed in those waters, and ordered Canopus to the Plate estuary to guard merchant shipping.³ By assigning his battleship this lowly task it can be seen that Cradock had no great faith in its fighting value.

Four days later the situation had changed again. On September 22nd., von Spee had bombarded Papeete, an island well to the west of Samoa, and had left in the direction of the American coast. The Admiralty passed this message on to Cradock but apparently the signal was never received by the Good Hope.⁴ Cradock’s failure to respond to the Admiralty message was never followed up and during the next two weeks Cradock was not contacted at all.

¹ Admiralty to Cradock 16/9/14, Adm. 116/3486.
² Sturdee and L.B. to S.N.O. Malta 18/9/14, Adm. 137/20.
³ Cradock to the Admiralty 18/9/14, Adm. 137/1022.
⁴ Admiralty to Cradock 30/9/14, Adm. 116/3486.
by London. Nor did Cradock, who was searching for Dresden near the Magellan Straits, cable for further instructions or news of the German Squadron.

It was on October 5th. that the next important signal from the Admiralty was received by Cradock. The day before, von Spee's destination had been reported as Easter Island, a clear indication that he was heading for South America. The Admiralty signalled to Cradock, "...it appears that Scharnhorst and Gneisenau are working across to South America. You must be prepared to meet them in company, possibly with a Dresden scouting for them. Canopus should accompany Glasgow, Monmouth and Otranto, the ships to search and protect trade in combination....If you propose Good Hope to go, leave Monmouth on east coast". The Admiralty had now realized that Dresden had moved into the Pacific, probably with the intention of joining von Spee. They also knew that the Nurnberg, which had called at Honolulu on September 1st., was attached to the German Squadron. Furthermore there was a possibility that Leipzig, last seen on the west coast of Mexico, would also join. Thus it was possible that von Spee's squadron would consist of two fast heavy cruisers and three light cruisers and according to this latest signal the Admiralty expected Cradock to defeat this force with the Canopus, Glasgow, Otranto and either the Good Hope or the Monmouth, a much weaker force than Defence, Good Hope, Monmouth and Canopus, the original squadron which had been entrusted with this task. Was the Admiralty's confidence in the strength of the new force justified?

Cradock's flagship, the Good Hope, was an obsolete cruiser built in 1902. Its armament consisted of two x 9.2" and sixteen x 6" guns all of which were outranged by von Spee's 8.2" guns. The six inch guns were placed low on the water line and could not be fired in the rough weather often experienced in South American waters. Moreover, 90% of the crew were inexperienced reservists called up at the outbreak of war. The Monmouth was almost as old

(1) Admiralty to Cradock, 5/10/14, Adm. 116/3486.
(2) Bennett, Coronel and the Falklands, Appendix 1, p. 188-9.
as the Good Hope. It was one of the under gunned County class cruisers, having only fourteen x 6" guns, many of which were also placed near the water line. The crew consisted of Scottish fishermen, coastguards and twelve naval cadets from Dartmouth. Glasgow was the only modern ship (built 1911) on the British side. It alone had the speed to catch von Spee's squadron. The ship had a regular navy crew and was an efficient fighting unit but although it was the equal of any of the German light cruisers, it could hardly stand up to the superior armament of the Schnarhorst or Gneisenau. The Otranto was a former P & O liner converted into an auxiliary cruiser. It had only two x 4" guns and its great bulk made it unsuitable to fight any thing but other auxiliary cruisers or merchant ships.

Thus far it can be seen that the British ships with the exception of the Glasgow were in every way inferior to their German counterparts. They were slower, their guns were outranged and their crews inexperienced. However, the Admiralty expected that the provision of the battleship Canopus would compensate for all these deficiencies. The Canopus undoubtedly had the heaviest armament of any ship in the South Atlantic (four x 12" and twelve x 6" guns) but the ship was old (built 1899) and ready for the scrap heap. Also there were reasons to doubt the effectiveness and range of the ship's 12" guns. Range estimates vary from the Whale Island Gunnery School figure given by Marder (14,000 yards) which was about the same as the German 8.2" guns, to 9,000 yards given by a gunnery officer who served on Canopus at the time. The Captain of the ship in 1914 gives the range as 10-11,000 yards. However, no authority has stated that the Canopus could substantially out-range the Schnarhorst and Gneisenau. Moreover, a better comparison of strength than range is the weight of shell that could be fired per minute. In this test the British compared unfavourably even allowing

(1) Bennett, Coronel and The Falklands, p. 17-18.
(2) Pitt B., Coronel and Falklands, p. 5.
(5) Pitt B., Coronel and Falklands, p. 28.
(6) Grant H., H.M.S. Canopus, Naval Review, V.11, 1923, p. 527.
for the greater weight of the 12" shells of the Canopus. The two largest British ships, Canopus and Good Hope, could fire 12,798 lbs of shell per minute while the German heavy cruisers could fire 17,226 lbs, nearly 40% more.¹ In any case it is doubtful if the Canopus could have hit the German ships even at short range. The rifling on some of the 12" guns had practically worn smooth and later when the ship was firing at the Dardanelles it was common for the shells to go head over heels when they left the muzzle.² Furthermore the gun turrets were in the hands of reservist officers who had never before fired a shot.³ The slow speed of the Canopus was another drawback. Although her nominal speed was 18 knots⁴ her best speed in 1914 was 15½ knots⁵ - eight knots slower than any of the German ships. A final factor was that except for the gun turrets, the Canopus was no more heavily armoured than von Spee's cruisers.⁶

By now it should be obvious that the five British ships were no match for von Spee. Yet the Admiralty expected Cradock to leave one of the stronger units of the five on the east coast of South America, defeat von Spee with the remaining four, and protect trade at the same time; a multiplicity of tasks even more difficult, given the strength of the opposition, than those which confronted Sir Berkely Milne.

Not everyone at the Admiralty was convinced of the strength of Cradock's force. Early in October, Richmond had written a paper in which he had pointed out that the Canopus and the Good Hope did not have the speed to catch the German ships, that their main armament was inferior, and that their standard of gunnery was likely to be much lower.⁷ The paper had no effect whatever on Sturdee or Richmond's immediate superior, Leveson so

(2) Bennett H.T., Twenty One Years Ago: The Tragedy of Coronel, The Argus (Melbourne) 2/11/35. (Bennett was navigating officer on the Canopus at the time of Coronel.)
(4) Bennett, Coronel and the Falklands, p. 188.
(5) Canopus Log for 1914, Adm. 53/69505.
(7) Richmond Diary 6/10/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/10.
matter be raised in Cabinet. This was done and after the Cabinet meeting Churchill asked to see Richmond's paper. But the First Lord expressed confidence in the ability of the Canopus to defeat von Spee. However, Churchill was concerned enough to pass the paper on to Sturdee and ask for his comments. Sturdee disagreed with all the points raised by Richmond and the matter was dropped.

While Richmond was urging Churchill to send reinforcements, Cradock was becoming increasingly worried about the inadequacies of his squadron. He informed the Admiralty on October 8th. that Dresden, Leipzig and Nurnberg were probably with von Spee and that consequently he was concentrating the five British ships at the Falklands. He added, "does Defence join my command?" Before the Admiralty could reply Cradock signalled again, "Without alarming, respectfully suggest that in event of the enemy's heavy / cruisers and others concentrating west coast of South America, it is necessary to have a British force on either coast strong enough to bring them into action."

This telegram forced the Admiralty to respond. Churchill held a series of meetings with Prince Louis, during which he suggested to the First Sea Lord that any cruise along the west coast of South America be postponed until von Spee's position was known and that Cradock's force should keep concentrated near the Falklands. However Prince Louis was convinced by Cradock's earlier message that the Admiral was already doing this and therefore he merely wrote "Settled" on Churchill's minute and took no further action. Churchill was evidently still not satisfied. A few days later he wrote to Prince Louis, "I presume Cradock is fully aware of the possibility of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau arriving on or after the 17th. instant in his neighbourhood; and if not strong enough to attack will do his utmost to shadow him pending

(1) Richmond to Hankey 7/10/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/10.
(2) Richmond Diary 10/10/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/10.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Cradock to the Admiralty (Received 12/10/14) Adm. 116/3486.
(5) Cradock to the Admiralty (Received 11/10/14) in Ibid.
(6) Minute by Churchill 12/10/14, in Ibid.
(7) Note by Prince Louis 12/10/14, in Ibid.
reinforcements". This message is of great interest. It shows that Churchill appears to have changed his mind about the strength of Cradock's squadron. At the very least he was now prepared to leave the decision of whether to fight von Spee to the Admiral on the spot. Unfortunately for Cradock, Admiralty Staff work broke down completely at this stage. Prince Louis did not transmit Churchill's message to the Admiral even in an abbreviated form but merely signalled "Your concentration of Good Hope, Canopus, Monmouth, Glasgow, and Otranto for combined operations concurred in. Stoddart in Carnarvon has been order to Montevideo...Defence order to join Carnarvon." These instructions have several curious features. The addition of Defence gave Stoddart a stronger squadron than Cradock, although he was much less likely to meet von Spee. Moreover it would have been possible to concentrate all available British ships in one strong squadron at the Falklands, an ideal position from which to intercept von Spee if he remained in South American waters. The only explanation for the Admiralty not taking this obvious course was that their obsession with the South American trade routes led them to keep a squadron off northern Bràzil to deal with the Karlsruhe which had been reported in the area. This policy of trying to be strong everywhere was soon to have disastrous results.

Cradock was still not convinced that his squadron could force von Spee to fight. He had formed a low opinion of the Canopus on its arrival at the Falklands and it was the opinion of the ships captain that 12 knots was its best speed for continuous steaming. Cradock therefore signalled to the Admiralty on the 18th. "I fear that strategically the speed of my squadron cannot exceed 12 knots owing to Canopus but shall trust circumstances will enable me to force an action." This message having elicited no reply from the Admiralty, Cradock left the Falklands on October 22nd. to join the rest

(1) Churchill to Prince Louis 14/10/14, Adm. 137/26.
(2) Admiralty to Cradock 14/10/14, Adm. 116/3486.
(4) Grant, H.M.S. Canopus, Naval Review, p. 144.
(5) Cradock to the Admiralty 18/10/14, Adm. 116/3486.
of his squadron in the Magellan Straits. The Canopus was ordered to follow
the next day and escort the squadron's colliers.¹ During this voyage Cradock
became more convinced than ever that his force was inadequate. On the 27th.
he informed the Admiralty, "consider it impracticable on account of Canopus's
slow speed, to find and destroy the enemy's squadron. Consequently have
ordered Defence to join me after calling at Montevideo for orders. Canopus
will be employed on necessary conveying of colliers. From experience of 6
August most respectfully submit not to oppose depredations of Karlsruhe. May
it continue until he meets a vessel of superior speed."² Cradock was
apparently trying to warn the Admiralty in this message that it was useless
to concentrate a squadron of slower ships against a fast ship like the
Karlsruhe, as his experience just after the outbreak of war had shown, and that
Defence would therefore be of more use in strengthening him against von Spee.
However the obscure wording of the message convinced the Staff that it had
been mangled in transmission and they immediately countermanded his order
to Defence, "Defence is to remain on east coast...This will leave sufficient
force on each side in case the hostile cruisers appear there on the trade
route."³ There was no comment on Cradock's use of the Canopus to convoy
colliers. There is some doubt if Cradock ever received this message.⁴
However, Hirst, the paymaster on the Glasgow, is "practically certain"
that he did⁵ and there is evidence to suggest that the message was relayed
from Montevideo to Coronel on the 29th., just before Cradock called there to
pick up mail.⁶ Also, Cradock is alleged to have written to Captain Grant
of the Canopus on the 29th., "I am very disgusted, I wanted the Defence and
her speed."⁷ If Cradock did not receive the signal then he must have been
expecting Defence to join him directly and his decision to force an action
without that ship is inexplicable.

¹ Cradock to the Admiralty 24/10/14, Adm. 116/3486.
² Cradock to the Admiralty 27/10/14, in Ibid.
³ Admalty to Cradock 28/10/14, in Ibid.
⁴ The Admiralty records say it is "almost certain that Cradock did not
receive this message". See Ibid.
⁵ Hirst L., Coronel and After, p. 97.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Grant, H.M.S. Conopus, Naval Review, p. 325-6.
Churchill was much more worried about the ambiguities in Cradock's telegram than the Naval Staff. He minuted on Cradock's telegram of the 27th, "This telegram is very obscure and I do not understand what Cradock intends and wishes". He was soon assured by a Staff appreciation which concluded, "The situation on the West Coast seems safe" and which added that Cradock's force was adequate to deal with von Spee even without Defence. Nevertheless, when a telegram from Cradock arrived on the 31st of October indicating that he was at Vallenar with Good Hope, Monmouth and Otranto and that Glasgow was in the vicinity of Coronel, Churchill minuted, "It is squandering force to keep him on W. Coast... He shd come back to Rio & join up with all the ships there so as to combine 7 or 8 ships in the hunt for the Karlsruhe. He is not doing well." This is a curious comment.

Churchill was obviously uneasy about Cradock's movements. Yet he made no comment on the absence of the Canopus from Cradock's squadron. It is also rather startling to find Churchill suggesting that Cradock's force be withdrawn from the search for von Spee's five ships to concentrate on the search for the lone Karlsruhe. His intention to form a combined squadron was good strategy but the obvious objective for that force was von Spee and not the Karlsruhe. In any case this instruction came too late.

Cradock was now proceeding up the west coast of South America with the Good Hope, Monmouth, Glasgow and Otranto. Canopus was some three hundred miles behind, convoying colliers. On October 29th, Glasgow called at the Chilean port of Coronel to collect mails, which perhaps contained the Admiralty signal ordering Defence to remain on the east coast. While in port, Glasgow picked up wireless signals from the Leipzig. At the same time von Spee, who had all his five ships together, learned of the presence of the Glasgow. Thus both sides began searching for a single ship. On November 1st., late in the afternoon, the two fleets met about fifty miles east of Coronel. Cradock immediately turned towards the enemy but von Spee used

(1) Churchill to Prince Louis 28/10/14, Adm. 116/3486.
(2) Oliver to Churchill 29/10/14, in Ibid.
(3) Cradock to the Admiralty 31/10/14, Adm. 116/3486; Churchill's minute 1/11/14, in Ibid.
his superior speed to keep out of range until the sun had set and the British ships were sharply silhouetted against the horizon. Then he opened fire. Cradock replied but he was hopelessly outgunned and the stormy conditions made it impossible to fire many of the lower deck guns on the Monmouth and the Good Hope. The battle was all over in two hours. The Good Hope and the Monmouth were sunk with all hands. Dark and moonless conditions allowed the Glasgow and Otranto to escape. British naval supremacy in the South Atlantic had been temporarily lost.

Why had Cradock been so anxious to fight against hopeless odds?, when in all probability he could have escaped, for night was falling when the squadrons met and it was unlikely that von Spee could have caught the British ships (Otranto excepted) before dark.1 Captain Luce of the Glasgow thought that Cradock, always an impulsive man, had decided to fight on the spur of the moment.2 The official explanation was that Cradock hoped to inflict enough damage on the German squadron to make internment or capture inevitable, for von Spee had no base at which to make repairs. Perhaps the fate of Admiral Troubridge, court-martialled for declining action, was a consideration. However there does seem to be something almost suicidal about Cradock's action, as if he was determined to show the Admiralty that his force was inadequate at the cost of his life. Evidence of Cradock's state of mind before the battle would tend to reinforce this view. He told the Governor of the Falklands before he left for Coronel that he did not expect to return and that he had been let down badly by the Admiralty.3

Would Cradock's squadron have been any safer had the Canopus been present? The efficiency of the old battleship was so low that it was hardly likely that the ship would have been the decisive factor. The only possibility was that von Spee would have declined action with a squadron that

(1) Bennett, Coronel and Falklands, p. 27.
(3) Quoted in Marder A.J., Scapa Flow, V.2, p. 111.
included a battleship. However in a letter written after the battle von Spee indicated that he probably would have risked action against such a ship.  

One authority has stated that the Canopus had rigged up a third funnel to give the ship the appearance of a County class cruiser. If this ruse had proved effective von Spee would have certainly fought.  

Who is to blame for the Coronel disaster? The Naval Staff and particularly Sturdee and Leveson must be held partly responsible. Although Sturdee had wanted reinforcements sent in September, a few weeks later he and Leveson ignored Richmond's clear and precise warnings that a disaster was impending. Prince Louis also must share in the blame. During this period he seemed incapable of transmitting Churchill's wishes into action. On two occasions he ignored Churchill's instructions and merely passed on to Cradock his own gloss on them. This proved disastrous in the case of Churchill's minute of October 15th. for if Cradock had known of Churchill's doubt Coronel might not have been fought.  

Churchill also must share the blame. He was too easily convinced that Canopus could deal with von Spee and too insistent on trying to direct distant operations from London. Also he was throughout this period distracted by the situation in Belgium and was perhaps not giving Admiralty business the attention that it needed. However he did show more concern for Cradock than his service advisers and his several attempts to clarify the situation were thwarted by the staff.  

Nevertheless the Admiralty alone cannot be held responsible for Coronel. Cradock did not make his difficulties and uncertainties clear to the Admiralty and his messages always contained a note of optimism. Perhaps the staff should have read between the lines but Cradock could hardly rely on them doing so. Also, Cradock's decision to fight, whatever the reason, was not based on any cool assessment of his chances. Strategic retreat may not have been compatible with his temperament but in the circumstances  

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(1) von Spee to his wife 2/11/14, Adm. 137/1022.  
it was the decision he should have made.

The Falklands

The Admiralty first learned that von Spee was off the coast of South America on November 1st. and they immediately ordered Defence to reinforce Cradock. Two days later the news of the defeat at Coronel arrived. The battle-cruisers from the Grand Fleet that would have saved Cradock were now taken from Jellicoe to avenge his defeat. The Invincible and Inflexible were ordered to Devonport to prepare for foreign service. At the same time Admiral Stoddart was ordered to send the Carnarvon, Cornwall and Kent to the Abrolhos coaling station to await the battle-cruisers. To guard against all possibilities Defence was sent to the South African Station to strengthen the squadron there, and forces capable of defeating von Spee were assembled off Sierra Leone, in the Caribbean, along the Mexican coast (this containing the Australia, at last ordered to the western Pacific) and in Fiji in case von Spee doubled back towards New Zealand. Orders were signalled to the Canopus to take charge of the defence of the Falklands, an obvious target for the German squadron. Mines were to be placed across the harbour entrance and the Canopus beached so as to command the harbour.

The battle-cruisers arrived at Devonport on November 6th where they were to undergo a refit for their voyage south. The harbour commander informed Fisher (now First Sea Lord) and Churchill that the ships would be ready to sail on the 13th. He received a reply, "Ships are to sail Wednesday 11th. They are needed for war service and dockyard arrangements must be made to conform. If necessary dockyard men shd be sent away in the ships to return as opportunity may offer. You are held responsible for the speedy despatch of these ships in a thoroughly efficient condition. W.S.C."
Eventually the ships left on the 11th. but, as will be seen, the speed of their despatch was largely negated by the leisurely pace at which Sturdee conducted the rest of the operation.

At this point the question of who was to command the battle-cruisers arose. Churchill at once seized the opportunity to solve a difficult problem. Since his return, Fisher had been unable to work amicably with the C.O.S. (Sturdee). Now, Fisher was openly blaming Sturdee for Cradock's defeat. Obvously Sturdee had to go, so Churchill appointed him to the new command.

The ships left Devonport on the 11th., complete with dockyard workmen. Although the destination of the battle-cruisers was supposed to be secret, it soon became known that they were bound for South America. Nor was security helped by the fact that Sturdee stopped to coal at the neutral Spanish port of St. Vincent, where there were several German merchant ships, any of which could have informed their naval authorities of the presence of the British ships. Furthermore, as Sturdee crossed the Atlantic he continually used his wireless to contact other British ships in the area and as a result German agents in Montevideo knew of the presence of Sturdee's force the moment it arrived at the Abrolhos. Luckily for Sturdee none of this information reached von Spee.

Nor was there any sense of urgency in Sturdee's voyage. He cruised at an economical speed to save coal and frequently stopped to examine merchant ships for contraband. As a result he did not reach the Abrolhos until November 26th. There he found Carnarvon, Cornwall, Kent, Bristol and Glasgow. After coaling it was apparently Sturdee's intention to remain at the base for several days but Captain Luce of the Glasgow convinced Sturdee

(2) Marder A.J. Scapa Flow V.2, p. 121.
(3) Sturdee's Report 26/11/14, Adm. 137/1027.
that it was important to reinforce Canopus as quickly as possible. The squadron therefore sailed on the 28th. Even then Sturdee did not hurry. He proceeded south at 10 knots and often delayed the sweep to search for enemy shipping, finally arriving at the Falklands on December 7th., exactly five weeks after Coronel.

During this time von Spee had been curiously lethargic. After his victory he spent almost a month on the coast of Chile, coaling and resting his crews and it was not until November 26th. that he left for the Falklands. His plan was to draw to sea and sink any ships he found in the harbour and then return and occupy the islands. Even then von Spee had time to arrive at the Falklands before Sturdee's battle-cruisers, but rough weather delayed the passage and on December 1st. von Spee captured a collier in the vicinity of Cape Horn and spent three days in transferring the cargo of coal. As a result he reached the Falklands on December the 8th., one day after Sturdee.

As he approached the Falklands on the morning of the 8th. von Spee despatched the Gneisenau and Nurnberg to make a reconnaissance of Stanley Harbour. It was then that he discovered the presence of the battle-cruisers. A few minutes later a shell, fired from the beached Canopus, ricocheted off the water in front of the Gneisenau and hit the base of the after funnel. With that the two ships sheered off and joined the main squadron on a southerly course. This had been a tense moment for Sturdee. His ships had been coaling and if von Spee had closed the harbour and attacked the ships at anchor a disaster might have resulted. However the shot from the Canopus and the shock of seeing battle-cruisers in South American waters made von Spee turn away and enabled Sturdee to raise steam for battle. At 10.00 a.m. the Inflexible, Invincible, Kent, Cornwall, Carnarvon and Glasgow left harbour. The chase had begun.

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(1) Hickling H., Sailor at Sea, London, Kimber, 1965, p. 66. (Hickling was an officer on the Glasgow.)
(2) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.1, p. 413.
(3) Diary of an Officer on the Gneisenau, Adm. 137/1018.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Canopus Report 15/12/14, Adm. 137/304.
(7) Inflexible Log, Adm. 137/304.
The British were well placed to catch the German squadron. The battle-cruisers could steam at 25 knots and the German heavy cruisers had been reduced to under 20 by their long period at sea. Sturdee's tactics for the battle had been formulated some days before. He intended that the battle-cruisers should concentrate on the Schirmhorst and Gneisenau while the light cruisers dealt with the Nurnberg, Leipzig and Dresden. This would take care of the possibility that von Spee might divide his force. Sturdee also intended that the battle should be fought at long range, outside that of the German cruisers guns. This would minimize damage to his ships and keep casualties to a minimum.

The battle developed much as Sturdee had planned. As the British ships closed the range von Spee ordered his light cruisers to break away and make their escape. The British squadron also divided, the Kent pursuing the Nurnberg, while the Glasgow and Cornwall chased the Leipzig and Dresden. The Carnarvon because of its low speed remained with the battle-cruisers.

The main action began at 1.20 when Sturdee opened fire at 16,000 yards. Initially the aim of the battle-cruisers was bad. The ships had not been fitted with director firing and the gun sights situated low on the deck were continually obscured by smoke and spray. It has been calculated that of the first 150 rounds fired the British scored only 3 hits. Nor did Sturdee's tactics aid his gunlayers. He failed to use his speed to obtain the lee side, from where the smoke would have been blown away from the German ships and given the gunlayers a clear sight. Also the leading ship, Invincible, so fouled the range of the Inflexible that the ship twice had to pull out of the line to get clear of the smoke. Occasionally the German ships, firing at extreme range landed a salvo near the British ships.

(1) Bennett, Coronel and The Falklands, p. 146-7.
(2) Sturdee's Report 16/12/14, Adm. 137/304.
(3) Ibid.
(6) Ibid., p. 11.
and on one occasion Invincible was hit but when this happened Sturdee was always able to withdraw out of range. Soon however, the British superiority began to tell. Hits were scored on the German ships and their speed much reduced. The end was now inevitable. The Scharnhorst sank at 4.17 and the Gneisenau two hours later. Although Sturdee's tactics were clumsily executed they were amply justified. The battle-cruisers were practically untouched and only two casualties were suffered.

Meanwhile the light cruiser chase was continuing. Numerically the two sides were evenly matched (three ships against three) but the British were at an initial disadvantage. Only the Glasgow was fast enough to catch all three ships in the German squadron. The Glasgow's original intention was to pursue the fastest German ship Dresden but it soon became clear that the other British ships could not keep up and the Glasgow reverted to attacking the Nurnberg and the Leipzig in turn, to enable Kent and Cornwall to draw level.¹

This the British cruisers did and their heavier armament soon told. The Kent sank the Nurnberg at 7.27² and two hours later the Leipzig was sunk by Cornwall.³ In the meantime, however, the Dresden escaped.

Sturdee learned of the escape of the Dresden from the Glasgow, and Luce also passed on the news of the Kent-Nurnberg encounter. Sturdee immediately took the battle-cruisers towards Cape Horn, picking up the Bristol, which had been left at the Falklands, on the way. The Dresden was in fact heading for Punta Arenas in the Magellan Straits and Sturdee has been criticized for not detailing the Bristol to search in that area.⁴ But Sturdee did not know that the Leipzig had been sunk and was unwilling to risk a division of force in the event of the enemy cruisers being together. In the event it is doubtful if any plan could have been successful for the weather deteriorated to such an extent that the search had to be called off.⁵

(1) Sturdee's Report, Adm. 137/304.
(2) Kent Report 9/12/14, in Ibid.
(3) Cornwall Report 12/12/14, in Ibid.
(4) The waters in that area were too treacherous for the battle-cruisers to be risked.
(5) Sturdee's Report, Adm. 137/304.
Thus Sturdee achieved the only decisive British victory at sea for the war. When examined in detail his battle tactics were unimaginative and at times poorly executed and his long delay in reaching the Falklands can hardly be justified. He also had the greatest good luck that von Spee arrived the day after he did and that the German Commander did not discover that the British fleet was coaling. Yet Sturdee still accomplished what he was
gone out to do with the minimum damage to his ships (an important consideration given the narrow superiority of the Grand Fleet at this time) and the minimum loss of life. If his task in battle seemed a simple one so too did many of the tasks set other British Admirals during the war which they executed far less successfully.

In London the victory was greeted with relief. The mounting public criticism of Churchill and the Admiralty was for the moment stilled. Churchill wrote in gratitude to Fisher, "My dear - this was your show & your luck. I shd only have sent one Greyhound and Defence. This wd have done the trick."¹ (In fact one battle-cruiser and Defence might not have done the trick.

Defence was inferior in speed to the German ships and was outgunned by the heavy cruisers. It was also a type of cruiser "admirably designed for rapid disintegration"² as Jutland was to show. The Germans, with their good shooting, might have put paid to Defence at an early stage. Then by dividing his squadron von Spee could have escaped with half his ships.)

Fisher, however, was not at all pleased. He chose to concentrate, not on the victory, but on the escape of the Dresden. He was later to write of the "inexplicable folly" of Sturdee in allowing this to happen.³ At the time he sent a telegram to Sturdee asking him to explain why the Dresden escaped.⁴ Not satisfied with the reply, Fisher sent off two more telegrams demanding an answer until finally an exasperated Sturdee replied, "I submit

(1) Churchill to Fisher 10/12/14, C.V.3, p. 302.
(2) Godfrey Captain J.H., Seven Lectures on Jutland (No.3) Cab. 45/269/Pt II.
(3) Fisher to Churchill 25/12/14, C.V.3, p. 333.
(4) Admiralty to Sturdee 21/12/14, Adm. 137/136.
that my being called upon on three separate telegrams to give reasons for my subsequent actions was unexpected." ¹ This earned Sturdee another rebuke from the Admiralty, although Churchill tried to soften the blow by congratulating Sturdee on his victory and offering the command of the 4th. Battle Squadron.² Fisher was not to be appeased. He suggested to Churchill that Sturdee transfer his flag to a light cruiser and continue the search for the Dresden.³ Churchill would have none of this. The public regarded Sturdee as a hero and it was necessary for this reason and for Churchill's reputation, that he appear in London as soon as possible. Even after Sturdee's return Fisher's spite had not abated. He kept Sturdee waiting for hours before he received him at the Admiralty, gave him a five minute interview, and then tried to pack him off to Scapa Flow before he could see the King. As a parting shot Sturdee's despatches were drastically pruned by Fisher before publication.⁴

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Churchill always felt that the defeat of the British squadron at Coronel was one of the events which led to his removal from the Admiralty in May 1915. At that time he was convinced that a section of the Conservative party held him to be personally responsible for the disaster and in a last attempt to save his position he sent a selection of the relevant telegrams and papers concerning the incident to Bonar Law.⁵ Bonar Law was unmoved, and criticism continued to disturb Churchill. In his resignation speech in November 1915 he demanded that the Government release all the relevant documents pertaining to Coronel so that his name could be cleared but nothing was done. Nor was Churchill satisfied that the official history of the naval war which appeared in 1921 gave an adequate explanation of his own and the Admiralty's position.⁶ It is not surprising then to find in

(1) Sturdee to the Admiralty 6/1/15, Adm. 137/136.
(2) Oliver to Sturdee 6/1/15, in Ibid.
(3) Marder, A.J. Scada Flow V.2, p.126
(4) See discussion on Sturdee's despatches in Adm. 137/304.
(6) See for example The World Crisis, p. 378-9.
The World Crisis, two long chapters, totalling over 50 pages, devoted to the hunting of the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the eventual British victory at the Falklands. 1 It remains to be seen whether in this narrative whether Churchill has managed to distance himself from events or whether he is merely concerned to make the best case he can for the actions of the Admiralty.

Churchill's attention is first turned towards the China squadron. His explanation for the weakness of that force in the pre-war years, that the most powerful British ships had to remain in the North Sea facing the High Sea Fleet, can readily be accepted. He correctly states that this was the reason for recalling the Defence from the China Squadron in 1913. He does not mention, however, that the Defence only represented a compromise with the original plan, which was to send the battle-cruiser New Zealand to the squadron as flagship. It will be remembered that this was arranged under the "fleet unit" agreement with the dominions in 1909 but Churchill does not mention this agreement at all or its later abrogation by the Admiralty.

Churchill/confident, that even without the Defence or the New Zealand, the China Squadron in 1914 was strong enough to defeat the German Squadron. He states that the Admiralty expected the Minotaur and the Hampshire to fight the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau "with good prospects of success", although "it would be a hard fought action". 2 It will be remembered from the previous discussion that both Richmond and Jackson expressed grave misgivings about the strength of the China squadron, so Churchill is hardly exact in saying that the Admiralty was confident that the squadron could defeat von Spee. Nor is it easy to see the basis for his confidence in the strength of the Minotaur and Hampshire relative to the German heavy cruisers. Apparently Churchill expected the heavier weight of broadside

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(1) The first chapter, "On the Oceans" was originally entitled, "Cruisers and Convoys". It has not been thought of sufficient interest, except in one case, to examine in detail the section of this chapter which deals with the organization of the various troop convoys to Britain, Churchill's account, in the main being confined to purely factual details.

(2) The World Crisis, p. 250.
fired by the Minotaur in relation to the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau to make up for the deficiencies of the Hampshire. Yet he appears to be unaware that all the heavy guns of the Minotaur were outranged by the 8.2" guns of the German ships. In any action between the four ships this might have been the decisive factor. However Churchill expected the balance between the two forces to be tipped decisively in Britain's favour by the presence of the battleship Triumph. With the Triumph, he wrote, "our superiority, except in speed, was overwhelming". But, it was shown earlier, this ship suffered from many of the same defects as the Minotaur and the Hampshire. Although it carried 10" guns they were also outranged by the 8.2" guns of the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. Furthermore, although the Triumph was classed as a battleship, its armour was much lighter than the German heavy cruisers. In addition it was manned by a scratch crew consisting of men from the Yangtze gunboats and the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, hardly the type of crew needed to face the crack gunners in von Spee's squadron. Finally, even at the optimistic speed quoted by Churchill (20.1 knots) the Triumph had no chance of catching the ships of the German squadron. In The World Crisis Churchill does not mention that this fact tended to make the whole China Squadron redundant. Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were essentially commerce destroyers. Their job was to avoid battle with other armoured ships at all costs and concentrate on the destruction of merchant shipping. If the British Squadron could not catch them, how could it prevent the Germans from carrying out their most important function? This question is not confronted by Churchill.

The World Crisis contains only a very brief account of the attempts by the China Squadron to catch the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. Churchill states that Jerram was ordered to concentrate on the Triumph which was at Hong Kong.  

(1) The World Crisis, p. 248.  
(2) Ibid.
But he neglects to mention that it was this move, though justified by the weakness of the British force, that allowed the *Emden* to escape and join von Spee. His narrative then jumps three weeks to the Japanese declaration of war. He comments that this event "enabled us to use our China squadron to better advantage in other theatres.... The *Triumph* was sent to participate with a small British contingent in the Japanese attack upon the fortress of Tsing Tau."¹ Churchill does not explain the "better uses" to which the remainder of the China Squadron was to be put. Nor does he explain why the squadron was to be dispersed to other theatres when it was still thought that von Spee was in far eastern waters.

At this point Churchill's account of the China Squadron's search for the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* ends. There is some justification for breaking off the narrative at this stage for Jerram's further efforts to locate the German cruisers proved fruitless and had little connection with other attempts to catch von Spee. However, it is nevertheless true that by breaking off his account where he does, Churchill manages to give the impression that from this point on the Admiralty had the situation in Far Eastern waters well in hand. Thus we have the *Newcastle* ordered to the Pacific coast of Canada, the Japanese navy assuming responsibility for the northern Pacific, and the *Triumph* participating in the siege of Tsingtao.² The vital factor missing from Churchill's discussion of these dispositions is that the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were still thought to be in eastern waters; that none of the forces mentioned were searching for them; that the force under Jerram that was continuing the hunt was woefully inadequate for its task; and that Jerram, with the full concurrence of the Admiralty, had increased the danger to the British ships even more by dividing his squadron. Thus a full survey of the position in the Far East, rather than giving the impression of the implementation of a well ordered plan, as is

(1) *The World Crisis*, p. 250.
(2) Ibid.
given in The World Crisis, leads one to believe that the Admiralty had entirely forgotten what their main priority was in those waters, namely, the speedy destruction of the German cruiser squadron.

Churchill opens his discussion of the position in Australian waters at the beginning of the war with an account of the origins of the expeditions against the German colonial possessions. "On an August morning, behold the curious sight of a British Cabinet of respectable Liberal politicians sitting down deliberately and with malice aforethought to plan the seizure of the German colonies in every part of the world."¹ The fact that the meeting took place on "an August morning" would indicate that neither the Cabinet nor the C.I.D. had done any forward planning on the capture of the German possessions in the event of war. In fact, as was shown, the immediate capture of the German colonies ran counter to the war orders of some of the outlying squadrons which would have to convoy the expeditions. Their first priority was the destruction of any German naval force in their area but Churchill does not comment on this conflict in objectives nor on whether the capture of the colonies was desirable until the waters surrounding them were cleared of enemy warships.

It is not clear from Churchill's account who first suggested that the German colonies be captured. From the passage quoted above it would appear that the impetus came from the Cabinet. Yet Churchill then goes on to say that, "The New Zealand and Australian Governments wished at once to seize Samoa and the German possessions in the Pacific",² and a few pages later, "As early as August 2 the New Zealand Government - ever in the van of the Empire - had...already made proposals for raising forces and striking at the enemy".³ However, it is obvious from the sources quoted earlier that the spur for action came from Britain and that the Australian Government at

¹ The World Crisis, p. 237.
³ Ibid., p. 252. The phrase "ever in the van of the Empire", was added in the final proof stage of the book. Perhaps the suggestion came from Hankey, who, as we shall see in a later chapter, was concerned that Churchill should give prominence to colonial efforts. See Churchill Papers, 8/122.
least was loath to undertake any expedition until von Spee had been located. Churchill considered that the expeditions were justified on two grounds; than von Spee was denied a series of potential "bases or refuges" and that the colonies could be traded against the liberation of Belgium at a peace conference. It will be remembered from the earlier discussion, however, that the Pacific possessions were of little use to von Spee as bases, mainly because of poor coaling facilities. None of them would have had any docking or repair installations, and therefore their use as refuges would appear to have been limited. Furthermore, the radio stations on these isolated outposts would hardly have been able to provide the German squadron with any up to date intelligence and if von Spee broke radio silence to contact them this would have provided the British ships searching for him with useful information. As for Churchill's second argument, it is hard to believe that the possession of Samoa or Rabual would have added any great weight to Britain's bargaining position at a peace conference, though the possession of Germany's African colonies might have. In any case the smaller colonies could have been captured at any time after the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had been located but this possibility is not discussed in The World Crisis.

Churchill's description of the movements of the battle-cruiser Australia is one of the least adequate sections in these chapters of the book and hardly gives a true picture of the use to which that ship could have been put in searching for the German cruisers. No mention is made of the fact that the war orders for the Australian Fleet laid down the destruction of the enemy heavy cruisers as its primary function (these orders had of course been approved by the Admiralty). Thus the important point, that the necessity to protect troop convoys on route to the various German possessions tied up the Australia when it could have been searching for von Spee, does not appear in The World Crisis. Moreover, Churchill does not mention that at

(1) The World Crisis, p. 237.
any time after the 1st. of October, or at least after the report on the 15th. that the German ships were in the Marquesas, the Australia was available to be sent to South American waters; that her commander pleaded with the Admiralty to be allowed to do so and that Admiral Patey made a series of extremely accurate predictions which stated that the coast of Chile was von Spee's most likely destination. These are very convenient omissions for Churchill. For, as was shown earlier, he was confident that even if Patey's predictions were correct Cradock's squadron, then forming in South American waters, was strong enough to deal with any eventuality.

In fact if Churchill's personal predilections had been followed the Australia would have not been in South Pacific waters at all. This is not made clear in The World Crisis as published, but an early draft of this chapter in the Churchill papers reveals that the following paragraph was originally included, "My only regret was that the Australia was not at home [Britain] with her consort the New Zealand ready to take part in what we expected to be, and what might easily have been, the supreme trial of strength."¹ This was a direct criticism of the Australian Government's policy in adhering to the original "fleet unit" idea and was in line with several statements made by Churchill in the pre-war period. However, these statements had been made in private and no doubt Churchill wished to avoid a public criticism of the policy of an autonomous Dominion. The paragraph was therefore deleted.

Churchill devotes two paragraphs to the sailing of the New Zealand convoy. He admits that there were differences of opinion between the Dominion Government and the Admiralty over the strength of the escort to be provided but his version of events gives no idea of the high state of tension between the two countries which those differences caused. For example it is not mentioned in The World Crisis that New Zealand ministers threatened to resign over the issue. Moreover, Churchill's account breaks off in late

¹ Churchill Papers 8/66. The omitted paragraph was to follow the paragraph ending, "no immediate anxiety about the Pacific", on p. 248.
September, thus omitting the fact that even after a stronger escort was provided, the Admiralty urged that the convoy sail before the additional ships arrived, thus almost provoking the resignation of the New Zealand Prime Minister.

No doubt, one factor in deciding Churchill to omit these facts from The World Crisis was that they hardly showed the Admiralty in the most favourable light. However, in this case it is possible that Churchill also thought that he was writing too soon after the event to make a full disclosure. Relations between Britain and the Dominions were a sensitive area and Churchill may have been anxious to avoid the airing of an inter-governmental dispute in this way.

For clarity, Churchill's discussion of the Coronel episode will be divided into three periods, September 1914, October 3rd. to 18th., and October 26th. to November 4th.

Only four paragraphs are assigned by Churchill to the first period. He quotes the Admiralty message of September 14th to Cradock warning of the possibility that *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* might arrive on his Station and that *Defence* was being sent as a reinforcement. However Churchill does not quote a later message to Cradock informing him that the "situation had changed". The omission of this telegram means that there is no discussion in The World Crisis of the ruse by which von Spee deceived the Admiralty, and no mention of the staff error which resulted in Cradock not being informed that the *Defence* had been ordered to remain in the Mediterranean. Also it is noticeable that Churchill accepts the view that German trade had revived along the Chilean coast, although, as we saw, the only "trade" taking place was the arrival of several colliers ahead of the German cruiser squadron. Another major omission from this section is that no mention is made of the Staff appreciations which were made during this period. It will be remembered that they all suggested that some form of reinforcement should be sent to

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1 The World Crisis, p. 365-6.
2 Ibid., p. 366.
Cradock. In *The World Crisis* the only mention made of reinforcements occurs later in Churchill's account when he mentions that at one point it was decided that *Indomitable* should go.¹ It is not clear from his account exactly when this decision was made or who made it.

Finally, Churchill does not quote or comment on the important message from Cradock on September 18th., in which he assigned *Canopus* the minor role of guarding colliers in the River Plate estuary, this being the first indication of the Admiral's low opinion of the ship.

It was shown that the characteristic of the second period (October 5th.-18th.) was that during this time Churchill started to have misgivings about the strength of Cradock's squadron and that by a series of staff errors these misgivings were not made known to Cradock. Here it seems is an excellent opportunity for Churchill to shift some of the responsibility for Coronel on to the Staff. Especially it might be thought that Churchill would single out Sturdee and Prince Louis for blame for they drafted the misleading telegram of October 14th. (Concur in your concentration of *Canopus* etc.) and it was Sturdee who convinced Churchill that the points made in Richmond's paper of October 5th., which warned of British inferiority in South American waters, were not valid. However, no mention of Staff errors appears in this section of *The World Crisis*. There would seem to be two explanations for this somewhat surprising fact. There were good reasons for Churchill to protect the reputation of Sturdee. Churchill had selected Sturdee for the command at the Falklands and his victory was important in restoring Churchill's reputation after Coronel. It would hardly be appropriate then for Churchill to criticize Sturdee for the poor staff work which contributed to that defeat. The case of Prince Louis is somewhat different. We have already seen that Churchill removed a critical reference to Prince Louis from his chapter on the *Goeben* incident. The explanation for this attitude, the need to retain the image of Prince Louis as a first rate naval

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¹ *The World Crisis*, p. 370.
officer with whom Churchill could work and to draw attention to the fact that here was another prominent figure driven from office by misinformed criticism, could again be applied to Churchill's suppression of Prince Louis' lapses prior to Coronel. Furthermore if Prince Louis' errors were revealed, the real reason for his replacement as First Sea Lord might become known; that he was, in Fisher's words "played out"¹ and that the dispute over his German parentage was just a convenient issue over which to accept his resignation. It is obvious that Churchill would not want to be responsible, even indirectly, for this disclosure.

Churchill's account of Coronel pauses at this point to consider the strengths of the rival squadrons which were gathering in South American waters. He describes Cradock's flagship, the Good Hope, as "a fine old a ship from the Third Fleet" with/9.2" gun at either end and a battery of 6" guns amidships.² The emphasis in this description should definitely be on "old" rather than "fine". The ship was built in 1902 and many of its 6" guns could not be fired in rough weather. Neither fact is mentioned in The World Crisis. Nor does Churchill mention that cruisers from the Third Fleet were usually regarded as obsolete types only suitable for commerce protection. Churchill is prepared to admit, however, that the Good Hope and the Monmouth stood little chance against von Spee's cruisers.³ For Churchill the presence of the battleship Canopus more than made up for any deficiencies in the other two ships. He writes,

"With the Canopus, Admiral Cradock's squadron was safe. The Scharnhorst and Gneisenau would never had ventured to come within decisive range of her four 12 inch guns....The old battleship, with her heavy armour and artillery, was in fact a citadel around which all our cruisers in those waters could find absolute security."⁴

It was shown earlier that the Canopus more closely resembled a scrap heap than a citadel. By whichever criterion is taken, range of guns, weight of

(1) Fisher to Pamela McKenna 3/10/14, McKenna Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, MCK 6/7.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 369.
(3) Ibid., p. 369-70.
(4) Ibid., p. 370.
shell fired per minute, experience of crew, the ship was outmatched by the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. Even in armour protection, it was seen that the battleship was only the equal of the German heavy cruisers. The evidence is also against Churchill's contention that von Spee would not have fought a squadron which contained the Canopus. The letter to his son, mentioned earlier, showed that the German Admiral would have risked an engagement, though not confident of the outcome. Furthermore, the battleship mentioned by von Spee in this letter was a Queen class. These were a much more modern design that the Canopus with 50% thicker armour and improved 12" guns with a longer range.\(^1\) It is possible that von Spee would have thought his prospects much better against a Canopus than a Queen. Finally, if the report of the dummy funnel was correct then von Spee might have entered a battle without being aware that a battleship was present.

Of course, if the premise that von Spee would have attacked a squadron containing a battleship is correct, it is clear that the strategy suggested for Cradock by Churchill in The World Crisis (harrassing the German ships and then retreating on the Canopus)\(^2\) would not have succeeded, for von Spee would have attacked the combined squadron at the first opportunity.

The final period in Churchill's account begins with the receipt of Cradock's telegram of the 26th. of October (shall employ Canopus on necessary work of convoying colliers) and ends with the news of the defeat off Coronel. Churchill claims that it was the disruption of Admiralty business caused by the replacement of Prince Louis by Lord Fisher which led him to miss the full significance of the minor tasks given to Canopus by Cradock.\(^3\) However, he states that he was concerned enough about the general situation to call for a report but was reassured by the staff paper of October 29th. (situation on west coast seems safe) and by Cradock's telegram of the same

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(1) Preston, Battleships of World War I, p. 103.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 371.
(3) Ibid., p. 372.
date which included Canopus in the list of ships to receive mail at Valparaiso. It was shown earlier that the staff paper mentioned by Churchill was a major factor in convincing Churchill that Cradock was safe. It is interesting to note therefore that although the paper is quoted by Churchill, it is not criticized. However the second "reassurance" listed by Churchill is not convincing for he has neglected to mention Cradock's telegram of the 31st. which, as we saw, made no mention of Canopus acting in conjunction with the other ships. Nor does Churchill quote his own reply, which again made no mention of the Canopus being absent. Furthermore, by this time Fisher had been installed at the Admiralty so Churchill could hardly use his earlier excuse to explain why he overlooked the absence of the Canopus. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Churchill's reason for omitting these two telegrams is that it would have damaged his case that the Admiralty had received no intelligence to indicate that the Canopus would be absent from Cradock's squadron at Coronel.

It is also stated quite categorically in The World Crisis that Cradock did not receive the message of October 28th. informing him that Defence was to remain on the east coast. It was shown earlier that the weight of evidence suggests that Cradock did receive this message. However, the stand taken by Churchill strengthens his case against Cradock, whose decision to fight von Spee is quite inexcusable if he was still expecting the Defence to join him at any moment.

The account of the action at Coronel in The World Crisis is not controversial and follows fairly closely that given in the official history. Like most authorities Churchill concludes that Cradock had a reasonable chance to escape with most of his squadron. Where controversy has arisen over his account is in his statement that he cannot "accept for the Admiralty any share in the responsibility" for the defeat of Cradock's squadron. The

(1) The World Crisis, p. 372-3.
(2) Ibid., p. 373.
(3) Ibid., p. 371.
previous discussion has shown that the poor staff work of Sturdee, Leveson, Prince Louis and Oliver contributed greatly to the defeat by ignoring the warnings of their juniors, by failing to translate Churchill's wishes into action and by supplying grossly inaccurate appreciations. Finally the silence of the Admiralty on Cradock's use of the Canopus surely implied consent and Cradock can hardly be blamed for interpreting it in this way.

Churchill also defends the dispositions made by the Admiralty to intercept von Spee and rejects the solution of concentrating Stoddart's and Cradock's squadrons near the Straits of Magellan.\(^1\) He argues that it was not possible for the British forces to be concentrated in this way, because the trade routes from Rio could not be left without a protecting force and because von Spee had at least six routes open to him, all of which had to be guarded against.\(^2\) To examine the second case first, the six alternatives open to von Spee which are mentioned by Churchill are: to remain in the Pacific, to double back in the direction of Australia and New Zealand, to enter the Caribbean through the Panama Canal, to concentrate on the destruction of shipping on the west coast of South America, to slip around Cape Horn and to make for either the Rio trade routes or South Africa. It is hard to follow Churchill's reasoning in the light of these options. The first two alternatives clearly did not involve Cradock or Stoddart at all. In the case of von Spee passing through the Panama Canal, it would have been simpler to send the combined British-Japanese force - which was working down the American coast - through the canal after them then to divert Stoddart from Rio. Furthermore it is hard to see that having a squadron on either coast was a superior disposition to a concentrated force if von Spee chose to remain off Chile or move to South Africa. In the first instance a concentrated squadron at the Magellan Straits would have been ideally placed to

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\(^1\) *The World Crisis*, p. 378.

sweep north to locate von Spee. If the Germans headed towards South Africa, a squadron situated near Cape Horn could have reached Cape Town almost as quickly as a squadron starting from Rio. Only in the case on von Spee making for the Plate estuary was a divided squadron possibly the best. However, even if this had been von Spee's plan it was probable because of his long voyage across the Pacific that he would put into a Chilean port before rounding the Horn. Thus it was likely that Cradock would meet the German squadron before Stoddart but Stoddart's squadron, in reserve on the east coast was much stronger than Cradock's in the front line. From these facts it would seem that Churchill's justification of the dispositions made by the Admiralty has little to recommend it.

It seems much more likely that the first reason given by Churchill for the division of force is the correct one. The need to protect the east coast trade routes seemed to obsess the Admiralty from the beginning of the war and they showed at least as much concern over the alleged appearances of the Karlsruhe in these waters as they did for von Spee. It will also be remembered that as late as October 31st. Churchill suggested that a combined squadron be formed, not to hunt down von Spee, but to look for this lone cruiser. Once more, it would seem that the local commanders were hampered in carrying out their duties by the failure of the Admiralty to choose their priorities correctly.

About his own responsibility for Coronel, Churchill's account is silent. Apparently he includes himself in the general absolution given to the Admiralty in The World Crisis. Normally in the case of a defeat at sea the First Lord would only assume a general responsibility, because as the civilian head of a fighting service he is not held personally responsible for fleet dispositions. Churchill, however, was a much more interventionist First Lord than most. He took it upon himself to see and comment on all the important telegrams which came in from Cradock and was intimately involved in setting the dispositions decided upon by the Admiralty. He therefore must
share the blame if those dispositions were found to be faulty. Also in his scrutiny of Cradock's telegrams he failed to notice on two separate occasions that the use to which the Admiral had decided to put his battleship was not in accordance with Admiralty policy. Of course Churchill has a case to make in criticizing Cradock. We saw earlier that Cradock did not make his doubts and anxieties about his force clear to the Admiralty Staff. Also his decision to fight von Spee without the Canopus but with the useless Otanzo remains one of the minor mysteries of the war. Where Churchill's account is misleading is that in accepting no blame on behalf of the Admiralty he is led to place all the blame on the local commander where a more reasonable view would be that mistakes were made by both and no participant emerged with any real credit.

The account of the Falkland Islands battle in The World Crisis is generally more satisfactory than the sections so far described. It is clearly easier to describe a victory than a defeat. The ships are sent out, they defeat the enemy, and all ends satisfactorily. It is in this vein that Churchill describes the despatch of the Inflexible and the Invincible to the Falklands. After some initial problems with the dockyard Admiral, who told Churchill that the ships could not sail before the 13th, the battlecruisers were sent on the 11th. (To make the point that it was a telegram from Churchill that caused their speedy despatch, a facsimile of the message to the Admiral is included in The World Crisis.)¹ As a result of this message,

"The ships sailed accordingly and in the nick of time. They coaled on November 26 at Abrolhos, where they joined and absorbed Admiral Stoddart's squadron (Carnarvon, Cornwall, Kent, Glasgow, Bristol and Orana) and dispatched Defence to the Cape, and without ever coming in sight of land or using their wireless they reached Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, on the night of December 7."²

Now we know that von Spee raided the Falklands on the morning of the 8th. Thus Churchill's account gives the impression that the journey of the battle-

(1) The World Crisis, p. 390-1.
(2) Ibid., p. 390.
cruisers was a speedy well ordered movement, which, because of the two days gained at the dockyard, culminated in the frustration of von Spee's plans by just a few hours. It will be remembered from the earlier account, however, that all sense or urgency left the voyage as soon as Sturdee was out of sight of land. Rather than dashing down to the Falklands as implied in The World Crisis, the squadron cruised at an economical speed, stopped frequently to examine merchant ships, frequently used the wireless, and generally behaved as though von Spee did not exist. We also saw that it was Captain Luce of the Glasgow who prodded Sturdee into moving from Abrolhos on November 28th. Thus it was by good luck and not the good management implied in The World Crisis that the battle-cruisers arrived in the nick of time.

In his discussion of the battle, Churchill does not go into the detail which would reveal the poverty of Sturdee's tactical thought. However, the brevity of his account is quite justified and generally it gives the correct impression. It was, as he remarks, an "uneventful" encounter on the British side.¹

Nor is Churchill disposed to go into the detail of the Sturdee-Fisher dispute which arose after the battle. He mentions that Fisher was displeased with the dispositions made by Sturdee after the battle but does not mention the amazing lengths to which Fisher was prepared to go to try to deflate Sturdee's reputation. However, the Churchill papers reveal that, initially, Churchill was willing to go further than this. In an early draft of this chapter he included a note from Fisher, highly critical of Sturdee, which gave the reader some idea of the unbalanced spite which governed some of the old Admiral's actions towards Sturdee.² Why the message was then removed from The World Crisis is open to doubt. Certainly, Fisher's reputation would not have been enhanced by its inclusion and this may have been a factor.

(1) The World Crisis, p. 393.
(2) Churchill Papers 8/71.
The chapters on Coronel were the first on which Churchill employed Admiral Thomas Jackson, a former Director of the Intelligence Division at the Admiralty, to help him. However, for this period Churchill had ample documentation in the papers he had taken with him from the Admiralty. It may also be imagined that in the case of an incident such as Coronel he had made up his mind on the broad outlines of what he wanted to say before he commenced writing. Therefore, unlike some of the men who advised Churchill on areas in which he had no direct experience, Jackson had little room in which to make a significant contribution to The World Crisis. In fact Jackson's main function seems to have been to draw up charts and maps, to provide lists of ships and their comparative strengths, and other technical information of a non controversial kind. His only suggestion in relation to the content of these chapters was that Churchill's section on troop convoys was better left out as it showed Admiralty unpreparedness in this area. It was ignored by Churchill.

Other assistance of a technical nature was sought by Churchill from the Admiralty. In one letter he got more than he bargained for, a list of the deficiencies of the Canopus in relation to the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. Churchill told Jackson that he could not agree with this and he sought reassurances from Admiral Oliver on the strength of the old battleship. Oliver told him that the Canopus was an efficient fighting unit well able to stand up to the German heavy cruisers, a view with which Churchill obviously felt much happier. Of course Oliver would have been partly responsible for sending the Canopus to Cradock in the first place and Churchill should have been much more cautious in accepting his advice. But then Churchill was not a detached observer impartially gathering facts but

(1) Churchill to Jackson 22/7/21, Churchill Papers 8/40.
(2) Jackson to Churchill 9/1/23, Churchill Papers 8/179.
(3) Jackson to Churchill 28/12/22, in Ibid.
(4) Undated note by Jackson, in Ibid.
(6) Churchill to Jackson 28/9/21, in Ibid.
(7) Oliver to Churchill 19/5/23, Churchill Papers 8/181.
a participant trying to justify his own actions.

In conclusion certain parallels can be drawn between these chapters and Churchill's handling of the Goeben incident. In an earlier chapter it was shown that the local commanders were hampered by the bewildering array of tasks assigned to them and by the failure of the Admiralty to fix priorities. It will also be remembered that in apportioning blame to Milne and Troubridge, Churchill completely ignores this point. Now in the case of Jerram and Patey, Churchill fails once more to grasp the fact that von Spee's escape from those Admirals was made much easier by the Admiralty's insistence that their ships be used to protect trade, convoy colonial expeditions, take part in siege operations and patrol huge areas of ocean. Nor is he willing to admit that it was the Admiralty's obsession with protecting trade routes which prevented Cradock's and Stoddart's squadrons from being combined to carry out what was surely the most important task facing the British in that area, the destruction of von Spee.

Other parallels can be found in the way that Churchill once more avoids criticizing Prince Louis and in his attempt to blame the Admiral on the spot for the defeat, when it is obvious that errors made in London contributed significantly to Cradock's downfall. However, in the case of Cradock, Churchill apparently feels that the evidence against the Admiral is so strong that there was no need to modify his criticisms as he did with Milne and Troubridge. Of course in Cradock's case there were no awkward court-martial verdicts or Admiralty communiques to be explained.

Other shortcomings in these chapters are Churchill's failure to make known that there were opponents inside the Admiralty of the strategy which he defends; his rather naive faith in naval nomenclature, whereby any battleship, no matter how old and decrepit, is considered superior to modern heavy cruisers manned by skilled crews; and his tendency to omit any documents or telegrams which prove embarrassing to the case he is trying

(1) Parallels to his treatment of Sturdee can be found in the section containing the three cruisers incident.
to make.

Perhaps some excuse can be found for Churchill in his coverage of the dispute over the New Zealand convoy for it is doubtful if any historian writing so close after the event would have been willing, or indeed permitted, to make public the full extent of the disagreement.

The Falkland Islands chapter, where Churchill is not defending any particular course of action followed by the Admiralty, was generally found to be more satisfactory. However, by concealing the lethargic way in which Sturdee conducted the campaign, Churchill makes him appear more competent than was the case, an interesting contrast to his handling of Cradock who is made to appear less competent. Also Churchill does not hesitate to extract the maximum amount of credit for himself in the course of the narrative emphasizing that it was his telegram to the Dartmouth dockyard which "resulted" in the Falkland Islands battle. Nevertheless the generalization can be made that Churchill is more reliable when he bestowing praise after victory than when apportioning blame after defeat.
In discussing the section on the siege of Antwerp in *The World Crisis* it will be necessary to order the Chapter in a different way from the methods adopted so far. In the main the details of the siege are well known and are not controversial; nor is Churchill's account primarily concerned with them. Rather it is the British attempt to raise a relieving force, his own role in prolonging the siege and the results achieved by the British intervention on which he concentrates. Therefore a step by step description of the progress of the siege would be largely irrelevant to Churchill's account. Instead it is proposed to give in a few paragraphs the main events leading to the fall of Antwerp; then to outline those sections of Churchill's narrative about which there has been controversy and, finally, to criticize that account in the light of the available documentary evidence.

After the battle of the Marne the retreating German army had halted on the River Aisne and from that line the Allies were unable to dislodge them. The Western Front was now continuous from the Swiss border to just north of Compiegne and the eyes of the belligerents turned towards the open flank between that point and the sea. Thus began the rapid extension of the front northward from the Aisne as each army tried to outflank the other.

For the Germans this movement was not without danger. The Belgian army, which had originally stood in the path of the invaders, had been brushed aside rather than beaten. As the Germans marched into France, King Albert had retired with his army into Antwerp and the Belgians now stood on the flank of German lines of communication with the northern sector of the Western Front. They had taken advantage of this position and had made sorties from Antwerp on August 24th, September 9th\(^1\) and a smaller movement in late September.\(^2\)

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It became obvious to the Germans that no major advance into Flanders could take place unless Antwerp fell, and on September 28th the bombardment of the outer forts began.

Earlier in September the Belgians had appealed to the British and French for aid. Little had been done. Now their requests became more urgent. An attempt was made by Kitchener and Joffre to raise a force to aid the Belgians. Before details could be finalised the Belgians announced that they intended to retire from Antwerp. Churchill was sent to the City with promises of aid if the defence could be prolonged, and a token force of marines and elements of the Royal Naval Division arrived in Antwerp between the 3rd and 6th October. But, on the 6th the Belgians decided that they could delay no longer as their communications with the Allies in Northern France were in danger and there seemed to be no prospect of stopping the heavy howitzers which were demolishing the Antwerp forts one by one. The evacuation of Antwerp commenced on October 8th and the City surrendered on the 10th. The Franco-British relieving force which had got as far as Ghent now joined the retreating Belgian field army until the line Nieuport-Dixmude-Ypres was reached. Here the front was to stabilise until the last year of the war.

Churchill states that from the beginning of the war his attention had been directed towards Antwerp. He had been "very anxious to do everything that could be done out of our slender resources to aid the Belgian King and nation to maintain their stronghold, and such small items as the Admiralty could spare in guns and ammunition were freely sent". However, Churchill claims that he was opposed to the strategy which lay behind the first Belgian appeal for help. He says the Belgians wanted "25,000 troops to co-operate with an equal number of Belgian troops for the purpose of keeping open the line Antwerp-St. Nicholas-Ghent-Bruges-Ostend". He was opposed to

(2) The World Crisis, p. 298.
(3) Ibid., p. 299.
this because

"It involves practically a flank position for a line of supply protected by forces large enough to be hit hard and perfectly powerless against any determined German attack which it is thought worth while to deliver. At any moment a punch up from Brussels by a German division or larger force would rupture the line, and drive the troops trying to hold it to be disarmed on neutral Dutch territory or into the sea."\(^1\)

Churchill asserts that he proposed an alternative strategy; the reinforcement of the Antwerp garrison by territorial troops and a "request" to the Dutch Government to "give a free passage up the Scheldt [which lay partly in Dutch territorial waters] to Antwerp for whatever troops and supplies were needed".\(^2\) Churchill says he felt sure that "strong representations to the Dutch Government...[would] have induced them to grant this relief to Antwerp and the Belgian nation in their agony," but that Grey was opposed to putting pressure on the Dutch.\(^3\) Nor did Kitchener approve of using British territorials at Antwerp.\(^4\) It should be noted that Churchill summarized his memorandum on Dutch neutrality instead of reprinting it because "those questions are still of some delicacy".\(^5\)

Churchill then gives an account of the attempt by the British and French to raise a relieving force for Antwerp in response to the second Belgian appeal for help.\(^6\) He states that he was not involved in this process in any way and that his participation in the attempt to save Antwerp began when he was recalled by Kitchener and Grey from a visit to Dunkirk on the night of October 2nd.\(^7\) On proceeding to Kitchener's house he was read a telegram from the British Ambassador, Sir Francis Villiers which is quoted in *The World Crisis*.

"The Government have decided to leave tomorrow for Ostend...The King with field army will withdraw, commencing with advanced guard tomorrow in the direction of Ghent to protect coast-line, and eventually, it is hoped, to co-operate with the Allied

\(^{(1)}\) Churchill to Grey and Kitchener and Asquith 7/9/1914, quoted *The World Crisis*, p. 299.
\(^{(2)}\) Ibid., p. 299.
\(^{(3)}\) Ibid., p. 299 and p. 302.
\(^{(4)}\) Ibid., p. 302.
\(^{(5)}\) Ibid., p. 299.
\(^{(6)}\) Ibid., p. 303-4.
\(^{(7)}\) Ibid., p. 305.
Armies...It is said that town will hold out for five or six days, but it seems most unlikely that when the Court and Government are gone resistance will be so much prolonged."\(^1\)

Churchill maintains that in the light of this message two decisions were made by Grey, Kitchener and himself. The first was to send a brigade of marines to Antwerp immediately to sustain the defence.\(^2\) The second was that

"some one in authority who knew the general situation should travel swiftly into the city and there ascertain what could be done on either side. As I was already due at Dunkirk the next morning, the task was confided to me. Lord Kitchener expressed a decided wish that I should go.\(^3\)

Churchill arrived in Antwerp on October 3rd. According to *The World Crisis* events developed in the following way. He was told by the Belgian Prime Minister, M. de Broqueville, that the field army intended to withdraw to the left bank of the Scheldt unless help arrived. He then unfolded the Anglo-French plan whereby a force of over 50,000 men was promised.\(^4\)

Following this meeting an agreement was drawn up which stated that the Allies would decide within 3 days whether they could launch a big operation to relieve the fortress. If satisfactory assurances could not be given, the Belgians would be free to abandon the defence if they thought fit.\(^5\) In the meantime the British would aid the defence with guns, marines and the naval brigades which, minus recruits, were ordered to be sent to Antwerp by Churchill.\(^6\)

What follows next is a description by Churchill of what took place in Antwerp during the next three days; how he visited the marines in the front line;\(^7\) how he supervised the arrival of the naval brigades and personally insisted that they remain in an intermediate position until the position at the front became clear;\(^8\) how the fire from the huge German howitzers gradually

\(^1\) Villiers to Grey 2/10/14, quoted *The World Crisis*, p. 305-6.  
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 307.  
\(^3\) Ibid.  
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 310.  
\(^5\) Churchill to Kitchener 3/10/14, quoted *The World Crisis*, p. 310-11.  
\(^6\) Ibid.  
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 312.  
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 319-20.
demolished the outer forts and demoralised the Belgian troops to the extent that the outer defences had to be evacuated;¹ how feeling himself "suddenly, unexpectedly and deeply involved in a tremendous and hideously critical local situation" he offered to resign his post and take "formal military charge of the British forces in Antwerp".² And finally how, with the relieving force not in sight the Belgians decided on October 6th that they could wait no longer and ordered the immediate evacuation of the field army from the city.³

Churchill left Antwerp that night and states that the bombardment of the city and the forts of the enemy line began on the 7th. After that "the enemy's attack was pressed continuously, and the enceinte of the city was considered to be untenable by the evening of the 8th."⁴ Thus the retreat of the British and Belgian forces from Antwerp began.

"Only weak parties of Germans ventured beyond Lokeren during the night of the 9th-10th to molest the retreat of the Antwerp troops. The 2nd Belgian Division and two out of the three Naval Brigades came through intact. But the railway and other arrangements for the rear brigade were misunderstood, and about two and a half battalions of very tired troops, who through the miscarriage of an order had lost some hours, were led across the Dutch frontier in circumstances on which only those who know their difficulties are entitled to form a judgment."⁵

Churchill claims that the object of prolonging the defence of Antwerp was,

"to give time for the French and British Armies to rest their left upon that fortress and hold the Germans from the seaboard along a line Antwerp-Ghent-Lille. This depended not only upon the local operations but on the result of the series of out-flanking battles which marked the race for the sea. A decisive victory gained by the French in the neighbourhood of Peronne, or by the British beyond Armentières and towards Lille, would have opened all this prospect."⁶

However, despite this failure Churchill expresses the opinion in The World Crisis that the attempt to save Antwerp was worthwhile in that the days

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(1) The World Crisis, p. 319.
(2) Ibid., p. 316.
(3) Ibid., p. 320-1.
(4) Ibid., p. 323.
(5) Ibid., p. 325-6.
(6) Ibid., p. 324.
gained at Antwerp saved the Channel Ports from German occupation. He arrived at this conclusion in the following way: Had the Belgian field army left Antwerp on the 3rd or 4th

"the city would have surrendered on the 4th or 5th. No [Allied relieving forces]...would have been at Ghent to cover the Belgian retreat. But assuming that the Belgian army had made this good unaided, the same marches would have carried them and their German pursuers to the Yser by the 10th. There would have been nothing at all in front of Ypres. Sir John French could not come into action north of Armentières till the 15th. His detractors at St. Omer, etc., were not completed till the 19th. Sir Douglas Haig with the 1st Corps could not come into line north of Ypres till about the 21st. Had the German Siege Army been released on the 5th, and, followed by [the Reserve Corps]... advanced at once, nothing could have saved Dunkirk, and perhaps Calais and Boulogne. The loss of Dunkirk was certain and that of both Calais and Boulogne probable. Ten days were wanted, and ten days were won."¹

It is now time to test the accuracy of this account against the available documentary evidence. During this examination two factors should be kept in mind. The first is that at the time Churchill's intervention at Antwerp provoked the bitterest criticism and was surrounded by the wildest rumours. The editor of the Morning Post called the operation "a costly blunder, for which Mr. W. Churchill must be held responsible".² The Daily Mail asked "who is responsible for [such] a gross example of mal-organization?"³ Sir Francis Hopwood told Lord Stamfordham, the King's secretary, that Churchill had insisted on going to Antwerp over the objections of Kitchener and Grey and had to be ordered to return by the Cabinet.⁴ Stamfordham replied, "Our friend must be quite off his head!"⁵ Even Asquith who had initially supported Churchill's action⁶ was eventually to speak of the "wicked folly of it all."⁷ Churchill was well aware of these criticisms and of the damage that the Antwerp venture had done to his reputation. It will be seen in the course of the narrative whether the need to answer his critics led

¹ The World Crisis, p. 326-7.
³ Daily Mail 14/10/14, quoted in Ibid., p. 126.
⁴ Hopwood to Stamfordham 6/10/14, C.V.3, p.174-5.
⁵ Stamfordham to Hopwood 6/10/14, C.V.3, p.175.
⁶ Asquith to Venetia Stanley 10/10/14, C.V.3, p. 184.
⁷ Asquith to Venetia Stanley 13/10/14, C.V.3, p.188
Churchill to distort his arguments in any way.

The second factor is that some of the material used by Churchill in this chapter came from two articles on Antwerp which he wrote from the Sunday Pictorial in 1916. In fact about one quarter of Churchill's entire account comes from this source. It is interesting to note that this is the section in which Churchill sums up the results obtained by the Antwerp operation. Therefore, whether Churchill's conclusions are correct or not it is obvious that they were arrived at without the benefit of the perspective of time.

The general impression given by the opening paragraphs on the siege of Antwerp in The World Crisis is that Churchill was the only minister interested in aiding Antwerp at this time, that neither Kitchener nor Grey was willing to adopt any of the suggestions which he put forward and that in the event little was done during September. It is true that Churchill's plan to save Antwerp was rejected but how realistic was that plan in the first place? We saw that the first phase of his scheme was to send territorial troops to the city, but was it feasible to send these Divisions to Antwerp when the battle in France was still undecided? Also, did not this plan violate one of the maxims of war that Churchill was fond of quoting in a naval context, namely, that forces should be concentrated for battle at the decisive point? Yet it must be said that Kitchener rejected sending territorials to Antwerp not for the reasons given above but because he had an unreasonable fear of a German invasion of Britain. The Territorial Divisions were, therefore, kept at home to guard the east coast.

The second part of Churchill's plan was to "request" the Dutch to open the Scheldt. Churchill has been less than frank in The World Crisis in describing what his actual policy toward the Dutch was. The full texts of his memoranda reveal that he was prepared to go much further than requesting the Dutch to open the Scheldt. On the 7th September he proposed

2. The material used from the Sunday Pictorial articles is - the last paragraph on p. 322, p. 333, from the first paragraph on p. 325 to the end of the section on p. 327.
to Grey that if Holland refused, the Navy should keep the Scheldt open by force. This would have had the added advantage of blockading the Rhine. Therefore, "from a naval point of view, war with Holland would be better for us than neutrality". ¹ Earlier he had told Grey, "The Admy are capable of [keeping the Scheldt open]...any time you think it necessary". ² However Grey was unwilling to risk adding to Britain's enemies at this crucial point and the plan was rejected. It is little wonder then that Churchill considered these memoranda too delicate to publish in full in The World Crisis.

Nevertheless, the proposition put forward by Churchill in The World Crisis that the British should have started to construct a plan to save Antwerp in early September has considerable merit. Kitchener not only rejected Churchill's ideas, he put nothing in their place. ³ Thus, when the urgent Belgian appeals for help came later in the month, the British had no plan and no time to respond to the situation in a reasoned way.

Churchill's account of the meeting at which it was decided to send him to Antwerp must now be discussed. Only one other description of that meeting written by a participant (Grey) exists. He describes Churchill's entry into the meeting thus. "Immediately he entered the room he said the abandonment of Antwerp must be stopped and announced that he was going there at once to stop it." ⁴ Grey at first urged caution but "finally Kitchener gave an opinion in favour of his going, and then I acquiesced". ⁵ Thus Grey is quite certain that the idea of the Antwerp trip was initiated by Churchill. It will be remembered that Churchill did not say with whom the idea of his going to Antwerp originated. He gave the impression that it was the logical extension of his trip to Dunkirk. Of course Grey's account could be wrong.

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² Churchill to Grey 20/8/14, C.V.3, p. 46-7.
³ He told Grey "I expect [the Belgians] will hang on to Antwerp" - Kitchener to Grey 7/9/14, C.V.3, p. 97.
⁴ Grey of Falldon, Viscount, Twenty Five Years 1892-1916 V.2, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1925, p. 79.
⁵ Ibid., p. 80.
but the fact that Churchill evades this issue in *The World Crisis* suggests otherwise. There is no doubt that because of the later criticism of his Antwerp journey he would have preferred that the public believe he had been sent to Antwerp as Kitchener's lieutenant rather than as the result of a suggestion which originated with himself. It is also worth noting that he is careful to avoid all mention of Grey's attitude to the venture.

Although Churchill did not know it in 1914 or presumably at the time of writing Volume 1 of *The World Crisis*, the message from Villiers which was the immediate cause of his going to Antwerp was wrong in one of its details. The Belgian Government had decided to leave Antwerp as stated but no final decision had been taken about the field army.¹ Villiers had been misinformed by the Belgian Prime Minister, M. de Broqueville,² perhaps deliberately to impress upon the British the need for haste. Ultimately the error probably made little difference for it is doubtful if the field army would have remained once the Government had gone. However, it is also doubtful if Grey or Kitchener would have recalled Churchill from his train to Dunkirk if they had thought that the Belgian army was to remain in Antwerp. Thus, Churchill's Antwerp journey may have been caused by a misconception.

It would be strange if Churchill did not hear of this error in later years. The fact was discovered by the official historian of the British army in the war, Sir John Edmonds. Churchill and Edmonds corresponded regularly while Churchill was writing *The World Crisis*, but if Edmonds told Churchill of the discrepancy in the telegram, Churchill did not think it necessary to incorporate this information into the later editions of his book.

The account of Churchill's three day sojourn in Antwerp is generally accepted and contains some of the best descriptive writing in the book depicting well the atmosphere of the besieged city. He does not succumb to the

*(1) Edmonds to Villiers 24/6/23, Cab. 45/158.*
*(2) Villiers to Edmonds 26/9/23, in Ibid.*
temptation of over-dramatising his own part in events. If anything, his role in inducing the Belgians to fight on is minimised. Even the controversial telegram in which he offered to resign is discussed. Churchill was not to know of course that it was received by his colleagues with a "Homerian laugh".¹

The only controversy which emerges from this three day period is the sending of the "partially trained and ill-equipped"² naval brigades into the City. Churchill was much criticized for this move after the event, particularly by Asquith who told Venetia Stanley,

"I was assured that all the recruits were being left behind, and that the main body at any rate consisted of seasoned Naval Reserve men. As a matter of fact only about 1/4 were Reservists, and the rest were a callow crowd of the rawest tyroes, most of whom had never fired off a rifle....It was like sending sheep to the shambles."³

These criticisms are hardly justified. As we saw, Churchill had asked that the naval brigades be sent minus recruits and it was the Admiralty that was at fault in not doing this. Secondly, the immediate arrival of reinforcements was part of the price demanded by the Belgians for not evacuating the City and, given Kitchener's veto on the use of Territorial troops, these were the only men who could have been sent at the time. Also, considering that only 57 men from the entire naval division were killed at Antwerp,⁴ Asquith's "sheep to the shambles" metaphor seems hardly appropriate.⁵

Presumably to avoid offending the Belgians Churchill has omitted some sections of telegrams sent from Antwerp during this period which dealt with the low morale of the Belgian army. For example, in his telegram to Kitchener of 3rd October the following was omitted from the text published

(1) Asquith to Venetia Stanley 5/10/14, C.V.3, p. 165-6.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 319.
(3) Asquith to Venetia Stanley 13/10/14, C.V.3, p. 188-9.
(5) There is an interesting parallel between Antwerp and the Dardanelles. The stores which were sent with the Naval Brigades came in four loads, one for each battalion. It was found that each contained all stores on one kind, e.g. bread in one, margarine in another. They had to be sorted and reloaded before issue.
Diary of Capt. O.M. Dyke, 1st Naval Brigade, 7/10/14, Cab. 45/158.
in The World Crisis: "I must impress on you the necessity of making these worn and weary men throw their souls into it, or the whole thing will go with a run."¹ Similar pages have been omitted from two telegrams sent on October 5th.² There is no indication in the text that any of these excisions have been made but it cannot be said that the omissions are vital. Enough references to the poor state of Belgian morale were retained to enable a correct picture to be given. Probably Churchill had no wish to hurt the feelings of an ally by over-emphasizing this factor as he may have done in 1914 to obtain as much help as possible.

It was noted earlier that Churchill stated that the "city was considered to be untenable by the evening of the 8th." This neutral phrase carefully conceals a disagreement between the commander of the British naval forces at Antwerp, General Paris, and Churchill. Paris, indeed considered that Antwerp could not be held beyond the 8th.³ but this view was not shared by Churchill. He considered that Paris could hold on and informed the British commander of this opinion in the strongest terms.⁴ However, Paris had witnessed Belgian forces leaving the line in large numbers and he was determined to evacuate his own forces at once⁵ and to this view Churchill was forced to bow.

Whether Churchill's view was correct does not admit of a definite answer. It all depended on what force the Germans would have been prepared to push forward from Termonde in an endeavour to block the line of retreat of the Antwerp troops. Suffice it to say that Rawlinson thoroughly approved of Paris' decision,⁶ and Churchill probably decided that with the weight of military opinion against him this intervention was better omitted.

The internment of over 1000 men from the naval brigades in Holland.

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¹ Churchill to Kitchener 3/10/14, Adm. 1/8397/362.
² Churchill to Kitchener 5/10/14, in Ibid.
³ Paris to Churchill 8/10/14, in Ibid.
⁴ Churchill to Paris 8/10/14, in Ibid.
⁵ Report by Major-General Paris 11/10/14, Adm. 116/3486.
⁶ Rawlinson's Report on Operations 18/10/14, Adm. 137/1010.
occurred much as described by Churchill. The rear brigade was delayed by a mistaken order and their transport arrangements had dissolved in chaos. However, he does not give the immediate reason which led to the decision by the Commander of the force to march his men across the Dutch border. This decision was made because news had arrived that the Germans were across the line of retreat in force (this is now known to have been false) and, as the men were exhausted and without transport, no other course seemed open.

It is never doubted in *The World Crisis* that the relief of Antwerp was a feasible operation or that the attempt to stave off the German besieging force was worth while. This optimism was of course based on the plans of Sir John French and Joffre to turn the northern German flank, fall on their lines of communication and sweep them out of Belgium and Northern France at a stroke.\(^1\) That this plan was wildly optimistic was proved by events. However, the plan was not as unreasonable at the time as it now appears. The situation in northern France and Flanders was still fluid. There were few German troops between the Channel Ports and Antwerp. The existence of the German Reserve Corps, which the Allies ran into at Ypres, was unknown. In short, at the time there seemed to be a reasonable prospect that the plan would succeed. In any case, although this point is not put forward by Churchill, it was perhaps inevitable that the British should attempt to save Antwerp. The comprehensive violation of Belgium neutrality was the most important factor in bringing Britain into the war. Yet so far the aid given to Belgium had been slight. It was inconceivable that when the Belgian appeal for aid came, Britain could have remained unmoved. Whether it was worthwhile or not, the attempt to save Antwerp had to be made.

The rather vague plans of the Allied High Commands were really more concerned with the wholesale defeat of the German Army than with the relief of Antwerp. It was noted earlier, however, that in *The World Crisis* Churchill put forward a definite strategic objective which he thought could

have been accomplished by the Allies if they outflanked the German forces in the North. His plan was to anchor the left of the Allied line on Antwerp and establish the front along the line Antwerp-Ghent-Lille. Leaving aside the fact that none of the Allied commanders mentioned this line as a possible objective, Churchill's plan is open to grave strategic objections. In fact, these objections are similar to those raised by Churchill himself to the Belgian proposal to supply Antwerp through Ostend and Ghent which was mentioned previously. A glance at the map shows that the line proposed by Churchill could have been ruptured in much the same way (a punch up from the south) with much the same dangers (internment in Holland or isolation from the Allied armies to the west) as that proposed by the Belgians.

A second objection to the plan was that it would have involved the Allies in holding a front line 50 miles longer than that which eventually solidified at a time when the shortage of troops was acute. Finally, was a city the size of Antwerp an ideal place on which to rest the front? The civilian population of 400,000 would have required evacuation and the city, under constant bombardment, would have become a death trap for troops, an Ypres on a large scale.

Churchill's wish to incorporate Antwerp into the front line invites comparison with Verdun, the most famous fortress city of the war. Churchill seemed to envisage for Antwerp a role similar to that played by Verdun. However, his remarks on the French strategy at Verdun were in marked contrast with his projected plan for Antwerp. In his discussion of Verdun Churchill wrote much good sense about the need for strategic withdrawal and shortening the line. "Ground should have been sacrificed" he wrote, "...with the sole object of exacting the highest price from the enemy at every stage". Instead the French had been "fastened to fixed positions by sentiment, and battered to pieces there by artillery." Yet "strategic withdrawal" played no

(1) The World Crisis, p. 964.
(2) Ibid., p. 963.
part in Churchill's plan for Antwerp. In this case it was going to be a matter of holding on at all costs because "Antwerp was...the sole stronghold of the Belgian nation". But what was this but sentiment? and the fate of the defenders of Antwerp must surely have been to be "battered to pieces by artillery". What was the difference between Verdun and Antwerp that made Churchill recommend such different solutions? One suspects that the only difference was that Churchill was personally involved with the defence of one and not with the other.

In The World Crisis the most important conclusion drawn by Churchill from the siege of Antwerp is that "Antwerp saved the Channel Ports". By this he means that the five or six days' delay in the fall of the City, which was achieved by British intervention, enabled a line to be formed across northern Belgium which prevented the German break through to the Channel. This assertion is difficult to prove depending as it does on the complex movements of three separate forces, the German Reserve Corps advancing from Germany, the B.E.F. arriving in Flanders from the Aisne and the retreating Belgian Field Army and Anglo-French relieving forces. It was noted earlier that Falkenhayn had decided that no major advance could be made through northern Belgium until Antwerp had fallen. When the City capitulated on the 10th four reserve Corps, whose task it was to outflank the Allied line and reach Calais, began their forward movement. On the 13th they were detaining south west of Brussels. On the 14th they began an advance to the line Eecloo-Deynze-Wortgem. Protecting their right was the Antwerp besieging force, the III Reserve Corps. By the 17th the new Corps were 6 miles east of a line Courtrai-Thourout, 2 miles from Ypres. The battle for

(1) The World Crisis, p. 298.
(2) Edmonds, Sir J., 1914 V.2, p. 121N.
(3) Ibid., p. 122N.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid.
Ypres began the next day.

Assuming that Antwerp had fallen on the 4th or 5th October, the new Corps would have arrived before Ypres on 12th or 13th. What forces would have been available to oppose them? The 7th Division and the 3rd Cavalry Division were only sent to Belgium to save Antwerp and would otherwise have remained in England. Likewise, the French Territorial Division and the Marine Brigade were sent to Flanders specifically to aid in the relief of Antwerp. The Belgian Field Army, had it escaped, would have been well to the north of Ypres and fully occupied by the German III Reserve Corps.

From October 1st the B.E.F. was transferring from the Aisne to Flanders. ¹ By October 11th the II Corps was at Bethune, the Cavalry Corps between Hazebrouk and Merville and the III Corps detaining near St. Omer.² All of these positions were well to the south and west of Ypres and obviously the B.E.F. would have been in no position to stop the German Reserve Corps reaching at least Dunkirk. By the 18th the gap in the line had been filled. Thus it is probably a reasonable assumption to say, as Churchill does, that the days gained at Antwerp enabled the battle of Ypres to be fought and the Channel Ports saved.

However, what Churchill does not make clear in The World Crisis is that the saving of the Channel Ports was not the object of the Antwerp enterprise but only an accidental by-product. After all, it was Churchill himself who defined the object of sending a relieving force to Antwerp as an attempt to gain "time for the French and British Armies to rest their left upon that fortress".³ But at the end of his account Churchill gives the impression that the main object was to delay the German advance until the B.E.F. arrived in Flanders from the Aisne. In fact the existence of the German Reserve Corps, with which the British collided at Ypres, was only vaguely known to

² See Map Annex to I bbld., Map 6.
³ The World Crisis, p. 324.
the Allied Commanders. Thus they could hardly have made plans to delay it by sending a relieving force to Antwerp. In fact, it was quite clear that Churchill could not have foreseen this result. In an earlier draft of The World Crisis he admitted this. He wrote, "It is by the results and as a whole that the episode will be judged; and these, though I do not by any means claim to have foreseen or controlled them, were certainly advantageous to the Allied cause". Later he decided to claim slightly more prescience for himself and wrote, "I do not by any means claim fully to have foreseen them or controlled them". Finally he dropped the whole section underlined above and wrote, "It is by the results and as a whole that the episode will be judged; and these as will be shown were certainly advantageous to the Allied cause".

Thus to justify further his attempt to save Antwerp Churchill has concentrated on the results achieved rather than on the aims of the original attempt and has claimed rather more foresight for himself than was evident at the time. However, in emphasizing the part Antwerp played in the first battle of Ypres, Churchill is going no further than writers such as Liddell-Hart, Crutwell and Edmonds, although it is possible that their accounts were influenced by The World Crisis. In the case of Edmonds this is known to be true. While Churchill was writing the chapter on Antwerp he consulted Edmonds. In return Edmonds wrote, "I shall be grateful for a copy of the proof of the Antwerp Chapter, that I may bring the "Official History", which I am now writing into line with it." As for that part of his account which deals with his own role in the siege, Churchill is really remarkably accurate and restrained, especially considering both the opportunities which existed for self-aggrandisement and the pressure

(1) Churchill Papers 8/68, emphasis added.
(2) Ibid., emphasis added.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 322.
(7) Edmonds to Churchill 12/1/20, Churchill Papers 8/38.
Churchill was under from his critics, as quoted earlier, to justify his intervention. It also compares favourably with other versions of these events, particularly the fanciful narrative produced by Lord Esher in "The Tragedy of Lord Kitchener", in which he claims that Churchill travelled to Antwerp without Kitchener's knowledge. 1 In short, in this chapter of The World Crisis the participant, the journalist and the historian have combined to produce a lively and, in the main, accurate record of the event.

(1) For Churchill's own comments on this book see The World Crisis, p. 322.
Between the outbreak of war and January 1915 there occurred five small naval actions in British waters, all of which receive attention from Churchill, and two of which (Scarborough Raid and the Dogger Bank Battle) have lengthy chapters of their own in *The World Crisis*. It will be convenient to group all these actions together in one chapter and discuss them in chronological order. Because of the small results produced by each of them in relation to the naval war as a whole it has not been thought worthwhile to reproduce a full account of each action. Instead the salient points in relation to Churchill's narrative alone are identified and discussed.

**Heligoland**

On August 28, 1914, a British force of destroyers, cruisers and submarines, supported by battle-cruisers and the first cruiser squadron from the Grand Fleet, raided the German-held waters of the Heligoland Bight. The plan was to interrupt the German destroyer patrols and attack any ships which attempted to come to their rescue. The operation succeeded, largely due to the intervention of the battle-cruisers at a crucial moment. Three German cruisers and one destroyer were sunk while on the British side only one cruiser was damaged. However, due to poor staff work the operation almost miscarried. Neither Tyrwhitt (leading the destroyer flotillas) nor Keyes (in charge of the submarines) was aware of exactly which units of the Grand Fleet had been detailed to support them. Luckily for the British, Tyrwhitt learnt the nature of the supporting force before the operation began, but for much of the time Keyes was in action, he thought Goodenough's first

- (1) Heligoland - Admiralty operations orders, Adm. 137/1943.
- (2) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.1, p. 119.
- (3) Southampton Report 29/8/14, Adm. 137/551. **Southampton** was flagship of the 1st Cruiser Squadron.
Cruiser Squadron was a hostile force. The confusion was such that the British were fortunate not to suffer losses from their own ships. Indeed one of the submarines tried to torpedo the Southampton, Goodenough's flagship, which in turn tried to ram a submarine. Neither succeeded. In the event all went well and Churchill was able to announce the first naval victory of the war.

Churchill's account of these events is extremely brief. In fact in the first draft of The World Crisis no mention is made of the Heligoland action. However, on reflection Churchill no doubt thought it wise to balance the account of the sinking of the "three cruisers" with which the chapter ends, with a victory at the beginning.

Since Churchill concedes the major criticism of the operation, that poor staff work almost caused several mishaps, only three points need to be made about his account. The first is a minor one concerning the role played by Jellicoe in the plan. Churchill says "As soon as Sir John Jellicoe was informed of...[the operation] he offered to send in further support three battle-cruisers and six light cruisers." According to Jellicoe this is incorrect. He claims to have either sent these ships and then told the Admiralty, or informed the Admiralty that he considered them essential for the success of the operation. In either case it was at Jellicoe's insistence that the supporting force was increased and it was the ships that he added which ensured that the operation ended successfully.

The second point to be made is that Churchill's description of the progress of the battle gives the misleading impression that the British were always in the ascendency. He writes, "A confused, dispersed and prolonged series of combats ensued between the flotillas and light cruisers and continued until after four o'clock in the afternoon. During all this time

(1) Lurcher Report 29/8/14, Adm. 137/551. Lurcher was Keyes's Flagship.
(2) See draft of the chapter "In the Narrow Seas" in Churchill Papers 8/66.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 261.
(4) Jellicoe - "A Reply to Criticism", Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 49041. Marder in Scapa Flow V.2, p. 51 only quotes the first of these alternatives.
the British light forces were rampaging about the enemy's most intimate and jealously guarded waters". The end of the battle came when "the German light cruisers precipitately proceeding to the assistance of their flotillas and animated by the hopes of cutting off our own, ran into the British battle-cruisers."^2

In fact the British light forces did not enjoy the early success that this passage implies. The light cruiser **Arethusa**, Tyrwhitt's flagship and leader of the destroyer flotillas had been damaged in an early encounter with a German cruiser. By 12.30 the crippled flagship, the other flotilla leader **Fearless** and their destroyers were being engaged by no less than three German cruisers with another three in the near vicinity, all of which outgunned the British ships. Tyrwhitt was forced to call to Beatty for aid, and it was the British battle-cruisers which drove off or sank the enemy ships before any of Tyrwhitt's forces had been critically damaged.^5

It can be seen that the action was by no means as one-sided as Churchill would have us believe and for most of the battle the British were in the presence of superior German forces. Thus the picture given of British ships "rampaging about" the Heligoland Bight is hardly accurate.

Also Churchill's account implies that the German cruisers arrived late on the scene and then "precipitately" ran into the British battle-cruisers, which Churchill also implies were already in close support of Tyrwhitt's force. As has been shown, the opposite was the case. It was Beatty's force which arrived late on the scene not the German cruisers, which at the time of Beatty's arrival, had already established a clear superiority over Tyrwhitt's flotillas. Thus the action of the Germans can hardly be called "precipitate" for they were unaware that British battle-cruisers were available to reinforce Tyrwhitt, and until the intervention of the heavy

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(1) The World Crisis, p. 261.
(2) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
British ships they had a good chance to inflict considerable damage on the raiding force.

Churchill's last point is that the action "produced results of a far-reaching character upon the whole of the naval war". To support this view Churchill quotes Tirpitz: "Orders were issued by the Emperor...to restrict the initiative of the Commander-in-Chief of the North Sea Fleet: the loss of ships was to be avoided, fleet sallies and any greater undertakings must be approved by His Majesty in advance". However it is doubtful if the battle modified German policy to any great extent. The German fleet had been effectively muzzled by the Grand Fleet since the beginning of the war. It was no part of German policy to make frequent sallies into the North Sea and precipitate a battle they were sure to lose, and the Kaiser's orders sent to the German Commander-in-Chief Von Ingelhol at the beginning of the war emphasized that the fleet should not be risked. It is possible that Tirpitz, in the passage quoted by Churchill, emphasized the new instructions in order to explain the passivity of the High Sea Fleet and to shift the blame for this on to the Kaiser.

The basic policy of the German Fleet after Heligoland remained the same as it had always been: to remain on the defensive until the mine and torpedo had worn down the British superiority. The Kaiser's order merely reinforced a policy already well established.

The Three Cruisers

Since the beginning of the war a patrol of five obsolescent Bacchante-class cruisers had been maintained in the southern waters of the North Sea and off the Coast of Holland. The purpose of the patrol was to aid the Harwich force in keeping the area south of the 54th parallel...clear of

(1) The World Crisis, p. 261.
(2) Quoted in Ibid., p. 262.
enemy torpedo craft and minelayers". About the middle of September Churchill became concerned about the safety of the patrol. He minuted to Prince Louis: "The force available for operations in the narrow seas should be capable of minor action without the need of bringing down the Grand Fleet. To this end it should have effective support either by two or three battle-cruisers or battleships of the Second Fleet working from Sheerness... The Bacchantes ought not to continue on this beat. The risk to such ships is not justified by any services they can render. The narrow seas, being the nearest point to the enemy, should be kept by a small number of good modern ships. The Bacchantes should go to the western entrance of the Channel." However, the next day Prince Louis was persuaded by the Chief of Staff, Admiral Sturdee, that until these arrangements could be worked out, the patrol off the coast of Holland should be continued. Thus on September 20th Admiral Christian with the four cruisers Euryalus (flag), Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue arrived on "the Broad Fourteens" from the Dogger Bank. On the way south the flagship was detached to coal at Harwich. The weather was too rough to transfer ship so Admiral Christian left Captain Drummond of the Aboukir in command with strict instructions to alter course frequently to avoid submarine attack. For some reason Drummond ignored these instructions and maintained a steady course. In this position on the 23rd of September all three Cruisers were torpedoed by a German submarine. Over 1,400 lives were lost.

In a public pamphlet, circulated at the time, Churchill was blamed for maintaining the Bacante patrol against the advice of his naval colleagues, and his account is mainly concerned with clearing himself on this point.

(1) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.1, p. 171.
(2) Churchill to Prince Louis 18/9/14, Adm. 137/47.
(3) Admiralty to Admiral Christian 19/9/14, Adm. 137/47. In the margin of one of the proofs of this chapter was written, probably by Churchill's naval advisor Thomas Jackson, "I think Adm'l Sturdee ack'd his responsibility for the orders of the 19th", Churchill Papers 8/123.
(4) Admiral Christian's Report 22/9/14, Adm. 137/47.
(6) Gilbert M., Winston S. Churchill V.3, p. 86. The pamphlet was written by the London Journalist Gibson Bowles.
This he is easily able to do by quoting his telegram of September 18th and showing how the War Staff failed to take immediate action upon it. However in two other areas his account is open to criticism. From *The World Crisis* it appears that Churchill was the first to officially warn the staff that the patrol was in danger. This was not the case. On August 21st, Keyes had written to the Director of Operations, Leveson, "For heavens sake, take those Bacchantes away!... I don't say those cruisers will be attacked, but the Germans must know they are about, and if they send out a suitable force, God help them."

A few days later the Assistant Director of Operations Division, Richmond, urged Leveson and Sturdee to remove the Bacchantes and replace them with modern light cruisers. However, although Richmond kept up the pressure throughout September for a change to be made nothing was done. It was the impossibility of getting any action from the Staff that led Keyes to inform Churchill of the position and resulted in his minute of September 18th. Thus Churchill's warning was only the culmination of a long campaign to have the Bacchantes removed, and although it seems certain that Churchill would have been aware of at least Keyes's earlier attempts to warn the staff, none of these efforts is mentioned in *The World Crisis*.

A second point which should be made is that Churchill's account implies that his warning of September 18th was against the type of disaster which eventually overtook the Bacchantes, that is attack by submarine. Yet a reading of that minute reveals that Churchill's proposal was to replace the old cruisers with "two or three battle-cruisers or battleships". It is obvious that the danger Churchill identified was that of attack by enemy surface craft. There is no evidence to suggest that Churchill foresaw the

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(1) *The World Crisis*, p. 276-7.
(2) Keyes to Leveson 21/8/14, Keyes Papers, 4/30.
(3) Richmond Diary 26/8/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/9.
(4) Lady Richmond Diary 16-22/9/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/16.
danger from submarines at this time. In this he was not alone for the
warnings of Keyes and Richmond also seem to be directed against attacks from
detachments of the High Sea Fleet. In partial mitigation of Churchill
and the others it can be said that as the three cruisers were the first
armoured warships to be sunk by a submarine in wartime the effectiveness
of this weapon was something of an unknown factor. However it should be
remembered that Churchill, contrary to what he would have us believe in
The World Crisis, did not foresee the danger to the three cruisers from
submarines.

In one respect Churchill would appear to have been too harsh on Admiral
Christian, the Commander of the cruiser squadron. Churchill stated that
"One would expect senior officers in command of cruiser squadrons
to judge for themselves the danger of their task, and especially
of its constant repetition; and while obeying any orders they
received, to represent an unsatisfactory situation plainly to the
Admiralty instead of going on day after day, and week after week,
until superior authority intervened or something lamentable
happened."1

Yet Christian had done what he could to vary the patrol. Early in September
he saw Sturdee and discussed the problem of the patrol being so much confined
to one area.2 A new system of sweeping patrols was suggested and these were
carried out for some days. Indeed the area in which the ships were sunk
had only been patrolled for five of the sixteen days, previous to the 22nd.3
However as Christian pointed out, the patrol area was so circumscribed by
mine-fields that no great variations could be employed.4 Presumably Dutch
territorial waters were also a factor. Therefore the point to be made about
the patrol is not that it was carried out in a repetitious way, but that
given the order to patrol the broad fourteens, some form of repetition was
inevitable. Churchill's account is therefore misleading on two counts.

Firstly, Christian did act to try and vary the patrols. Secondly, the

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(1) The World Crisis, p. 279.
(2) Court of Enquiry Into Loss of Aboukir, cressy and Iogue on September
22, 1914 - Minutes 30/9/14, Adm. 137/47.
(3) Admiral Christian to Jellicoe 29/9/14, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 49035.
(4) Admiral Christian - Report 22/9/14, Adm. 137/47.
patrol area laid down in Admiralty orders meant that very little variation could be made.

The Scarborough and Hartlepool Raid

On December 16th 1914, a German battle-cruiser squadron bombarded the English coastal towns of Scarborough and Hartlepool. The bombardment was meant to cover the laying of a mine field further south, in which it was hoped to catch the Grand Fleet, if an attempt was made to intercept the German Squadron.\(^1\) Because of their ability to read the German Naval Code the Admiralty had advance warning of this movement. They therefore sent Beatty's battle-cruisers, a squadron of dreadnoughts, and two light cruiser squadrons from the Grand Fleet to try and force a battle with the German squadron by cutting it off from its base.\(^2\) In fact this force almost ran into the High Sea Fleet which was supporting the German battle-cruisers from the vicinity of the Dogger Bank. However after an indecisive and confused action had been fought between the destroyers screening the two main forces,\(^3\) Von Ingenhol the Commander-in-Chief of the High Sea Fleet, became convinced that the entire Grand Fleet was present and withdrew towards Heligoland. The British force then learned of the bombardment of Scarborough and Hartlepool and turned towards the coast. However the weather now deteriorated and no decisive action was fought. The British had three fleeting opportunities to engage, but these were lost because of a signalling error in the first case and poor visibility in the other two.\(^4\) A submarine and destroyer attack on the German ships as they returned to base failed to eventuate mainly due to the Admiralty not passing on order quick enough.

Churchill devotes a whole chapter of *The World Crisis* to the "missed

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(2) Ibid., p. 134.
(3) King George V (Admiral Warrender the British Commanders Flagship) Report 18/12/14, Adm. 137/295.
(4) For these incidents see King George V Report 18/12/14, Lion Report 19/12/14, Southampton (Flagship of the cruiser squadron involved in the signalling error) Report 18/12/14, all in Adm. 137/295.
(5) Keyes, Naval Memoirs V.1, p. 147.
opportunities" of the Scarborough Raid. The first half of the chapter is an interesting account of the battle as it was seen from the Admiralty, with the small amount of information then available to them. The second half goes into the battle in detail, and is in the main accurate, following as it does the narrative given in the official history. However in discussing the signalling error which resulted in contact being lost with the Germans, Churchill, as in the Goeben chapter, invokes the fates (now called Mischance) to explain the mistake. What actually happened was that during the early part of the "action" the cruiser screens guarding the British and German battle cruisers met in the mist. Two of Beatty's cruisers moved to the south of the main force and opened fire. This encounter convinced Beatty that Hipper was still ahead of him, and as visibility was poor, he ordered his remaining light cruisers to maintain their scouting positions. The signal officer on the Lion, Lt. Ralph Seymour, who seems to have been chosen by Beatty because he was a congenial companion rather than for any expertise in signalling, incorrectly made the signal general to all the light cruisers. Southampton and Birmingham, the ships engaging the enemy, therefore broke off the action and resumed their original positions and the German ships were soon lost in the thickening mist.

In Churchill's account the signalling error is acknowledged but as this is put down to mischance no investigation of the error follows and the real culprits, Beatty and Seymour, escape uncensured. This method also enables Churchill to completely ignore the role of the cruiser squadron Commander, Goodenough, in this fiasco. Yet Goodenough's were the only ships in contact with the enemy and in breaking off the action he violated the first principle of naval reconnaissance to maintain touch with the enemy at all

(1) The World Crisis, p. 422 N2. There is a minor dispute on who fixed the position of the intercepting squadron. Churchill says it was the Admiralty (The World Crisis, p. 417). Jellicoe claims he placed the British force (Jellicoe - A Reply to Criticism, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 49041, Marder sides with Jellicoe: Scapa Flow V.2, p. 135.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 427-8.
(3) Lion Report 19/12/14, Adm. 137/295.
(4) Marder A.J., Scapa Flow V.2, p. 140N.
(5) Lion Report 19/12/14, Adm. 137/295.
(6) Southampton Report 18/12/14, Adm. 137/295.
costs and to ignore orders which might prevent this. Churchill's attitude at the time was much less generous and he was more than ready to blame Goodenough for his actions.\(^1\) There are also three dubious assumptions made by Churchill in the course of his narrative. The first is that with any luck a decisive action could have been fought on December 16th and there is much wailing and gnashing of teeth as the missed opportunities are recounted one by one. However it is doubtful if these opportunities ever amounted to very much. From 11.0 a.m. onwards visibility rarely exceeded 4,000 yards. At Jutland, where the visibility was somewhat better, much larger forces than Hipper's Squadron were able to extricate themselves from the British without much difficulty. Even if the two main fleets had sighted each other in the mist the perennial British difficulty in firing accurate opening salvos must have made the German chances of escape good.

This brings us to Churchill's second assumption. He always assumes that if the two forces had met in clear conditions the British would have won. This probably would have been the result had the combined British force met Hipper's squadron or if the heavily armoured 2nd Battle Squadron had fought the more vulnerable and less powerfully gunned German battle cruisers. However the two best opportunities of the day were both for Beatty alone to fight Hipper. In this case British victory was much less sure for the battle was likely to be fought at close range, where the initially poor British shooting and the thinner armour protection of their ships would have put them at a distinct disadvantage.

Finally Churchill assumes that a British victory off Scarborough would have had an important effect on the naval war. He claims that the destruction of "the German battle-cruiser squadron...would fatally mutilate the whole German Navy and could never be repaired".\(^2\) However it is doubtful if there would have been anything "fatal" in the sinking of Hipper's battle cruisers.

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\(^1\) Minute by Churchill N.D., Adm. 137/295, also Asquith to Venetia Stanley 6/1/15, C.V.3, p. 381.
\(^2\) The World Crisis, p. 419.
No doubt the High Sea Fleet would have been inconvenienced without its scouting force but as there never was any intention to risk that fleet it is hard to see that it would have been a crippling blow. Probably the Germans would have made fewer raids against the English coast but these were of no strategic significance in any case. Certainly the German policy of wearing down the British superiority by mines and torpedoes would have become virtually impossible to achieve, but this might have led to a switch to U-boat warfare much earlier. The fact remained that even without its battle-cruisers the High Sea Fleet remained strong enough to ensure that the bulk of the British fleet would remain tied to the North Sea for the duration of the war.¹

Only one further point need be made on Churchill's account of the Scarborough Raid. Over 500 civilians were killed or wounded in the bombardment.² There was an outcry against the navy for allowing such an incident to take place and partly to assuage this criticism Churchill made a speech in which he characterized the German Seamen as "baby-killers".³ However at the time it is clear that a desire to trap the German battle-cruisers outweighed his undoubted sympathy with the hapless civilians. In an early draft of The World Crisis he recalled that he was taking a bath when the news that the coastal towns were being bombarded was brought to him. "I jumped out of the bath with exclamations of joy (Hartlepool, Scarborough, forgive me!)")⁴ Later, he apparently decided that these sentiments might be misunderstood and substituted "I jumped out of the bath with exclamations".⁵

Dogger Bank

A month after the Scarborough raid a further battle-cruiser sweep into

(1) These exaggerated expectations were mirrored on the German side, the Germans concentrating on the narrow margin by which the British ships avoided the High Sea Fleet. However as Churchill rightly points out (The World Crisis, p. 426) there was no need for the faster British squadrons to engage in an action against their will.

(2) Crutchell, C.R.M.F. The Great War, p. 312.

(3) Churchill to the Mayor of Scarborough 20/12/14, The Times, 21/12/14.

(4) Churchill Papers, 8/129.

(5) The World Crisis, p. 418. He also removed "good" from the following sentence "The Admiralty spread the good tidings (about the bombardment). See also p. 418.
the North Sea was sanctioned by Von Ingerhol. Once again the Admiralty, through their intelligence department, were aware of the German move and this time they correctly estimated that the German battle-cruisers would be unsupported, though whether this was due to greater experience with the German codes or just good luck is not clear. On January 23rd, Beatty's five battle-cruisers with the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron from Rosyth and the Harwich force were ordered to a rendezvous point in the North Sea designed to cut the German squadron off from its base.¹

The plan worked perfectly and just as the Harwich force was about to join Beatty's squadron, early on the morning of the 24th, the four enemy battle-cruisers were sighted.² Hipper immediately turned his ships 16 points and headed for home. The battle developed into a protracted chase with the British Ships gradually overhauling the German Squadron. Initially British shooting was bad and few hits were made. Also the Tiger misread the fire distribution signal with the result that one of the German ships (Moltke) was left unattended and was able to score some damaging hits on the Lion.³ However by this time the rear German ship, the heavy cruiser, Blucher, had suffered many hits and began to drop astern. The crisis of the battle was now approaching. At this point the Lion suffered a damaging hit and listed out of the line. As the other ships swept past, Beatty thought he saw the periscope of a submarine and ordered an 8 point turn to port. This meant that the four remaining ships in the squadron were travelling at right angles across the wake of the retreating Germans, so Beatty made two more signals designed to re-direct his squadron on to the course followed by the Germans: "Course N.E." and then "Attack the rear of the enemy".⁴ These two signals were hauled down together and therefore read by the other ships as one, "Attack the rear of the enemy bearing North East".⁵ In that direction

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¹ "Report of Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty on The Action In The North Sea", January 24, 1915, Adm. 1/8413/54.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Battle-cruiser Squadron Signals, in ibid.
lay the crippled **Blucher** and Admiral Moore, Beatty's second in command, on the battle-cruiser **New Zealand**, assumed that Beatty wanted the entire squadron to concentrate on the German heavy cruiser. Under concentrated fire from four battle-cruisers and numerous light craft the **Blucher** sank at 12.13.

Meanwhile Beatty seeing his plan going awry flew another signal "Keep nearer the enemy" but by this time the **Lion** was too far astern for the flags to be read. Beatty then transferred to a destroyer, caught up with the remainder of his squadron and ordered the chase resumed. It was too late, the enemy ships had escaped.

Churchill's account of these events follows the same pattern as his description of the Scarborough raid. The first half of the chapter consists of an account of the battle as seen from the Admiralty; in the second half he gives a detailed investigation of the action. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that on this occasion Churchill has rather magnified the importance of the impending battle in the opening pages of the chapter. He speaks of attending a dinner the night before the expected encounter and feeling "separated from the distinguished company who gathered there, by a film of isolated knowledge and overwhelming inward preoccupation". Yet it was known that only the rival battle-cruisers were to clash and all that could have been expected on the British side was that two or three German ships would be sunk. However passages such as this build up the tension and convince the reader that important issues were at stake.

Only three points need to be made about Churchill's description of the battle. He mentions Beatty's 8 point turn to avoid submarines and is willing to make full allowance for the fact that the Admiral could not have known that there were actually no submarines present. However he does not

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(1) New Zealand Report, Adm. 137/305:
(2) Lion Signals, in Ibid.:
(3) Beatty's Report, Adm. 1/8413/54.
(4) The World Crisis, p. 561.
(5) Ibid., p. 567.
investigate the necessity to make the signal at all but it is obvious that even had the submarine sighting been genuine the other ships had already passed that point before the signal was made and were therefore already in the clear.

Churchill also mentions the two signals made by Beatty which led Moore to break off the chase and concentrate on the Blucher. As in the chapter on the Scarborough raid, however, no discussion of the event follows. Seymour and Beatty once more escape uncensured. Yet in hauling down both signals at once Seymour showed his usual incompetence and surely it was possible for Beatty to make his intentions clearer than by using the obscure "Attack the rear of the enemy". (Why the rear of the enemy? Surely Beatty wanted all the enemy ships attacked.) Admittedly he had wanted to send "Engage the enemy more closely" only to find it had been deleted from the signal book, but even that lacked the clarity of such simple alternatives as "Attack the enemy" or "chase". The World Crisis is silent on all these points.

Even Admiral Moore, whose decision to concentrate on the crippled Blucher, rather than chase the remaining German ships, demonstrated the lack of initiative that was to become the hallmark of subordinate British Admirals throughout the war, is allowed to escape lightly by Churchill. Although Churchill is clearly uneasy about Moore's decision, his only reproof is to state that Beatty's signals "seemed to suggest that some reason unknown to Rear-Admiral Moore had led the most daring of our naval leaders [note the flattering reference to Beatty] to break off the action". However in an earlier draft of The World Crisis, Churchill in a section similar to the deleted paragraphs on Sir Berkeley Milne wrote "[To resume the chase] would have been a fine thing to do. But Rear Admiral Moore was not the first British

(1) The World Crisis, p. 568.
(2) Chalmers W. Beatty, p. 196.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 568.
Admiral in the Great War to whom in perplexing and uncertain circumstances the opportunity for a famous decision presented itself in vain. Nor was he to be the last. On reflection this paragraph was deleted, perhaps to maintain consistency, perhaps to bring The World Crisis in line with Churchill's attitude immediately after the battle, that the victory should be celebrated and the lost opportunity overlooked.

Churchill concludes this sector of The World Crisis by speculating on what would have happened had Moore continued to chase the enemy. He first assumes that Moore would have caught the Germans had he chased them. This is doubtful for Moore was almost ten miles behind Hipper when he received Beatty's signal. Even Churchill admits that the chase would have been a long one. But when he was writing this section of The World Crisis he consulted Admiral Oliver on this point and Oliver replied that he thought it very doubtful if Moore could have come into decisive range. However Churchill preferred to leave the question open and this section remained unchanged. A further assumption is that the resulting battle would have ended in a British victory. This was by no means certain. Although the British had a superiority of four to three the shooting of the Tiger had been so bad that the odds were practically even. In this case the sturdier construction of the German ships may have given them a slight advantage. In any event the result could not be written down as a forgone conclusion. The final assumption was that the destruction of the German battle-cruisers would have in some way been a decisive victory. As stated earlier this impression in enhanced by Churchill's dramatic build-up to the battle. This point has already been discussed in relation to the Scarborough Raid: it is obvious that a British victory would have only amounted to a minor

(1) Churchill Papers, 8/138. This was to be added after the sentence ending "Von Hipper's disappearing vessels" on p. 569.
(2) Minute by Churchill 11/2/15, Adm. 137/305.
(3) Southampton Report 25/1/15, in Ibid. Goodenough reported shots from Tiger going consistently over.
(4) The World Crisis, p. 569.
tactical success. Despite the impression given in The World Crisis there were no high stakes at risk that day at the Dogger Bank.

The Bombardment of the Belgian Coast

From October 1914 the Western Front met the sea between Ostend and Dunkirk. The Belgium Army was on the extreme left of the allied line and there was some concern that the Germans might overwhelm that poorly equipped force and thus turn the whole allied position. General Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, therefore appealed to the British for a bombarding squadron to enfilade the German line, nullify the enemy superiority in artillery, and be generally available to saturate with naval shells any area over which the enemy were likely to advance. The British agreed and on October 18th, Admiral Hood, who had been serving as Churchill's naval secretary, took charge of operations. The bombarding squadron consisted of three monitors with an escorting force of light cruisers and destroyers.

These operations are briefly described in The World Crisis, Churchill's account consisting mainly of a series of telegrams between the Admiralty and Hood. Churchill is in no doubt of the effectiveness of the squadron's fire on the German lines. He gives prominence to an Admiralty Communiqué of October 22nd which stated "all reports indicate that substantial losses have been inflicted upon the enemy and that the fire is well directed and effective against his batteries and heavy guns". This statement is supported by messages from Hood. A telegram from the Admiral on October 19th which said "I believe that naval bombardment has done harm to the enemy", is quoted. Similar sentiments are expressed in telegrams from Hood on

(1) Admiralty to Hood 17/10/14, Churchill Papers 8/69.
(2) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.1, p. 216.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 333-7.
(4) Quoted in Ibid., p. 335.
(5) Quoted in Ibid., p. 334.
22/10/14 and 23/10/14. In short the reader is left in no doubt by *The World Crisis* that both Churchill and the local commander considered the operations to be valuable and effective.

An examination of the documents for the period of operations covered in *The World Crisis* largely substantiates Churchill's view. For example, on October 28th, Col. Bridges, the liaison officer between Hood and the Belgian Army, reported "your shells have had great moral and material effect". Earlier Hood had reported that he had been informed that the ship's fire was very effective not only from the observers in the Belgian Army "but from the constant reports received by prisoners and other sources". However even in this period it is noticeable that Hood is also speaking of "the difficulty of getting accurate results" due to the fact that the ships had to keep moving to avoid possible submarine attacks. Also the evidence for these early "successes" came partly from intelligence reports compiled by the Belgium Army, which was at that time desperately short of artillery and engaged in a fierce struggle to keep the Germans from the Channel Ports. It is therefore quite possible that they deliberately over-estimated to the British the effectiveness of the ship's fire, in order to obtain as much help as possible. Furthermore the intelligence reports were often based on the interrogation of civilians and German prisoners of war, usually extremely unreliable sources of information.

Of course operations off the Belgian Coast did not come to an end in late October as implied in *The World Crisis* but continued until March 1915. A reading of Hood's reports from November 1914 to March 1915 soon reveals a quite different story from the October operations. In November Hood reported, "The configuration of the coast rendered accurate firing

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(2) Bridges to Hood 28/10/14, Hood Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, 6/2.
(4) Report on Operations off the Belgian Coast 21/10/14, Hood Papers 5/1.
(5) See Intelligence Reports in Adm. 137/2110. One of the sources quoted is a "retired English Officer".
impossible. Sandhills or dunes some 50 feet high lay between the ships and
the enemy. The only way to find the enemy was to locate a prominent
high object...and then search the area round that object by gun fire."¹
A month later he complained "It is never possible accurately to locate the
guns as they are never seen; I submit it is an axiom that ship guns
cannot knock out shore guns".² He thought that the risk run by the ships
was only justified it they were to support an advance by the army.³ By
the end of December he was convinced that the fleet could not silence the
land batteries⁴ and he strongly hinted to the Admiralty that his squadron
should be withdrawn.⁵ He was, however, ordered to continue. In mid-January
Hood summed up the operations for the Admiralty. "During all the weeks
that I bombarded on the Belgian Coast I never located one gun, I never saw
a flash. I never knew where any shot came from "and" Battleships cannot
silence guns unless they actually hit the gun."⁶ He was still writing in this
vein in March.⁷ From this weight of evidence it is clear that, taken as a
whole, the operations by the British fleet on the Belgian coast were largely
useless and a waste of ammunition. However, by describing in The World
Crisis the first two weeks firing only, Churchill is able to claim a
substantial amount of success for the British squadron. Within the
limits described earlier this is a reasonable point of view. But a more
balanced treatment would look at the operation as a whole and when this is
done a completely different picture emerges.

(1) Hood Report on Operations on the Belgian Coast November 1914, Adm.
137/2110.
(2) Ibid., 17/12/14, Adm. 137/2110.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Hood to C.O.S. 20/12/14, in Ibid.
(5) Hood to C.O.S. 28/12/14, in Ibid.
(6) Hood Report on Operations on the Belgian Coast, January 1915, in ibid.
(7) Hood to the Admiralty 15/3/15, in Ibid. Hood's reports have important
implications for the Dardelnes operation. This will be discussed
in a later chapter.
Conclusion

In conclusion only five points need be made about Churchill's description of these minor events in *The World Crisis*. The most important criticism is that in the case of three of the incidents, Heligoland, Scarborough, and Dogger Bank, Churchill greatly exaggerates the advantages which either flowed, or would have flowed, from a British victory. In the first instance it was shown that the British victory at Heligoland hardly affected German naval policy. And as far as Scarborough and Dogger Bank are concerned it was seen that a victory to either side would not have changed the balance of naval power. In *The World Crisis* however these incidents are portrayed either as great victories or important missed opportunities.

It was noticed that Churchill is again uncritical of the actions of Beatty. Praise is once more lavished on the dash and gallantry of Beatty's actions at Heligoland while the mistakes made at Scarborough and the Dogger Bank are passed over in silence.

Given its slight historical importance it is difficult to know why the operation off the Belgian coast was included at all. The affair was of little interest and it is possible that it was included by Churchill for no better reason than that he had a file of documents on the action in his papers. In fact Hood's bombardments are only interesting in regard to the Dardanelles operation, the planning of which was proceeding concurrently. Many of the problems encountered by Hood were to be met at the Dardanelles but this aspect of the operation is ignored in *The World Crisis* - as it was by Churchill and his Admiralty advisors at the time.

The most satisfactory section is perhaps the few pages devoted to the sinking of the three cruisers where Churchill is easily able to defend himself against his critics. But even then it was noticed that he overstates his case in claiming that he not only identified the vulnerability of the patrol but also the kind of attack to which it was vulnerable.
Looked at as purely historical accounts, it might be thought that an inordinate amount of space has been devoted to the Scarborough Raid and the Dogger Bank battle. However, if they are looked on as mainly personal accounts of how the battles were seen from the Admiralty, a different perspective is obtained. For from Churchill's point of view they were the only two occasions when he was able to witness a naval battle unfolding from the War Room at the Admiralty, and his descriptions of the scene in the War Room, though somewhat overdrawn, are valuable because they are so rarely recorded. Thus on this occasion the value of The World Crisis as memoir would seem to exceed its value as pure history.
The survey of volume I of The World Crisis has now been completed and it is time to turn our attention to volume II. As originally published this volume is concerned with the war in 1915. But its view of that year is decidedly partial. Apart from two short chapters on the naval war and one on the invention of the tank, its 440 pages are devoted entirely to the genesis, execution and demise of the Dardanelles operation. Because of his close involvement with that operation and the effect that it was to have on his political career, this volume was perhaps the most important written by Churchill and therefore the volume most worthy of detailed criticism. Obviously the importance of his subject and the fact that he was involved in an attempt to vindicate his policies was clearly recognized by Churchill. He therefore set about, in three carefully written chapters, preparing the ground for the line to be followed in the remainder of the volume. The first of these chapters ("The Deadlock In The West") sets the scene for the other two ("The Search For A Naval Offensive" and "The Beginning Of The Year") as well as for the remaining Dardanelles chapters. It deserves close attention.

Churchill's main theme in that chapter is that the strategic, diplomatic and mechanical deadlock in the West resulted in the search for separate theatres of action outside France and Flanders. He opens the chapter by asserting that the failure to develop any of these alternative theatres led to catastrophic results.

"The year 1915 was fated to be disastrous to the cause of the Allies and to the whole world. By the mistakes of this year the opportunity was lost of confining the conflagration within limits which though enormous were not uncontrolled...Thereafter events passed very largely outside the scope of conscious choice.... But in January, 1915, the terrific affair was still not unmanageable. It could have been grasped in human hands and brought to rest in righteous and fruitful victory before the world was exhausted, before the nations were broken, before
empires were shattered to pieces, before Europe was ruined."¹

It was not necessary, he continues, to win battles by the methods of slaughter which were adopted.

"Battles are won by slaughter and manoeuvre. The greater the general, the more he contributes in manoeuvre, the less he demands in slaughter. The theory which exalted the 'bataille d'usure' or 'battle of wearing down' into a formost position, is contradicted by history and would be repulsed by the greatest captains of the past. Nearly all the battles which are regarded as masterpieces of the military art...have been battles of manoeuvre."²

However, Churchill states, there is more than one kind of manoeuvre. A diplomatic manoeuvre "which brings an ally into the field is as serviceable as that which wins a great battle."³

Churchill also claims that there was a mechanical as well as a strategic deadlock, on land and sea, a deadlock which could have been broken had those in authority adopted the obvious solutions.⁴ Those who perceived the solutions "were a class apart, outside the currents of orthodox opinion, and for them was reserved the long and thankless struggle to convert authority and to procure action. Eventually they succeeded. On sea authority intervened at an early stage: on land the process was more painful. The Monitor and the 'bulged' or 'blistered ship' were the beginning of the torpedo-proof fleet, the Tank was the beginning of the bullet-proof army."⁵

However, Churchill concludes, both these novel expedients were thrown away by commanders who either would not use them or did not use them in the best manner.

Churchill then turns to an explanation of why it was so essential to break the deadlock on the Western Front. Russia, he states, was failing, and it was vitally necessary for the allied cause that Russia be supplied with arms and material aid.⁶ Moreover, a moral debt was owed by the West

¹ The World Crisis, p. 461.  
² Ibid., p. 464.  
³ Ibid.  
⁴ Ibid., p. 465-6.  
⁵ Ibid., p. 466.  
⁶ Ibid., p. 467-472.
to Russia. At the beginning of the war the Russians had launched an offensive into Germany before their mobilization was completed thus rescuing the allies at the Marne by forcing the Germans to withdraw two army corps at a critical time.  

Churchill puts forward two ways in which help could have been sent to Russia. Both of these involved operations on the "flanks" of the Central Powers.

"The line of the Central Powers from the North Sea to the Aegean and stretching loosely beyond even to the Suez Canal, was, after all, in principle not different from the line of a small army entrenched across an isthmus, with each flank resting upon water. As long as France was treated as a self-contained theatre, a complete deadlock existed, and the Front of the German invaders could neither be pierced nor turned. But once the view was extended to the whole scene of the war, and that vast war conceived as if it were a single battle, and once the sea power of Britain was brought into play, turning movements of a most far-reaching character were open to the Allies."  

These "turning movements" are identified by Churchill as the mobilization of the northern neutrals coupled with British domination of the Baltic, and the mobilization of the Balkan neutrals coupled with British action at the Dardanelles. This then is how Churchill sets the scene for his discussion of the Dardanelles operation. Several observations about this section should now be made.

It should be noted that Churchill's opening paragraph assumes that the war could have been won in 1915 by the Dardanelles operation or perhaps some action on the northern flank. In the case of the Dardanelles it is intended to show in subsequent chapters that even had the operation at Gallipoli succeeded it is by no means certain that larger results would have followed. In the case of the northern project it will be suggested that such an operation was almost impossible to carry out and rested on many major fallacies. However, in this section Churchill has planted a seed in the mind of the reader that the poor execution of the Dardanelles campaign was a disaster of unprecedented magnitude for the Allies. He then

(1) The World Crisis, p. 467. See also Vol. I, p. 228, for an amplification of this point.
(2) Ibid., p. 472.
(3) Ibid., p. 473.
also implies that all this could have been avoided if other hands had held the reins of power. Is there any doubt about whose hands Churchill thought these should have been?

After this introduction we find the first of the pillars on which Churchill bases his argument against the Western Front. This is, that all battles now regarded as "classic" have been won largely by manoeuvre and not slaughter. However, it is not difficult to think of some classic battles in which attrition has played as large a part as manoeuvre. One is Blenheim, in which the French numbers were worn down on the right flank before a frontal assault was launched against their weakened centre. Another example is Waterloo where Wellington was careful not to launch an attack until the French had been worn down by a series of attacks against the British squares. One authority has even held that battles of attrition are the rule. John Keegan has written that on rare occasions manoeuvre may overcome an enemy's resistance but "very much more often, the defender's power of resistance must be worn down by a protracted process of combat- 'attrition' is the word we would use today".1

It is not intended to discuss in detail here Churchill's contention that diplomatic attempts to bring new allies into the field were thrown away. Churchill's Balkan policies are discussed later. It is merely worth noting at this point that Churchill believes that Germany could have been brought down by the accession to the allied cause of several small peasant states on the periphery of the conflict.

As for Churchill's mechanical expedients, the tank is dealt with in a separate chapter, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Churchill has overstated the case for monitors and blistered ships. He is obviously keen to make the point that in the navy it was his authority that enabled those expedients to be adopted quickly, whereas on land the military authorities took years to be convinced of the utility of the tank. But,

it could also be said that the tank developed into an effective weapon of war, while no real use was ever found for the monitors and the blistered ships. Of course, Churchill wanted them used against Borkum and in the Baltic, but as we will see these operations were hardly practical. Nor were these craft "torpedo-proof" as Churchill seems to imply. The British navy was to spend another quarter of a century on experiments with "blistering" and torpedo-proofing and then find that their ships were as vulnerable to underwater explosion as ever. The "torpedo-proof" fleet was a myth, a product of Churchill's imagination.

Churchill's point about Russia being in desperate need of help in 1914 and 1915 is no doubt valid. However, the fact remains that even if communication had been established with Russia during this period, Britain and France would have had no surplus war material with which to supply their ally. This was also the period of the great shortages of munitions in the West and the shells scandal occurred in Britain in May 1915. In these circumstances it is hard to see how any shells could have been diverted to Russia, always assuming that the shipping to get them there was available. Churchill's second point is that the allies owed a moral debt to Russia. This is also fairly dubious. Norman Stone argues that there was no question of the Russians attacking before their mobilization was complete. The two armies which invaded East Prussia were fully mobilized and indeed had been the first of the Russian armies to complete this procedure. ¹ Nor was the action of these armies in launching an early attack a matter of quixotic self-sacrifice. It was commonsense to attack in the east while the Germans were fully occupied with the allies in the West. ²

A glance at a map of Europe reveals how dubious is Churchill's contention that the line of the Central Powers was no different from that

(2) Ibid.
of a "small army entrenched across an isthmus". An army holding a small isthmus has very definite and defensible flanks. The only flank which bore any relation to this situation in 1914-15 was the German right flank in Flanders which could have been theoretically turned by an allied landing on the north Belgian coast. Churchill's strategy in the north, a landing on the Pomeranian coast, could hardly be called a turning movement at all. The landing point was so far from the main armies that the concept of "out-flanking" was not relevant. Also to counter this movement it would only have been necessary for the Germans to send troops northwards from their central reserve. Even if troops had been withdrawn from the Western Front to meet the new threat they could have been taken from quiet sectors and no withdrawal of the line would necessarily have taken place.

The situation in Southern Europe, far from being "even more remarkable" as characterized by Churchill in *The World Crisis*, was less promising. At least a landing on the North German coast directly threatened the main enemy. In the south a group of small neutral countries stood between the allies and Austria-Hungary, the weaker member of the Central Powers. It is difficult to see how this area could be viewed as a flank. The main fronts were hundreds of miles distant and a landing anywhere in the area would hardly have affected the situation on either of them. In any case with interior lines it would have been a relatively simple matter for the Central Powers to convert this "flank" into another front.

Thus all of the assertions upon which Churchill built up his case for the Dardanelles enterprise can be challenged and although, in the nature of the arguments, no final judgement can be pronounced, it has been shown that many of Churchill's propositions are of doubtful validity. However a seed has been sown in the mind of the reader that some drastic action elsewhere was needed to break this deadlock.
Churchill's Strategy August-December 1914

Immediately following his introductory chapter Churchill turns to an investigation of the search for an offensive, which he has argued, was necessary to break the deadlock in the West.

The first project to come to the fore was the capture of an island off the German coast. Even before war had been declared Churchill had circulated Admiralty plans, worked out in 1913, for the seizure of various islands close to the main German naval bases.¹ In the coming months Churchill was to select two of these islands as being particularly suitable, Sylt, the largest German island in the North Sea, 23 miles long and only ½ mile in width, 7 to 12 miles off the Schleswig coast, or Borkum, the most easterly of the West Frisian group, 5 miles long and 2½ miles broad, lying 32 miles from the large naval base at Emden. Briefly, the plans to capture these islands consisted of a preliminary bombardment by a force of older battleships and monitors, followed closely by the landing of troops (a force of between 5,000 and 12,000 men was variously recommended).² The island would then become the base for British submarine and destroyer flotillas which would harry the High Sea Fleet if it tried to leave its defended harbours.³ Any attempt by the German fleet to recapture the island, it was hoped, would lead to the decisive naval battle of the war. The victorious British fleet would then be able to enter the Baltic and be available to co-operate with the Russians in landing a Russian force on the North German coast, which at some points was only 90 miles from Berlin. In the event of the German fleet not attempting the recapture of the island, it was hoped to mount an operation to block the lock gates of the Kiel Canal. This would force the Germans to send their fleet around Jutland in pursuit of the Grand Fleet which would enter the Baltic and it was anticipated that this move would render the Germans vulnerable to

¹ Churchill to Asquith 31/7/14, C.V.3, p. 6-7.
³ Ibid.
attack by the torpedo craft and submarines located on the captured island.  

The difficulties in carrying out this series of operations were formidable. The waters around the islands were mined and further protected by enemy submarines and torpedo boat flotillas. The bombarding force would be open to attack by the entire High Sea Fleet unless the British reinforced their older ships with units from the Grand Fleet, which would of course provide more targets for German torpedoes. There were additional problems of hitting unlocated shore batteries from moving ships not fitted with director finding and of landing troops under the fire of machine guns and artillery. In the case of Sylt, artillery from the mainland could continually keep the island under fire, thus making life extremely difficult for the garrison, their supply ships and the flotillas of small craft. Borkum was out of range of all but the largest shore guns, but was vulnerable to shelling from the nearby island of Juist (a factor which might have meant that both islands would have to have been captured). Supplying the garrison and flotillas on the island would have been a precarious affair, involving a continual stream of slow merchant ships passing through submarine and mine-infested waters. Finally, if the British were able to capture an island far from their shore and so close to Germany, what was to stop the Germans retaking it? 

The operations planned after the island had been successfully captured and held belong to the world of speculation rather than to strategy. However, some of the difficulties may be set down. The blocking of the Kiel Canal lock gates involved sending destroyer flotillas against one of the most heavily defended areas in the world and exposing them to the fire of heavy shore batteries and the dreadnoughts of the High Sea Fleet. In any case, enemy submarines and destroyer flotillas were permanently located on the eastern side of the Canal and would have been available to attack the Grand Fleet had it entered the Baltic. Moreover, a British

entry into the Baltic presupposed that the Russians had troops available for the proposed landings on the North German coast, that these troops were skilled in combined operations, that logistic support in the form of artillery and stores was available in sufficient quantities, that the language problem could have been overcome and, given that such a highly trained, well supplied force did exist, that the Russians would have been willing to risk it on a hazardous operation well away from the theatre in which their main armies were in action against the Germans. In fact, not one of the above conditions applied throughout the war. In addition, had such a force been landed in Pomerania, the important point to remember is that it would be only 90 miles from Berlin. The Germans were in possession of a highly efficient railway system which would have been able to move troops northwards much faster than the attacking army could have been reinforced by the Navy. What was to stop the Germans doing this and driving the Russian troops into the sea? And what of the supply ships and naval vessels, vulnerable to torpedo attack and forced to lie off the German coast for days at a time? It is clear that when this plan is examined in detail it collapses under the weight of difficulties and the risks are out of proportion to any likely positive result. It is interesting that no plans for the second half of the operation were ever formulated.

To return to Churchill's first circulation of the "German island" plan; the response from naval and military officers was essentially negative. An army officer with the unlikely name of Hereward Wake, who had been detailed to investigate the Admiralty plans, concluded that German long range guns, mines, torpedoes and excellent communications made the "advantages to be gained...[not] commensurate with the risks incurred."¹ At the Admiralty, Jackson came to the same conclusion.² Earlier Jellicoe had agreed with these views, but surprisingly, in view of his hostility to all

² Admiral Jackson - Memorandum n.d. in Ibid.
projects off the German coast, suggested that a better alternative might be to establish a British destroyer base at Borns Deep.¹ Now, Borns Deep was a protected anchorage between the Dutch islands of Terschelling and Ameland, at least one of which it would have been necessary to capture to maintain the base. Churchill therefore wrote to Prince Louis and Sturdee suggesting that plans be prepared for the capture of Ameland.² This plan too received a poor reception from the staff. It was pointed out that the base was only 140 miles closer to Germany than Harwich, and Richmond thought that the seizure of a Dutch island might bring Holland into the war on the German side without vitally altering the naval situation.³

Repulsed at home, Churchill sought to enlist the aid of an ally in getting his plans accepted. He wrote to the Grand Duke Nicholas, asking what use the Russians could make of the command of the Baltic if it was obtained as a result of British naval attacks.⁴ The reply was disappointing. The Grand Duke stated that Russian troops would only be available to act in concert with the British fleet if the military situation improved substantially.⁵ In view of these negative responses, Churchill's interest in the Borkum-Baltic project temporarily subsided.

Now, however, an alternative to this operation was about to enter the field. Churchill had been intimately involved in Britain's relations with Turkey since the beginning of the war. At the time there were two battleships being built in British yards for the Turkish navy. On the 30th. July Churchill was advised by the Third Sea Lord, Admiral Moore, that the ships represented a serious factor in the balance of naval power and should not be allowed to leave England.⁶ By August 2nd. it had been decided to requisition both ships and offer Turkey monetary compensation.⁷ This action

| (1) | Jellicoe to the Admiralty 27/7/14, Adm. 137/995. |
| (2) | Churchill to Prince Louis and Sturdee 9/8/14, Adm. 137/452. |
| (3) | Richmond Diary 9/8/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/9. |
| (4) | Memorandum by Churchill 18/8/14, Adm. 116/1351. |
| (6) | Moore to Churchill 30/7/14, Adm. 137/880. |
caused an outcry in Turkey and was once thought to have been a key factor in Turkey's entry into the war on the German side. This view must be modified for it is now known that negotiations for a Turko-German alliance had been progressing since July 24th. and that the treaty was signed on August 2nd. No doubt the seizure of the ships enabled Enver and the pro-German party to arouse public opinion against the Entente but their course had been decided long before that event. Moreover Britain's attitude was more justified than could have been known at the time, for on August 1st. Enver and Talaat (Minister of the Interior) had offered to direct one of the ships, Sultan Osman I, to a German North Sea Port, "a proposal immediately accepted by Berlin".

Shortly after the seizure of the Turkish ships, the Goeben and Breslan arrived at Constantinople and were "sold" to the Turks while retaining their German crews, a move so transparent that it deceived no-one. From this point on Churchill seems to have been convinced that Turkey would eventually enter the war against Britain. On August 17th. Asquith noted that Churchill was "all for sending a torpedo flotilla thro' the Dardanelles - to threaten & if necessary to sink the Goeben & her consort." This was the first time that forcing the Dardanelles as an operation of war had been mentioned. At a Cabinet meeting a few days later Churchill was described as "violently anti-Turk". At this point there was little prospect of Britain being in a position to mount an attack on Turkey - in any case the two countries were not yet at war. Then came the sudden prospect of an ally in the Balkans which made anti-Turk operations far more practicable.

On August 19th. Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, informed the

(1) Beaumont [acting Ambassador in Mallet's absence] to Grey 9/8/14, Correspondence respecting events leading to the rupture of relations with Turkey [Command Paper CMD 7628] London, HMSO, 1914.
(3) Ibid., p. 24.
(4) Asquith to Venetia Stanley 17/8/14, C.V.3, p. 40.
(5) Asquith to Venetia Stanley 21/8/14, C.V.3, p. 49.
British Government that Greece was willing to place her military and naval forces at the disposal of the Entente. Although the offer was not immediately accepted, for reasons which will be investigated later, the prospect of a Greek Army had come forward at the very moment when the use of a Russian army in the Baltic had receded. At the same time others were turning their thoughts towards operations against Turkey. On the 26th. Mallet informed the Foreign Office that the Germans considered the Dardanelles impregnable. He was inclined to disagree with this statement but he considered that "rapid and complete success would alone justify [any attempt to force the Straits]." Churchill's interest was immediately aroused. He marked the passage on "rapid and complete success" and wrote, "Troubridge's redemption".

The next day a report arrived from Cunliffe-Owen, the British military attache in Constantinople, warning that an attempt on the Dardanelles by the fleet alone was unsound and that if action was contemplated it should be a combined operation and the "point arises whether substantial enterprise should be attempted in quite a subsidiary theatre of war". However, he obviously considered that a combined operation had a reasonable chance of success if it was executed with rapidity.

Here were two opinions on forcing the Dardanelles from men on the spot. Both had stressed the difficulty of the operation, both had pointed to the necessity for rapid action (if the operation was decided on), but neither had said that the operation was impossible. Indeed, both had hinted that a combined operation might succeed.

The thin line dividing "difficult" from "impossible" enabled Churchill to act. He drafted a letter to Venizelos suggesting that plans

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1. Grey to Elliot and Buchanan 20/8/14, Adm. 116/1336.
2. Mallet to Grey 26/8/14, in Ibid.
3. Note by Churchill, in Ibid. Troubridge was at that time in charge of the British squadron patrolling off the Dardanelles. It was shown earlier that Churchill held him to be partly responsible for the escape of the Goeben and Breslau.
4. Memo by Cunliffe-Owen 27/8/14, in Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. See also Cunliffe-Owen to the War Office 30/8/14, W.O. 106/1462, and Mallett to Grey 31/8/14, Adm. 116/1336.
should be prepared to enable a Greek Army to be landed on Gallipoli, supported by the British Fleet, in combination with a Russian naval and military attack on the Bosphorus. At the same time he arranged with Kitchener for a meeting between War Office and Admiralty staff "to examine and work out 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". The Director of Military Operations (D.M.O.) General Callwell, was to chair this meeting. In papers prepared for him, his advisers warned that the one army corps on the Peninsula could easily be reinforced from European Turkey where between 200,000 and 300,000 troops were situated. Another paper stated that in 1906 a scheme had been prepared to take the Peninsula which involved the use of 4 Divisions. "Since the date of this scheme the fortifications have been much strengthened, and their armament has been modernized and increased: and it is believed that an attempt to capture the peninsula would be a much more serious operation now." At the meeting, which was attended by Callwell, Talbot, Lambert (4th. Sea Lord), Graeme Thomson (Director of Transports) and Richmond (A.D.O.D.) but not by Churchill, Callwell stated that "considering the strength of the Turkish Garrison & the large force already mobilised in European Turkey, he did not regard it as a feasible military operation".

However, the matter did not end here. On the 2nd. or 3rd. of September a second War Office Admiralty meeting was held and this time Churchill did attend. The minutes of this second meeting merely state that "The matter was thrashed out again, with the result that the D.M.O. put his views". The important point is that these views had undergone a change.

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(1) Churchill to Grey 1/9/14, Adm. 1/8393/301.
(2) Churchill to General Douglas [C 1 GS] 1/9/14, W.O. 79/63.
(3) Paper by Col. Dallas 1/9/14, W.O. 106/1463.
(4) Paper by Col. Talbot 1/9/14, in Ibid.
(5) Minute by Col. Talbot 5/9/14, in Ibid.
(6) Ibid.
since the last meeting. Callwell still emphasized that "an attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula from the sea side...is likely to prove an extremely difficult operation of war" but he stated that the operation might succeed if 60,000 men with a strong contingent of siege artillery were landed. He suggested that the Greek authorities be asked for the latest plans in their possession. The reasons for Callwell's change of mind are not known but it is known that Churchill suggested landing a Greek Army on the Gallipoli Peninsula to the Cabinet on the 2nd. and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he put strong pressure on Callwell to produce a more favourable answer than that which came out of the initial meeting.

Churchill and Prince Louis now took up Callwell's suggestion of obtaining plans from the Greek military authorities. They both wrote to Admiral Kerr, the English Admiral in command of the Greek Navy, and asked that the provision of a Greek force to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula and admit the Anglo-Greek fleet to the Marmora be considered. Kerr replied a few days later. A plan had been prepared but it had been designed to be executed by coup de main before Turkey mobilized. In any case Greece would not move unless Bulgaria actively entered the war on the Allied side and attacked Turkey. As there was no possibility of Bulgarian action against Turkey, the prospect of a Greek Army faded into the background. It has been suggested, however, that even with Bulgarian co-operation, Greek military aid against Turkey was most unlikely. The British Military Attache at Athens, Lt. Col. T.M. Cunninghame, has stated that the Greek plan was designed as a surprise attack in peacetime. The Greeks did not contemplate landing in the face of armed resistance.

(1) Memorandum by Major-General Callwell 3/9/14, W.O. 106/1463.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Gilbert M., Winston S. Churchill V.3, p. 204-5. Gilbert is quoting from the Pease Diary.
(5) Kerr to Churchill 9/9/14, Grey Papers, F.O. 800/63.
also told the Dardanelles Commission that Col. Metaxas, the vice-Chief of the Greek General Staff, "was strong in his opinion that once the Turks had mobilized [which of course they had when Greek aid was under consideration], the project offered every danger and little prospect of success". Furthermore, it has been stated that in August 1914 the Greek Army was in no position to help anybody. It is claimed that in that month the army was in the midst of changing the whole of its armament and possessed ammunition for only three weeks fighting and was without heavy artillery.

In spite of these setbacks Churchill refused to give up the idea of landing an army on the Gallipoli Peninsula. He told Grey that in the event of war with Turkey, the Admiralty could easily transport a Russian army corps to Gallipoli, "A good army of 50,000 men & sea power - that is the end of Turkish menace". But this was merely wishful thinking for that same day the British Ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, had told Grey, who had passed the message on to Churchill, that if war with Turkey broke out, Russia would have no troops to spare for operations in that sphere.

During the remaining weeks of September and for most of October there was rather a lull in the search for an offensive role for the Navy. On September 10th, Admiral Wilson produced his plan to capture Heligoland, an island much more heavily defended than Borkum or Sylt. Churchill put this idea before a specially convened conference of senior naval officers on board the Iron Duke on September 17th. It met with almost universal opposition and was quickly dropped. Three weeks later Churchill wrote to Jellicoe asking him to study the method by which British entry into the

(1) Dardanelles Commission, Evidence of Lt. Col. T.M. Cunninghame 13/3/17, Q22, 444, Cab. 19/33.
(3) Churchill to Grey 6/9/14, C.V.3, p. 95.
(4) Buchanan to Grey 6/9/14, C.V.3, p. 94; Grey to Churchill 6/9/14, C.V.3, p. 94-5.
Baltic was to be effected but without the willingness of any senior officer to undertake the necessary first stage of the Borkum-Baltic plan, this was rather a long-term prospect.

Meanwhile events in Turkey kept the possibility of action at the Dardanelles before Churchill. With the refusal to the Turks to dismiss the German crews of the Goeben and Breslau, the position of the British Naval Mission became "false and invidious", and in mid September it was withdrawn. Then later in the month a Turkish destroyer was turned back by the British squadron off the Dardanelles and in retaliation Turkey closed the Straits to all shipping, thus effectively cutting off Russia from the west. Finally on October 29th., the Goeben and Breslau were taken by Admiral Souchon into the Black Sea, with Enver's connivance, and several Russian ports bombarded. The next day Mallet asked for his passports.

With war between Britain and Turkey now certain, Churchill immediately sought ways to bring home to Turkey the power of the Royal Navy. He wrote to Fisher (now First Sea Lord), "Admiral Slade shd be asked to state his opinion on the possibility ...of a bombardment of the sea face forts of the Dardanelles. It is a good thing to give a prompt blow". Slade replied that this operation "offers very little prospect of obtaining any effect commensurate with the risk to the ships. The Forts are difficult to locate from the sea at anything like the range at which they will have to be engaged." However, he added that a demonstration might make the batteries disclose their position and that "a little target practice from 15 to 20 thousand yards might be useful". Churchill apparently with Fisher's consent, therefore instructed Admiral Carden now commanding the squadron off the Dardanelles, to engage the forts at a range

(1) Churchill to Jellicoe 8/10/14, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 48890.
(2) Mallet to Grey 8/9/14, Correspondence...Respecting Turkey.
(3) Mallet to Grey 27/9/14, quoted in Ibid.
(4) Trumpener U., Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914-1918, p. 54.
(5) Buchanan to Grey 29/10/14, Correspondence...Respecting Turkey.
(6) Mallet to Grey 30/10/14, quoted in Ibid.
(7) Churchill to Fisher 30/10/14, Adm. 137/96.
(8) Memorandum by Slade 31/10/14, in Ibid.
(9) Ibid. The last sentence was underlined by Churchill.
of 12 - 14 thousand yards, making sure to retire before the fire from the forts became effective.\(^1\) Admiral Limpus the former head of the British Naval Mission in Turkey, immediately raised objections to the bombardment. He thought the retirement of the British Fleet after the demonstration would be reported in Constantinople as a Turkish victory.\(^2\) He was also concerned about the limited nature of the operation. "Naturally have no knowledge of plan, but it seems to me that first thing to free passage of Straits is a land attack on forts on Asia side."\(^3\) However, no land attack was contemplated. Nor was the operation to be a preliminary to the forcing of the Straits by ships alone. In fact the bombardment bore no relation whatever to the earlier large scale operations which Churchill had already investigated and Churchill's instructions to Carden contain no aim or objective that the demonstration was supposed to achieve. One view is that the bombardment was designed to test the range and calibre of the Turkish guns but it has been pointed out that these details were already known and published in a Naval Intelligence Department handbook.\(^4\) The only conceivable object the bombardment could have had then was to gratify Churchill's desire for "a quick blow".

The bombardment took place as scheduled on November 3rd., before the formal declaration of war. At first Carden emphasized the "very severe" damage done to the fort at Seddelbahr."\(^5\) Later, however, he remarked that because of the smoke and dust it was impossible to tell the extent of the damage done.\(^6\) Still later he rather reverted to his original opinion reporting considerable damage to Sedd-el-Bahr and a panic caused among government officials at Chanak.\(^7\) Churchill was quite satisfied with the results achieved and on November 9th. he asked Carden to "Report if

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(1) Churchill to Carden 1/11/14, Adm. 137/96. The message ended "I SL concurs".
(2) Limpus to Sturdee 2/11/14, in Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) F.R. Maunse11 (former Military Attache at Constantinople) to Aspinall-Oglander 1/11/23, Cab. 45/243.
(6) Carden to the Admiralty 14/11/14, Adm. 137/881.
(7) Carden to the Admiralty 22/11/14, in Ibid.
you see any way of injuring the enemy without undue risk or expenditure of ammunition",\(^1\) surely extraordinary limitations to place on the use of a squadron of warships. In reply Carden suggested an attack on the batteries in Besika Bay\(^2\) but Churchill stated that he must keep concentrated off the Dardanelles.\(^3\) With yet another limitation put on his actions, all Carden could suggest was a further bombardment of the entrance forts\(^4\) and there for the time Churchill allowed the matter to rest.

It has been widely suggested that the November bombardment concentrated the Turks' attention on the Dardanelles defences and consequently made future operations more difficult.\(^5\) However, it is clear that the Germans had determined to strengthen the defences of the Straits long before November. As early as August, Admiral Souchon ordered from Germany coastal defence experts, mines and ammunition.\(^6\) In early September 200 mines and 650 naval personnel arrived.\(^7\) From October no more German material could be used on the defences as Roumania bowed to Entente pressure, and stopped all through shipments from Germany to Turkey.\(^8\) Of course the defences did increase substantially between November and the next bombardment in February but the Turks have testified that the main increases had been decided on before the war.\(^8\) Furthermore, the Straits were such a vital factor in the defence of Turkey it is reasonable to suppose that they would have received a high priority when Turkey's defences were reviewed on the outbreak of war. What is clear, however, is that the risk of provoking the Turks to accelerate the defences was hardly commensurate with the meagre results likely to be achieved. Moreover, it is now known that the November bombardment provided the German Admiral in charge of the Straits defences with the vital evidence that the effect of large calibre shells on

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\(^1\) Churchill to Carden, 9/11/14, Adm. 137/96.
\(^2\) Carden to Churchill, 12/11/14, in Ibid.
\(^3\) Churchill to Carden, 12/11/14, in Ibid.
\(^4\) e.g. Marder A.J., Scapa Flow V.2, p. 201.
\(^5\) Trumpener U., Germany and The Ottoman Empire 1914-1918, p. 39.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) G.H.Q. Constantinople: Answers to Mitchell Committee Questions, Adm. 116/1714. This Committee was sent to Turkey in 1919 to investigate technical aspects of the Dardanelles operations.
modern earthworks was astonishingly small.¹

The next discussion of operations against Turkey came during a War Council debate on the defence of Egypt. Churchill told his colleagues that the "ideal method of defending Egypt was by an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula ... [but that this] was a very difficult operation requiring a large force".² However, he suggested that transports be collected in Egypt in the event of an expedition being sanctioned³ but a few days later this move was vetoed by Kitchener.⁴ This still did not prevent Churchill hankering after "a heroic adventure against Gallipoli and the Dardanelles"⁵ but from this point on the operation was pushed aside as other alternatives gained prominence.

With Fisher's arrival at the Admiralty, interest began to turn back to the North Sea. In late November Fisher revived the idea of a British fleet landing a Russian army in Pomerania. He emphasized the need for action and added, "risks must be taken to use our Command of the Sea with greater energy."⁶ Churchill agreed with Fisher that the ultimate aim of British naval strategy was to secure the entry of the Grand Fleet into the Baltic and act in cooperation with the Russians but he was convinced that a necessary prerequisite to that operation was the seizure of a German island to "block in" the High Sea Fleet. He therefore raised the seizure of such an island at the War Council of December 1st., emphasizing, perhaps for Kitchener's benefit, that if an island was secured, a German invasion attempt would be almost impossible.⁷ He was supported by Fisher who "pointed out the importance of adopting the offensive".⁸ Kitchener then announced that no troops for such an operation were available but the War Council were sufficiently impressed by Churchill's exposition.

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¹ von Usedom to the Kaiser 14/11/14, Cab. 45/215.
² War Council Minutes 25/11/14, Cab. 42/1/4.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Kitchener to Churchill 30/11/14, C.V.3, p. 283.
⁵ Asquith to Venetia Stanley 5/12/14, C.V.3, p. 297.
⁶ Fisher, "On the possibility of using our Command of the Sea to influence more drastically the Military Situation on the Continent", Adm. 116/3454. The paper is undated but Martin Gilbert has placed it at the end of November, See. C.V.3, p. 284n.
⁷ War Council Minutes 1/12/14, Cab. 42/1/5.
⁸ Ibid.
to authorize the Admiralty to examine the whole question in detail and report. ¹

Churchill lost no time in putting his own thoughts on paper for the guidance of his colleagues. On the 2nd, he wrote a paper which suggested that Sylt would be the ideal island to capture. He advocated that the defences should be overwhelmed by naval gunfire and a force of 4,000 men landed to hold the island. The ships' gunfire could then protect the island from land attack, while submarines and destroyers made it impregnable to attack from the sea. ² Balfour, meanwhile suggested that a careful survey of the entire German coast should be made before a decision was reached, ³ and this latter approach seems to have been adopted for it was not until the middle of the month that Oliver announced that Borkum was considered by the staff to be the most suitable. However, the Staff memorandum was largely negative in tone and the difficulties of the operation were emphasized. It was pointed out that each gun would have to be hit yet the attacking squadron would have to bombard from long ranges because of the shoals around the island. ⁴

For the remainder of the year the German island project remained in the background. Late in December, when Fisher complained to Churchill about the need to "do something" ⁵ Churchill replied that "the key to the naval situation is an oversea base" but that no one at the Admiralty seemed prepared to carry the operation through, ⁶ and to this Fisher had no reply.

In the meantime another sphere of action in which the navy would be able to play a role had gained prominence. In essence the new plan called for the navy to act as offshore artillery and help the army advance along

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¹ War Council Minutes 1/12/14, Cab: 42/1/5.
² Memorandum by Churchill 2/12/14, Adm. 137/452.
³ Balfour to Hankey 3/12/14, Asquith Papers, 13/224-8.
⁴ Memorandum by Oliver 15/12/14, Adm. 116/1350.
⁵ Fisher to Churchill 21/12/14, Churchill Papers, 8/178.
⁶ Churchill to Fisher 21/12/14, in Ibid.
the north Belgian coast towards Zeebrugge and so outflank the Germans in Belgium. To undertake this operation it would be necessary for the British army to move from its existing position between La Bassee and Ypres, to the vicinity of the coast. It was also thought that the Belgian army which was occupying the coastal sector would be placed under the British army for the duration of the campaign. Churchill's attention was first drawn towards the Belgian coast in mid-October when the French called for British aid to protect the left flank and sporadic bombardments of the Belgian coast had been carried out from that date. Then in November Churchill expressed concern at the development of submarine bases and other dangerous naval preparations at Ostende and Zeebrugge. A few days later he ordered plans prepared to bombard the two Belgian ports as soon as possible. Sometime within the next ten days the scope of the operation was broadened to include an advance by the army along the Belgian coast for we find Sir John French warning Churchill of the difficulties which the extensive inundations and numerous canals would cause. From this reply it is obvious that it was Churchill who first mentioned the operation to French. In early December and Churchill again discussed the plan. At this meeting Churchill apparently overcame the Commander-in-Chief's reluctance and French authorized Churchill to inform Kitchener of the substance of the scheme.

The plan also won the immediate approval of Fisher. He told Fitzgerald, Kitchener's secretary, "we must (as I said the first day I came here) [get]...the British Army on the Sea Flank...[and] shove along & sweep the whole Belgian Coast clear of Germans & get Antwerp." Two days later he told Jellicoe "I'm fighting to get the British Army on the sea flank. It's so obvious, yet it's not done. Our coastal bombardments are futile now, as no military advantage taken of them!" Yet there is no evidence that

(1) Churchill to French 15/11/14, C.V.3, p. 265.
(4) French to Kitchener 7/12/14, Kitchener Papers, Pro. 30/57/49.
(5) Fisher to Fitzgerald 8/12/14, W.O. 159/6.
Fisher had suggested this operation earlier, as he claims, and the reason for this whole-hearted espousal of it is not clear. Perhaps he saw in it a means by which to escape from the seemingly insoluble problems of the Borkum-Baltic plan.

The operation quickly began to gain momentum. On the 9th. Churchill told French that the French Government had been informed of the British desire to move to the sea flank. He continued, "A good & brilliant operation is in sight, conducent immediately to the safety of this country & the general success of the war. Meanwhile all the naval preparations are going forward ...The Admirals here are red hot for it."¹ Then on the 10th. a new factor was added. Churchill announced to French that while the army advanced towards Zeebrugge 10,000 men would be landed at that port by the navy to destroy the submarine base there.² This aspect of the coastal plan was apparently not a Churchillian addition and Churchill told Fisher he was not happy with it, "I am shy of landings under fire - unless there is no other way";³ a strange admission to make considering that the Borkum plan involved just such a landing. As planning began to reach an advanced stage difficulties with the French appeared. Joffre would not consent to the postponement of a minor operation on the British front scheduled for mid-December and this meant that the move to the sea flank would be delayed.⁴ Churchill at once asked Kitchener to intervene⁵ and this may have had some effect for during the next week Joffre changed his mind. On the 28th. French told Kitchener that Joffre now agreed that the British army should move to the sea flank to act in conjunction with the fleet.⁶

In the meantime, however, Churchill had written to Asquith that "In my judgement the flank move is a very different job to what it was when we

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² Churchill to French 10/12/14, C.V.3, p. 302-3.
³ Churchill to Fisher 10/12/14, Adm. 116/3454.
⁴ French to Churchill 10/12/14, C.V.3, p. 303-4; Churchill to French 13/12/14, p. 307-8.
⁵ Churchill to Kitchener 21/12/14, Kitchener Papers, Pro 30/57/72.
⁶ French to Kitchener 28/12/14, in Ibid., Pro. 30/57/49.
first talked of it six weeks ago. The whole front and angle right up to
the Dutch frontier is fortified line behind line; and although you
can get on along the coast, the advantages to be gained are reduced as
much as the difficulties are augmented.\(^1\) However it must be doubted if
Churchill was really as pessimistic about the sea coast advance as this
letter implies, for the main purpose of the letter to Asquith was to
convince the Prime Minister that the Borkum operation was the best alter-
native to action on the Western Front. As we shall see, Churchill continued
to espouse the Zeebrugge plan well into January.

Thus at the end of December 1914 the state of the three operations under
consideration was as follows. The Borkum-Baltic project which had been
put forward with great persistency by Churchill and others throughout the
period had run into seemingly insuperable difficulties. The scheme had
few advocates among Churchill's professional advisors. However, the First
Lord had by no means dropped the idea as the next chapter will make clear.
Plans for operations against Turkey at the Dardanelles seem to have been
shelved by the War Council meeting of November 25th. Churchill himself had
described the operation as "very difficult" and "requiring a large force".
The unavailability of that large force in the form of the Greek army and
Kitchener's lack of interest in any immediate action were, for the moment,
obstacles too difficult to be overcome. The operation that had been most
discussed during December was the advance on Zeebrugge. Despite a
temporary setback in the middle of the month it definitely held the field
at the turn of the year and seemed the operation most likely to be
attempted in 1915.

Two further factors should be kept in mind when this period is
considered. The discussions set down here have often been described as a
search for a naval offensive. This is only a half truth. All the operations
involved the use of an army, in the case of Borkum and Zeebrugge, the
\(^{(1)}\) Churchill to Asquith 29/12/14, Asquith Papers, 13/242-3.
British Army; in the case of the Dardanelles the Greek army. At no time had any of the planners or high officials suggested that the navy could be used alone to influence the course of the war. Secondly, it is clear that in two instances out of three, the search for an additional sphere of operations did not arise because of a deadlock in the main theatre of war. It has been seen that the Borkum operation had been discussed before Britain had entered the war and was under consideration before the Western Front had solidified. The same could be said for the Dardanelles operation, which was the subject of an Admiralty-War Office conference before the battle of the Marne had been fought. Only Zeebrugge could be said to have arisen because of the inconclusive end of the first battle of Ypres in late November. It is obvious that the primary impulse behind the search for a new offensive was Churchill with his restlessness and dissatisfaction with the "passive" role which he considered the navy was playing. This attitude was in evidence as early as the first week of the war, and it is noticeable that the first move in the investigation of all three spheres of action, Borkum, the Dardanelles, and Zeebrugge was made by Churchill. This attitude was now to be reinforced by, and to react on, the attitude of several of Churchill's colleagues.

It is intended to deal with the various operations suggested by Churchill in the order that they appear in The World Crisis, the Dardanelles, Borkum, and Zeebrugge. Those sections of these chapters which are concerned with British diplomacy in the Balkans will be omitted and discussed later.

The first section of The World Crisis which is relevant to the preceding discussion is Churchill's decision to requisition the two Turkish battleships being built in Britain. Churchill puts forward the view that this decision was not relevant to Turkish entry into the war against

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(1) Richmond Diary 12/8/14, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/9.
Britain which, he states, had already been decided upon in principle. ¹ This opinion is almost certainly correct. Of course Churchill could not have known that his decision prevented one of these ships sailing to Germany to join the High Sea Fleet. Churchill, however, makes a larger claim for his action. He states that, "The requisitioning of these ships, so far from making Turkey an enemy, nearly made her an Ally".² This startling claim is based on what Churchill identifies as the Pan-Turk War Plan.³ The central feature of this plan, he claims, provided for Turkish control of the Black Sea in the event of a general war, in which Turkey was on the opposite side to Russia. The ships being built in Britain were the means by which the Turks meant to gain control of the Black Sea and by withholding the ships Britain thwarted the plan and forced Turkey to remain neutral.⁴ Unfortunately for Britain, the arrival of the Goeben and Breslau enabled the Turks to carry out their original plan.⁵ Churchill does not cite a source for this information and more recent scholarship makes no mention of the supposed Pan-Turk War Plan. Trumpener's book, the best on the subject in English, contains no reference to the plan at all. In fact from this account it appears that the decision to send the Goeben into the Black Sea to bombard the Russian ports was an ad hoc decision forced on Enver by the failure of his colleagues to support the Turko-German alliance, rather than the culmination of a previously arranged plan. If this version of events is correct then Churchill has somewhat overstated his case.

Churchill then turns to the Greek offer of August 19th. He obviously thinks that this was one of the great lost opportunities of the war. He writes,

"a combination of the Greek armies and fleet with the British

¹ The World Crisis, p. 436-7.
² Ibid., p. 437.
³ Ibid., p. 436.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., p. 437.
Mediterranean squadron offered a means of settling the difficulties of the Dardanelles in a most prompt and effective manner. The Gallipoli Peninsula was then only weakly occupied by Turkish troops, and the Greek General Staff were known to be ready with well-thought-out plans for its seizure.\(^1\)

Churchill has therefore assumed that the acceptance of the Greek offer would have led to the immediate use of the Greek Army in combination with the British Squadron at the Dardanelles. However, it has been shown earlier that this was a very dubious proposition. An important point was that Britain and Turkey were not at war in the period mentioned by Churchill and *The World Crisis* offers no solution to this inconvenient problem. In any case it is doubtful whether the Greek General Staff would have agreed to the transfer of a large section of their army overseas while the attitude of Bulgaria was uncertain. Churchill's description of the plan as "well-thought-out" is also hardly accurate. The only "plan" which the Greeks had available was for a landing on an undefended beach, before a formal declaration of war and before Turkey had mobilized. By August the 19th the latter condition did not apply and it is doubtful if the Greek plan had any further relevance. Furthermore there is the possibility mentioned earlier that the Greek army was in the process of changing its armament, in which case it would have been in no position to attack Turkey.

If the arguments presented above are correct the Admiralty-War Office conferences which were called by Churchill, involving the use of the Greek Army at the Dardanelles, are invested with a rather theoretical quality. However, Churchill discusses them in full in *The World Crisis*. He quotes his letter of September 1st. to the C.I.G.S. which arranged the first meeting and continues,

"The Director of Military Operations, General Callwell, replied on the 3rd., on behalf of the General Staff, that the operation of seizing the Gallipoli Peninsula would be an extremely difficult one. Sixty thousand men would be required, thirty thousand of

\(^{1}\) *The World Crisis*, p. 441.
whom should be landed in the first instance, should gain as much ground as possible, should prepare landing stages, and hold their own for a week while the transports returned to Greece for the second thirty thousand. On this basis the operation was considered feasible."

As was shown, Callwell did reply in this sense on September 3rd, but Churchill has not included Callwell's statement at the meeting on September 1st. that he did not regard the operation as feasible. In fact the first meeting is not mentioned in The World Crisis at all. Thus the fact that Callwell changed his mind between September 1st and 3rd is concealed, which strengthens the suspicion that it was Churchill's presence at the second meeting which was the cause of Callwell's revised opinion.

The events leading to the entry of Turkey into the war are next considered by Churchill. He then describes the Turkish attack on the Russian ports and the bombardment of the Dardanelles forts by the British which followed soon after. He explains the reasons behind this action,

"A British squadron had for months been waiting outside the Dardanelles. War had been declared with Turkey. It was natural that fire should be opened upon the enemy as it would be on the fronts of hostile armies. It was necessary to know accurately the effective ranges of the Turkish guns and the conditions under which the entrance to the blockade port could be approached."3

The first point to be noticed about this paragraph is that war had not been declared between Britain and Turkey at the time of the bombardment. The formal declaration came only on November 5th. Secondly Churchill does not quote the memorandum of Admiral Slade, to the effect that the operation offered very little prospect of any decisive result. Nor does Churchill quote the opinion of Admiral Limpus, who was against the bombardment, and who was described by Churchill a few pages earlier as "the Admiral who of all others knew the Turks, and knew the Dardanelles."4 As for the need to know the ranges of the Turkish guns, if the former British military attaches'
opinion is correct, this information was already available and it is worth noting that this objective was not mentioned in any of Churchill's telegrams to Admiral Carden, who was to carry out the bombardment.

Churchill is confident that the bombardment did not lead the Turks to strengthen their defences, which he claims would have been improved steadily from the declaration of war in any case. From the earlier discussion this view seems to be correct, for the Germans had undertaken to strengthen the defences in early August. His account says nothing, however, on the point that the risk that the Turks would accelerate the defences of the Straits was hardly commensurate with the small results likely to be achieved by the bombardment. He also makes no comment on the fact that the bombardment increased the confidence of the defence by showing what little effect naval shells had on earthworks even though this information is contained in the file of correspondence between the German commander of the Straits defences, von Usedom, and the Kaiser; a file Churchill is known to have seen before writing *The World Crisis.*

The next section in *The World Crisis* of relevance to the Dardanelles comes many pages later, in a discussion of the War Council meeting of November 25th. It will be remembered that after this meeting Churchill suggested that transports be collected in Egypt for the purpose of transporting 40,000 men to the Dardanelles at short notice and that this was later vetoed by Kitchener. Churchill has this to say about Kitchener's decision, "I do not censure the War Office decision not to act at this time. Action would have been a master stroke, but no one could be blamed for not attempting it." Thus while not "censuring" the War Office, Churchill re-emphasizes than in his opinion action was both desirable and possible.

It is also clear that by action Churchill means landing a force of 40,000 men.

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(1) *The World Crisis*, p. 450.
(3) *The World Crisis*, p. 488.
men on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Yet the timing for such an operation could hardly have been worse. Even if the War Office had acted immediately, following the War Council meeting of November 25th., six weeks at least would have been needed to collect the transports and work out a plan. Thus the landing could not have taken place before early January. But the weather conditions at the Dardanelles at that time of the year are not appropriate for combined operations. According to Carden gale force winds were experienced on 28 days in January. It is quite possible that the navy would not have countenanced a landing under these conditions. Furthermore, the troops to be used, according to Churchill the Anzacs and a Territorial division, would have hardly received any training at all by mid-December. The Anzacs had only been in Egypt since December 3rd. Even in February, almost three months later, Churchill described these troops as half trained. With uncertain weather and troops which were largely untrained, the operation could well have been a disaster rather than the master-stroke anticipated by Churchill.

Churchill introduces his chapter on the Borkum-Baltic operation with a discussion of the deadlock at sea. He then goes on to give his opinion on what actions the navy should have been prepared to take to break it.

"Without risking the Grand Fleet otherwise than in a battle upon favourable conditions, every device and form of pressure to make the enemy come out and bring on a naval crisis and climax ought to have been perseveringly studied. If the enemy would not come out to break the blockade, some other effective provocation should be sought for, and sought for with ceaseless diligence and audacity of conception. The Admirals in command and the prevailing authorities at the Admiralty, however, rested content with their distant blockade and their protection of the lines of communication. They endeavoured to gather as many ships as possible, adding squadron to squadron and flotilla to flotilla, and then thought they had done all that could be expected of them. When reproached form time to time for their inactivity, they replied by using all the perfectly correct arguments about not jeopardizing the Grand Fleet on such occasions."

(1) Carden to the Admiralty 3/2/15, Adm. 137/96.
(2) Bean C.E.W., The Story of Anzac VI, 8th ed., Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1938, p. 114 [The Official History]
(3) War Council Minutes 19/2/15, Cab. 42/1/36.
(4) It is interesting to note that this section of The World Crisis which deals with the November discussions on the Dardanelles is a slightly reworded version of Churchill's evidence to the Dardanelles Commission. See Churchill Papers 8/75. The section concerned starts from "It had long been obvious" on p. 486 to the beginning of the second paragraph on p. 488.
Fleet. But this was not for them the end of the story. It was their business to invent or discover some offensive plan which without engaging the Grand Fleet at a disadvantage either forced the Germans to give battle or helped the allied armies in some notable way and took some of the pressure off them. A civilian Minister could never compel them to such a course. He could suggest, encourage and sustain. But if they remained immovable, like George II at the Battle of Dettingen, 'sans peur et sans avis', nothing could be done."

In relation to the Borkum-Baltic project this summary of naval opinion is grossly unfair. The Admirals remained immovable to the ceaseless proddings by Churchill about this operation not because they "rested content" with the situation at sea but because, for reasons explained earlier, Churchill's schemes were basically unsound. They involved risking the Grand Fleet in waters which would have exposed the British Squadrons to mines and torpedoes. No likely gains warranted these risks and it was decidedly not the business of the Admirals to invent operations of this nature. Nor is it easy to see how purely naval action could have taken pressure off the allied armies. Naval power alone could not do it and if troops were used in combination with the Fleet they would have to be taken from the main front. Given the inherent advantages of the defence during this period of warfare any troop movements on the periphery could be blocked by a lesser number of the enemy, who because he was operating on interior lines could always reinforce faster. Churchill's reproaches to the Admirals for not adopting any of his "northern" projects are therefore hardly justified. Many of the weaknesses of Churchill's case are not apparent, however, because he never explains exactly how an island off the German coast is to be captured or what operations would be necessary after the event to enable the command of the Baltic to be obtained. He either describes these operations in general terms: "Military history shows many examples of Commanders marching swiftly into an enemy's country and seizing some key position" (no examples or locations of key positions are given in The World Crisis) or states that the factors which made the

(1) The World Crisis, p. 478.
(2) Ibid.
operation hazardous (aviation, the submarine and the long range gun)
"favoured or hindered both sides in various degrees at the different
stages of the operation". It is noticeable that machine guns and mines,
two of the key weapons available to the defenders against such an attack,
are not mentioned. Furthermore, it has been shown that in an operation of
the type contemplated by Churchill, most of the advantages lay with the
defence. Concerning operations in the Baltic, after the island was
captured, Churchill never attempts to say how command of that sea was to be
obtained in the face of German destroyer flotillas, minefields and
submarines. There are also no details in _The World Crisis_ on the difficulties
of landing a Russian force on the north German coast nor a discussion of
how it was to be supplied or why it was likely that this force could be
reinforced from the sea at a faster rate than the Germans could reinforce
their own defensive troops.

To a certain extent Churchill seems to have played down in _The World
Crisis_ his interest in the Borkum project during this period. It has been
shown earlier that he was a fairly consistent advocate of the plan through-
out the first five months of the war. Yet in _The World Crisis_ only a
section of a short chapter is devoted to a discussion of it. Moreover,
several paragraphs which would have made Churchill's attitude to the
operation much clearer were omitted while the chapter was in draft form.
The relevant section of the first of these deletions reads,

"Up till the end of the year my mind turned on the whole to
intervening on the Northern rather than on the Southern flank
...it was to the Baltic that my thoughts were principally
turned."2

The second omission included the following,

"Up till the end of 1914 I was working at the Borkum-Baltic
plan, encountering some opposition, much apathy, but also
enjoying a great deal of support especially from Fisher....
Anyhow it had been clear from the beginning that many months

(1) _The World Crisis_, p. 481.
(2) Churchill Papers 8/134.
would be required before any decision other than preparation and study need be taken as far as the Northern Borkum movement was concerned. Meanwhile the naval operation at the Dardanelles, which was a far smaller and less formidable business, would either fail or succeed. If it failed, then very likely I should be made the scapegoat and the responsibility for further events would be passed to others. If it succeeded, we should gain the prestige, which alone would enable so terrific and deadly a business as the storming of Borkum ... to be carried out ... even while the Dardanelles was on I always regarded it as [long] as I was in office only as an interim operation, and all the plans for the Borkum-Baltic project were going forward.\(^1\)

These two paragraphs give a unique insight into Churchill's thinking on the relative merits of the Borkum plan and the Dardanelles operation. They reveal that even after the naval attack on Gallipoli had begun, Churchill still regarded the "northern theatre" as the one in which the really decisive operation would take place. The Dardanelles was merely to be a preliminary to the main offensive. This is a strikingly different line from that eventually taken in *The World Crisis*, where the importance of Borkum is played down in relation to the Dardanelles.

Why did Churchill in the published version of these events wish to convey the opposite impression to that revealed by the deleted paragraphs? The answer may lie in how the two operations were viewed at the time Churchill was writing *The World Crisis* or in how he wished them to be viewed in the future. The Borkum operation was never supported by any substantial body of naval opinion, either during or after the war. Even Keyes, the most aggressive of naval commanders, rejected the scheme as impractical.\(^2\) By contrast, the Dardanelles plan was always regarded by a section of military and public opinion as a brilliant strategic concept which had unfortunately failed due to a lack of political and military support. Liddell Hart is an example of this school of thought.

For obvious reasons Churchill was in sympathy with this line of reasoning and there is no doubt that he wished to propagate the view that the Dardanelles plan had been the one imaginative strategic conception of the

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\(^1\) Churchill Papers 8/182.

\(^2\) Keyes to Churchill 1/12/26, Churchill Papers 8/174.
war. However he could hardly do this if it is was revealed that he saw
the Dardanelles attack as a merely preliminary to the event and that it
was undertaken partly as a stop-gap operation. All references to the true
state of his thinking were therefore removed from The World Crisis and,
as will be shown, the consistent line adopted throughout the book was that
the Dardanelles and not Borkum was the key to a shorter and less costly
war.

Churchill's emendations also provide an answer to a question that has
often puzzled historians. It has never been known why preparations and
discussions about the Borkum plan continued well after the Dardanelles
operation had begun. The answer is now obvious.

The Zeebrugge operation has received similar treatment to that meted
out to Borkum in The World Crisis. Even in the first paragraph on the
operation Churchill is concerned to minimize its importance, "This project
was a limited and local operation not at all to be confused with the great
strategic alternatives which previous chapters have examined."\(^1\) Yet it
will be remembered that the operation was to involve the entire British
and perhaps Belgian armies in France and Flanders and a squadron of
battleships and monitors as well as attendant small craft. In addition
10,000 men were to be landed at Zeebrugge, supported by appropriate naval
power. Thus, although a somewhat smaller naval contingent was required
than was deemed necessary for the Borkum project, the number of troops to
be used made the plan as a whole a far larger affair than either the
"southern" or "northern" alternatives. However, it is possible that
Churchill did not regard the Zeebrugge attack as a war winning plan in the
\(^1\) The World Crisis, p. 490.
same way as the other "great strategic alternatives". But this reasoning merely highlights the strategic fallacy behind the Borkum and Dardanelles plans for if a successful attack with a large number of troops in the main theatre could not win the war, how as this feat to be achieved by greatly reduced numbers on the periphery?

In any case it is not certain that Churchill regarded the Zeebrugge operation as of minor importance at the time. It was noted earlier that Churchill wrote to French on December 9th. about Zeebrugge, "A good and brilliant operation is in sight, conducing immediately to the safety of this country and the general success of the War".1 Such a statement hardly implies that Churchill was discussing a subsidiary operation. It is noteworthy that this letter was originally selected for inclusion in The World Crisis but was eventually omitted, one suspects because it would have weakened Churchill's argument about the subsidiary nature of Zeebrugge.2

Sections of two other letters from Churchill to French which were omitted from The World Crisis may be included here although they strictly lie outside the time-span of this chapter. Both deletions tend to show that Churchill considered northern operations of far greater importance than the Dardanelles attack. The first passage (11/1/15) concern Zeebrugge and reads, "I argued in the War Council strongly against deserting the decisive theatre and the most formidable antagonist to win cheaper laurels in easier fields".3 The second is from a letter of January 24th., "The result of the decision [to scale down the Zeebrugge operation] (which I shall not dispute) is that we must very soon attempt a dangerous operation, which can, at the best, bring only a partial and transient remedy."4 It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, as with Borkum,

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1 Churchill to French 9/12/14, C.V.3, p. 300.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid. Three other paragraphs have also been omitted from the letter. They concern Churchill's critical attitude towards the French opinion of the operation, a description of the Dogger Bank action, and an indication that Churchill would make one of his controversial visits to French in the near future.
Churchill has deliberately excluded these passages in order to play down the important of the Zeebrugge operation so that the "correct" conclusion will be drawn about the importance of the Dardanelles.

Originally Churchill included in *The World Crisis* a section of his letter to Asquith of December 29th., in which he tried to convince Asquith of the merits of the Borkum plan by stating that the proposed advance on Zeebrugge was now too difficult and would only produce small results. Later, this letter was omitted. Probably Churchill's reason was that the omission avoided the need to explain why he had seemingly changed his mind about the operation and why he then (as evidenced by his letters to French in *The World Crisis*) changed back again to support the operation in January. In other words by deleting the letter he avoids the charge that it was merely a political exercise to convince Asquith of the merits of another operation.

A final point that should be made about the treatment of the Zeebrugge operation in *The World Crisis* is that Churchill definitely attributes the origin of the plan to French. He writes, "about the third week in November, 1914, Sir John French wished to make an advance in conjunction with the Belgian Army along the sea coast ...towards Ostend and Zeebrugge." However, it has been shown that the first time French mentioned the plan to Churchill it was to warn him of its difficulties and it is clear the he is responding to a suggestion already put to him. As Churchill has been concerned about German submarine activity at Zeebrugge as early as October circumstantial evidence points to him as the originator of the scheme.

In conclusion two comments seem necessary about these chapters of *The World Crisis*. The first is that, broadly speaking, Churchill deals with the origins of the Gallipoli, Borkum and Zeebrugge plans in three separate chapters. This gives the impression that the operations were discussed at

(1) Churchill Papers 8/76. The letter was originally included immediately before the last paragraph on p. 507.
(2) *The World Crisis*, p. 490.
different times and in different circumstances. As the first part of this chapter shows this was not the case. Discussions concerning the three operations often took place simultaneously.

Secondly, by playing down the importance of the Borkum and Zeebrugge plans Churchill has enhanced the importance of the Dardanelles plan during this period and given the impression subsequently adopted by historians that "His eyes had been on the Dardanelles from the moment that Turkish intervention on the German side appeared probable". In fact, as was shown, of the three operations, the Borkum plan seemed the most important to Churchill at the time. However, for reasons which have been explained, Churchill did not want to be remembered as the author of the Borkum plan, while he was quite content to be known as the driving force behind the Dardanelles campaign. Therefore, in studying this section of The World Crisis, the reader needs to bear in mind Churchill's ever present concern by the time of writing to emphasize the Dardanelles operation at the expense of others.

It should also be obvious by now that Churchill's chapter on the deadlock in the west has given a misleading impression of the impulse behind the search for a new offensive. It has been shown that this search began long before the solidification of the Western Front and that the major impulse behind the search was Churchill's restlessness and dissatisfaction with the progress of the naval war. Indeed in the next two chapters many of the letters and memoranda quoted by Churchill reveal that investigations into extraneous operations involving the navy began in the earliest days of the war. However, such is the force with which "The Deadlock in The West" has been written, and so attractive are the arguments used, that combined with the fact that the three operations discussed are treated separately, the impression is left on the mind of the reader that all three operations were considered because of the paralysis of the Western Front. As a result the operations themselves have an

appeal, an urgency and an inevitability which in fact they did not possess at the time, and it is after this preparation that the reader is introduced to a discussion of the Dardanelles operation proper.

A Note on The World Crisis and the Lusitania Incident

In his book on the sinking of the Lusitania Colin Simpson implicates Churchill in the disaster. It is not intended to examine Simpson's case in detail. Suffice it to say that it is partly based on the contention that Churchill had been trying to involve the United States in the war from the earliest days. According to Simpson the "ingenious and subtle" strategy developed by Churchill to achieve this end was to goad the Germans into a confrontation with America by forcing them to attack either American merchant shipping, or shipping carrying American citizens.  

The Lusitania incident was the result of this strategy. The relevance of this theory to this section of The World Crisis is that Simpson uses a quotation from one of the chapters discussed to support his argument. The quotation is taken from the chapter, "The Deadlock in the West" and is used by Simpson to show how Churchill plotted to get the United States into the war. It reads, "At the summit true politics and strategy are one. The manoeuvre which brings an ally into the field is as serviceable as that which wins a great battle. The manoeuvre which gains an important strategic point may be less valuable than that which placates or overawes a dangerous neutral."  

Yet if this quotation is taken in context it is seen that Churchill is discussing the possibility of inducing the small neutral states of Europe into the war. In particular, Holland, Greece and Bulgaria attracted Churchill's attention at this time. The whole chapter is in fact an extended argument for allied action on the so-called northern and southern flanks of the

(2) The World Crisis, P.464.
Central Powers. This is quite apart from the fact that the passage is not contemporary with the sinking of the Lusitania, and would not necessarily be evidence of any plans he had engaged in to involve America even if he made the statements in that context. Thus there are no grounds for inferring that the passage refers to supposed plans by Churchill to involve America in the war. (It might be added that if this had been Churchill's plan the Lusitania incident would seem to have been a conspicuous failure, for America did not enter the war until two years after the sinking of the liner.)
THE DARDANELLES I

At the end of the year dissatisfaction with the higher direction of the war, and the conviction that the deadlock in the west could not be broken, led some of the more active members of the Government to explore alternative methods and areas of action. The first to submit proposals to the Prime Minister was Lt.-Col. Hankey, a professional marine officer and secretary to the C.I.D. and the War Council. After postulating a stalemate in France and Flanders and suggesting various devices which might be used to aid trench attacks, Hankey turned to alternative theatres of operation. "Germany", he thought, "can perhaps be struck most effectively and with the most lasting results on the peace of the world through her allies, and particularly through Turkey...Is it impossible now to weave a web round Turkey which shall end her career as a European Power?"\(^1\) Hankey went on to suggest that three army corps (six divisions) be earmarked for use against Turkey. "This force, in conjunction with Greece and Bulgaria, ought to be sufficient to capture Constantinople."\(^2\) Several features of this memorandum should be noted. First was its imprecision. What, for example, did the phrase "weave a web round Turkey" mean? Second was the lack of argument in support of the paper's basic assumptions. For example, the novel suggestion that Germany could be defeated by attacks on her weaker allies was never argued by Hankey. Third was the failure to take into account the political realities. Thus although the active participation of the Balkan states was anticipated the method by which this desirable result was to be obtained was not specified. Finally the paper was not complete in its military details. While Hankey postulated a land attack against Turkey and suggested the actual number of British troops to be used (90,000) no specific area of attack was identified and the only objective mentioned was the capture of Constantinople. In short

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(2) Ibid., p. 342.
the paper was a masterpiece of impression which neither explored the important issues nor offered solutions to the problems it raised.

A second contribution to the strategic debate was made by Lloyd George in a paper entitled, "Suggestions as to the Military Position". He also put forward the view that stalemate existed on the western front and that the best way of "bringing Germany down [was] by the process of knocking the props under her". He too accepted the remarkable idea that Germany was "propped" up by such countries as Austria-Hungary and Turkey. He considered that Germany could best be defeated by an attack upon Austria-Hungary, in conjunction with the Serbians, the Roumanians and the Greeks through Salonika or by landing on the Dalmatian coast and suggested that 600,000 British troops would be required. A second operation was suggested against Turkey which involved the landing of 100,000 in Syria to cut off the Turkish expedition against the Suez Canal.

Churchill had also written a paper on strategy during the Christmas period. His contribution, however, was merely a reiteration of the Baltic scheme and the preliminary capture of a German island, now identified as Borkum. Details of how these operations were to be carried out followed in a separate paper on December 31st. His conclusions were that, "it will be better to engage Germany on new frontiers, & force her to exhaust her war energy at all points simultaneously along the longest lines the allies can develop." It was perhaps with this strategy in mind that Churchill read Hankey's paper of December 28th. He passed it on to Asquith with the comment, "I have talked to Hankey. We are substantially in agreement and our conclusions are not incompatible. I wanted Gallipoli attacked on the Turkish declaration of war." Thus Churchill was apparently advocating

(1) Lloyd George, "Suggestions as to the Military Position" 31/12/14, Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Record Office, London, c/16/1/7.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Churchill to Asquith 29/12/14, Asquith Papers, 13/242-243.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Churchill to Asquith 31/12/14, Asquith Papers, 13/244.
both the Borkum scheme and the attack on Turkey in order to force Germany
to "exhaust her war energy...along the longest lines the allies can
develop". It should be noted however, that Hankey had not mentioned an
attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula in his paper. This was a purely
Churchillian contribution.

Fisher had also read Hankey's paper. He told him, "The more I think
over your paper the more I like it" and he unfolded a 7 point plan for
victory in the east:

(1) Sir W. Robertson to command the expedition.
(2) 75,000 troops from France and the Indian Corps to be used for the
attack.
(3) The troops should be embarked from Marsailles, ostensibly for Egypt.
(4) Feints should be made at Haifa and Alexandretta and the latter
converted into a real landing.
(5) The main landing to be made at Besika Bay.
(6) The Greeks to land 100,000 men on the Gallipoli Peninsula.
(7) Simultaneously with 5 and 6 the British Fleet to force the Dardanelles.

He concluded, "You must do spade work vigorously with Lloyd George,
Balfour, Crewe, Grey, & the Prime Minister. I will undertake Kitchener &
Winston." Given Churchill's favourable comments on Hankey's paper it is
perhaps surprising to find that Fisher thought Churchill would need to be
convinced of the merits of the Turkish plan. However, it is likely that
Fisher had read Churchill's own memorandum of the 28th advocating action
in the northern area and Churchill had apparently told Fisher at the same
time that he was against action in Turkey on the grounds that "it's too
far from the main theatre of war", which Fisher considered to be 'all
rot!' This apparent conflict in Churchill's views can be resolved.
Churchill clearly regarded his plan for action in the Heligoland Bight
and in the Baltic as paramount and regarded Hankey's plan as secondary
though desirable. In addition a third plan, an attack on Zeebrugge,
continued to attract Churchill's attention. On January 1st. he had
informed French that the navy was "ready to run great risks" to support the
army in the coastal advance. Fisher's self-appointed task that was not

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(1) Fisher to Hankey 2/1/15, Hankey Papers, Public Record Office,
London, Cab. 63/4.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Churchill to French 1/1/15, C.V.3, p. 358.
so much to convince Churchill of the soundness of the Turkish plan but to change his priorities.

It was at this moment that the Russian plea for help arrived. Grey was informed that the Russian position in the Caucasus was threatened by the Turks. "Grand Duke...asked if it would be possible for Lord Kitchener to arrange for a demonstration of some kind against the Turk elsewhere, either naval or military...which would cause Turks...to withdraw some of the forces now acting against Russia."\(^1\) The next day Kitchener asked Churchill if he considered anything could be done to help Russia.\(^2\) Kitchener's own view was that "I do not see that we can do anything that will seriously help the Russians in the Caucasus....We have no troops to send anywhere....The only place that a demonstration might have some effect in stopping reinforcements going East would be the Dardanelles....We shall not be ready for anything big for some months."\(^3\) Before Churchill could consider his own position Fisher passed on to him the "Turkey Plan" as communicated to Hankey the day before. His advocacy of it was enthusiastic, even violent, "I consider the attack on Turkey Holds the Field! - but Only if its Immediate! However, it won't be! - Our Aulic Council will adjourn till the following Thursday fortnight! (N.B. When did we meet last? & What came of it???)"\(^4\) After detailing the military operations which he considered should take place Fisher came to the role of the Royal Navy, "Sturdee forces the Dardanelles at the same time with Majestic class & Canopus class! God Bless him!"\(^5\) Both Kitchener and Fisher had mentioned the Dardanelles as a possible sphere of action, although the two operations were very different, Kitchener's a mere naval demonstration, Fisher's a wildly impractical combination amounting to a separate war.

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(1) Buchanan to Grey 1/1/15, C.V.3, p. 359-60.
(2) Kitchener to Churchill 2/1/15, C.V.3, p. 360.
(3) Kitchener to Churchill 2/1/15, C.V.3, p. 360-1.
(5) Ibid.
With Fisher's and Kitchener's proposals fresh in his mind Churchill attended a Meeting of the Admiralty War Group (Churchill, Fisher, Wilson, Oliver, Bartoleme and Greene (Secretary)). The Russian plea for help was discussed but exactly what passed at the meeting is not known. However, shortly after its conclusion Churchill sent the following telegram with the apparent concurrence of Fisher and Oliver to Admiral Carden, commanding the allied squadron off the Dardanelles:

"Do you consider the forcing of the Dardanelles by ships alone a practicable operation. It is assumed older Battleships fitted with minebumpers would be used preceded by Colliers or other merchant craft as bumpers and sweepers. Importance of results would justify severe loss. Let me know your views."

The nature of the operation mentioned in the telegram is interesting. It was neither a demonstration as requested by the Russians nor a large combined operation as recommended by Fisher, and it had nothing in common with the suggestions made by Hankey and Lloyd George. The operation suggested to Carden by Churchill was nothing less than an attempt to use the navy alone to force one of the belligerents out of the war. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this message was deliberately framed to encourage a positive response for if severe losses were justified what commander would admit that the operation should not be attempted? Churchill later stated that the telegram was cast in such a way to indicate "that action, if possible, would be very desirable (and)...that we should have been very glad if he had had a good plan."

Some historians have held that the wording of the telegram shows that Churchill was determined to attack Turkey at all costs and that this had been his policy since the beginning of the war. However, it was shown that in the early months of the war action at Gallipoli was by no means an "idée fixe" for Churchill but just one of a series of options. That this

(1) Dardanelles Commission - Fisher's Evidence 11/10/16, Q3115, 3117; Oliver's Evidence 5/10/16, Q1772-5, Cab. 19/33.
(2) Churchill to Carden 3/1/15, Adm. 137/96.
(3) Dardanelles Commission - Churchill's Evidence 4/10/16, Q1261, Cab. 19/33.
(4) For example see James, Gallipoli, p. 31.
remained his position, even after his first telegram to Carden, is indicated by the fact that on the same day that this was sent Churchill wrote to Fisher, "All preparations should be made for the capture of Sylt (possibly a code name for Borkum) .... The plans should be aimed at two dates, viz: - March 1st. and April 15th."1 It is obvious from this instruction that the Dardanelles operation was still at this time only one of a number of alternative spheres of action for Churchill. Perhaps his object in writing to Carden in the terms chosen was to make sure that the Admiral produced a plan which would be available if the German Island operation fell through.

Whatever the explanation, Admiralty attention continued to focus on Borkum. On the 4th. Churchill, perhaps after seeing a favourable report from Keyes on the prospects of defending the island after it had been taken,² wrote to Jellicoe, "I am sure that the time has come to seize an oversea base" and went on to give details of a prospective plan.³ On the same day, Richmond was given Churchill's paper on Sylt and ordered to work out the details. He regarded the scheme as "quite mad. The reasons for capturing it are nil, the possibilities about the same. I have never read such an idiotic amateur piece of work."⁴ Fisher was also not convinced of the efficacy of the Borkum operation. He tried to throw doubt on the question of whether Borkum could be held after its capture and urged Churchill to accept Hankey's plan. "The naval advantages of the possession of Constantinople and the getting of wheat from the Black Sea are so overwhelming that I consider Colonel Hankey's plan for Turkish operations vital and imperative and very pressing".⁵ Churchill, remained cautious "I think we had better hear what others have to say about the Turkish plans", he wrote, "before taking a

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1 Churchill to Fisher, Wilson and Oliver 3/1/15, Adm. 137/452.
3 Churchill to Jellicoe 4/1/15, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss 48890.
4 Richmond Diary 4/1/15, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/11.
5 Fisher to Churchill 4/1/15, Churchill Papers 8/177.
decided line. I wd. not grudge 100,000 men because of the great political effects in the Balkan peninsula: but Germany is the foe, & it is bad war to seek cheaper victories & easier antagonists."¹ Thus we have Churchill favouring action in the main theatre and Fisher advocating an attack on the periphery, the exact opposite of what is usually thought to be their respective strategies. In fact at this time Fisher had gone completely cold on the Borkum project. His naval secretary, Captain Crease, told Richmond not to worry over the operation because "the 1st Sea Lord didn't intend to have the Borkum business done...Crease said they can go on getting their plans as much as they like, but Jacky is simply not going to do them in the end."²

Carden's reply to Churchill's telegram arrived on the 5th., "I do not consider Dardanelles can be rushed. They might be forced by extended operations with large number of ships".³ This was at best a grudging admission that under certain circumstances the operation might be attempted. However, Carden had not said that the operation was absolutely impossible and for Churchill this was enough. He was determined to obtain a plan from Carden and he telegraphed back, "Your view is agreed with by high authorities here. Please telegraph in detail what you think could be done by extended operations, what force would be needed and how you consider it should be used."⁴ According to Churchill the "high authorities" mentioned were Jackson and Oliver with whom he discussed the idea of a naval attack at the Dardanelles verbally.⁵ But Carden naturally assumed that Fisher was included.⁶ What Fisher's response to Carden's telegram was is not known. However, on the day it arrived Fisher had warned Churchill against futile naval bombardments on the Belgian coast which "result in nothing as the Army does not take advantage of them."⁷ It is hard to believe then,

¹ Churchill to Fisher 4/1/15, Churchill Papers 8/177.
² Carden to Churchill 5/1/15, Adm. 137/96.
³ Churchill to Carden 6/1/15, in Ibid.
⁴ Dardanelles Commission - Churchill's Evidence 28/9/16, Q1131, Cab. 19/33.
⁵ Ibid. Carden's Evidence, 6/10/16, Q2838.
that Fisher could have shown much enthusiasm for a purely naval bombardment at the Dardanelles. Furthermore, if Fisher agreed with Carden's view (whatever that was) why did not Churchill name Fisher in the telegram instead of using such a vague phrase as "high authorities"?

In fact Jackson's support is also in some doubt. It appears that at about this time, Jackson had a conversation with Churchill concerning a naval attack at the Dardanelles. While deprecating a rush at the Straits Jackson seemed to agree with a step-by-step approach. However, he apparently also stated that troops would be needed to complete the naval attack and to occupy Constantinople.¹

Certainly a memorandum written by Jackson on the 5th., but not seen by Churchill until after the high authorities telegram had been sent, confirms that Jackson had grave doubts concerning Carden's plan. Jackson calculated that an attempt to rush the Straits would result in the loss of six out of a squadron of eight ships with the other two severely damaged. A second squadron following the first closely might get through with much less damage but he thought a methodical approach would yield better results. He warned however that such a method would require the expenditure of a large amount of ammunition, would mean a great amount of wear on the guns, and would also entail some losses,² and that "to arrive off Constantinople with depleted magazines and ships almost out of action from gun fire, and with shore batteries still intact both in front and rear, would be a fatal error, and tend to annul the effect of the appearance of the squadron, as soon as its real state was known."³ It therefore appears that any support that Jackson gave to the Carden proposal was of a highly qualified nature.

Oliver's opinion at this time is unknown although later he became

¹Dardanelles Commission - Churchill's Evidence 28/9/16, Q1260-5, Cab. 19/33.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
a supporter of the plan. But it seems unlikely that any naval
authority had expressed marked enthusiasm for a naval attack on the
Dardanelles. Yet by not questioning anyone too deeply on what their
actual opinions were, Churchill was rapidly creating a situation where he
could claim that a substantial body of naval opinion supported the concept.

In fact by this time the original raison d'être of the naval attack
had disappeared. On January 3rd. the British liaison officer with the
Russian Army, General Hanbury-Williams, told Kitchener that the
immediate danger of a Russian reverse in the Caucasus had passed. Then
on the 6th. Reuter published news of a big Russian victory over the Turks
in that region. This event made no impact on the Admiralty or the War
Office and preparations continued to be made "to relieve the pressure on
Russia in the Caucasus.

The events of the next few days were to show that Churchill was by
no means single-minded in his advocacy of an attack on the Dardanelles at
this stage. At a War Council meeting on the 7th. he spoke in favour of an
attack on Zeebrugge as advocated by Sir John French. When this plan
was vetoed by Kitchener, Churchill switched discussion to the capture
of a German island and with Fisher's support (had he reversed his apparent
decision of January 5th. "not to do" the operation or was he trying to
humour Churchill in the knowledge that the plan would probably break down
at the planning stage?) obtained the War Council's approval for the
Admiralty to proceed with the detailed planning of the attack.

At a further meeting on the 8th. Churchill produced yet another
alternative plan. He asked if Holland could not be induced to enter the
war. This would far outweigh the advantages of action in the Mediterranean
and would provide Britain with an island base near Germany without fighting.

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(1) Hanbury-Williams to Kitchener 3/1/15, Kitchener Papers, Pro 30/57/67.
(3) War Council Minutes 7/1/15, Cab. 42/1/11.
(4) Ibid., 8/1/15, Cab. 42/1/12.
No solutions were offered to the not inconsiderable problem of how to convince the Dutch that the German Army, which surrounded them on three sides, could be offset by naval operations.

Perhaps to divert Churchill's attention from the Dardanelles and Borkum Fisher now enthusiastically took up the "Holland Plan". He wrote to Churchill on the 9th.

"I dont think that you at all realize that your Dutch project will sweep the board ...All other schemes will be swallowed up by it & it will mean The End Of The War! provided we put our shoulders to the wheel & [prepare] our Transport arrangements & their convoy for 750,000 men being landed at Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and all other spots (however small) along the Dutch coast - Land Everywhere! At Once."

Churchill needed little encouragement. He now spoke of "bringing in" Holland as the "greatest hope" in the northern theatre and cautioned, "It is not until all the Northern possibilities are exhausted that I wd. look to the S of Europe as a field for the profitable employment of our expanding milty forces. But plans shd. be worked out for every contingency." The last sentence probably explains why Churchill was pressing ahead with the Dardanelles plan at this point.

Churchill certainly made sure that there would be no lack of plans for on the same day that he spoke of Holland as the "greatest hope" he wrote to Jellicoe outlining (yet again) a plan for the capture of a German island.

Carden's plan arrived on the 11th. It was divided into four stages.

"A. Indirect bombardment of forts, reduction completed by direct bombardment at decisive range; torpedo tubes at the entrance and a gun commanding minefield destroyed; minefield cleared. B. Battleships preceded by mine-sweepers enter straits working up till position reached from which battery No. 8 can be silenced. C. Severe bombardment of forts by Battle

(2) Churchill to French 11/1/15, C.V.5, p. 401-2.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Churchill to Jellicoe 11/1/15, Jellicoe Papers, Add.Miss 48890.
(5) Carden to Churchill 11/1/15, Adm. 137/96.
Cruisers from Gaba Tepe spotted from battleships, reduction completed by direct fire at decisive range. D. Battleships preceded by sweepers making way up towards Narrows. Forts 22 23 24 first bombarded from Gaba Tepe spotting for 22 by seaplanes then direct fire. Sweep minefields in Narrows, the fort at Nagara reduced by direct fire battle force proceeds to Marmara preceded by mine-sweepers."¹ He added that the expenditure of ammunition would be "large", that frequent reconnaissances by seaplanes would be indispensable, that the force required was 12 battleships, 3 battle-cruisers, 3 light cruisers, 16 destroyers, 6 submarines, 12 minesweepers including 4 fleet sweepers, 6 colliers, 2 supply and ammunition ships and 4 seaplanes. With this force he thought, "Might do it all in a month about."²

Churchill claimed later to be much impressed with this plan. He described Carden's message as "The most important telegram. Here was the Admiral, who had been for weeks sitting off the Dardanelles, who presumably had been turning this thing over in his mind...who produces a plan and a detailed plan and a novel plan, and this plan found immediate acceptance by the Chief of the Staff, and by Sir Henry Jackson."³ Both Oliver⁴ and (with qualifications) Jackson⁵ testified that they thought Carden's plan worthy a try at this stage. But was the plan as impressive as Churchill stated to the Dardanelles Commission?

On examination, Carden's "plan" is seen to be hardly a plan at all but merely a statement of the order in which the Dardanelles defences were to be reduced. The details of how this was to be achieved were sketchy and the problem of the guns and the minefields protecting them was hardly mentioned. Yet the Admiralty War Staff accepted the basis of the plan without question. Why they did this is hard to explain. There is some

(¹) Carden to Churchill 11/1/15, Adm. 137/96.
(²) Ibid.
(³) Dardanelles Commission - Churchill's Evidence 28/9/16, Q1140, Cab. 19/33.
(⁴) Ibid. Oliver's Evidence 5/10/16, Q1814-5.
(⁵) Ibid. Jackson's Evidence 6/10/16, Q2110-1.
evidence to suggest that opinion at the Admiralty had undergone a recent change on the question of whether ships could fight forts. In a report completed just before the war, the then Commander-in-Chief, Sir George Callaghan, suggested that armoured ships could demolish forts. In 1913 Jackson had concluded that 9.2" guns based on shore (typical of those at the Dardanelles) could not stand up to an attack by battleships carrying 12" guns. Oliver stated that he had been impressed by how easily the Germans had demolished the Antwerp forts. Significantly, Godfrey, the member of Carden's staff largely responsible for the plan, was also influenced by the Antwerp analogy.

However, the proposition that ships could fight forts was not as simple as it appeared. In Carden's plan the ships were to attack the forts outside the range of the Turkish guns. In this situation a very efficient spotting force was required, for the long ranges involved meant that the fall of shot could not be seen from the ships. It also required a large amount of ammunition for the percentage of hits that could be expected on the guns at those distances was no more than 2 or 3%. Moreover ships fighting forts was not really the crucial problem at the Dardanelles. For the ships to completely dominate the forts and to ensure that they were totally demolished it would have been necessary for Carden to attack from close range. This required that the minefields protecting the forts be swept and to enable this to be done either a force capable of sweeping in the face of heavy fire from the batteries protecting the minefields was needed, or some method devised of destroying the batteries so that the minefields could be swept at leisure. A vital question then was whether the ships could destroy these batteries as well as the forts. There is no

(1) Dardanelles Commission - Sir A. Wilson's Evidence, 24/10/16, Q4690, Cab. 19/33.
(2) Appendix 1 to "Coast Defences of the United Kingdom and the Question of a Coast Watch" - Joint War Office Admiralty Report 25/2/14, Cab. 38/27/19.
(3) Dardanelles Commission - Oliver's Evidence 5/10/16, Q1868, Cab. 19/33.
evidence that these additional factors were considered by the Staff, even though they had the example of Hood's experience off the Belgian coast before them. It will be remembered that in that operation many of the same problems to be encountered at the Dardanelles were experienced and Hood's conclusion was that for ships to be effective against land-based artillery the individual guns had to be hit and that this was impossible to achieve, even given extensive periods of firing.

Did the Staff or Churchill perhaps feel that the plan carried particular weight as coming from Carden? It seems hardly likely. Carden had not been Churchill's original choice to command the squadron at the Dardanelles. He had wanted to appoint Admiral Limpus, the head of the British naval mission to Turkey, a man familiar with the Dardanelles defences and possessing intimate knowledge of the Turkish Navy. This appointment had been vetoed by the Foreign Office on the advice of the British ambassador to Turkey on the extraordinary grounds that the appointment would offend the Turks. Churchill protested at this move but was over-ruled. Thus Carden, the Superintendent of the Malta dockyard, got the job. Now this position was not the usual stepping stone to high office within the navy, although Churchill later claimed that Carden had narrowly missed a senior appointment at sea and denied that he had been shelved. There is no evidence to suggest that Carden's career had in any way been exceptional and as late as December 23rd. Churchill had written, "As for Carden - he has never even commanded a cruiser Sqn & I am not aware of anything that he has done wh. is in any way remarkable." Thus it seems probably that it was the chance inaugurating a naval operation rather than the fact that Carden was the author of the plan that had impressed Churchill.

(1) Churchill to Limpus 9/9/14, Adm. 116/1336.
(2) See Mallet to Grey 10/9/14, in ibid.; Mallet to Grey 11/9/14, Grey Papers, F.O. 800/80.
(4) Dardanelles Commission - Churchill's Evidence 28/9/16, Q1327-8, Cab. 19/33.
Fisher might have thought slightly higher of Carden. He told the
Dardanelles Commission that Carden had "a very good reputation".1 Also
he had wanted to bring Carden home in December to command a battle squadron
in the Grand Fleet, a very senior appointment.2 On that occasion,
however, Churchill had reminded him that "You were vy angry with [Carden]...
some time ago about circling Malta with his 3 submarines."3

Would events have developed differently if Limpus had obtained the
command? There is evidence that Churchill thought little more of Limpus
than he did of Carden4 but Limpus was a man with some independence of mind,
who as early as September 1914 had expressed a decided opinion against
action at the Dardanelles by the navy alone and in favour of a large
combined operation.5 Thus although Churchill would no doubt have tried
the same tactics of pressure on Limpus that were successful on Carden the
result might have been different. On the other hand Limpus' knowledge
of the Dardanelles defences was passed on to Carden before Carden had
formulated his plan so nothing was lost in that direction.6

According to one authority Carden had very little influence on the
making of the plan. Keyes has suggested that the plan was drawn up by two
members of Carden's staff Ramsey and Godfrey. Later in the campaign Keyes
wrote to his wife, "He [Carden] owed every thing to them (Ramsey and Godfrey) -
there never would have been a Dardanelles, but for those two who after weeks
of fights...- he had no ambition of any sort - finally got him to say it
could be done - then he retired to a novel and really took little more
interest."7 This view is reinforced by a handwritten document in
Godfrey's papers in which a plan for forcing the Dardanelles by ships alone,
strikingly similar to that submitted by Carden, is outlined.8

(1) Dardanelles Commission - Fisher's Evidence 11/10/16, Q3169, Cab. 19/35.
(2) Churchill to Fisher 23/12/14, Churchill Papers 8/177.
(3) Ibid.
(5) Note By Rear-Admiral Limpus On The Situation Inside The Dardanelles
21/9/14, Adm. 116/3491.
(6) The Note quoted above was handed to Carden by Limpus on 21/9/14. It
contained a detailed description of the Dardanelles defences and the
steps the Germans were taking to improve them.
(7) Keyes to his wife 2/7/15, Keyes Papers 2/13.
(8) Untitled Paper in the Godfrey Papers, 69/33/1.
On January 15th, Churchill decided to put Carden's plan before the War Council. It is probable that he did so because no other operation seemed possible at this stage. Jellicoe's last communication on Borkum had been decidedly pessimistic. Zeebrugge had been shelved by the War Council. No one knew how to bring in Holland. In short, Carden's plan which seemed to have some sort of support at the Admiralty appeared to hold out the only chance for action. Whether any action at all on the part of the Fleet was desirable or even possible at this stage of the war was not considered by Churchill.

The War Council met on the 13th. The Zeebrugge operation was re-introduced by French but after a lengthy discussion it was again decided to postpone it. Churchill then unveiled Carden's plan. He said it was based on the fact that the old guns of the Dardanelles forts were outranged by the guns of the warships. "The Admiralty were studying the question and believed that a plan could be made for systematically reducing all the forts within a few weeks. Once the forts were reduced the minefields would be cleared and the Fleet would proceed up to Constantinople and destroy the Goeben. They would have nothing to fear from field guns or rifles, which would be merely an inconvenience." It is noticeable that Churchill did not go into the details of what would happen after the Goeben was sunk. Would Constantinople surrender? Would the Gallipoli Peninsula be evacuated? Would troops be needed to occupy those positions?

These questions were not considered. In their enthusiasm for the Churchill-Carden plan, offering as it did the prospect of a victory without the enormous casualties being suffered on the Western Front, no one on the War Council had stopped to consider that even if the Fleet was successful troops would be needed in reasonably large numbers to garrison

(2) War Council Minutes 13/1/15, Cab. 42/1/16.
(3) Ibid.
the captured territory. However, if the substance of the Jackson-Churchill conversation of January 4th or 5th is correct, then Churchill must have been aware of this need and it seems possible that he deliberately concealed this fact from his colleagues in order to get the operation accepted. For the mere mention of troops must have raised questions as to their availability and Kitchener's opinion that there were no troops to land anywhere was well known. The failure of the War Council to investigate this point was to lead them into a much larger operation than they would have been willing to contemplate at the time.

But so far from being sceptical of the Churchill plan the War Council enthusiastically endorsed it and gave the Admiralty permission to prepare for its implementation. At the same meeting they also set up a sub-committee to consider alternative theatres in which British troops could be used in the event of the stalemate on the Western Front being prolonged into the spring.¹ This was a surprising move. Only a week before Kitchener had stated that the most desirable action Britain could take outside Europe was a combined operation at the Dardanelles and he had lamented the fact that no troops were available.² Yet here was a sub-committee set up to find a role for Britain's future armies and no one mentioned the Dardanelles as their possible destination or suggested that the planning of the naval attack should perhaps be deferred in case the sub-committee did decide to use the new armies against Turkey.

At the Admiralty, planning for the naval attack now got under way. Fisher suggested to Oliver that the Queen Elizabeth, the most powerful battleship in the world, should test her 15" guns at the Dardanelles.³ Percy Scott, the gunnery expert, was offered the command of the ship by Churchill but turned it down on the grounds that Carden's plan was an

¹ War Council Minutes 13/1/15, Cab. 42/1/16.
² Ibid., 8/1/15, Cab. 42/1/12.
³ Fisher to Oliver 12/1/15, Oliver Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, OLV/5.
impossible task for the older, inefficient ships which would make up the bulk of the squadron. Undeterred by this setback, Churchill ordered that the fleet for the bombardment be collected at once. He also instructed an officer of the War Staff to analyse Carden's proposals "in order to show exactly what guns the ships will have to face at each point". He had now clearly decided that the operation was to go forward for he added, "this officer is to assume that the principle is settled, and all that is necessary is to estimate the force required".

After Carden's plan had been received by the Admiralty, Churchill had asked Jackson to make a study of it and report his conclusions. Jackson reported to Oliver on January 15th. Of Carden's proposals he wrote, "Concur generally in his plans. Our previous appreciations of the situation differed only in small details." He thought that the warships already at the Dardanelles would be adequate to undertake the clearing of the defences at the entrance. For the second phase he recommended that the minesweepers be despatched at once and that they clear the minefields at night under cover of the guns of the squadron. Also in this phase an indirect attack on the Narrows forts might be tried from off Gaba Tepe. Echoing Carden, he warned that a large amount of ammunition would be required (3,000 rounds per gun) and suggested that the first phase of the operation "be approved at once, as the experience gained would be useful". This was a particularly ambiguous document. Although Jackson "concurred generally" in Carden's plans and gave details of how the first two stages were to be carried out, he only definitely recommended that the first stage be attempted. Perhaps Jackson realized at this early stage that the operation would be a difficult one and he was trying to hedge his bets in case of failure. This interpretation is

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(2) Churchill to Fisher and Oliver 13/1/15, C.V.3, p. 412-3.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Jackson - "Remarks On Vice-Admiral Carden's Proposals As to Operations In Dardanelles", 15/1/15, Adm. 116/3491.
(5) Ibid.
reinforced by Jackson's evidence to the Dardanelles Commission. There, he claimed that both he and Carden had only agreed that "there was a possibility of getting some ships through but [that] they would be bottled up in the Sea of Marmora when they got through and [that] ...would be a mad thing to do."¹ Earlier, in answer to the question, "Did you think it was a feasible operation by the Fleet alone?", he answered, "No, I never did; I wrote that quite plainly".² In fact Jackson had been anything but plain on the vital question of whether he thought the operation feasible. It is possible that he supported the naval attack on the technical question of getting through the straits but thought that once this was done no great results would be obtained by the Fleet alone. But if this was his position he never made it clear and his support could be claimed by both advocates and opponents of the naval attack, depending on which section of his papers they chose to emphasize.

What views were held by other members of the Admiralty War Group towards the Carden-Churchill plan? Unfortunately few members of the War Group committed to paper their opinions of the plan during this period. The historian therefore often has to fall back on their evidence given to the Dardanelles Commission, held after the operation had failed. Obviously no member of the Admiralty would have wanted to be identified too closely with the inception of the operation. Their evidence is therefore often so contradictory as to defy analysis. A case in point is that of Churchill's naval secretary, Commander de Bartoleme. He testified that he was not generally in favour of making the naval attack without military cooperation but that he thought the Carden plan worth trying³ and that it stood a good chance of success.⁴ It is hardly possible to work out from this evidence what advice he gave to Churchill at the time.

¹ Dardanelles Commission - Jackson's Evidence 6/10/16, Q2084, Cab. 19/33.
² Ibid., Q2051.
³ Ibid., Bartoleme's Evidence, 5/10/16, Q1584-5.
⁴ Ibid., 25/10/16, Q 5341.
Oliver, the C.O.S., seems to have been the one authority at the Admiralty who was consistently in favour of the naval attack. In his unpublished autobiography he stated that he thought Churchill was right to go ahead with the operation.\(^1\) At some time during January he apparently expressed a wish to command the squadron at the Dardanelles.\(^2\) Oliver was strongly opposed to operations against Borkum or in the Baltic\(^3\) and may have seized on the Dardanelles plan as a less dangerous alternative. Finally he made no attempt to conceal from the Dardanelles Commissioners that he approved generally of Carden's proposals.\(^4\)

Sir Arthur Wilson's opinion is harder to establish. He concurred in Jackson's first appreciation on January 5th, in which Jackson seemed to favour a methodical bombardment.\(^5\) However, Wilson's work at the Admiralty had almost exclusively been involved with the preparation of plans to bombard and capture certain German islands, particularly Heligoland. All of these plans involved the use of troops and this perhaps indicated Wilson's preference. However, he also told the Dardanelles Commission that he thought an attack on the outer forts worth trying provided it was broken off if resistance proved too great.\(^6\) It is quite possible then, that he expressed no firm view against at least the first phase of Carden's plan.

The Junior Sea Lords were outside the War Group and took no part in debates on strategy. None of them seemed to possess any expertise in this field and there is no particular reason why they should have been consulted on Carden's plan. In fact, Fisher, who had excluded them from all areas involving fleet movements, would hardly have tolerated their interference in strategic matters. The Second Sea Lord, Hamilton, told the Dardanelles Commission that he gave a verbal opinion against the naval

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1. Oliver Sir Henry - Draft Autobiography, p.147, Oliver Papers, OLV/12.
2. Lady Richmond - Diary 20/1/15, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/17.
3. Ibid., 3/1/15.
4. Dardanelles Commission - Oliver's Evidence 5/10/16, Q1814, Cab. 19/33.
attack, but as will be shown this was not to remain his view throughout the operation.¹ For what it is worth, Tudor, the Fourth Sea Lord, also told the Commission that he warned Churchill that the naval plan would fail.²

The only other person inside the Admiralty whose opinion is known is Richmond. Richmond was one of the few naval intellectuals of his generation, a man with a penetrating and critical mind. Yet he is reported as saying that he thought Carden's plan was "excellent", although he too was to change his opinion before the operation began.³

Outside the Admiralty, Admiral Bayly, of whom Churchill thought highly, was strongly of the opinion that the Dardanelles could be forced.⁴ Jellicoe's opinion was never invited, a staggering omission, considering that he occupied the most important command afloat. He claimed to have always thought the naval attempt unsound.⁵

What of Churchill's view? Certainly the assertion that the wording of his first telegram to Carden showed that he had already made up his mind to attack the Dardanelles using ships alone, has to be modified. In early January he was cautious about an attack on Turkey and reluctant to abandon his schemes for action in the north. His opinion seemed to change after the arrival of Carden's plan on January 11th. Whether Churchill considered that Carden's plan was novel enough to change the situation or whether by that time he was convinced that none of the other alternative operations would get past the planning stage, is not known. What is evident is that by January 15th. Churchill seemed to have a new found determination that the Dardanelles operation would take place.

The most important figure in relation to naval operations at the Admiralty was Fisher, who was responsible for planning and authorizing all operations.

¹ Dardanelles Commission - Hamilton's Evidence 12/10/16, Q3888 and 3895, Cab. 19/33.
² Ibid., Tudor's Evidence 10/10/16, Q2917.
³ Lady Richmond Diary 14/1/15, Richmond Papers, RIC. 1/17.
⁴ Bayly to the Admiralty 8/1/15, Adm. 137/1089.
⁵ Jellicoe - A Reply to Criticism, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss.49041.
undertaken by the navy. If he disagreed with an operation, all other opinions would count for little, for theoretically only he could give the necessary orders to the Fleet. The problem of divining Fisher's opinion of the naval attack during this period is even more difficult than is the case for the other Admirals, for it is known that Fisher's evidence to the Dardanelles Commission was concocted with Churchill to produce the least damaging effect on their respective reputations. Occasionally, under cross-examination Fisher was drawn away from his prepared story and some of his statements have a ring of truth but obviously his evidence has to be treated with caution. What Fisher's early view of a purely naval operation at the Dardanelles was is not known. Presumably he could not have expressed violent disagreement with Churchill's first enquiries to Carden or they would not have taken place. Perhaps he felt that as with Churchill's Borkum investigations the plan would be found to be practically impossible. To the Dardanelles Commission Fisher stated that in these early days he stood rather aloof from the question leaving the matter in the hands of Jackson and Oliver. Certainly there is hardly a written comment by Fisher on the Dardanelles in the first ten days of January. But it was noticed that on January 9th. he took up Churchill's "Holland Plan" with alacrity and this may have been an indication that he was uneasy with a naval operation at Gallipoli. However, a few days later he made no comment on a memorandum by Churchill which pointed out that Carden's proposals could be implemented without weakening the Fleet in Home Waters, a significant omission considering that this was to be Fisher's main criticism of the operation later on. Furthermore, it was Fisher who first suggested adding the Queen Elizabeth to Carden's force, hardly the act of an opponent of the scheme. Under cross examination at

(1) See, for example, Churchill to Fisher 30/8/16, telling him that he has completed his statement & suggesting that they meet and "discuss particular points and documents" C.V.3, p. 1550, and an undated note in the Churchill Papers, 8/178.

(2) Dardanelles Commission - Fisher's Evidence 11/10/16, Q3201-3, Cab. 19/33.

the Dardanelles Commission Fisher admitted "I really thought that we
might get through, through the possible ineptitude of the Turks1...the
way I looked at it was that you could cut your loss at any moment".2
Here then was another half-hearted opinion that the operation might work.

An attempt should now be made to sum up Admiralty opinion on the
Dardanelles. Taken overall, it can be seen that the quality of advice
given to Churchill by his professional colleagues was lamentably poor.
Not one of them was prepared to state unequivocally that a purely naval
operation against land fortifications was unsound. This criticism
particularly applies to Fisher who had the stature, the experience and
countless opportunities to make his views known to Churchill in the
clearest terms. Also his relationship with Churchill was much closer
than was usual between a first Sea Lord and his political chief.
However, Fisher continued to equivocate and constantly shifted the grounds
of his objection to the operation. In short, although it is reasonably
clear the Fisher and most of Churchill's advisers were ambivalent about
the naval attack, by not speaking out plainly about the difficulties of the
operation they enabled Churchill, the only real enthusiast for the plan,
to say to the War Council on January 13th. that the Admiralty believed
that Carden's proposals could lead to success.

For his part, Churchill should have realized the ambivalence of the
support given to the naval attack by his advisers. Jackson's memoranda
are particularly good examples of hedging on vital issues. Whether
Churchill needed a success to salvage his flagging reputation, whether
his inability to contemplate a further period of inactivity at sea led
him to ride roughshod over the doubts of his naval advisers, or whether
in his enthusiasm for the Carden plan he grasped only those positive
aspects of their advice is not clear. What is evident is that he should

(1) Dardanelles Commission - Fisher's Evidence 11/10/16, Q3148, Cab.19/35.
(2) Ibid., Q3124.
have proceeded with much more caution and taken more care to find out exactly what views his advisers, and particularly Fisher, held.

The remaining two weeks of January were characterized at the Admiralty by the continuing preparations for the naval attack and by an increasing reluctance on the part of Fisher that the attack should take place at all. On the 14th. Churchill wrote to Carden telling him that his plan had been accepted by the War Council. Churchill then set about informing Britain's allies about the forthcoming attack. The French were the first to be told. They were asked to contribute a squadron of battleships to the bombarding force and informed that the War Office were considering the occupation of Alexandretta as a subsidiary operation. The latter piece of information caused concern in Paris. Alexandretta was in Syria, an area considered by the French to be within their sphere of influence. The French Minister of Marine was therefore despatched to London to see Churchill. An agreement was soon reached. The French would contribute the battleships required by the British and cede the command in the Eastern Mediterranean to Carden. In return the French were given the naval command off Syria and were guaranteed participation in any landing at Alexandretta. In fact this operation was beginning to diminish in importance and the French were told by Churchill that Kitchener did not see his way clear to fix any precise date for the expedition. Little more was heard about landing at Alexandretta. Thus the operation that was to have served as a diversion in the event of the rebuff at the Dardanelles was quietly discarded. And although Churchill had once told Kitchener that the landing was vital to avoid the appearance of a serious defeat, he now acquiesced in the demise of the operation without a protest.

The Russians were the next to be told of the scope of the operation.

(1) Churchill to Carden 14/1/15, Adm. 137/98.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Churchill to Kitchener n.d., Kitchener Papers, Pro. 30/57/72.
Churchill invited their cooperation "by naval action at the mouth of the Bosphorus, & by having troops ready to seize any advantage... (although) it wd. probably be better to defer Russian action until the outer forts of the Dardanelles have been destroyed, so that if failure shd. occur at the outset, it will not have the appearance of a serious reverse. But it is our intention to press the matter to a conclusion." This communication is notable for two things. First, it shows that Churchill was not unaware of the need for troops to be present to "seize any advantage". Second, it indicates that in Churchill's mind at least the idea of breaking off the attack if difficulties arose was receding.

In the matter of Russian naval and military aid Churchill was to be disappointed. A few days later the Grand Duke informed the British that in view of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's inferiority to the Turkish navy no naval action could be contemplated. Nor could troops be moved from the main theatre to threaten Constantinople.

Meanwhile, Carden had been formulating his requirements: 3,000 rounds of ammunition per gun for the main armament (agreed to by Jackson), two 4 to 6" howitzers for each of the old battle ships and an appropriate number of minesweepers.

Although he approved formally of most of these demands, Fisher viewed with increasing apprehension the growing list of Carden's requirements. The first occasion on which he criticized the operation in writing seems to have been in a letter to Jellicoe on January 19th., in which he said, "And now the Cabinet have decided on taking the Dardanelles solely with the Navy, using 15 battleships and 32 other vessels, and keeping out there three battle cruisers and a flotilla of

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(1) Churchill to Grand Duke Nicholas 19/1/15, Grey Papers, F.O. 800/75.
(2) Buchanan to Grey 25/1/15, in Ibid.
(3) Carden to the Admiralty n.d., Adm. 137/96.
(4) Memorandum by Jackson 26/1/15, in Ibid.
(5) Carden to Churchill 15/1/15, in Ibid.
(6) Admiralty Memorandum 27/1/15, Adm. 137/1090.
(7) The orders for the minesweepers were marked "approve,F", Adm. 137/1090.
destroyers - all urgently required at the decisive theatre at home! There is only one way out, and that is to resign! But you say no, which simply means I am a consenting party to what I absolutely disapprove - I don't agree with one single step taken."¹ Two days later he wrote "This Dardanelles operation, decided upon by the Cabinet, in its taking away Queen Elizabeth, Indefatigable and Inflexible, and Blenheim, with a flotilla of destroyers arranged to have been brought home, is a serious interference with our imperative needs in Home waters, and I've fought against it 'tooth and nail'....I just abominate the Dardanelles operation, unless a great change is made and it is settled to be made a military operation with 200,000 men in conjunction with the Fleet. I believe that Kitchener is coming now to this sane view of the matter."²

It is difficult to know what should be made of these outbursts. Rather than disagreeing with "every single step taken" Fisher had personally approved of the number of battle-ships to be allotted to Carden, had himself suggested the addition of the Queen Elizabeth and counter-signed most of the orders and requisitions for materials which passed between the Admiralty and Carden. Obviously something had happened between the 13th. and the 19th. to make Fisher violently opposed to the naval attack. Perhaps the lurking doubts he always seemed to have about it came to the surface as the scope of the operation become apparent. Perhaps, in agreeing to the initial proposal, he thought that somehow troops would be made available but by mid-January he had become convinced that this would not be the case. The violent change in Fisher's stand certainly shows signs of mental instability, the result of the enormous pressure which the Admiralty was placing on a man of 74 years.

It is possible that if Fisher had written to Churchill in terms similar to those he used to Jellicoe the naval attack would have stopped there. However, he chose to approach the subject in correspondence to

(2) Fisher to Jellicoe 21/1/15, C.V.3, p. 436.
to the First Lord in a much more oblique manner. He wrote to Churchill on the 20th. complaining of the weakness of the Grand Fleet in destroyers and later the same day he asked that the destroyer flotilla at the Dardanelles be returned home. Churchill tried to persuade Fisher that various changes in the distribution of destroyers in Home Waters would solve the problem but Fisher was not convinced and matters came to a head on the 25th. when Fisher announced that he would not attend the War Council scheduled for the 28th. and submitted a paper on the naval situation for Churchill to circulate to his colleagues. The key passages of this paper suggested that the only justification for coastal bombardments was to force a decision at sea and no operation that did not contribute to this end (which obviously the Dardanelles operation did not) should be undertaken. He considered that "Even the older ships should not be risked, for they cannot be lost without losing men, and they form our only reserve behind the Grand Fleet," and the paper concluded, "Being already in possession of all that a powerful fleet can give a country, we should continue quietly to enjoy the advantage without dissipating our strength in operations that cannot improve the position." Fisher had now made it clear that he was opposed to the Dardanelles operation but once again he made his objections more in terms of the strength of the Grand Fleet than by producing a reasoned critique of the naval attack. Churchill refused to circulate the paper. Instead he wrote a reply easily proving that the margin of the Grand Fleet over the High Sea Fleet had greatly widened since the beginning of the war. He also suggested that the two papers be shown to Asquith in the presence of himself and Fisher before the War Council meeting of the 28th.

(1) Fisher to Churchill 20/1/15, Churchill Papers 8/177.
(2) Ibid.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Churchill to Fisher 27/1/15, Cab. 42/1/24.
Churchill also reminded Fisher that he had assented to the operation "so far as I am concerned there can be no withdrawal without good reason". Assuming that Churchill was determined to embark on some operation he had compelling reasons for holding Fisher to his earlier "concurrence" for it was by now even less likely that either the Borkum or Zeebrugge operations would be attempted or Holland intervene. Concerning Borkum, Churchill had received two more papers deprecating his plan from Jellicoe and Richmond. In relation to Zeebrugge, Kitchener had learned from the French Minister of War, Millerand, that Joffre was opposed to the idea and then French told Churchill that if the attack took place at all it would have to be on a greatly reduced scale.

Asquith met with Churchill and Fisher on the morning of the 28th. According to Churchill, Asquith said of the two operations to which Fisher was opposed, he (Asquith) thought Zeebrugge was not worth an argument but that "the Dardanelles was very important and on the whole he thought it was an operation that should be undertaken. Lord Fisher said 'well it is very important, very important and with great political advantages' and so on, and then we got up and went down to the War Council." Asquith believed that Fisher had withdrawn his opposition to the naval attack at this meeting but Churchill's evidence says nothing about a firm decision being reached by Fisher on this point.

Given that Fisher's paper was not circulated beforehand, Churchill is often criticized for deliberately misleading the Council. The details of this meeting are therefore important. At the War Council Churchill informed the members that he had been in touch with the French and the

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(3) Richmond Diary 19/1/15, Richmond Papers, RIC 1/12.
(4) Memorandum by Lord Esher 22/1/15, Kitchener Papers, Pro. 30/57/57.
(5) Dardanelles Commission - Churchill's Evidence 28/9/16, Q1184, Cab. 19/33.
Russians and that preparations were in hand to begin the naval attack in mid-February. "He asked if the War Council attached importance to this operation, which undoubtedly involved some risks?"  

At this point Fisher interjected. He said "that he had understood that this question would not be raised to-day. The Prime Minister was well aware of his own views in regard to it."  

Here was a clear indication to the War Council that Fisher was not happy with the naval attack but none of the members asked him to explain his views more fully. In reply to Fisher Asquith then said that the operation could hardly be left in abeyance in view of the preparations which had been made.  

Fisher then left the table, followed by Kitchener. Fisher told Kitchener that he intended to resign but Kitchener said that his duty to the country was to continue in office and with some reluctance Fisher returned to the council table.  

According to Fisher "everybody" noticed this incident, "there was a pause in the proceedings - a collapse of everything".  

However Balfour, Haldane, and Asquith all testified that they had not noticed the incident at all.  

When the formal discussion resumed Kitchener, Balfour and Grey all spoke out strongly for the operation, Balfour and Grey in particular claiming that the operation would have a decisive effect on the Balkan states and would influence favourably the situation in Russia.  

Churchill then closed proceedings by stating that the ultimate aim of the navy was still to gain access to the Baltic but that the necessary preliminary step, the capture of a German island would have to be postponed until the special craft being prepared for the operation had been completed.  

Although this announcement could have been made as a sop to Fisher, the

(1) War Council Minutes 28/1/15, Cab. 42/1/26.  
(2) Ibid.  
(3) Ibid.  
(5) Dardanelles Commission - Fisher's Evidence 11/10/16, Q3196, Cab. 19/33.  
(6) Ibid., Balfour's Evidence, Q4179.  
(7) Ibid., Haldane's Evidence, Q4493.  
(8) Ibid., Asquith's Evidence, Q5481.  
(9) War Council Minutes 28/1/15, Cab. 42/1/26.  
(10) Ibid.
construction of the special craft would indicate that Churchill had by no means given up the Borkum operation.

The vital question to be asked in relation to this meeting is, did Churchill, by not circulating Fisher's paper of the 25th, mislead his fellow council members? Of the civilian members who attended the meeting Asquith, Churchill and Kitchener obviously knew that the First Sea Lord was unhappy with the naval plan. Hankey also knew, for he had helped Fisher draft his paper of January 25th. Of the remainder, Crewe, Lloyd George, and Balfour all told the Dardanelles Commission that they were aware that Fisher had reservations about the operation. In addition, Hankey had warned Balfour that Fisher often disagreed with statements made by Churchill at the War Council. This leaves Grey and Haldane, both senior members of the Government. Both men however were close to Asquith and it is hard to believe that no hint of Fisher's opinions could have reached them. Moreover, Grey had been convinced since the beginning of the war that to win over the Balkan neutrals the allies had to become militarily active in the area. About this time he wrote to Churchill, "The sooner they [Carden's plans] can be put in execution the better as some striking offensive is necessary to counteract the effect, that the presence of German troops...is having in the Balkans." It is interesting that Grey thought that a group of old battleships could offset the presence of the German Army but it is obvious that someone so anxious for action to back up a failing diplomacy, would not be likely to quibble because of the vague doubts of the First Sea Lord.

In any case Grey and Haldane were only two out of ten. Eight members of the War Council knew of Fisher's views and chose to ignore them. Why they did this is not clear. Perhaps they thought that Fisher did not

(2) Dardanelles Commission - Crewe's Evidence 25/10/16, Q5444, Cab. 19/33.
(3) Ibid. Lloyd George's Evidence 30/10/16, Q5676.
(4) Ibid. Balfour's Evidence 13/10/16, Q4144.
(5) Hankey to Balfour 25/1/15, Balfour Papers, Add/Mss. 49703.
(6) Grey, Twenty Five Years V.2, p. 154.
object to the operation as such but preferred action elsewhere. This was certainly the view of Lloyd George who said that he regarded the Dardanelles operation as much less risky than the northern schemes supposedly espoused by Fisher. Other members of the War Council were no doubt reassured by Churchill about Fisher's contention that the operation would weaken the Grand Fleet. All of them may have been so attracted to a project which offered large gains cheaply that they allowed their enthusiasm to overcome any doubts they might have had concerning Fisher. Balfour, at least, seemed to fall into this category. After the War Council meeting he read Fisher's paper of the 25th. He then proceeded to lecture the First Sea Lord on the political and economic advantages of the plan which he thought would be "enormous" while he considered that the "risk to the ships does not seem great".

In fact the War Council had broken down completely as the supreme war making body. We noticed earlier that it had failed to consider the consequences of a successful naval attack. It should have been perfectly clear that even if the fleet got through occupation forces would be needed in considerable numbers. Yet such was the anxiety for success and such was the attractiveness of a victory on the cheap that they had allowed themselves to be convinced by Churchill that "ships alone" could do the job. Now at the important meeting of January 28th. these questions had again gone unasked, with consequences that were soon to be felt. In addition the Council was now apparently willing to discount the doubts of the professional head of the navy.

Churchill had noticed that Fisher had left the council table and after the meeting had adjourned for lunch he spoke to Fisher alone in his room. Churchill told the Dardanelles Commission that he strongly urged Fisher to undertake the operation and that Fisher "definitely consented to do so.

(1) Dardanelles Commission, Lloyd George's Evidence 30/10/16, Q5676, Cab. 19/33.
(2) Balfour, "Notes on Lord Fisher's Memorandum" 1/2/15, Balfour Papers, Add/Mss. 49712.
I state that positively. (Well, I state everything positively, but I state this super-positively). Churchhill may have been "super positive" but it is obvious that Fisher only accepted the naval attack under great pressure and with extreme reluctance, for the next day he wrote to Churchill, "Not a grain of wheat will come from the Black Sea unless there is military occupation of the Dardanelles! And it will be the wonder of the ages that no troops were sent to cooperate with the Fleet with half a million ...soldiers in England!"

The main topic of discussion for the next two weeks was whether any of those half million soldiers should be used in theatres outside the Western Front. The consensus seemed to be that sooner or later troops would have to be sent to aid Serbia in the event of an Austro-German attack. The Greek port of Salonika was usually favoured as the point of disembarkation although Greece was still neutral and had not requested troops. Such ideas were put forward by Lloyd George, Churchill, and Callwell.

Hankey, however, had arrived at the seemingly obvious conclusion that British troops should be used to support the naval attack at the Dardanelles. He prepared a paper on the subject for Asquith which made this point very strongly but it had no observable effect.

Indeed at a War Council on February 9th, no mention was made of sending troops to the Dardanelles. Instead a decision was made to send one British and one French division to Salonika in the event of the Serbs being attacked. Presumably this was to be conditional on Greek cooperation. Kitchener announced that the 29th., the last of the regular divisions, would be sent.

(1) Dardanelles Commission, Churchill's Evidence 28/9/16, Q1190, Cab. 19/33.
(2) Fisher to Churchill 29/1/15, C.V.3, p. 471.
(3) Lloyd George to Kitchener 29/1/15, Kitchener Papers, Pro. 30/57/80.
(6) "The War: Attack on the Dardanelles": Note by the Secretary 2/2/15, Cab. 42/1/30.
(7) War Council Minutes 9/2/15, Cab. 42/1/33.
(8) Ibid.
Outside the War Council Hankey, continued the campaign to get troops sent to the Dardanelles. Hankey told Balfour,

"I am convinced that an attack on the Dardanelles is the only extraneous operation worth trying. From Lord Fisher downwards every naval officer in the Admiralty who is in the secret believes that the Navy cannot take the Dardanelles position without troops. The First Lord still professes to believe that they can do it with ships, but I have warned the Prime Minister that we cannot trust to this."\(^1\)

Hankey had in fact succeeded in convincing Asquith that military backing for the naval attack was necessary, although he smugly told Venetia Stanley that he had "been for some time coming to the same opinion."\(^2\)

Hankey was correct in believing that naval opinion had hardened against the naval plan. On the 13th. Jackson had submitted a memorandum on the operation to Churchill. It was largely a technical document but the conclusions were less ambiguous from those contained in Jackson's earlier papers. Jackson recommended that a fleet of transports be on hand to proceed through the Straits as soon as the forts were silenced. However, he considered that unarmoured ships would not be able to pass the straits until the Peninsula was in allied hands. He concluded that in this event it would be impossible to keep the Fleet in the Marmora supplied and ended by saying, "The naval bombardment is not recommended as a sound military operation, unless a strong military force is ready to assist in the operation."\(^3\) These views were reinforced by a paper from Richmond. He stated that in his judgement, "the bombardment of the Dardanelles, even if all the forts are destroyed, can be nothing but a local success, which without an army to carry it on can have no further effect."\(^4\)

On the 16th. an informal meeting of the War Council, attended by Asquith, Lloyd George, Churchill, Fisher, Grey, and Kitchener, was held. Hankey was not present, and unfortunately for the historian, no minutes

\(^{(1)}\) Hankey to Balfour 10/2/15, Balfour Papers, Add/Mss. 49703.
\(^{(2)}\) Asquith to Venetia Stanley 13/2/15, C.V.3, p. 512-3.
\(^{(4)}\) Richmond, "Remarks on Present Strategy", Richmond Papers, RIC 14/3.
were kept. One of the conclusions of the meeting was that the 29th. division which had already been earmarked for the east was now to be available to support the naval attack at the Dardanelles if necessary. Why had the destination of the 29th. division been changed? No firm conclusion can be reached although perhaps in the general discussions on the use of troops in the east it was realized that even if the naval attack succeeded troops would be needed for occupation duties. Perhaps it was merely looked on as a useful precaution to have troops in the area. Perhaps Churchill now decided to inform his colleagues of Jackson's opinion that troops would be needed for occupation duties even if the fleet operation was successful. Why it was thought that regulars were needed for these duties is another question. Probably the 29th. division was chosen for no better reason than that it was already destined for the east.

Whatever the reason the War Council had now gone a step further than on January 13th. or 28th. They had now sanctioned a naval operation with military support "if necessary". This decision was no doubt made easier by the fact that at the time it could not have seemed a very serious step to take. The naval attack was scheduled for February 19th. It was obvious that any troops sent could not arrive until two or three weeks after that date. There was therefore no reason to suspect that they would be used as an integral part of the naval attack. By the time they arrived the fleet would be through and the troops merely used for occupation duties. However the first step had now been taken along the road to a combined operation.

On February 19th. the War Council discovered that their deliberations of three days previously had gone for nothing, for Kitchener had changed his mind about the 29th division. He announced that as the Turks were retreating from the Suez Canal, he considered the garrison troops in Egypt

(1) War Council Conclusions 16/2/15, Cab. 42/1/35.
sufficient for local defence. This meant that the Australian and New Zealand troops (39,000 strong) were available to support the operation at the Dardanelles. Therefore he was holding back the 29th. Division, which in any case should be kept in readiness to intervene in France in view of the Russian reverses in the east and the likely transfer of German troops to the west.¹ This brought an immediate reply from Churchill. He said,

"it would be a great disappointment to the Admiralty if the 29th. division was not sent out. The attack on the Dardanelles was a very heavy naval undertaking. It was difficult to over-rate the military advantages which success would bring....In his opinion it would be a thrifty disposition on our part to have 50,000 men in this region...which could be concentrated in three days. He was sending out the ten trained battalions of the Naval Division. Neither these, however, nor the Australians and New Zealanders, could be called first-rate troops at present, and they required a stiffening of regulars.... We should never forgive ourselves if this promising operation failed owing to insufficient military force at the critical moment."²

A long discussion on the use of the 29th. Division followed. Asquith read out extracts from a 1906 C.I.D. report on the Dardanelles, "tending" as the minutes state "to show that military co-operation was essential to success".³ In fact the report had gone further than this and had deprecated even a combined operation but whether this section was also read out by Asquith is not known.⁴ Kitchener, however, was unmoved. He refused to budge and the most the committee could extract from him was that transports should be prepared to take the 29th. Division to the east if required.⁵

At first glance the position adopted by Churchill at this meeting is

(1) War Council Minutes 19/2/15, Cab. 42/1/36.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Minutes of the C.I.D. 28/2/07, Cab. 38/13/12.
(5) Churchill to Kitchener 18/2/15, Kitchener Papers, Pro. 30/57/72.
puzzling. He had stated clearly that he wanted 50,000 men within easy reach of the Dardanelles. But Kitchener had not vetoed this move or even disagreed with it and had offered the 39,000 Anzacs as part of the contingent. To this figure could be added the 10,000 men of the Naval Division, making a total of 49,000 men, almost exactly the number specified by Churchill. Yet he considered this force inadequate and proceeded to argue about its composition, insisting that the crack 29th. division be included in it. But on the only occasions when Churchill specified the tasks troops would be required to carry out at the Dardanelles he stated that they were merely needed to occupy the Gallipoli Peninsula after it had been evacuated, to occupy Constantinople if a revolution took place and to clear the shores of the Straits of riflemen and field guns. Now none of these operations involved much heavy fighting and suggested that troops would only be needed to follow up a naval success. However Churchill had also told the War Council that the whole operation might fail owing to insufficient military force. This remark, which went unchallenged by his colleagues, in fact disclosed Churchill's real purpose in insisting that the 29th. division be included in the Gallipoli force. What had brought about this change of mind?

Obviously Churchill had been affected more than he was willing to admit by the arguments of Fisher, Jackson and Richmond in favour of using troops at the Dardanelles and he had been shaken in his view that the navy could succeed alone. Thus troops might be needed, not to follow up, but to ensure a naval success. This would involve fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula for which a "stiffening of regulars" would be indispensible. Moreover if the 29th. division was sent there would be almost 70,000 men available for use. If the naval attack failed they could be thrown in at once. But it was inconceivable that a force consisting wholly of

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(1) War Council Minutes 19/2/15, Cab. 42/1/36.
(2) Ibid.
partly trained troops would be used in such a way. Therefore the despatch of the 29th. division was crucial. However Churchill could not use this line of argument openly. Thus far he had assured the War Council that the navy alone could achieve success. He could hardly now say that the operation was not feasible unless troops were used. Nor could he stop the naval attack which began on February 19th. All he could do was to proceed by stealth. He could press for troops, ostensibly to "reap the fruits" of a naval victory and hope that if a division of regulars was sent and there were 70,000 men in the area and the naval attack faltered, the logic of the situation would compel their use.

* * *

The opening of the naval attack on the Dardanelles is a convenient point at which to break off the narrative of events and examine Churchill's treatment of this period in The World Crisis. The first feature of these chapters which should be noticed is their heavy documentation. Over half the space devoted to the period January 1st - February 19th. is taken up with the quotation of letters, memoranda, minutes and telegrams. This documentation is important to Churchill. In the preface he claimed that he "made no important statement of fact relating to naval operations or Admiralty business" on which he did not possess unimpeachable documentary proof. Now, in these chapters, in which he seeks to justify his role in the origins of the Dardanelles campaign he attempts to convince the reader that this claim has been made good. It remains to be seen

(1) Approximately 28 pages out of 53. The chapters concerned are, "The Choice", "Second Thoughts and Final Decision", and the first nine pages of "The Genesis Of The Military Attack". Some of the remaining material has been taken from Churchill's evidence to the Dardanelles Commission. The passages are; the opening paragraph on p. 527 (paraphrased); from "Sir Henry Jackson deprecated"... on p. 533 to the end of the paragraph (paraphrased); the first two lines of the first paragraph on p. 536 and the last six lines of the second; from "After the meeting was over" to "consented to undertake it" on p. 591 plus the two sentences beginning "This I took" and ending with "misgivings" on the same page; the whole of the section between the asterisks on p. 592-3; the first paragraph on Lord Kitchener on p. 597 minus the first two sentences and the last from "in all that concerned"; the last sentence on p. 599-600 minus the words "and courtesy".

(2) The World Crisis, p. vii.
however if the documents chosen speak for themselves or whether in the
hands of a skilled publicist they can be manipulated to prove a case.

Churchill begins his narrative of these events with a discussion of
the papers on the war written at the turn of the year by Hankey, Lloyd
George and Fisher. He states that he forwarded Hankey's paper to Asquith
with a covering note which said in part, "We are substantially in
agreement, and our conclusions are not incompatible. I wanted Gallipoli
attack on the declaration of war."1 Churchill makes two separate points
here, both of which must be questioned. Firstly the real area of agree-
ment between Hankey and Churchill must be examined, and secondly,
Churchill's claim that he had wanted Gallipoli attacked on the declaration
of war. To deal with this point first, Churchill had originally said, "I
wanted Gallipoli attacked on the Turkish declaration of war". Leaving
aside the fact that it was Britain that declared war on Turkey, the version
published in The World Crisis clearly gives the impression that Churchill
had wanted Gallipoli attacked in August when Britain entered the war,
rather than in November when Turkey entered. Churchill's reasons for
doing this are rather obscure. It should probably be seen as a
continuation of previous attempts in The World Crisis to convince the
reader that he had held a consistent policy about attacking Turkey from
the very beginning of the war. The naval attack could then be presented
as the culmination of that consistent policy. However, it will be
remembered that an attack on Gallipoli was only one, and by no means the
most important, of several options which Churchill investigated in the
first five months of the war. Moreover, most of the early plans to attack
Turkey involved landing an army (usually Greek) on Gallipoli and had
nothing in common with a purely naval plan.

To return to Churchill's first claim, that he and Hankey were
"substantially in agreement", it is necessary to examine the substance of
(1) The World Crisis, p. 527.
Hankey's paper. As was noted earlier, Hankey had not mentioned an attack on Gallipoli but had only spoken generally of "weaving a web round Turkey". The attack on Gallipoli was a purely Churchillian gloss. Also, Hankey's plan was basically for a land attack, involving 90,000 British troops and the armies of two other countries. It might appear that Hankey's and Churchill's plans were more remarkable for their differences than for their similarities. The reader is not able to draw this conclusion for himself though, for not even a summary of Hankey's paper is included in The World Crisis.

It would also appear that at the time not even Churchill saw great areas of agreement between himself and Hankey, for it will be recalled that the very day after Hankey's paper was written and again two days later, Churchill wrote to Asquith advocating that the best strategy for Britain was the capture of a German island in the North Sea. Once again, however, the evidence is concealed; neither letter to Asquith is published in The World Crisis.

Churchill next discusses the Russian appeal for help of January 1st. Nowhere in The World Crisis is it mentioned that this reason (or excuse) for the naval attack soon disappeared with the defeat of the Turks in the Caucasus in early January. Indeed, Churchill gives as one of the reasons for holding Fisher to his acceptance of the Carden plan, the fact that the operation "would give the Grand Duke the help he so sorely needed". Yet if it was known from such a public source as Reuters that the Turks had suffered a defeat, it is hard to believe that Churchill would not have been aware of it. On the other hand it is obviously convenient for Churchill if his readers continue to believe that the naval attack was pushed through to help a hard pressed ally for this gave the plan an urgency that it would otherwise not have possessed.

(1) The World Crisis, p. 578.
Churchill goes on to indicate what effect the coincidence of the Russian appeal with the papers of Hankey, Lloyd George and Fisher had upon him.

"This series of weighty representations had the effect of making me move. I thought I saw a great convergence of opinion in the direction of that attack upon the Dardanelles which I had always so greatly desired. The arguments in its favour were overwhelming. And now the highest authorities, political, naval and military, were apparently ready to put their shoulders to the wheel. All Mr. Lloyd George's advocacy and influence seemed about to be cast in the direction of Turkey and the Balkans....I knew from my talks with Mr. Balfour that he too was profoundly impressed by the advantages which might be reaped by successful action in this South-Eastern theatre. Lastly, the Foreign Office and Sir Edward Grey were, of course, keenly interested. Here was a great consensus of opinion. Here it seemed at last was a sufficient impulse and unity for action. But was there a practicable scheme? This I determined to find out."

It cannot be said that this passage is remarkable for its accuracy. Our earlier investigation of the contributions of Hankey, Lloyd George and Fisher revealed no "consensus" and no "convergence of opinion" on an attack upon the Dardanelles. Hankey thought that Turkey should be attacked but had not specified where or how: Lloyd George favoured an attack on Austria-Hungary through Dalmatia and to say that all his "advocacy and influence" were cast in the "direction of Turkey and the Balkans" is hardly evidence that he favoured an attack on Gallipoli. Fisher, on the other hand had outlined a vast plan encompassing most of the countries of South-Eastern Europe and the Near East. Balfour, so far from favouring action in South-Eastern Europe had told Hankey on January 2nd. that he did not see any solution to Britain's problems in that direction. It is possible that Grey did want action in the Balkans for he always believed that diplomacy in war time was futile unless backed by armed force but it is very unlikely that he would have advocated any particular operation. In fact the only person who had even mentioned Gallipoli was Fisher and it formed only a minor part of his plan. Thus in The World Crisis Churchill has again conveyed an impression of unity and agreement which did not in

(1) The World Crisis, p. 531-2.
fact exist, this time between members of the War Council. Once again, he reinforces the idea, already introduced, that he had always greatly desired an attack on the Dardanelles. And once again, Churchill ignores in The World Crisis the fact that he continued to advocate alternative operations in the face of the apparently "overwhelming" advantages of the Carden plan.

It was stated earlier that it was possibly the realization that other operations would not get past the planning stage rather than any supposed convergence of opinion on the Dardanelles which led Churchill to telegraph Carden on January 3rd. This controversial and crucial message is quoted in The World Crisis but Churchill does not comment on it. In our earlier investigation it was suggested that the telegram had been deliberately worded to produce a favourable response and that Churchill seemed to admit as much to the Dardanelles Commission. It might have been expected that this important point would have been discussed or rebutted in The World Crisis but this is not the case.

It is at this point, however, that Churchill makes his only reference to the importance still attached to the Zeebrugge and Borkum projects during this period. He explains that the telegram to Carden did not commit him "even to the general principle of an attack upon Turkey," as he "was still thinking a great deal of the Northern theatre, of Borkum and of the Baltic." He also says that Zeebrugge was still under consideration and quotes a part of his letter to Fisher of January 4th, in which he remarked that he would prefer to "hear what others have to say about the Turkish plans before taking a decided line." With the introduction of these issues, otherwise so carefully excluded from this section of The World Crisis, Churchill is able to lessen the importance of his telegram to

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(1) The World Crisis, p. 332.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
Carden and hence the importance of its strong wording. The risk that these references to Zeebrugge and to Borkum might contradict the impression given of the supremacy of the Dardanelles plan is fairly small given that this is their only mention in a chapter entirely devoted to the genesis of the Dardanelles plan.

Churchill has also omitted a key sentence from his letter to Fisher, quoted above. The sentence reads, "Germany is the foe & it is bad war to seek cheaper victories and easier antagonists". By omitting this sentence Churchill again is seeking to conceal the fact that he had been very sceptical about the efficacy of action against Turkey in early January. This deletion also saves him from explaining why this scepticism disappeared within the next few weeks.

Churchill next deals with Carden's reply to the telegram of January 3rd. "On January 5 the answer from Admiral Carden arrived. It was remarkable." Even to a vivid imagination it is hard to see how this reply (the Dardanelles cannot be rushed, they might be forced, large numbers of ships will be needed) could be described as remarkable. As noticed earlier, it was at best a grudging admission that under certain circumstances the operation might be possible. Considering the wording of Churchill's original telegram the reply is suprisingly restrained. The only way in which it could have been considered remarkable by Churchill is that it did not say that the operation was impossible.

Churchill does not discusss in The World Crisis what particular competence Carden had in naval strategy which might have made a favourable reply from him "remarkable". It will be remembered that several memorandum written by Churchill about this time indicated that he had quite a low opinion of Carden. However, there is no mention of this in The

(1) Churchill Papers 8/177.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 532.
World Crisis and the reader is left with the impression that, both on this occasion and at the time of the arrival of Carden's detailed plan on January 11th., Churchill regarded Carden as quite capable of producing a plan that would substantially shorten the war. Furthermore, if Carden was the ideal man, what of Churchill's earlier view, that by bowing to Foreign Office pressure on the question of Limpus's appointment, the Admiralty lost "the Admiral who of all others knew the Turks, and knew the Dardanelles with all its possibilities?" 1 In fact this is the last mention made of Limpus in The World Crisis. He does not appear at all in the chapters on the genesis of the naval attack and it would appear that Churchill did not want to draw attention to the fact that Carden's was a stop-gap appointment, for that might detract from the "remarkable" nature of his plan. In addition, of course, further mention of Limpus may have prompted an interest in Limpus's opinion of the scheme.

It will be remembered that Churchill's reply to Carden was contained in a telegram of the 6th. of January which began "Your view is agreed with by high authorities here". 2 It was suggested that the vague term "high authorities" was chosen by Churchill to conceal from Carden that Fisher at that time could not be counted among them. Churchill, of course, does not discuss this aspect of the telegram in The World Crisis. He does, however, concede that Fisher had not yet expressed an opinion on the technical aspects of the plan, 3 but claims that he saw the telegram, a fact which was denied by Fisher at the Dardanelles Commission. 4

According to The World Crisis, the high authorities whom Churchill had in mind were Jackson and Oliver 5 and with the introduction of these

(1) The World Crisis, p. 446.
(2) Ibid., p. 533.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
personalities to Churchill's narrative, it is time to investigate Churchill's analysis of the opinions held by various members of the Admiralty about the Carden plan.

The three important papers written by Sir Henry Jackson about the Dardanelles question on January 5th. and 25th. and February 13th. are discussed at length in The World Crisis. In view of the importance Churchill places on the opinions of Jackson it is surprising to find that his first paper of January 5th. is not published. It was shown earlier that this document did not throw a great deal of light on what Jackson's opinions actually were. However, the paper certainly did not under-rate the difficulties facing the fleet and perhaps this is the reason that it was omitted by Churchill. Churchill's conversation with Jackson about this paper is however included. He states that on January 5th.

"I had a conversation with Sir Henry Jackson, who had that day completed a memorandum upon the...[Dardanelles] (which I read some days later). Sir Henry Jackson deprecated any attempt to rush the Straits, but he spoke of the considerable effects of the brief bombardment of November 3, and he was attracted by the idea of a step-by-step reduction of the fortresses, though troops would be needed to follow up and complete the naval attack and especially to occupy Constantinople."1

Other aspects of this important conversation will be discussed later. All that needs to be noted now is that, as reported by Churchill, Jackson clearly makes the use of troops an integral part of the projected operation and it is therefore hardly accurate for Churchill to claim him as a "high authority" supporting the concept of a purely naval plan in his telegram of January 6th.

Jackson's second memorandum of January 15th. is quoted in full in The World Crisis. Churchill claims that this document reveals that at this time Jackson fully supported the Carden plan and although he considers that Jackson did not have "accountable responsibility", "he is certainly

(1) The World Crisis, p. 533.
responsible for the opinions which he expressed in so much detail".¹ No one could argue with this statement. However, the vital question is not whether Jackson should be held responsible for his opinions but exactly what those opinions were. Churchill never confronts this issue. The ambiguities of the memorandum and the alternative interpretations which could be placed upon it were noted earlier. They are, however, totally ignored by Churchill in *The World Crisis* as they apparently were at the time.

Jackson's third memorandum of February 13th, presents Churchill with a more difficult problem. It will be recalled that this memorandum was a fairly straightforward condemnation of the Carden plan raising few problems of interpretation. It concluded that the naval attack was not recommended as a sound military operation unless a strong force was at hand to assist or follow up any success gained by the Fleet. Churchill could have regarded this, the clearest statement of Jackson's opinions, as the culmination of Jackson's views on the Dardanelles. Instead he concentrates on the only "ambiguity" which the paper contained, namely the alternative uses of troops in either assisting or following up the naval attack. Churchill points out that these two alternatives relate to fundamentally different operations and on these grounds he dismisses the entire paper as the product of "mixed" thinking.² However, Jackson's position is quite clear. He wanted troops at the Dardanelles. Preferably they could land on the Peninsula and assist the fleet in destroying the forts. If this was not possible they should at least be ready to follow up a naval success and occupy the Peninsula after it was evacuated by the Turks and provide a garrison for Constantinople. This is not "mixed" thinking but a reasonable statement of alternatives.

Jackson's performance at the Dardanelles Commission was singled out for criticism in the first part of this chapter and it was suggested that

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¹ The World Crisis, p. 547.

² Ibid., p. 602.
his main purpose was to conceal even the partial support that he had given to Carden's plan. The Commissioners were aware of this fact and they commented on it in their first report. They concluded that if Jackson was totally opposed to the Carden plan he certainly did not place that opinion clearly on record at the time. Churchill quotes this conclusion in a long footnote in The World Crisis, to which he says "I do not desire to add anything". However, the Churchill papers reveal that initially Churchill wished to add a great deal. In an early version of The World Crisis Churchill said in relation to Jackson's testimony,

"One must make great allowances for the action of public and professional men in time of war. The prizes are so brilliant, the penalties so bitter and lasting, the opportunities for transferring the burden of failure on to some victim of popular or newspaper displeasure so easy, that many men of high and generous character have yielded to the strong and seductive pressures of temptation. Business is complicated. Memories are short. One situation rapidly succeeds another. Feelings and opinions after the event are so different to what they were before, that the most honest people fail often to recognize their former selves and old opinions. But for my invariable habit of transacting all official business in writing, and of procuring the written assent of all parties concerned at every stage, I should unquestionably have been crushed under the weight of responsibility - not merely for action, but for what would have appeared to be reckless, ignorant, ill-considered, isolated action - which was thrown on me and me alone. Happily for me "Litera scripta maet"."

It is obvious from this passage that Churchill, with some justification felt very bitter towards Jackson whom he considered had tried to say that he, (Churchill) was the only one at the Admiralty with any enthusiasm for the naval attack. Also interesting is Churchill's rather naive view that he could rebut this opinion by the publication of Jackson's second memorandum, which as we have seen, is hardly helpful to Churchill's case. However, Churchill eventually deleted this passage from The World Crisis. Perhaps he felt that the point about Jackson's approval of the Carden plan had already been made and that it was better to allow the Dardanelles Commissioners to make the point about Jackson's duplicity. This way the

(1) The World Crisis, p. 549n.
(2) Churchill Papers 8/137.
man would stand condemned and all appearance of a personal vendetta would be avoided.

Of the opinion of Admiral Oliver towards Carden's plan, Churchill says very little. He states that on the 5th. of January Oliver viewed the plan "with favour"¹ and later, after Carden's plan had arrived that the "Chief of the Staff seemed favourable to it".² From Oliver's testimony to the Dardanelles Commission and the other evidence quoted earlier, this would seem to be a reasonable summary of his opinion at the time. Of all Churchill's naval advisers, Oliver seemed most consistent in his endorsement of the Carden plan. Certainly it has been suggested earlier that his enthusiasm for the plan may have sprung from his dislike of Churchill's German Island schemes, which he considered too risky. But it is hardly to be expected that Churchill would have been aware of such an attitude.

Churchill next sums up the opinions of the three naval personalities so far considered. Carden, Oliver and Jackson. "So here we had the Chief of the Staff, the Admiral studying this particular theatre, and the Admiral in command," all apparently in general accord in principle. This coincidence of opinion in officers so widely separated and so differently circumstanced impressed me very much."³ As the previous narrative has demonstrated this is hardly a fair summary of the opinions of these officers. Under great pressure Carden had only said that the operation might succeed. Jackson, according to Churchill's own account, had suggested that troops be used. Only Oliver seems to have endorsed Carden's plan although it is not possible to say with what enthusiasm. Thus there was "no coincidence of opinion" and the only thing that could have impressed Churchill was that none of the authorities concerned had said that the operation was impossible. In addition although Churchill

(1) The World Crisis, p. 533.
(2) Ibid., p. 536.
(3) Ibid., p. 533. The words "so widely" were added later. See Churchill Papers 8/137.
claimed that the officers were "widely separated" and "differently circumstanced", they were all open to his influence and it is perhaps this fact which may have resulted in what little "agreement in principle" there was.

We now come to what must be a crucial section of the Dardanelles chapters of The World Crisis, Churchill's discussion of the attitude which Fisher held towards the naval attack. It was shown earlier that Fisher's attitude was complicated and not always easy to define. How does Churchill handle this difficult task? Fisher's first letter of January 3rd, outlining the "Turkey Plan" is quoted in full in The World Crisis. Churchill describes this letter as being of
great importance [because] it reveals Lord Fisher's position fully and clearly. The turbulence of its style in no way affects the shrewdness and profundity of its vision. I do not think that Lord Fisher ever took any action or expressed any opinions which were irreconcilable with the general principles of these first thoughts. He was always in favour of a great scheme against the Turks and to rally the Balkans. He always believed that Bulgaria was the key to the situation in this quarter. He was always prepared to risk the old battleships as part of a large naval, military and diplomatic combination. In all this we were, as his letter shows, in entire agreement. That these large schemes were not carried into effect was not his fault nor mine."

It is hard to see how Churchill could justify the statement that the failure to adopt Fisher's "larger schemes" was no fault of his, for by immediately suggesting a "smaller" plan to Carden and then enthusiastically endorsing it he virtually ensured that larger combined operations of the type suggested by Fisher passed out of contention.

In an earlier version of The World Crisis, after the last sentence quoted above, Churchill added "That, in their default, less satisfactory and smaller expedients were adopted is largely due to me". He then deleted this sentence. Probably his reason for doing so was that the

(1) The World Crisis, p. 530.
(2) Churchill Papers, 8/78.
line taken in The World Crisis is that in advocating the Dardanelles operation Churchill was following the advice given by his naval colleagues. Thus he would want to avoid the impression given by the deleted sentence that he had been the principle agent responsible for the adoption of the naval attack. Nor would Churchill want to propagate the view that the naval attack was in some way a "less satisfactory" or "smaller" expedient.

Turning to Churchill's comments on Fisher's letter, it seems reasonable to assume that Churchill's main purpose is to convince the reader that Fisher was always in favour of the Carden plan. This he attempts to do by stating that Fisher was always in favour of a large scheme against the Turks and was always willing to risk the old battleships as part of it. Now this may well have been true, but it is not correct to deduce from this that Fisher was an enthusiast for the naval attack. It is quite obvious that Fisher's "large naval military and diplomatic combination" bore no resemblance to an attempt to force the Dardanelles by ships alone. In other words what Churchill says about Fisher's "first thoughts" may be correct, but Churchill cannot claim from this that Fisher supported a naval attack.

Churchill goes on to say that in this early period Fisher "seemed favourable" to the Carden plan.\(^1\) It is difficult to establish whether or not this assertion is justified. It has already been noted that Fisher expressed no opinion on the Carden plan in writing during this period. On January 6th, however, Churchill apparently did not feel able to name Fisher as a "high authority" supporting the naval attack. On the other hand Fisher let Churchill's correspondence with Carden proceed without comment and this might have given Churchill grounds for his statement in the The World Crisis that Fisher "seemed favourable" to the

\(^1\) The World Crisis, p. 536.
plan. (It might be thought that the addition by Fisher of the Queen Elizabeth would confirm Churchill's statement. However Churchill says in The World Crisis that it was the Staff who proposed that the ship be sent and he seems unaware of the part played by Fisher in this decision.)

In the circumstances no final judgement can be made on Churchill's statement but it is quite possible that Fisher's reluctance to state his position clearly gave Churchill grounds for writing as he did.

It is clear from The World Crisis that Churchill is aware that Fisher's attitude to the operation changed about January 20th. He seems at a loss to explain this apparently sudden reversal of opinion and the only explanation put forward is that "Lord Fisher's sudden dislike of the Dardanelles project seemed to arise at this time largely and even primarily from his reluctance to undertake the bombardment and blocking in of Zeebrugge [and later this attitude] ....was extended not only to the Dardanelles plan, but to all plans of naval attack on hostile coasts." This argument is not convincing. Although Fisher had mentioned both Zeebrugge and the Dardanelles in his paper of January 25th., there is no evidence to suggest that Zeebrugge was the cause of his dislike of the Dardanelles operation. Fisher's letters to Jellicoe, quoted earlier, which contain his first outbursts against the project, do not mention Zeebrugge and seem to be based on the shortcomings of Carden's plan, or on the fact that the operation was taking vital ships away from home waters. However, although Churchill's theory is unconvincing, his failure to follow the workings of Fisher's mind should be treated sympathetically. It was noted earlier that whenever Churchill confronted Fisher about his objections to the naval attack Fisher shifted his ground and it is little wonder that eight years later Churchill is still unable to explain the

(1) The World Crisis, p. 536.
(2) Ibid., p. 576.
(3) Ibid., p. 577.
mental processes of the old Admiral during this period.

Churchill is on much stronger ground in saying that Fisher's "arguments did not take the form of criticizing the details of either operation in question. He did not, for instance, deal with the gunnery aspects of the Dardanelles, or with any purely technical aspect."¹ It was demonstrated earlier that Fisher used a much less direct line of argument against the Dardanelles with Churchill than was expressed, for example, in his letters to Jellicoe and to this extent the First Sea Lord was at fault. However, Churchill does not admit in The World Crisis that there was a strong possibility that Fisher's indirect objections to the Dardanelles were merely the surface indications of a deep-seated hostility towards the plan.

The events leading up to the War Council of January 28th. are discussed in detail in The World Crisis and the full text of Fisher's memorandum of January 25th. and Churchill's reply are printed.² Churchill also comments on the meeting between Asquith, Fisher and himself on the 28th. He says that both Zeebrugge and the Dardanelles operations were discussed and that "The Prime Minister, after hearing both sides, expressed his concurrence with my views, and decided that Zeebrugge should be dropped but that the Dardanelles should go forward. Lord Fisher seemed on the whole content."³ This version of events generally agrees with the only other account of the meeting, that given by Asquith to Venetia Stanley. However in The World Crisis Churchill does not attempt to expand further on Fisher's attitude and there is quite a difference between being "on the whole content" and being a supporter of an operation.

The final aspect of Churchill's treatment of Fisher in this section of The World Crisis concerns the results of the meetings of January 28th.

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¹ The World Crisis, p. 577.
² Ibid., p. 578-88.
³ Ibid., p. 589.
Churchill states that during the interval between the first and second meetings he determined to find the reason behind Fisher's action in leaving the council table. He says he called Fisher to his room and in the course of the discussion, "I strongly urged him not to turn back from the Dardanelles operation; and in the end, after a long and very friendly discussion...he definitely consented to undertake it."\(^1\) In convincing Fisher Churchill continues, "I am in no way concealing the great and continuous pressure which I put upon the old Admiral...Was it wrong to put this pressure upon the First Sea Lord? I cannot think so. War is a business of terrible pressures, and persons who take part in it must fail if they are not strong enough to withstand them."\(^2\) Earlier he writes in the same vein, "When others [read Fisher] weakened or changed their opinion without adducing new reasons, I held them strongly to their previous decisions; and so in the general interest of the Allies, thrust the business steadily forward into actual experiment."\(^3\) Nowhere in this section of The World Crisis is the doubtful propriety or even utility of forcing colleagues to accede to a plan against their better judgement admitted, though it would be expected that Churchill above all people, given the circumstances of Fisher's resignation, would be aware of its dangers. However a draft of this chapter in the Churchill papers tells a very different story. Originally this chapter was headed by two lines of poetry from Hudibras by Samuel Butler

\begin{quote}
"A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still"\(^4\)
\end{quote}

This was an obvious reference to the incident described above. Churchill

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\(^1\) The World Crisis, p. 591.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 591-2.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 553.
\(^4\) Churchill Papers 8/80. Churchill has got the quotation wrong. Butler actually wrote, "He that complies against his will Is of his own opinion still"

continued in the draft

"Here it was that I consider that I made my greatest mistake. I thought that with the assent of the First Sea Lord I shd. have sufficient power to carry the plan through. But more than this was needed. His active aid, his devising energy, his positive authority, his will power were all vital to success. If the Admirals on the spot had felt the real drive of Lord Fisher behind them, a different spirit would have animated their proceedings." 1

The second part of this paragraph can be quickly dismissed. The reasons which led the Admirals on the spot to abandon the naval attack will be discussed in a following chapter. It is sufficient to say at this point that there is no evidence to suggest that they felt able to abandon the operation because they realized that Fisher had reservations about it. The first part of the paragraph is more important. The couplet from Butler and the next three lines of the deleted section are the only occasions on which Churchill admits his misjudgement in pressuring Fisher into agreeing to the naval attack "against his will", for Churchill's downfall came, not when the Admirals at the Dardanelles changed their minds, but when Fisher reverted to his "own opinion" about the Carden plan and resigned. This was indeed Churchill's greatest mistake. But only in the unpublished version of The World Crisis is this made clear and in the published version Churchill maintains the line that he was quite justified in convincing Fisher on January 28th. that the operation should go ahead.

Only one other naval authority is mentioned in connection with the genesis of the naval attack. This is Sir Arthur Wilson whom Churchill introduces into this section of The World Crisis mainly to support a technical point about gunnery which he is making. However, in passing, he says of Wilson's attitude to Carden's plans, "He was not committed like others by anything he had written at the time - indeed he had another policy". 2 It is not very easy to discern from this whether Churchill

(1) Churchill Papers 8/80. The rough draft is in Churchill's own handwriting.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 538.
thought that Wilson was in agreement with the naval attack or not. However, the Churchill papers show that Churchill originally wrote, "indeed on general grounds he had not been in favour of the policy".\(^1\)

Churchill is obviously trying to augment Wilson's favourable reply on the gunnery question by pointing out that Wilson had no vested interest in giving a favourable answer. As Churchill pointed out in the draft Wilson was not in favour of the policy. However, expressed in this way, there is a direct invitation to ask why not. As altered in *The World Crisis* the advantages still accrue to Churchill without Wilson's opposition to the plan being emphasized. These passages provide further evidence on two points. Firstly that Churchill was well aware of at least some opponents of the plan, and secondly that he intended to minimize such opposition as much as possible in *The World Crisis*. When a conflict in Churchill's aims arises he handles the situation in *The World Crisis* in careful and well considered words.

As well as discussing the opinion of individuals towards the naval attack, Churchill makes several statements in the course of these chapters on the general attitude of his naval advisers towards the Carden plan. It has already been noticed that Churchill has attempted to convey the impression that there was a convergence of opinion among his War Council colleagues and Fisher towards an attack on the Dardanelles. Also, he has claimed, on the flimsiest of evidence, that Carden, Jackson and Oliver were all united behind the idea of a piecemeal reduction of the Straits defences. He now continues this process into his discussion of the reception that the Carden plan received at the Admiralty. He states that Carden's plan

"produced a great impression upon every one who saw it....Both the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Staff seemed favourable to it. No one at any time threw the slightest doubt upon its technical soundness. No one, for instance, of the four or five great naval authorities each with his technical staff who

\(^1\) Churchill Papers 8/137.
were privy said, 'This is absurd. Ships cannot fight forts', or criticized its details. On the contrary they all treated it as an extremely interesting and hopeful proposal; and there grew up in the secret circles of the Admiralty a perfectly clear opinion favourable to the operation."

There is a certain amount of truth in this statement, although it is interesting to note that the first sentence originally read, "The plan produced a great impression upon my mind", which is probably more accurate than the published version. However it does seem reasonable for Churchill to claim that no one at the Admiralty spoke out strongly against the scheme. It will be remembered that this was the conclusion reached in the first half of this chapter and it will be shown later that the instructions sent to Carden from the Admiralty did not deviate significantly from the propositions contained in the original plan. Nevertheless, Churchill overstates his case in saying that "a perfectly clear opinion" had grown up at the Admiralty in favour of the operation. Jackson's opinion, as we have seen, was anything but clear. It also seems unlikely that Fisher had expressed a "clear" opinion at this stage. Thus although Churchill is correct in stating that no one had said that the operation was impossible, this is hardly proof that there was a strong body of opinion in favour of it.

Churchill, however, persists with this line of half truth, saying at the end of the chapter that no one had spoken out against the plan, which was more or less true, and then saying that all were in agreement with it, which was not true. And in the next chapter we find, "Up to about January 20 there seemed to be unanimous agreement in favour of the naval enterprise against the Dardanelles... all the Admirals concerned appeared in complete accord." By this time these sentiments were even less accurate than Churchill's previous statements to this effect.

(1) The World Crisis, p. 536.
(2) Churchill Papers 8/78, emphasis added.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 553.
(4) Ibid., p. 576.
For by this time Churchill had received and read Jackson's extremely equivocal memorandum of January 15th. and it was on the 19th that Fisher informed Jellicoe that he has not agreed with a single step taken concerning the operation. Thus once more Churchill has tried to create an impression of unity at the Admiralty which in reality did not exist.

How does The World Crisis deal with Churchill's own role in these events? Churchill discusses the origin of the Carden plan in the following terms,

"It will be seen that the genesis of this plan and its elaboration were purely naval and professional in their character. It was Admiral Carden and his staff gunnery officers who proposed the gradual method of piecemeal reduction by long-range bombardment. It was Sir Henry Jackson and the Admiralty staff who embraced this idea and studied and approved its detail. Right or wrong, it was a service plan... At no point did lay or civilian interference mingle with or mar the integrity of a professional conception."¹

There is another series of half truths here. Churchill is certainly correct in stating that he did not interfere with the technical elaboration of Carden's plan. Nor does he seem to have played a part in drafting the Admiralty instructions which were sent to Carden. However, to state that the genesis of the plan was purely "naval and professional" in character is quite misleading. It was shown earlier that the genesis of the plan lay with Churchill. It was he who first broached the subject of forcing the Dardanelles by ships alone with Carden, and he also did it in such a way as to make sure that Carden replied favourably. Furthermore Churchill actively discouraged his advisers from expressing an opinion on the overall conception of the naval attack. As noted earlier, he instructed that the Staff Officer who was to analyse Carden's proposals was "to assume that the principle is settled". The responsibility for the general concept of the plan lay with Churchill, that of filling in the technical details with his naval advisors and only in the latter sense can the plan be described as a service plan.

(¹) The World Crisis, p. 552-3.
How does Churchill deal with the state of his thinking on alternative operations in the first weeks of January. There is only one mention of the Borkum plan, which it will be remembered Churchill was still pushing strongly during this period. Moreover there is no mention at all of his plan for bringing in Holland although it seemed important enough at the time for Churchill to recommend it to the War Council on two separate occasions. Nor is it made altogether clear that discussions about Zeebrugge continued throughout this period. For the reader to grasp this fact reference would have to be made to Chapter III, some two chapters back in which Churchill publishes some of his correspondence with French for January concerning Zeebrugge.

Originally, however, Churchill intended to focus the attention of the reader even more clearly on the fact that by early January the Admiralty had decided in favour of action on the "Southern Flank". In the Churchill papers there is an earlier draft of this chapter (The Choice) which began with the following paragraph,

"[At the end of 1914 Admiralty attention had been drawn towards the Northern Flank but] it seemed that the Southern Flank offered prizes at least as great and much more near than the Northern, that it presented difficulties and risks, which, though serious, were incomparably less; that the Southern enterprise could proceed and need not exclude the Northern at a later stage; and that success in the South would give the confidence and authority necessary to enable the Northern problem to be effectively approached."\(^1\)

This paragraph was later deleted. It was certainly misleading for as was shown earlier, the attention of neither Churchill nor the Admiralty was concentrated on the Southern flank at this time. However, as Churchill develops the notion of the importance of the Southern flank throughout these chapters, it is unlikely that he removed the paragraph for that reason. It is far more likely that it was deleted for the same reason that a similar passage was deleted in a previous chapter: that is, it reveals that Churchill saw the Dardanelles operation during this period.

\(^1\) Churchill Papers 8/78. It preceded the opening paragraph on p. 527.
as a relatively minor though essential (in the sense of giving him the
authority to dragoon the Admirals into it) preliminary to the Borkum-
Baltic plan which still remained at the centre of his strategic
thinking and which would be attempted as soon as the Dardanelles attack
had been completed. As stated previously Churchill was not anxious that
these facts should be revealed. He was concerned that the Dardanelles
plan should be viewed as the great strategic conception of the war, not
merely as the preliminary to another enterprise which had been almost
universally condemned as being too hazardous and not likely to achieve
any lasting results. It is obvious that if this line of reasoning is
correct Churchill would have had no choice but to remove the paragraph
in order to keep The World Crisis consistent on the vital point of the
paramount importance of the Dardanelles operation.

The World Crisis would seem to be more reliable on Churchill's
attitude after the arrival of the Carden plan. It will be remembered
that he had originally written that the plan had "produced a great
impression on my mind" and it is of the period immediately after the
arrival of the plan that he wrote "I had now become deeply interested
in the enterprise, and nothing but new facts and reasons, the merit of
which might convince me, would turn me from pressing it forward."¹
However, it was suggested earlier that it was perhaps not the intrinsic
merits of Carden's plan which made such an impression on Churchill as the
difficulty in getting an operation underway anywhere else. In any case
he is probably correct in identifying the period after January 11th.
as the time in which he became the enthusiastic advocate of the
Dardanelles enterprise.

It was noted that part of the "novelty" in the Carden plan lay in
its assumption that ships could fight forts. This issue is discussed
at length in The World Crisis. Churchill strongly defends Carden's

(1) The World Crisis, p. 545.
assumption on this point. He states "No general or absolute rule can be laid down regarding fighting between ships and forts. It depends on the ship; it depends on the fort. If, for instance, the ship has a gun which can smash the fort and the fort has no gun which can reach the ship, it is hard to prove that the ship is at a great disadvantage." This statement is true as far as it goes but Churchill does not say with what frequency and effect the ship could expect to hit the fort at these ranges, a critical question, as it happened, at the Dardanelles. Nor does he discuss the point that at these ranges effective spotting and a large amount of ammunition, neither of which were supplied to Carden, are essential to success.

Churchill also argues in a passage largely taken from the report of the Mitchell Committee, that naval guns can hit their target three times as often as howitzers of similar size and that the proposition that it would have taken howitzers to destroy the Dardanelles forts is therefore incorrect. This statement is no doubt true but like Churchill's earlier argument, it is irrelevant to the main issue at the Dardanelles. This was not substantially that of ships versus forts. It was ships versus minefields which were protected by forts, fixed artillery defences and movable batteries. Yet Churchill does not discuss these additional factors and, therefore, he does not come to grips with the real issues. Indeed he defends himself by saying, "There was no fallacy in the technical arguments of the Admiralty so far as the gunnery was concerned. The difficulties which frustrated the plan lay in the absence of good conditions of observation at the long ranges, of the opportunity of coming to close quarters." But this is exactly the point which was made earlier against the naval plan. The gunnery calculations were irrelevant. The fallacy in

(1) The World Crisis, p. 537.
(2) Ibid., p. 540-51.
(3) Ibid., p. 541.
the plan lay in not taking the additional factors into account.

To support his argument Churchill quotes a long memorandum by Sir Arthur Wilson on ships versus forts.\(^1\) This paper is also largely irrelevant to the main issues because it does not mention mines, mobile guns, and methods of observation. However, it is a good example of Churchill's selective use of evidence. At one time or another Jellicoe, Fisher, Jackson and Richmond all expressed the opinion that ships could not fight forts. They are not quoted. Nor does Churchill quote Wilson extensively on other aspects of the operation. Obviously it was not Wilson's opinion on this matter that Churchill found particularly valuable but the fact that it was an opinion that agreed with his own.

Churchill's attitude to the use of troops and the role he played in this matter must now be examined. It was suggested earlier that even if Churchill had not foreseen the necessity for troops to at least follow up a naval success, he must nevertheless have been aware of their need after seeing Jackson's memorandum of January 5th. Yet this issue was not raised at the War Council on January 13th, and The World Crisis offers no explanation for this omission. Not surprisingly there is no suggestion in The World Crisis that this was the result of deliberate deception on Churchill's part. The theory that Churchill first gained the War Council's agreement to the naval attack before pointing out the need for follow up or occupation troops cannot definitely be proved but in the light of the available evidence must remain the most likely explanation.

A second phase in the use of troops starts in February, when, as has been shown, Churchill seemed to change his mind about their need and likely role. At this stage the obvious need for troops had been recognized by the War Council and all the troops claimed by Churchill to be necessary for occupation and mopping up duties had been granted by the Council.

\(^{(1)}\) The World Crisis, p. 538-40.
These troops comprised the Royal Navy Division and the Anzacs, which together constituted a force adequate in both skill and numbers to their apparent tasks. Churchill, however, glosses over this fact in The World Crisis and concentrates instead on the withholding of the 29th. division by Kitchener. As was shown earlier it was Churchill's persistent attempts to regain this division which provided such strong evidence that his attitude towards a purely naval attack had changed and that he foresaw the duties of the troops as involving far more than mere occupation and mopping up. Churchill, however, states that in early February "I still adhered to the integrity of the naval plan". He can therefore hardly admit to his change of mind, nor can he reveal that Kitchener's main reason for withdrawing the 29th. division was that such a division was hardly necessary for the humble duties proposed by Churchill. Instead he falls back on the argument that Kitchener's decision was forced by pressure from G.H.Q. in France.

Following Churchill's statement that he still adhered to the integrity of the naval plan is a passage, which, if it is a true representation of Churchill's thinking at the time, shows the vague and uncertain foundations on which the naval plan was based. It reads,

"I had of course thought long and earnestly about what would follow if the naval attack succeeded and a British fleet entered the Marmora. I expected that if, and when, the Turkish forts began to fall, the Greeks would join us, and that the whole of their armies would be at our disposal thenceforward. I hoped that the apparition of a British fleet off Constantinople and the flight or destruction of the Goeben and the Breslau would be followed by political reactions of a far-reaching character, as the result of which the Turkish Government would negotiate or withdraw to Asia. I trusted that good diplomacy following hot-foot on a great war event, would induce Bulgaria to march on Adrianople. Lastly, I was sure that Russia, whatever her need elsewhere, would not remain indifferent to the fate of Constantinople and that further reinforcements would be forthcoming from her. It was on these quasi-political factors that I counted in our own military penury, for the means of exploiting and consolidating any success which might fall to the Fleet."
This passage is remarkable for several reasons. Firstly, Churchill's expectations of assistance from the Greeks, Bulgarians and Russians display an extreme degree of optimism. Certainly in the case of the Greeks Britain's previous negotiations would give no cause for such extravagant hopes. Secondly, and even more remarkably, this section implies that the successful passage of the Straits by the Fleet would in itself have no direct effect upon the Turkish Government but would merely be the means by which the Greeks, Bulgarians and Russians were encouraged to march on Turkey. Far from exploiting and consolidating a naval success these armies would be the sole means of obtaining a worthwhile result. The most likely explanation for this paragraph in *The World Crisis* is that it reflects not so much Churchill's belief that these foreign armies would be supplied, a result which even he must have considered unlikely, but his fears that a purely naval attack would achieve no decisive results. However, given his role in initiating a purely naval attack he is forced to defend the absence of British troops from this plan by suggesting that outside military help would have been available. His realization that such help would not eventuate was no doubt the reason for Churchill's persistent efforts to obtain British troops. None of this however is admitted in *The World Crisis*.

Churchill's belief that troops were essential to the Dardanelles operation combined with his need to disguise his real attitude no doubt largely explain his treatment of Kitchener in this section of *The World Crisis*. He introduces a lengthy section on Kitchener by saying, "The workings of Lord Kitchener's mind constituted at this period a feature almost as puzzling as the great war problem itself."¹ He then goes on to make two main points. The first is that Kitchener "kept the General Staff, or what was left of it, in a condition of complete subservience and practical abeyance".² The second point is that Kitchener "was torn

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¹ *The World Crisis*, p. 597.
² Ibid., p. 599.
between two perfectly clear-cut views of the war".¹ According to Churchill these were the views put forward by G.H.Q. in France that the war could only be won by killing Germans on the Western Front and the other put forward by the War Council, that the campaign for 1915 should take place in South Eastern Europe. (It is worth noting in passing that the War Council did not hold this view. They agreed to the initial enterprise at the Dardanelles solely because they were assured that it could be effected without diminishing the war effort in the west.) Churchill claims that it was possible to reconcile these policies by developing an offensive in the Balkans and then subsequently attacking on the Western Front in the autumn of 1916. However, he concludes, Kitchener failed to choose between them and "succumbed to conflicting forces and competing policies".²

The first of these criticisms is now generally accepted as being accurate. From the beginning of the war until late in 1915 no appreciations of the military position were prepared by the General Staff. Nor did Kitchener seem to discuss matters of Grand Strategy with the members of the Staff. The Chief of the General Staff during this period, General Wolfe-Murray stated that he had never been asked to give an appreciation on the Dardanelles expedition.³ It was not until the appointment of Robertson as C.I.G.S. in December 1915 that a proper Staff system was reconstituted, although Archibald Murray had gone some way towards it. Thus far we can agree with Churchill. However, his second point is much more dubious. It would appear that far from failing to make a choice between "east" and "west" Kitchener had made a choice to which he adhered throughout this period. He had chosen, as he was bound to do, the Western Front. It was in this theatre that the bulk of the British Army was deployed. It was here that a major defeat would mean the loss of the war. Therefore it was obvious that the security

¹ The World Crisis, p. 598.
² Ibid., p. 599.
³ Dardanelles Commission, Wolfe-Murray Evidence 10/10/16, Q2596 passim, Cab. 19/33.
of this front would have to be provided for as the first priority.
Kitchener accepted this and it was this fact that lay behind his state-
ments in January that there were no troops for extraneous operations.
Not that he was averse to action in other areas, but the troops used
for these operations would have to be surplus to British needs in France.
There is no need to look for a conspiracy on the part of G.H.Q. in France
to explain this choice. It was dictated by the logic of the situation.
But in The World Crisis Churchill cannot see this and he is led to condemn
as vacillation what was a perfectly consistent policy.

In contrast to the treatment given to the naval officers and
Kitchener, The World Crisis is generally reliable on the attitude of the
civilian members of the War Council to the operation as expressed at the
five important meetings of January 13th. and 28th. and February 9th., 16th.
and 19th. These meetings are all discussed and long quotations given from
the minutes of the first two. 1 Churchill claims that "the collective
opinion of the War Council" was strongly in favour of the naval attack. 2
This view would seem to be justified for it was demonstrated earlier that
none of the civilian members of the War Council spoke against the Carden
plan and that some members (Balfour and Grey) spoke in sweeping terms of
the results that could be expected from it. Nor were the members really
misled by Churchill on naval opinion towards the attack for it was seen
that most of them were well aware of the doubts and hesitations of Fisher
but made no attempt to question the First Sea Lord closely about his
opinions. However, it was also noticed that the War Council only approved
of the various stages of the plan because it was presented to them by
Churchill in a piecemeal way and this fact should not be lost sight of
when the attitude of the War Council is discussed.

Two rather general points remain to be discussed. It was suggested
in the earlier discussion that it was remarkable that no one suggested

(1) For January 13th. see The World Crisis, p. 542-3, January 28th.,
p. 589-90, February 9th., p. 601, February 16th., p. 603-4, February
19th., p. 604-5.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 591.
that the naval attack be delayed until troops were available to support it. Churchill discusses this point in *The World Crisis* but rejects it. He claims that if the naval attack had been delayed no operation at all would have been the result for "nothing less than the ocular demonstration and practical proof of the strategic meaning of the Dardanelles, and the effects of attacking it on every Balkan and Mediterranean Power, would have lighted up men's minds sufficiently to make a large abstraction of troops from the main theatre a possibility". This is a quite defensible opinion. It is possible that G.H.Q. in France would have resisted the diversion of four or five divisions at one blow. However, this passage also reinforces the view that Churchill led the War Council into a larger operation than they at first anticipated, for the suggestion that the naval attack was a necessary prerequisite for obtaining troops to be used against Turkey bears a strong resemblance to the view put forward earlier that Churchill first committed the War Council to the operation by suggesting that ships alone were necessary and only later pointed out that after all troops would be needed.

Churchill goes on to conclude that it was better to have had the type of muddled operation that eventuated at the Dardanelles than no operation at all. The positive effects of the operation are stated to be; the Italian entry into the war, the delayed accession of Bulgaria to the Central Powers and the destruction of "the flower of the Turkish Army, which...would certainly have fought us or our allies somewhere else" and the prevention of a disaster to the Russians in the Caucasus.

It only need be noted here that all these statements are extremely contentious. For example, the Italian entry into the war was to prove of dubious benefit to the allies; the obvious impotence of the force at Gallipoli may have hastened Bulgaria's adherence to the Central Powers; the

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(1) *The World Crisis*, p. 593.
Turkish Army need not have been fought elsewhere except perhaps on the line of the Suez Canal, a defensive operation that would have proved far less costly to Britain than the Gallipoli campaign; the Russians, as shown earlier, had defeated the Turks in the Caucasus before the naval attack got under way. Yet all these statements are made as facts in The World Crisis, a process clearly designed to condition the reader at this early stage in the narrative into accepting the immense value of the campaign, and to this end Churchill strengthened his original concluding sentence which read, "The pity was that we did not persevere", to the more dramatic, "Not to persevere - that was the crime."¹

In conclusion it can be seen that Churchill's defence of his Dardanelles policy rests on several dubious assumptions. Firstly he has claimed a concensus of opinion in favour of an attack on Gallipoli on the part of such colleagues as Lloyd George and Hankey when it was seen that no concensus existed. Secondly he claimed that his naval advisors Jackson, Oliver, Carden and at first Fisher, all approved the concept in principle when it is clear that they were at best only half-hearted in their approval of the naval attack. In particular it was noted that Churchill failed to get at the root cause of Fisher's dislike of the plan, although in Churchill's defence it was also suggested that never at any time did Fisher attempt to criticize the plan on its merits. Thirdly, Churchill has asserted that Carden's plan was of such a remarkable nature that the question of forcing the Dardanelles could be regarded in an entirely different light. In fact, it was shown earlier that the plan had not even dealt with the fundamental problems facing the fleet at the Straits. Fourthly, to focus attention on the strategic importance of the Dardanelles plan, Churchill has continued to understate the importance of the Borkum and Zeebrugge operations, when, as is revealed in the Churchill papers, the former operation continued to be regarded by him as

¹ Churchill Papers 8/139. See The World Crisis, p. 594.
the ultimately decisive stroke. Other strategic alternatives such as
the inducement of Holland into the war are not even mentioned.

There are other weaknesses in this section of *The World Crisis.*
Churchill has not admitted that he underwent a fundamental change of
mind on the feasibility of the naval attack and consequently on the use of
troops at the Dardanelles around mid-February and he offers no explanation
for his insistence that the 29th. division be sent other than the
unconvincing argument used at the time that these regular troops were
needed for mopping up operations. Indeed he has been so skilful in
disguising this change of mind that most other historians have not
noticed it. There is of course no explanation for his failure to
mention at the War Council of January 13th. that troops would be needed
in the operation although from his conversation with Jackson he must have
been aware of this fact.

Churchill's attempt to convince the reader of the validity of his
case by sheer weight of documentation has also been exposed. It has been
found that it is often not the quotation of a document itself which is
important but the interpretation which is placed upon it. An example
is Jackson's second memorandum on the Dardanelles which has been quoted
by Churchill to support his case when it was found that an equally valid
interpretation would show that Jackson was opposed to the line followed
in *The World Crisis.* In other instances key documents embarrasing to
Churchill's thesis have been omitted. Thus there is no mention of his
two letters to Asquith of late December which advocated the Borkum
operation; not even a summary of Hankey's Boxing Day Memorandum is
included and Jackson's first memorandum has not been published.

Thus Churchill's claim that he makes no important statement of fact
relating to naval operations or Admiralty business without unimpeachable
documentary proof begs several important questions regarding the
selection, interpretation and omission of "important facts". These
points should be kept in mind throughout the discussion of the remaining Dardanelles Chapters of The World Crisis.
While the War Council debated the need for troops at the Dardanelles, preparations for the naval attack continued. At the Admiralty an investigation was made into which old battleships would be best suited for firing at extreme range. On the 22nd of February John de Robeck was appointed, on whose recommendation is not clear, as second in command to Carden. Orders for the minesweeping force were completed on the 27th and Carden was informed that the work of fitting mine-bumpers to the battleships had begun. Then on February 5th, the Dardanelles operation orders were sent to Carden. In regard to ships and seaplanes, Carden had been provided with almost exactly what he had asked for - 12 battleships (he received only 2 dreadnoughts instead of 3), 4 light cruisers, 16 destroyers, 6 submarines and 6 seaplanes (he had asked for 4). Twenty-one minesweepers were sent while Carden had only specified twelve. However, the twenty-one included none of the fast "fleet-sweepers" Carden had requested and this omission was to become increasingly important. The orders had several peculiar features. They commenced by saying "Queen Elizabeth had been detailed on account of her long range 15-inch guns. It is particularly important that her guns should not be unduly worn nor a large quantity of her valuable ammunition expended....[The ammunition of the other battleships] is limited, though not to the same extent, and wasteful expenditure of ammunition may result in the operations having to be abandoned before a successful conclusion is arrived at". It will be remembered that one of the major premises on which Carden's plan was based was that it would require a large amount of ammunition. Jackson had also pointed this out and agreed with

(1) Dardanelles Commission, Oliver's Evidence 25/10/16, Q25170, Cab. 19/33.
(2) Oliver to de Robeck 22/1/15, Adm. 137/96.
(3) See Adm. 137/1090. Fisher wrote "approve" on these orders.
(4) Admiralty to Carden 8/2/15, Adm. 137/96.
(5) "Dardanelles Operation Orders" 5/2/15, prepared by Admiral Oliver, Adm. 137/1089.
(6) Ibid.
Carden's figures on the estimated expenditure of shells. Now Oliver, who prepared the operations orders in place of Jackson who was sick, sought to place limits on the amount of ammunition to be used. Neither Jackson, when he returned to the Admiralty, nor Churchill commented on this extraordinary reversal of policy. Oliver also stated that the Queen Elizabeth would be able to destroy the forts with between 5 and 10 shells using the number of shells needed by the Germans to destroy the Antwerp forts as a guide. However, as the Mitchell Committee was to point out, the situations could not be compared. At Antwerp a hit on the fort meant that falling masonry then made the guns unworkable. At the Dardanelles most of the guns were in more open works and would only be destroyed if actually hit by a shell. As was shown, the chance of hitting a gun at long range was about 2%; therefore it would obviously take many more than 10 shells to destroy, say, a five gun fort.

Later in the instructions a caution was issued to Carden. "It is not expected or desired that the operations should be hurried to the extent of taking large risks and courting heavy losses". Thus the premise on which Churchill's original enquiry had been made (importance of result would justify severe loss) was quietly abandoned. However, there was apparently no divergence of view here between the naval staff and those members of Carden's staff responsible for the plan, for a handwritten draft of the plan in the Godfrey Papers states that "To obtain greatest moral effect straits should be forced without the loss of a ship". Despite these important modifications of the original plan Churchill still felt able to write "Excellent" on these orders.

(1) "Dardanelles Operation Orders" 5/2/15, prepared by Admiral Oliver, Adm. 137/1089.
(3) Dardanelles Operation Orders 5/2/15, Adm. 137/1089.
(4) Draft Plan - Godfrey Papers 69/33/1.
(5) Note by Churchill 5/2/15, on Dardanelles Operation Orders, Adm. 137/1089.
On February 19th. at 9.51 a.m. a combined British and French squadron opened fire on the entrance forts at the Dardanelles. Ten battleships took part in the opening attack (Inflexible, Vengeance, Albion, Cornwallis, Irresistible, Triumph, Suffren, Bouvet, Charlemagne and Gaudious), six ships firing and four supporting. They were joined by Agamemnon and Queen Elizabeth late in the afternoon. Their targets were four forts, two on the Asian coast (Kum Kali and Orkanie) and two near Cape Hellas (Sedd-el-Bahr and Hellas). Between them these forts mounted 17 larger guns (between 8.2" and 11") and 11 smaller guns and howitzers.

From the beginning some of the problems that were to plague the operation became obvious. The opening salvoes were fired when the ships were under way. This was found to be too inaccurate and the ships were ordered to anchor. Two seaplanes, ordered to spot for the Inflexible, proved totally ineffectual due to problems with their radio equipment. It was soon found that smothering the forts with fire produced only poor results. Orkanie and Hellas were hit on many occasions but when the ships closed in all guns in the forts opened fire. It was then realized that it was necessary to hit each gun to put it out of action and as Keyes said, at a range of 13,000 yards this was a "matter of chance". It was also a matter of having a large amount of ammunition for as stated, only two shells in a hundred could be expected to hit a gun. Yet in line with Admiralty instructions, Carden had issued an order that "Strict economy of ammunition must be practised on all occasions". That this instruction was obeyed is obvious from the tables of firing from the first day. The Triumph fired only 14 shells from its main armament and the Inflexible only 18. The bombardment was, therefore, by no means heavy and at 5.20

(1) Admiral Carden, Narrative of Events 19th. February to 16th. March, Adm. 137/38.
(2) Ibid.
(4) Ibid., p. 145.
(6) Carden, Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
(7) Keyes to his wife 20/2/15, Keyes Papers, 2/8.
(8) Admiral Carden, "Orders for the forcing of the Dardanelles by the Allied Squadron" 14/2/15, Adm. 137/38.
(9) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 35.
it was broken off. 1 The results were, to say the least, disappointing.

Carden had intended to resume the attack the next day but then another factor to which very little attention had been paid - the weather - intervened. A strong gale blew up from the south-west and it was to be six days before firing could be resumed.2

During this interval a desperate debate on the provision of troops for the operation continued. On the 19th. Fisher introduced a new element by warning Hankey that as German and Austrian submarines might make naval operations untenable, the need for rapid military action was urgent.3 At the same time Churchill urged Kitchener to send a General to the Dardanelles to co-ordinate troop movements.4 To these voices was added that of Lloyd George. In a Cabinet memorandum he urged that a large force should be ready to occupy Gallipoli and then used to "bring in" the 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) million troops of Bulgaria, Roumania and Greece. He warned that a failure at the Dardanelles "will be disastrous in the Balkans".5 Churchill hastened to agree with this analysis. He stated that there were 109,000 troops capable of being concentrated within striking distance of Gallipoli (29th. + Territorial Division in England, (33,000) RND (11,000), Anzacs (39,000), French Division (18,000), Russian Brigade (8,000). After occupying Constantinople and "compelling" the surrender of Turkey in Europe (note that initially this was to have been achieved by the fleet alone) this force could combine with the Bulgarian, Roumanian or Greek armies if any of those countries joined the war.6 In another memorandum Balfour pointed out the weakness of the plan. The War Council had no idea whether 100,000 troops would be sufficient for the tasks

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(2) Carden, Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
(3) Fisher to Hankey 19/2/15, Hankey Papers, Cab. 63/4.
(4) Churchill to Kitchener 20/2/15, C.V.3, p. 535; Churchill to Kitchener 22/2/15, C.V.3, p. 543-4. On this occasion he suggested that Hunter-Weston would be the most appropriate man.
(5) Lloyd George, "Some Further Considerations on the Conduct of the War" 22/2/15, Cab. 42/1/39.
(6) Cabinet Memorandum by Churchill 23/2/15, Cab. 37/124/43.
outlined by Churchill. They had no reliable estimates of the number of Turkish troops in the vicinity of Constantinople; nor had they attempted to ascertain from the Balkan States the number of troops they considered necessary to induce them to march. In fact these fundamental questions were never answered and no estimates were ever made of the force required to achieve success.

The War Council of February 24th. provided the next opportunity for Churchill to put pressure on Kitchener to release the 29th. Division and he repeated his argument that 100,000 troops were available to be concentrated at the Dardanelles, adding that "we were now absolutely committed to seeing through the attack on the Dardanelles". Although many of the Council members had only agreed to the attack on the grounds that it could be broken off in the event of a failure, no one challenged this statement. Kitchener, however, for the first time queried Churchill's commitment to the naval attack. He asked "if Mr. Churchill now contemplated a land attack". Mr. Churchill said he did not; but it was quite conceivable that the naval attack might be temporarily held up by mines, and some local military operation required. This statement also went unchallenged but its first half is hardly compatible with the second for if the naval attack was held up by mines, the only effective help that could be rendered by the military was the occupation of the peninsula. Thus Churchill was indeed contemplating a land attack but, because of his constant advocacy of the purely naval operation, could not say so directly. This "indirect approach" enabled Kitchener to strike at the weak point of Churchill's argument. If Churchill still thought the naval attack would succeed, for what purpose were 100,000 troops including regulars required? Kitchener pointed out that if the naval attack succeeded, all

(1) Cabinet Memorandum by Balfour 24/2/15, W.O. 159/3.
(2) War Council Minutes 24/2/15, Cab. 42/1/42.
(3) Ibid.
that was contemplated for the troops was a cruise in the Sea of Marmora for which purpose the Naval Division and the Anzacs were quite good enough. 1 Once again Churchill had no real answer and had to fall back on the usual arguments of using the troops to influence the situation in the Balkans. On one issue however Churchill had obtained a commitment from Kitchener. In the course of the discussion Kitchener had said that "if the fleet would not get through the Straits unaided, the army ought to see the business through. The effect of a defeat in the Orient would be very serious. There could be no going back."2 It was at this meeting that Hankey circulated the 1906 C.I.D. paper on the Dardanelles that Asquith had quoted at the February 19th. meeting. It will be remembered that this paper thought both a purely naval attack and a combined operation fraught with too many difficulties to be recommended. However, Hankey added a note which said in part that since 1906 "a great many of the factors have changed, particularly ...the development of naval guns and gunnery, so that its conclusions cannot be regarded as entirely applicable to modern conditions"3 and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this rider had the effect of destroying Hankey's original purpose. The only positive decision reached by the War Council, was to instruct General Birdwood, the Anzac Commander-in-Chief, to contact Carden to obtain his thoughts on what military aid he considered that the navy might require.4

In fact Carden had already been contacted by General Maxwell, Commander-in-Chief Egypt, on which, if any, of the Anzacs or the 2,000 marines which had arrived at Lemnos (a Greek island "unofficially ceded" to Britain) be required.5 Carden was completely bemused by this

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1) War Council Minutes 24/2/15, Cab. 42/1/42.
2) Ibid.
3) "A Note by the Secretary" 24/2/15, Cab. 38/12/60.
4) War Council Minutes 24/2/15, Cab. 42/1/42.
5) Maxwell to Carden 21/2/15, Birdwood Papers, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, DRL 3376, 2nd Series, AWM File, 419/10/7, Box 213.
communication. He had been told that 8-10,000 infantry would be available if the operation went favourably¹ but as only one day's firing had been completed, he could only reply that he had no immediate need for troops.² Thus were the confusions of the War Council reflected by the local commanders.

The naval attack was resumed on the 25th. Although the weather had moderated, it was still found too rough to get any planes into the air for spotting.³ However, events seemed to proceed more smoothly than on the 19th. The Queen Elizabeth dismantled one of the guns at Hellas and the fort was soon entirely out of action. By 3.00 a.m. the forts had virtually ceased firing and an area up to the entrance of the Straits was swept though no mines were found.⁴ However, one of the ships had been hit 6 times and had to withdraw to Lemnos for repairs⁵ and Carden had found it necessary to censure another ship for using too much ammunition.⁶ In summing up the day's operations Carden told Churchill that the "Forts at the entrance of Dardanelles...are reduced".⁷ The next day this was found to be inaccurate. Landing parties at Orkanie and Sedd-el-Bahr found most of the guns intact and they blew up 5 of the major pieces.⁸ On this day, for the first time, ships fired on the defences inside the Straits but to no effect.⁹ A gale then delayed operations for a further two days.¹⁰ On March 1st, when landing parties were put ashore at Kum Kale. 8 of the 10 guns were found to be in working order. These were destroyed as were 6 field guns.¹¹ Most of the guns at the entrance forts were now out of action. However, only 3 had been destroyed by the bombardment and it should have been obvious that the

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¹ Minute by Churchill 20/2/15, C.V.3, p. 536.
² Carden to Maxwell 23/2/15, Birdwood Papers, AWM File, 419/10/7, Box 213.
³ Jones, The War In The Air V2, p. 15.
⁴ Carden Report, Adm. 137/38.
⁵ Diary of Lt. Macleish 25-26/2/15, Macleish Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, [Macleish was aboard Agamemnon].
⁷ Carden to Churchill 25/2/15, C.V.3, p. 565.
⁸ Carden to the Admiralty 27/2/15, Adm. 137/109.
⁹ Carden - Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
¹⁰ Ibid.
the landings were an essential feature of the attack. Meanwhile operations inside the Straits were not progressing well. At times Vengeance, Ocean, Albion, Triumph, Irresistible and Majestic were used to try to locate howitzers and field batteries which were firing on the ships from both sides of the Straits. No success was obtained, the guns being "extremely hard to locate".1

While these operations were in progress Churchill had suffered another series of reverses over the 29th. Division. At the War Council on the 26th. Churchill stated that "At the previous meeting Lord Kitchener had asked him what was the use to be made of any large number of troops at Constantinople. His reply was that they were required to occupy Constantinople and to compel a surrender of all Turkish forces remaining in Europe after the fleet had obtained command of the Sea of Marmora".2 They could then be used to dominate the Balkans. The point had obviously long since been passed when any members of the War Council were prepared to point out to Churchill that he had promised these objectives using the fleet alone. It could also have been pointed out that even the numbers recommended by Churchill (100,000) would not be sufficient to "compel" any Turkish surrender (there were at least 400,000 Turkish troops in the area of the fleet's operations) unless the Turks felt disposed to capitulate. Nor was the force large enough to influence events in the Balkans.

Certainly Kitchener was not moved by Churchill's arguments - he said he felt sure "from his knowledge of Constantinople and the East, that the whole situation in Constantinople would change the moment the fleet had secured a passage through the Dardanelles";3 which after all had been the argument Churchill had been using himself until recently. A long

1 Carden, Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
2 War Council Minutes 26/2/15, Cab. 42/1/47.
3 Ibid.
discussion on the use of the 29th. Division followed. In the course of it Churchill made the remarkable statement that although 63,000 men (that is the available force minus the 29th. Division) were not enough to bring in the Balkan States, 85,000 would do the trick, surely one of the most optimistic statements of the war. However, Kitchener refused to budge and Churchill was driven to say that "If a disaster occurred in Turkey owing to insufficiency of troops, he must disclaim all responsibility", an extraordinary remark from the man who had convinced the War Council that no troops at all would be needed.

The next day another contretemps occurred between Churchill and Kitchener. Churchill was informed by Graeme Thomson, the Director of Transports at the Admiralty, that on Kitchener's orders he had cancelled the preparations to transport the 29th. Division which had been ordered by the War Council on February 19th. Churchill protested to Kitchener who claimed he did not remember issuing the order. Work was immediately resumed on preparing the ships but relations between the two service ministers had reached a new low.

However, at this point the mood at the Admiralty seemed to change and a new confidence in Carden's attack was noticeable amongst the naval personnel. That this euphoria was hardly justified by the experience of the bombarding squadron should be obvious from the previous narrative. On the other hand it was known that the outer forts had been rendered ineffective in less than a week (though not by the bombardment, but this was perhaps not made altogether clear by Carden) and that the bombardment had made a great impression in Bulgaria and Italy and had resulted in

(1) War Council Minutes 26/2/15, Cab. 42/1/47.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Thomson to Churchill 27/2/15, C.V.3, p. 585.
(4) Churchill to Kitchener 27/2/15, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/33.
new proposals of help from Greece. For whatever reason, it was thought that Carden might get through. The new feeling of optimism was recorded by Lady Richmond. "Winston has now become tremendously keen about the whole business, & behaves as though it was all his own idea...He [that is Richmond] is enchanted at the success of the Bombardment up to now." Richmond asked to be sent out to Carden in some capacity but was told by Oliver that "it wd be all over before he cd get there".

Even Fisher, who the week before had written, "Diplomacy and the Cabinet have forced upon us the Dardanelles business. So damnable in taking away the Queen Elizabeth" could now write, "We seem to be getting on nicely in the Dardanelles". Hamilton, the Second Sea Lord, who later told the Dardanelles Commission that he had always been opposed to the naval attack, told his son, "We have already knocked out the 5 forts at the entrance...there is no difficulty dealing with other forts...then all is plain sailing as the Bosphorus forts all face North so that we can attack them in rear...it will be a great thing taking Constantinople and opening up the Black Sea." In the van of the enthusiasts was of course Churchill. On the 28th, he outlined to Grey a draft armistice to be concluded with Turkey. He thought Britain "cannot be content with anything less than the surrender of everything Turkish in Europe". At the same time he called for a report on the reduction of the Bosphorus defences and asked Carden for an estimate of the number of days needed to arrive in the Marmora.

The mood spread to other members of the War Council. Hankey wrote a detailed paper entitled "After The Dardanelles; The Next Steps" which
discussed what peace terms might be offered to Turkey. This question was discussed by the War Council on March 3rd. The success of the fleet now seemed to be a foregone conclusion. Churchill re-iterated that they must seek the surrender of Turkey in Europe. "All must pass into our hands, and we ought to accept nothing less". He suggested that the Turkish army ought to be hired as mercenaries. Grey suggested that Bulgaria and perhaps Italy be invited to join the Allies but Asquith said "it was by no means improbable that Bulgaria was already on the move". The future of Constantinople was also discussed, the general opinion being that Britain and France would not oppose its cession to Russia provided they received compensation in Asia Minor and Syria.

Even the importance of the 29th. Division had receded. Carden had told Churchill that he expected to be in the Marmora in 14 days. Churchill now informed Kitchener of this fact and stated that 40,000 troops (now apparently regarded as sufficient should be available for "land operations on Turkish soil" by March 20th. He said he still regarded the provision of the 29th. Division as "grave and urgent" but added "I wish to make it clear that the naval operations in the Dardanelles cannot be delayed for troop movements, as we must get into the Marmora as soon as possible in the normal course". On the same day he wrote to Grey that the Greeks should be told that "the Admiralty believe it in their power to force the Dardanelles without military assistance".

Subsequently Churchill did not send this letter but the prospect of Greek participation was rapidly disappearing. On the 3rd. Buchanan told Grey that the Russians had informed him that on no account would they allow

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(1) "After The Dardanelles: The Next Steps" 1/3/15, Cab. 42/2/1.
(2) War Council Minutes 3/3/15, Cab. 42/2/3.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(8) Ibid.
Greek soldiers to enter Constantinople. This veto was later modified, the Russians allowing the Greeks to operate in areas (excluding Constantinople) designated by the Allied commanders. In the meantime, however, the pro-Allied Venizelos government had resigned, to be replaced by a more neutralist administration and all chances of Greek aid were at an end. It was once thought that the Russian veto was the direct cause of the "loss" of the Greek divisions. Churchill certainly took this line at the time and was very critical of the Russians for their attitude. It is now known however that the Greek General Staff were absolutely opposed to sending any force to the Dardanelles, as they had been in August, because of the uncertain attitude of Bulgaria, that the King was in total agreement with this policy, and that this position had been arrived at before the details of the Russian veto were known. Therefore the second Greek offer was as chimerical as the first, having once more been made by Venizelos on his own initiative without consultation with the military authorities.

In other areas in the Balkans the British were finding that the naval attack had not made the complex diplomatic situation any less intractable. On March 4th. Bax-Ironside reported that the position of the pro-German Cabinet had not been shaken by the naval attack and that they were determined to remain neutral. The Prime Minister remained convinced that the fleet would not get through. Much the same view was expressed by the King of Roumania. Indeed, in some ways the Dardanelles operation had made the situation more complicated. The rumour soon spread that Britain and France had offered Constantinople and the Straits to Russia.

(2) Buchanan to Grey 8/3/15, in Ibid.
(3) Elliot to Grey 6/3/15, in Ibid.
(6) Cunningham, The Greek Army and The Dardanelles, p. 130-1.
This immediately aroused the hostility of the small Balkan States who were more content with Turkish control of the Straits than with the prospect of a great power controlling the vital waterway. To counter the Allied move it was suggested by Bulgaria that Greece and Roumania join her in opposing Russian aspirations in the area. These moves obviously made the task of trying to induce the Balkans into the war on the same side as Russia more difficult. Allied action at the Dardanelles was starting to create as many problems as it was supposed to solve.

At the Dardanelles the naval attack resumed on March 2nd. Canopus, Cornwallis and Swiftsure went inside the Straits and fired at fort No. 8 (Dardanos). The ships were kept moving by concealing howitzers and field guns "which could not be silenced", and it was not even clear if these guns were located on the north or the south side of the Straits. The shortage of ammunition was obviously hampering firing for Cornwallis only fired 8 shells from its main armament. Not surprisingly no hits were reported on the guns of the fort. Carden's position was not made any easier by a note from the Admiralty informing him that there was a shortage of high explosive shells (ideal for use against forts) and that most of his future supply would consist of armour-piercing type. On the 3rd. three more battleships attacked forts 7 and 8. Again none of the guns appeared to be hit. Again one of the ships was warned for firing too many (47) 12" shells. Ominously the Triumph which had taken part in the bombardment of the German forts of Tsingtao, reported that "an opinion was formed that no more progress can be made without the assistance of land forces, to supplement and make good the work done by the Fleet".

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(1) Elliot to Grey 4/3/15, P.O. 371/2243.
(2) Carden - Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
(3) Swiftsure Report 2/3/15, in Ibid.
(4) Cornwallis Report 2/3/15, in Ibid.
On the 4th. there was another setback. Companies of marines were landed to complete the destruction of the forts at Kum Kale and Sedd-el-Bahr. Both parties were stopped by heavy fire from large numbers of Turks. Only two machine guns were destroyed at a cost of 41 casualties at Kum Kale alone. This was indeed a gloomy sign for if the guns could only be destroyed by landing parties and the landing parties could not land, then clearly new factors would have to be introduced or the landing of much larger numbers of men attempted.

One possible solution was tried on the 5th. when the Queen Elizabeth bombarded the forts at the narrows across the peninsula from a point off Gaba Tepe. This too proved a failure. Firstly, the ranges involved were enormous (16,000 yards). Then it was found that the spotting force was totally inadequate. Three planes were sent up. The first crashed and the pilot of the second was wounded and forced to land. The third managed to signal several corrections to the ship but could not rise high enough to observe accurately and could not proceed more than three miles inland because engine failure would have forced a landing on Turkish territory. The conclusion drawn from this by Carden was that seaplanes were not powerful enough to use as spotters. "An aeroplane is required for this purpose, and it is a waste of ammunition to fire without the help of one". But in his original proposals Carden had specified that seaplanes be used, and the only aeroplanes present were less powerful than the seaplanes. Nor would it be an easy task obtaining them, for Maxwell, who had already realized the deficiency, had been told by the War Office that there was none available.

Waste of ammunition or not, the Queen Elizabeth resumed indirect firing
on the 6th. By now the Turks had rushed several howitzers to the Gaba
Tepe coast and their fire drove the ship out to 21,000 yards. Consequently
only 8 rounds were fired, with little effect. Neither did the five
battleships firing inside the Straits achieve any worthwhile results.¹
Carden concluded that the day's action "confirms the opinion that an
efficient aeroplane is necessary in default of an observation station
ashore, which latter is unobtainable without military operations on the
Gallipoli Peninsula."²

On the 7th. a slightly more concentrated attack was attempted using
the entire French Squadron supported by Lord Nelson and Agamemnon. A
heavy fire was opened on the narrows forts but more damage was done to the
ships than was inflicted on the Turks. Keyes reported that the plunging
shots of the mobile howitzers were very destructive. "The Agamemnon had a
hole in her upper deck 16 feet in diameter".³ A new approach was tried
on the 8th. The Queen Elizabeth was brought inside the Straits and
supported by four battleships and fired at fort No. 13 at the narrows.
Seaplane spotting again proved ineffective, this time due to low cloud.⁴
In all only 8 15" shells were fired and nothing was accomplished.⁵

Operations on the 8th. marked the last attempt before the full scale
attack on the 18th. to silence the intermediate defences and the narrows
forts. The long range bombardment had failed utterly. Because of the
need to conserve ammunition only four or five ships had been used at any
one time and they had only been permitted to fire between 10 and 40
shells each. With an expected hitting rate of 2% and a total of 37 large
guns to hit at the narrows⁶ alone, it would obviously be a long time
before the fleet got through. Furthermore the aerial spotting had not

¹ Carden to the Admiralty 7/8/15, C.V.3, p. 652.
² Carden to the Admiralty 10/3/15, Adm. 137/38.
³ Keyes to his wife 8/3/15, Keyes Papers, 2/9.
proved effective and there was no prospect of an early improvement in the efficiency of the force. The obvious answer was that the forts would have to be attacked at closer range but to do this the minefields, which were keeping the battleships at a distance, would have to be swept. Thus a new phase of the operation began.

In fact minesweeping operations had been proceeding inside the Straits since March 1st. Very little progress had been made. The ships provided were North Sea trawlers manned by civilian crews. It has been suggested that when they were selected the officer concerned took the opportunity of "getting rid of most of his rotters". But even if the crews had been first class they faced formidable difficulties. The minefields (10 main lines - 387 mines) were protected by 48 guns and 5 searchlights, all trained on the sweeping area. It was then found that with their sweeps out the trawlers could hardly make headway against the 4 knot current flowing down the Dardanelles; in other words, they were practically stationary targets for the minefield defences. Until the night of the 9th.-10th. March heavy fire from the defences had prevented the sweepers from even entering the first line of the minefield. Sweeping at night had proved no more successful for the accompanying warships had been unable to extinguish the searchlights which made the poorly protected trawlers perfect targets for the defending batteries. On the night of the 9th. a determined effort was made to reach the minefield. Seven sweepers protected by destroyers, the light cruiser Amethyst, and the battleship Canopus entered the Straits. Under the concentrated fire of the warships several trawlers got above the minefield and began sweeping down with the current. However, only one pair of trawlers got their

(1) Dewar to Richmond N.D., Dewar Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, VII.
(2) See Map "The Dardanelles" in Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.2.
(3) "Defences of the Dardanelles" by Gen. Percival, Adm. 116/1713.
(4) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 54-55.
(5) Carden - Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
sweeps to work effectively.\(^1\) The result of all this effort was that just two mines were swept, one of the trawlers was sunk and another badly damaged by a 6" shell.\(^2\) The next night the civilian crews refused to face the heavy fire of the batteries. They fled and although they were rounded up by a destroyer and forced to make another attempt, their advance "was carried out so slowly & reluctantly... that I had to give the order to retire in order to get the vessels clear of the Dardanelles by daylight".\(^3\) The offer of a bonus for working under fire produced no better results\(^4\) and the failure of French minesweepers on the night of the 12th.\(^5\) decided Carden to man the sweeping force with volunteers from the Fleet. Although under the naval crews the trawlers entered the minefield they met with no more success than the civilians. "All except two were so damaged that they could not get their sweeps out - kites were smashed - wires cut and winches destroyed by gunfire - they were hit by projectiles ranging from 6" to shrapnel."\(^6\) The two sweepers that managed to get their sweeps out did succeed in cutting loose several mines but the results of the night were disappointing.\(^7\)

By now almost everybody at the Dardanelles had come to the conclusion that military aid would be essential if the fleet were to get through. Not surprisingly the military had been the first to arrive at this position. On the 5th. Birdwood, who had been in touch with Carden, told Kitchener that he doubted if the navy could force the passage unassisted and that he considered "the Admiral's forecast too sanguine".\(^8\) Maxwell agreed with this appreciation and urged Kitchener to land a strong force on the Balair Isthmus.\(^9\) By this time the fleet's confidence was also

\(^1\) Carden, Narrative, Adm. 137/38.
\(^2\) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 54-55.
\(^3\) HMS Amethyst, Diary of Events 11/3/15, Adm. 137/38.
\(^6\) Keyes to his wife 15/3/15, Keyes Papers, 2/9.
\(^7\) Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.2, p. 209.
\(^8\) Birdwood to Kitchener 5/3/15, Birdwood Papers, AWM File 419/10/17, Box 213.
\(^9\) Maxwell to Fitzgerald 8/3/15, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/61.
waning. De Robeck had reached the conclusion that the forts could be
-dominated but not destroyed and that in this case even if warships passed
into the Marmora, the passage would be barred to the unarmoured supply
ships necessary to maintain them there.

"The situation is therefore reduced to a point at which strong
military co operation is considered essential in order to clear
at least one side of the straits of the enemy and their movable
batteries. I am not prepared to suggest the proper place
for landing or to indicate the method the military should employ but I
would point out from my almost daily personal observation\(^5\)
that the enemy are continuously making new entrenchments and
improving their position at the southern end of the straits
and a landing at Morto Bay and Seddul Bahr with a view to
attacking the ridge of which Achi Baba is the commanding point
would be extremely costly.\(^1\)

This must be deemed an extremely interesting statement in the light of
further developments.

Even Carden was coming around to this view. It has already been
shown that he realized it might be essential to capture an observation
post on shore. By the 9th. he was telegraphing to the Admiralty that
"operations are...likely to be prolonged".\(^2\) On the 10th. he was forced
to admit that "The methodical reduction of the forts is not feasible without
expenditure of ammunition out of all proportion to that available....
Our experience shows gunfire alone will not render forts innocuous most
of the guns must be destroyed individually by demolition."\(^3\) The
implication behind all these statements was that the military would have
to land to destroy the guns; but, although there is evidence that Carden
had privately arrived at this position,\(^4\) he was apparently not yet willing
to recommend to Churchill that the naval attack be called off until

(1) Rear-Admiral Second in Command, Eastern Mediterranea
Squadron, "Appreciation of present position in Dardanelles and proposals for
(3) Carden to the Admiralty 10/3/15, Adm. 137/1089.
(4) Dewar K.G.B., The Dardanelles Campaign, Naval Review, V. 45, April
1957, p. 153. (Dewar is quoting from Wemyss' Diary.)
troops were ready. Limpus, on the other hand, was more than willing to make his opinions known. He told Carden,1 the captain of one of the bombarding ships 2 and the Admiralty3 that he considered a landing in force on the Peninsula essential. No reply was ever received from the Admiralty.

At home the War Council were still parcelling up the Turkish Empire. It was considered that if Russia were to have Constantinople, the opposition should be involved in the decision and Asquith invited Bonar Law and Lansdowne to a War Council meeting held to consider the question.4 It was mutually agreed at the meeting that Constantinople should be offered to Russia subject to French and British desiderata in the rest of the Turkish Empire being met.5

Kitchener also announced that as the position was "sufficiently secure" he was now prepared to release the 29th. Division. Exactly how the security of the Western Front had increased since February 26th. is not clear. Nor did Kitchener elucidate on the role that he expected these regular troops to play in the east. Perhaps he too was effected by the general atmosphere of optimism and considered that the 29th. Division might form the nucleus of a large British army which would operate in the Balkans after the Turkish surrender. In any case he now estimated that there were 130,000 troops available "against Constantinople" (Naval Brigade 11,000, Anzacs 34,000, 29th. Division 18,000, French Division 18,000, Russian troops 48,000).6 The Russian forces were largely theoretical although, if Constantinople had fallen, no doubt a Russian contingent would have been made available. There were no more questions about the use to which these troops would be put or why so many were needed. Churchill

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(2) Limpus to Captain Phillimore 14/3/15, Adm. 116/3491.
(3) Limpus to the Admiralty 10/3/15, in Ibid.
(5) War Council Minutes 10/3/15, Cab. 42/2/5.
(6) Ibid.
had won his point but the delay in the preparation of the transport for the 29th. Division meant that it could not sail until March 15th.¹

With such a large force being assembled it was considered that a senior General should be appointed to command. Birdwood had thought that he would head the land attack but on the 10th. Kitchener told him that General Sir Ian Hamilton was to be sent out from England.² Churchill immediately suggested that Hamilton and his staff should be sent out at once³ but Kitchener replied that the General could not leave until he had studied the situation thoroughly.⁴ Unhappily for Hamilton a thorough study of the situation never took place. On the 12th. he was taken to meet Kitchener and shown the Greek plan for a landing at Gallipoli.⁵ This could have been of little use as it will be remembered that it contemplated only an unopposed landing. Calwell also stated that he discussed the 1906 CID plans with Hamilton, although Hamilton later claimed that he was denied a copy of the paper.⁶ In the event Hamilton left with only an out of date map, and a 1912 handbook of the Turkish Army⁷ although according to an officer in the War Office there were "fat envelopes and files by the dozen, simply bulging with information and references and plans about the Turkish forts...current landing places and topographical details of all sorts".⁸ In fact, these oversights only became important in retrospect as it was clear from Hamilton's instructions that military force was only to be used "in the event of the Fleet failing to get through after every effort has been exhausted",⁹ and opinion in London was still confident of a naval success. Hamilton was warned, however, that "Having

(1) War Council Minutes 10/3/15, Cab. 42/2/5.
(2) Kitchener to Birdwood 10/3/15, Birdwood Papers, AWM File 419/10/7, Box 213.
(5) Dardanelles Commission, Hamilton's Evidence 13/10/16, Q4318, Cab. 19/33.
(6) Ibid., Callwell's Evidence 12/10/16, Q5777.
(7) Ibid., Hamilton's Evidence 13/10/16.
entered on the project of forcing the Straits, there can be no idea of abandoning the scheme. It will require time, patience, and methodical plans of co-operation between the naval and military commanders.¹

Hamilton and a few staff officers dug out from the War Office left for France on the rather inappropriately named HMS Foresight² and travelled from Marseilles to the Dardanelles in the Phaeton, arriving just in time to witness the culmination of the naval effort on March 18th.

The origins of that attack, as with so much concerning the Dardanelles, lay with Churchill. Although on the 9th. he wrote confidently to Jellicoe that affairs at the Dardanelles were going so well that the Grand Fleet should begin preparations for the attack on Borkum,³ he was clearly worried about Carden's lack of progress. As early as the fifth he had asked Carden to report on minesweeping operations and whether any ships had "yet opened fire on the forts at the narrows". He concluded the letter, "This is what I am anxious to know"⁴ but then perhaps to conceal his anxiety from the Admiral, crossed out the last line. However, he was convinced that Carden was not pressing the attack with enough vigour and on the 11th. he informed the commander that, although "Your original instructions laid stress on caution and deliberate methods...we recognize clearly that at a certain period...you will have to press hard for a decision and we desire to know whether you consider that point has now been reached. We shall support you in well conceived action for forcing a decision even if regrettable losses are entailed."⁵

Carden responded by saying that he too considered that the time had come for vigorous action. This however can hardly have been his real view, for he added, "In my opinion military operations on large scale

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³ Churchill to Jellicoe 9/3/15, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss. 48890.
should be commenced immediately in order to secure my communication line immediately Fleet enters Sea of Marmora".  

Whether Fisher agreed with the decision to make a major naval attack on March 18th. is not known. After his brief burst of optimism his attitude to the operation had hardened again and he was soon writing to Churchill. "The more I consider the Dardanelles - the less I like it!" However, on the 12th., that is after Churchill's letter to Carden suggesting the attack, Fisher commented, "Carden to press on! and Kitchener to occupy the deserted forts at extremity of Gallipoli and mount howitzers there!" and on the 14th. he offered to go to Gallipoli and take command of the naval forces himself. This, however, should be looked upon as a vote of no confidence in Carden rather than a sign of any renewed enthusiasm for the naval attack for he told Jellicoe the next day that "Things are going badly at the Dardanelles!" and on the 16th. he wrote to Churchill "The decisive theatre remains and ever will be the North Sea - our attention is being distracted - Schleswig Holstein, the Baltic, Borkum are not living with us now! Your big idea of 3 British armies in Holland in May obliterated by Bulair! and so to bed! (as Pepys would say!)."

The only other member of the Admiralty to express an opinion on the operation at this time was Jackson. On the 11th. he prepared a paper for Oliver saying that he deprecated an attempt to rush the Straits but advocated a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula in force. He thought this the only way to eliminate the enemy's artillery which was essential to make the waterway safe for troop transports. This is a typical Jackson production. No one had suggested rushing the Straits. The proposed large scale attack was not in this category at all, being merely an extension of

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(1) Carden to Churchill 14/3/15, C.V.3, p. 693.
(3) Fisher to Churchill 12/3/15, in Ibid.
(5) Fisher to Jellicoe 16/3/15, Jellicoe Papers, Add/Mss. 49006.
the step by step approach. However, it did show that Jackson was convinced that troops would be needed at Constantinople to effectively alter the situation and that a safe passageway for these men could not be obtained without the occupation of the Peninsula. This was a direct repudiation of the Carden plan but by the introduction of the irrelevant concept of a "rush" at the straits Jackson virtually ensured that his paper would not receive from Churchill the consideration that his main argument deserved.

Meanwhile planning for the big attack was getting underway. The original idea seems to have been worked out by Godfrey and Captain Dent. However, they had envisaged the columns of battleships being led by destroyers fitted out as fast sweepers. The problem was that none of the destroyers had been modified and it was apparently decided that pressure from the Admiralty would not allow a sufficient delay to fit them. Planning, therefore, went ahead with the old sweepers, even though Dent warned that "an attack on the Narrows without a sufficient number of fast sweepers would lead to disaster". The plan as finally developed envisaged using virtually all the available battleships in an attempt to silence the guns of the forts and the minefield defences simultaneously - while the forts were silenced a passage would be swept through the minefield up to Sari Siglar Bay. From there the fleet would destroy the narrows forts at close range and attack the two forts near Nagara Point. This was expected to take two days, sweeping to be continued during the night. The squadron for the Marmora was to consist of Lord Nelson (flag), Agamemnon and all other available ships, except the Queen Elizabeth, one or two French battleships and some cruisers and destroyers.  

(2) Notes by Captain Dent N.D., W.O. 95/4263.
Two days before the attack Carden collapsed from a stomach complaint brought on by nervous exhaustion. He was put in hospital at Malta, from where it was expected that he would return to the Dardanelles, but he never did. The command was now given to de Robeck, Carden's deputy. He was a much more forceful character than his former chief and seemed to inspire confidence even in those like Keyes who opposed his strategy. Fisher thought him better than Carden, and Birdwood thought him "a real fine fellow - worth a dozen of Carden at least". What Churchill's contemporary opinion of him was is not known. According to Fisher de Robeck and Churchill had a "contretemps" at the beginning of the war, as a result of which de Robeck was "cast away in the Canary Islands for 6 months... & put 'in Coventry' by Winston". Certainly on March 19th. Churchill had no hesitation in appointing de Robeck to the command, asking him if he considered "after separate and independent judgment that the immediate operations proposed are wise and practicable. If not, do not hesitate to say so." This placed de Robeck in a difficult position. It will be remembered that he had recommended to Carden as early as March 9th. that military operations should be undertaken and that the fleet would not be able to maintain itself in the Marmora unless this was done. Although Hamilton had now arrived at the Dardanelles, it was obvious that a landing in force could not be made for some time, for the 29th. Division had only just sailed from England. Cancellation of the naval attack, which was due to begin in a few hours, would mean that no action at all would be taken for several weeks. De Robeck later stated that it was for this reason, involving as it did considerations of prestige and political necessity, that he decided to continue with the attack.
However, pressure from London and the advanced stage of the planning must also have played a part. In any event the attack was now to be directed by a commander who had grave doubts that, even if it succeeded, any substantial results would be obtained.

The great naval attack on the Dardanelles began at 10.45 a.m. on March 18th. The four most powerful British ships, Queen Elizabeth, Inflexible, Agamemnon and Lord Nelson opened a concentrated fire on the narrows forts while Triumph and Prince George fired at the intermediate defences. Heavy fire was opened on the ships by howitzers and field guns, the Agamemnon suffering many damaging hits, one of which put a 12" gun out of action. However, at 12.06 the French Squadron entered the Straits and under the concentrated fire of 10 battleships the forts fell silent. Then at 1.25 Vengeance, Irresistible, Albion, Ocean, Swiftsure and Majestic were ordered forward to relieve the old battleships inside the Straits. As the French squadron was passing out of the Straits, the second ship in the line, Bouvet blew up and sank in two minutes with the loss of 600 lives. At the time the cause was unknown and for many years it was thought that the ship had struck a mine, but a recent study has suggested that a shell from one of the narrows forts caused the demise of the French ship. Despite this setback, at this point the forts seemed to be dominated. "The towns of Chanak and Kilid Bahr were in flames, all telephone lines were cut, all communication with the forts was interrupted, some of the guns had been knocked out, others were half buried, others again were out of action with their breech mechanism jammed; in consequence the artillery fire of the defence had slackened considerably."

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From then on the situation deteriorated for the British. At 4.9 the **Irresistible** hit a mine and was later abandoned. A few minutes later the **Inflexible** was also mined and struggled out of the Straits towards Tenedos.¹ Later while Keyes was trying to induce the **Ocean** to take the crippled **Irresistible** in tow, it too struck a mine and was left to sink.² As a final blow it was learned that the **Suffren** and **Gaulious** had been so battered by gunfire that they would have to be docked for repairs.³ It was not known at the time what had caused the losses in the Allied squadron. It is now thought that the most probable cause was a new line of mines laid parallel to the coast by the Turks on the night of March 8th. Four of these mines had been exploded by sweepers on the 15th. and 16th. but it was thought that they were floating mines and it was not realized that a new field had been laid.⁴ In fact the whole area in which the battleships were to manoeuvre was supposed to have been swept but reliance had come to be placed on observing minefields from the air although warnings from the RNAS had indicated that sightings could only be made when "conditions of light and sea were very favourable".⁵

The minesweeping operations proved totally ineffectual. Staff work had not been perfect. The destroyer that was to lead the sweepers did not receive the operation orders until two days after the attack.⁶ As all naval personnel were required on the warships, civilian crews had to be used once more. Only two trawlers got their sweeps out and the main force did not approach the Kephez minefield.⁷ Most of the trawlers fled and some of them were fired on to try and bring them around.⁸ In short, the whole minesweeping operating was a fiasco and had to be broken off without

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¹ Keyes, Naval Memoirs V.2, p. 240-2.
² Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.2, p. 223.
³ Ibid., p. 225.
⁴ de Robeck to the Admiralty 19/3/15, Robeck Papers, 4/4.
any mines having been cleared.

With six of his battleships out of action (3 sunk and 3 damaged) and the causes of the casualties still unknown, de Robeck had little alternative but to withdraw. What damage had been inflicted on the forts could only be guessed at. (In fact only 1 heavy gun had been destroyed and four others put out of action temporarily) but Keyes for one realized that the minefield was the real problem and no headway at all had been made against that. De Robeck's immediate reaction seemed to be that the naval attempt was at an end, not a surprising decision given his earlier attitude and the loss of a third of his force. He asked Wemyss, the Commander of the Mudros base, to see him on the 19th and told him "We have had [a] disastrous day". At this meeting Wemyss later claimed he and de Robeck had come to the conclusion that "combined action must be postponed until plans had been developed and perfected". De Robeck had also listened to the views of the Captain of the Canopus (Grant) and Vengeance (Haddy) that combined operations were essential if the fleet was to get through. Furthermore, he had been told by his own staff that ammunition for the fleet was short and that the state of wear on many of the old guns was critical. On the other hand de Robeck had told Hamilton on the 19th that although "I was sad to lose ships & my heart aches when one thinks of it....We are all getting ready for another 'go' & not in the least beaten or down-hearted."

That War Council was prepared to authorize another attack was confirmed on the 19th. In a splendid burst of irrelevancy the Council spent most of the meeting discussing "The Partition of Turkey In Asia" and on the 20th Churchill informed de Robeck that his losses would be replaced and that "It appears important not to let the forts be repaired or to encourage enemy by an apparent..."
suspension of the operations."\(^1\)

In fact the suspension of operations was inevitable. The weather had changed on the 19th. and a strong gale blew until the 25th.\(^2\) Also, de Robeck realized that no further action was possible until the mine-sweeping force was reorganized, although he then stated that he would press on with the naval attack.\(^3\) Even Keyes, the incurable optimist, realized that nothing could be done until the destroyers were fitted out with sweeps and he estimated that this would take until about the 4th. of April.\(^4\) A further factor was that the Inflexible, de Robeck's only dreadnought, was damaged and there was no ship (Queen Elizabeth was not to be risked) capable of dealing with the Goeben.\(^5\)

On March 23rd. a conference of the naval and military leaders was held on the Queen Elizabeth. At that meeting de Robeck decided to abandon the naval attack. No minutes of the meeting were kept and it was once thought that de Robeck had been influenced by Hamilton in reaching a decision but this was strongly denied by Hamilton.\(^6\) Keyes thought de Robeck had changed his mind when he found that the army would land at Hellas and that he had been pressing on with naval preparations because he thought Hamilton would land at Bulair and that it was imperative that the fleet get into the Marmora to support him.\(^7\) This may have been a factor, but it has been shown already that de Robeck had come to the conclusion as early as March 9th. that the military would have to land, and therefore he cannot have been wholehearted in his decision to press on with the March 18th. attack. His view on the 22nd. then really represented no change of mind at all and it is doubtful if his statements made after the 18th. about giving the naval attack "another go" amounted to more than an attempt to put a brave face on what amounted to a lost battle.

(2) Weather Reports in Adm. 116/1715.
(3) de Robeck to the Admiralty 21/3/15, Adm. 137/110.
(4) Keyes - Naval Memoirs V.2, p. 186.
(6) Hamilton to Churchill 21/6/23, Hamilton Papers, 1/15.
(7) Keyes to Hamilton 27/4/17, Keyes Papers, 5/33.
In any event Hamilton's attitude to a military operation made de Robeck's decision easier to take. He had already written to Kitchener on the 19th. that "I am being most reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the Straits are not likely to be forced by battleships...and that, if my troops are to take part, it will not take the subsidiary form anticipated...it must be a deliberate and progressive military operation carried out at full strength so as to open a passage for the Navy".1 Birdwood, who attended the conference with Hamilton and de Robeck, had, it will be remembered, already come to the same decision. It has also been recorded that the general impression amongst Hamilton's staff was that the "navy can't do it alone".2 Military opinion on the spot then was virtually unanimous. In addition, just before the meeting of the 23rd., Hamilton had received a telegram from Kitchener in reply to his message of the 19th. "You know my views - that the passage of the Dardanelles must be forced, and that if large military operations on the Gallipoli Peninsula by your troops are necessary to clear the way, these operations must be undertaken".3 The Dardanelles Commissioners thought, and Hamilton agreed with them, that this was a "peremptory" order to take the Peninsula, although Hamilton added that he still felt free to say "This is altogether an impossibility" but that this was not his opinion.4 With military opinion unanimous and Kitchener's telegram as an added reinforcement and the loss of one third of the naval force on March 18th., the question of whether de Robeck or Hamilton first took the initiative in deciding on a military attack seems rather irrelevant. All were agreed, except perhaps Keyes, and he was not in favour of a resumption of the naval attack until after the minesweeping force had been

(1) Hamilton to Kitchener 19/3/15, C.V.3, p. 710.
(3) Kitchener to Hamilton 19/3/15, Hamilton Papers, 15/17.
(4) Dardanelles Commission, Hamilton's Evidence 13/10/16, Q4385-6, Cab. 19/33.
reorganized, which would be around April 4th. It was thought originally that the Army would be ready to land about the middle of April so a delay of only 10 days was envisaged. This postponement seemed a small price to pay in order to get the army on shore.

Back in London Churchill did not agree with this attitude at all. After receiving de Robeck's letter stating his intention to wait for the army, Churchill set about writing a reply, ordering de Robeck to continue the attack. However, the telegram was never sent. The Admiralty War Group insisted that the Admiral on the spot was in the best position to judge. Churchill then drafted another letter to de Robeck. He pointed out that enemy submarines were expected to arrive at any minute, that the army faced heavy losses (at least 5000) if they landed and that "the possibilities of a check in the land operations [were] far more serious than the loss of a few old surplus ships. These must be balanced against the risks and hopes of a purely naval undertaking. Here you must not ignore the supreme moral effect of a British fleet entering the Sea of Marmora". He considered this effect would be the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the probable surrender of Constantinople. This attitude is consistent with Churchill's renewed faith in the naval attack, which as has been shown took place about the beginning of March, although it is hardly compatible with his appeals to Kitchener to release the 29th Division. Fisher threatened to resign if Churchill's letter was sent but Churchill only modified it slightly (many of the passages were identical with the original) and then sent it against the wishes of a still protesting Fisher. Perhaps Churchill's insistence that the attack

(1) de Robeck to Churchill 23/3/15, Adm. 137/110.
(2) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) See C.V.3, p. 788N2.
(8) See C.V.3, p. 788N2.
should be renewed merely sprang from a dislike of admitting defeat. Certainly reports from naval intelligence that some forts were short of ammunition was a factor.¹

De Robeck replied on March 27th. after telling Limpus that "he was not going to be hurried by W.C."²

"The original approved plan for forcing the Dardanelles by ships was drawn up on the assumption that gunfire alone was capable of destroying forts. This assumption has been conclusively proved to be wrong....The utmost that can be expected of ships is to dominate the forts to such an extent that gun crews cannot fight the guns....To destroy forts therefore it is necessary to land demolishing parties."³

He concluded that the only way to do this was to capture the Peninsula which would have the added advantage of ensuring that the Straits remained open when the fleet passed through.⁴ Churchill had to accept this decision, replying to de Robeck that "the reasons you give make it clear that a combined operation is now indispensable. Time also has passed, the troops are available & the date is not distant."⁵

Thus ended the naval attempt to force the Dardanelles and the historian is left with one of the most intriguing questions of the war; could the fleet have got through if the attack had been renewed?

There are several factors to be considered. The first is the alleged Turkish shortage of ammunition. The table below gives a summary of various estimates of the ammunition supply available on March 19th.

Certain features of the table should be noted. The estimates by Enver Bey and the Turkish G.H.Q. were both given to the Mitchell Committee and have enough similarities to suggest that they had a common source. Enver's were much more detailed⁶ while the G.H.Q. grouped the figures more

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¹ Dardanelles Commission, Rear Admiral R. Hall's (N.I.D.) Evidence 24/10/16, Q.4916-7, Cab. 19/33.
³ de Robeck to Churchill 27/3/15, Adm. 116/1348.
⁴ Ibid.
⁶ Mitchell Committee Report, p. 436.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Forts' Ammunition Supply</th>
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<tr>
<td>German Official Account quoted by R.R. James</td>
<td>H.E. Shells &quot;nearly used up&quot;</td>
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| German Official Account quoted by Aspinall-Oglander | 35.5 cm (heavy) 50 rounds per gun  
23 cm 30-50 rounds per gun  
+ H.E. shells "almost all gone" |
| German Official Account quoted by K.G.B. Dewar | 35.5 cm guns (heavy) - 46 rounds per gun  
20" - 62 rounds per gun |
| Turkish War Office quoted by Corbett        | Heavy - 70 rounds per gun  
Light -130 rounds per gun  
+ stocks of old ammunition |
| Turkish G.H.Q.                              | 35.5 cm - 52 rounds per gun  
21-18 cm - 82 rounds per gun  
15 cm -128 rounds per gun  
10-12 cm - no figures  
smaller calibres - 258 rounds per gun |
| Enver Bey                                  | 35.5 cm - 52 rounds per gun  
21-28 cm -110 rounds per gun  
15 cm -131 rounds per gun  
15 cm (How)120 rounds per gun  
10-12 cm - 19 rounds per gun  
smaller calibres - 312 rounds per gun |
| Djevdad                                    | 35.5 cm - 11 rounds per gun  
24 cm - 79 rounds per gun  
15 cm - 74 rounds per gun  
15 cm (How)116 rounds per gun |
| Austro-Hungarian Military Attache          | 2/3 of stocks on 18/3/15 remaining                           |
| Capt. Serri                                | 35.5 cm - 36 rounds per gun  
24 cm - 29 rounds per gun  
(based on one fort) |
under type of gun and this could account for any discrepancies. The figures from the Official German account quoted by Dewar and Aspinall-Oglander are different. Perhaps differences in translation account for this. James has quoted from the same passage as Aspinall-Oglander but, while mentioning that the high explosive shells were practically used up, has omitted the sentence which includes the details of the rounds per gun that remained. The figure given by Captain Serri are significantly lower than most of the other estimates but is based on one battery. Mitchell thought his evidence was largely hearsay. Within broad areas the other estimates are really remarkably similar considering the inevitable errors in counting numbers of shells and the undoubted crudities in Turkish statistics of the time. Thus there seem to have been 50-60 rounds for the heavier guns and 70-80, 120 and at least 250 for the three smaller categories in descending order. What is more speculative is how many attacks on the scale of March 18th. this amount of shells could have repulsed. There are no reliable estimates of what was fired by the forts on March 18th. although the Austrian Military Attache said that forts Hamidie and Rumili Medjidieh on the European side fired from the heavy guns, 95 shells (12 per gun). Hamidie on the Asian side fired 75 (8 per gun). This would have allowed several more large scale attacks before the forts ran out. The attache concluded that at least two more attacks could be sustained, a conclusion also reached by the Mitchell Committee and Djevd. Turkish G.H.Q. were more optimistic saying that 'many attacks could have been repulsed'. Of course different emphasis can be placed on these figures. Thus Mitchell emphasised that there were only two days' ammunition remaining.

(1) G.H.Q. Constantinople - Answers given to the Mitchell Committee, Adm. 116/1714.
(2) James, Gallipoli, p. 64; Aspinall-Oglander C., Military Operations: Gallipoli V.1, London, Heinemann, 1928, p. 105N [The Official History].
(6) Ibid., p. 436.
while Djevad said "A good rate of fire could have been maintained for at least two more days after March 18th."¹ Most authorities agree, however, that there were further reserves of older ammunition which were not counted in the returns given above and which could have been used.² It would seem reasonable to conclude that at least two attacks on the scale of March 18th could have been repulsed by the Turks using their modern ammunition and a further indefinite number using old shells. Thus in all probability the immediate resumption of the attack, as desired by Churchill, would have had no dramatic effect and, if similar casualties had been suffered, very little of the British Fleet would have remained at the end. Moreover, the quality of the ammunition used would not seem to be a vital factor. Providing the forts kept firing, some kind of shells, the ships would have to keep underway which would make their fire less accurate. This was a much more important factor than the forts needing modern ammunition to sink the ships, for it is admitted by all sides that hardly any hits and perhaps no vital ones were made on the Fleet. Moreover, the question of ammunition supply for the forts, which because it persistently reappears in histories of the Gallipoli campaign and occupies a prominent place in The World Crisis has had to be discussed at length, would seem to be largely irrelevant to the chances of the Fleet. It was the mine field that was the crucial factor. The mines prevented the Fleet from rushing the Straits and kept the ships from engaging the forts at close range, the only position from which they were likely to be destroyed without the aid of landing parties. As far as the batteries protecting the minefields were concerned no authority has suggested that they were running low on ammunition. Thus any attempt at sweeping would have had to have been continued under fire. Turning to the minefields themselves, hardly any of the mines had been swept so most of them must have been in place on the 19th. Moorehead claims however that "many of...[the mines] were old and...had broken from their moorings and drifted away".³

¹ Quoted in the Mitchell Committee Report, p. 436.
² Ibid., p. 71.
However, the Mitchell Committee investigated the state of the minefield because of the impression "that the Turkish personnel would be ineffective, and also, the doubt whether any mines could remain at their correct depths in such strong, and probably variable currents". They found that "Both these impressions have proved to be without foundation". Would the reorganized sweeping forces have made any impression on the minefields? In a recent study of this problem Marder has suggested that they would. He points to the fact that 16 destroyers had been fitted as sweepers by April 14th, and by the 18th, they could sweep at 14 knots which he thinks would have been too fast for the poor ranging equipment of the Turkish batteries. Mitchell also pointed out that the draft of the destroyers (10' 6") was less than the depth of the mines so that no casualties could be expected from that source. However, the destroyers would have had to have faced the full weight of the minefield defences and even Marder concludes that the Fleet had only a 50-50 chance of success (or to put in another way a one in two chance of failure).

Another factor which seems to have been ignored by historians is the depleted state of the Anglo-French Fleet after March 18th. It will be remembered that de Robeck had only two dreadnoughts at his disposal to meet the Goeben, had the Fleet got through, the Queen Elizabeth and the Inflexible. The Queen Elizabeth, apart from having turbine trouble on the 18th., was not to be sent through the Straits. The Inflexible had been mined and had to be sent to Malta where it took two months to repair her. Thus even allowing for the time taken to reorganize the sweeping force, the British would have had no ship capable of fighting the Goeben. (Even had the Inflexible been present the result must have remained speculative. The Inflexible was

(1) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 50.
(2) Ibid.
(4) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 104.
(5) Marder A.J., From the Dardanelles to Oran, p. 23.
(6) Preston, Battleships of World War I, p. 121.
(7) The reinforcements ordered by the Admiralty did not include a dreadnought.
of the type against which the German battlecruisers had all their success at Jutland.) As it was, if the Fleet had got through, the pre-dreadnoughts Lord Nelson and Agamemnon, with much weaker armament and side armour would have been the logical choices to fight the German battlecruiser and in this case the odds must have favoured the Goeben.

An even more speculative question now must be asked. What would have happened had the Fleet got through? In the first place would the British Fleet have been able to maintain itself in the Marmora? With the Ports still in Turkish hands and at least some of the guns working, it would have been difficult to send through a continuous stream of supply ships. Thus a quick victory by the Fleet was required but it is by no means certain that it would have eventuated. The Turks had made plans to attack the Fleet with all the ships they had as it passed Nagara Point. They hoped that the British would have approached in a single line which would have enabled them to have been attacked one at a time. If the British had attacked without a dreadnought the Goeben might have been able to effect some losses before weight of numbers told. Nor would the Turkish Fleet have been the last of de Robeck's problems. Batteries had been placed on the Princes Islands which would have had to have been passed by the Fleet on the way to Constantinople. Furthermore, the Turkish capital was defended by 5 batteries of guns capable of inflicting damage on the Fleet. Of course, the British were relying on a form of pro-allied coup de'etat or revolution in Constantinople as soon as the Fleet appeared in the Marmora, and that such an event would have taken place has been lent wide currency by the oft quoted views of the American Ambassador to Turkey Hans Morganthau. However, apart from mere assertions, the only hard evidence he produces is contained in the following quotation, "[By March] the exodus from the capital had begun; Turkish women and children were being moved into the interior; all

(1) Enver Bey (C.O.S. to Souchon) to the Mitchell Committee, see Mitchell Committee Report, p. 382.
(2) Von Sandars L., Five Years In Turkey, Annapolis, U.S. Naval Institute, 1927, p. 47.
(3) G.H.Q. Constantinople - Ansers given to Mitchell Committee, Adm. 116/1714.
the banks had been compelled to send their gold into Asia Minor; the archives of the Sublime Porte had already been [sent away]; and practically all the ambassadors and their suites, as well as most of the government officials, had made their preparations to leave."¹ These facts were no proof that the government was about to capitulate. Many of them could be taken as evidence that resistance was going to be continued from the interior. Similar scenes would have been observed in Paris in August and September 1914 and yet no one has suggested that the French were on the point of surrendering. Their moves, as with the Turks, were merely sensible precautions taken in the face of an advancing enemy. One suspects that with the Turks these scenes were taken to be indicative of the panic that could be expected of a non-European race.

Much the same type of evidence as used by Morgenthau was put forward by naval intelligence as proof that the Turks would surrender. Hall in particular seemed to be impressed by the movement of the ubiquitous archives.² At the same time any evidence which would contradict this view is usually ignored. The fact that trenches were being dug in Constantinople and the artillery defences of the city increased would not seem to indicate an abject intention to surrender.³ Moreover, Constantinople was in military hands and there is no evidence to suggest that the army leaders would not have remained loyal to Enver Pasha. Thus it seems highly doubtful if the desired political upheaval would have taken place and this might have left de Robeck with little choice but to return back down the Straits.

Even the hope that the passage of the Fleet would have forced the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula seems doubtful. Sea communication with the garrison would have been completely cut and road communications could have been controlled by warships during the day. However, it is

² Dardanelles Commission - Hall's Evidence 24/10/16, Q4906, Cab. 19/33. The movement of the archives is also mentioned by a Swiss observer H. Stuermer in his Two Years in Constantinople, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p. 84-5.
doubtful if road traffic could have been completely cut during the night and it is possible that a diversion inland, out of sight of the guns of the Fleet, could have been made. Therefore if the Turks had kept their heads, and later fighting would suggest that this would have been likely, not even this "success" could have been claimed by the British.

The events from the opening of the naval bombardment on February 19th. to the failure of the attack in late March occupy over 80 pages in The World Crisis, over 2½ pages for every day covered. Once more the publication of official documents takes up over 40% of the total space, an indication that Churchill again expects these documents to substantiate his case. For convenience five main topics dealt with by The World Crisis will be discussed in roughly the order in which they occur in the book. These are the continuing controversy surrounding the provision of troops for the operation, the naval attack, and its effect on opinion abroad and at the Admiralty; the aftermath of the failure of March 18th. and consideration of a long retrospective chapter entitled "The case for perseverance and decision" in which Churchill attempts to establish a case for continuing the naval attack after March 18th.

Before commencing our discussion on the use of troops in the operation it may be as well to recapitulate Churchill's line on this subject as established in the previous chapter. It will be remembered that in describing his attitude on the use of troops at Gallipoli, Churchill actually used two contradictory arguments. He claimed that the naval attack would succeed but at the same time accused Kitchener of blighting the

(1) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 211.
(2) Some small sections of these chapters have been taken by Churchill from his Dardanelles Commission evidence. They are the first complete paragraph on p. 164 (Churchill Papers 8/141), the section on p. 635 after Carden's telegram and ending with "Medical Officer", (Churchill Papers 8/142), the first paragraph on p. 645 and from "Lord Fisher took the line" to "accept their views" on p. 648 (Churchill Papers 8/143), from "Never again" to the end of the chapter on p. 669 (Churchill Papers 8/144).
operation by refusing to provide regular troops. This process is now continued. In these chapters the main point Churchill is concerned to establish is that Kitchener's failure to release the 29th. Division during February was a decisive "turning-point in the struggle", and eventually led to disaster. To make his case Churchill states that he argued strenuously for the despatch of the 29th. Division at the War Councils of February 24th. and 26th., and disclaimed responsibility for the consequences of any military operation that might arise. What Churchill has not done, is to give the other side of the story. For, as has been shown, at the same time that he was advancing these arguments he was also stating that the naval attack would still succeed. It was also noted that the reasons Churchill put forward concerning the use to which the 29th. Division would be put in the east (mopping-up, occupation duties) were not of the kind that Kitchener was likely to find persuasive for it could always be argued that these tasks could have been performed by troops already in the east. However these issues are not discussed in The World Crisis. In fact the whole issue concerning the date of despatch of the 29th. Division is of much less importance than Churchill's narrative supposes, for because of the weather it would have been virtually impossible to land the troops at Gallipoli in March or early April. However, be concentrating on the need for troops instead of on factors surrounding their use Churchill is able to ignore this point without the omission becoming obvious and readers of The World Crisis never realize that the amount of space devoted to the tussle between Kitchener and Churchill over the 29th. Division is hardly in keeping with any practical advantages that might have accrued to the British had Churchill been successful.

(1) The World Crisis, p. 606.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid., p. 605.
(4) Ibid., p. 606.
Kitchener continues to come under attack from Churchill in *The World Crisis* even after the 29th. Division was released.

"But even after decision was at last taken to send an army including the 29th Division, the use to which that army was to be put remained a Secret of the Sphinx. When Lord Kitchener had decided in his heart that if the Navy failed to force the Dardanelles, he would storm the Gallipoli Peninsula, he ought to have declared it to his colleagues....Most of all should he have set his General Staff to work out plans for the various contingencies which were now plainly coming into view."\(^1\)

The arguments concerning the unpreparedness of the General Staff and Kitchener's unhealthy dominance over them are then repeated in case the proposition has not been appreciated on the other two occasions on which it is mentioned.\(^2\) This form of attack on Kitchener is hard to justify.

When Kitchener released the 29th. Division on March 10th. he had no intention of "storming" the Gallipoli Peninsula. Such an operation had never been serious considered by the War Council. The troops were to be sent in Churchill's own phrase to "reap the fruits" of the naval attack. On the other hand Kitchener had said that if all else failed the army should see the fleet through. Thus, his policy seemed quite clear involving no "secrets of the sphinx" and had been declared to his colleagues many times. In fact Kitchener's decision to storm the Gallipoli Peninsula was only made after the naval failure of March 18th. and therefore could hardly have been revealed before then.\(^3\)

Churchill's assertions about the War Office in the above quotation can also not escape comment. They contain three dubious assumptions. Firstly, it is assumed that the group of incompetents, who according to *The World Crisis* were inhabiting the War Office, would have proved capable, if given the chance by Kitchener, of producing a plan for a combined operation at

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(1) *The World Crisis*, p. 609-10.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 616. For the other two discussions of this point see p. 609-10 and p. 598-9.
(3) Churchill Papers 8/141. The Churchill Papers make clear that Churchill initially took his attack on Kitchener a step further. In relation to Kitchener's attitude to military planning Churchill originally wrote, "I did not know what Lord Kitchener would or would not do in certain eventualities. He preserved an air of incredible mystery, and whether this covered a profound resolve or the lack of it, I could not tell." The deleted paragraph was originally placed after the sentence ending "prevailed in the War Office" on p.616.
Gallipoli superior to that developed by Hamilton on the spot. Secondly, Churchill also assumed that somehow planning could make up for the fact that Gallipoli was an extremely difficult theatre in which to conduct offensive operations. Thirdly, one of the major factors which prevented planning from getting underway at an earlier date was Churchill's assurances that no troops would be required for the operation. No doubt there is much to be said for Churchill's opinion on the chaotic state of the War Office but these other factors should not be ignored.

For convenience Churchill's description of the naval attack will be divided into five sections (the opening bombardment, the fall of the outer forts, operations inside the Straits from March 3rd. to 11th., the crisis surrounding the replacement of Carden by de Robeck and the great attack of March 18th.) and discussed in order.

Although it was seen that the opening bombardment of February 19th. was indecisive and something of a disappointment to those on the spot, Churchill feels able to say that..."a favourable impression had been sustained" as a result of the first day's firing, though he does not say by whom. A few pages later Churchill sums up the opening bombardment.

"The results of this inconclusive bombardment seemed to show first, that it was necessary for ships to anchor before accurate shooting could be made; secondly, that direct fire was better than indirect fire; and, thirdly, that it was not sufficient to hit the forts with the naval shells - actual hits must be made on the guns or their mountings. This last fact was important."  

This would seem to be a fair summary of the day's events and it is hard to see how the results listed tie in with Churchill's earlier statement that the events made a "favourable impression". In fact, as has been shown, the results were profoundly alarming. The fact that the ships had to hit each gun is obviously considered by Churchill to be a new discovery. However, it was shown earlier that Hood had pointed this out 

(1) The World Crisis, p. 605.
(2) Ibid., p. 612.
in his reports from the Belgian coast in the early months of 1915. Had no one at the Admiralty read these reports? Churchill clearly had not. Also this revelation deserves a much stronger adjective than "important" which was chosen by Churchill. Disastrous would have been more appropriate for in the plan as modified by the Admiralty Staff nothing like the amount of ammunition required for the fleet to achieve this feat had been allowed. In other words, the basis on which the plan had been prepared was found to be false on the first day. Furthermore, it was seen that the fact that the ships had to anchor to fire accurately pointed to a future problem when firing commenced inside the Straits. For if the ships had to anchor in that narrow waterway they would provide easy targets for the mobile batteries which lined either bank, and if this fire proved effective enough to keep the ships underway, then the accuracy of the ships' fire at long range would be greatly reduced. Thus, although Churchill sums up the day's firing in a reasonable manner, he does not mention these important conclusions which highlight some of the fallacies on which the naval attack was based.

The events which encompassed the fall of the outer forts are now considered by Churchill. Of the attack by the fleet on the 25th he says, "The effect of the bombardment was remarkable. It proved conclusively the great accuracy of naval fire, provided good observation could be obtained",¹ and, "The bombardment clearly proved the power of the ships anchored at about 12,000 yards, if good observation at right angles to the range was available, to destroy the Turkish guns without undue expenditure of ammunition."² Although the 25th was one of the most successful day's firing ever carried out by the fleet (four guns were disabled), the previous discussion of the problems encountered would suggest that

Churchill's summary is too optimistic. That the accuracy of the day's

(1) The World Crisis, p. 612.
(2) Ibid., p. 613.
bombardment was never repeated would indicate that a certain amount of luck was involved. Furthermore, Churchill's statement about good observation being necessary for success begs an important question. In the bombardment of the outer forts "observation at right angles to the range" could be provided by warships spotting for the ships carrying out the bombardment. Once inside the Straits, however, this service would have to be provided by seaplanes which had already been found to be ineffective. As for Churchill's contention that the day's firing showed that it was possible to destroy the guns without "undue expenditure of ammunition", this was not the case. It was shown earlier that the Mitchell Committee Report, which Churchill read before writing The World Crisis, held it to be almost an "iron law" of gunnery that at extreme ranges only two shells in a hundred would hit a gun and this would have required more ammunition than was available to the fleet. In fact the bombardment of the outer forts "proved" very little about the problems to be faced later. The manoeuvring area available to the ships was virtually unlimited, good observation was possible, no minefields were encountered and there were few heavy guns to face. None of these factors applied inside the Straits and it is hardly appropriate for Churchill to draw positive conclusions from this phase of the attack.

The small section on the landing parties in The World Crisis is not consistent with Churchill's optimistic approach to the opening bombardment. From the figures given by Churchill it is possible to work out that it was the landing parties and not the firing of the ships which destroyed most of the guns. However, this fact is not pointed out to the reader and as a result the conclusion is not drawn that landing parties might also be essential inside the Straits where they would be more likely to meet stiff resistance from Turkish troops.

Churchill also gives a misleading picture of the minesweeping

(1) The World Crisis, p. 613 and footnote 1.
operations which were associated with the attack on the outer forts. He states that the approaches and entrance of the Straits were swept on the 25th. and 26th.¹ and that as a result "the fleet was now able to sweep and enter the Straits for a distance of six miles up to the limit of the Kephez minefield".² Thus the impression is given that up to this point the sweepers had been worked effectively and had proved quite efficient. However, the reason for their success is not revealed in The World Crisis but it was noticed earlier that there were no mines to be swept in the area identified by Churchill. Nor were there any search-lights and mobile batteries to hamper the work of sweeping.

Churchill next describes the operations inside the Straits from March 3rd. to the 11th. It will be remembered that no great results were obtained by the fleet during this period. Churchill ascribes this lack of success to: periods of unsuitable weather; inefficiency of the seaplane spotting service; the mobile howitzers which forced the ships to keep moving; the inadequacy of the minesweeping force coupled with the efficiency of the minefield defences.³ The failure of the indirect bombardment by the Queen Elizabeth is put down to the Admiralty restriction on ammunition and the inadequacies of the spotting force. Churchill states that both of these problems were eventually remedied "but meanwhile the method had itself been precipitately condemned and was never resumed".⁴ Several observations should be made on these remarks. Firstly, it should be said that Churchill has given a quite adequate summary of the reasons for the failure of operations inside the Straits. Only the lack of ammunition, which seems to have been the reason for Carden committing only a few ships at a time in the Straits, seems to have been omitted. It is

(1) The World Crisis, p. 613 and footnote 1.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid., p. 623.
(4) Ibid., p. 625.
rather the conclusion drawn from these facts that is open to objection. Churchill states that "it was clear that a much more vehement effort must be made"\(^1\) and then quotes his telegram of March 11th. authorizing Carden to make a more vigorous attack.\(^2\) It was shown earlier that this message committed Carden to an attack using the same methods which had failed, but on a larger scale. There was to be no improvement in the aerial spotting force, no attempt to eliminate the mobile howitzers. The lifting of the restriction on the use of ammunition was the only new development. Yet, as has been shown, many of the naval and military authorities at the Dardanelles concluded that the original methods had failed, and they reached the conclusion that military support was essential if progress was to be made. In fact, it has been shown that Churchill was one of the few who had not drawn this conclusion and in The World Crisis he follows exactly the same line.

What of Churchill's statement that the indirect bombardment was abandoned just as the causes which led to this action, shortage of ammunition and the inefficient spotting force, were being remedied? It is true, as he states, that the restriction on the use of the Queen Elizabeth's ammunition was lifted, but the indirect bombardment of March 5th. and 6th. was not broken off primarily from a need to conserve ammunition but because of poor weather and the failure of the seaplane spotting force. The weather was a factor which no one had previously taken into account and at this time of the year many days' bombardment from long range would have been lost, even allowing for efficient spotting. However, the major factor which crippled the indirect bombardment was the poor performance of the seaplanes, and this force was not re-organized until the end of March,\(^3\)

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\(^{1}\) The World Crisis, p. 625.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 633-34.
which made any indirect naval bombardment redundant. Furthermore, although the spotting force was improved by the arrival of a squadron of aeroplanes, it was found that only 5 out of the 18 available planes made efficient spotters.  

The next events to be described in The World Crisis are the collapse of Carden on March 16th, and the appointment of de Robeck to the command. Churchill describes his relationship with the new commander thus;  

"I had become acquainted with Admiral de Robeck during the previous three years. He bore an exceptionally high reputation in the service. He was a good sea officer and a fine disciplinarian. Before the war he had served during my tenure for two years on the East Coast as Admiral of Patrols. I had not always agreed with the schemes which he had made in this capacity for dealing with war problems. One could not feel that his training and experience up to this period had led him to think deeply on the larger aspects of strategy and tactics. His character, personality, and zeal inspired confidence in all." 

These carefully chosen words conceal the fact that Churchill and de Robeck had had a "contretemps" just before the war which, as we saw, resulted in de Robeck being exiled to the Canary Islands. Also, Churchill's comments about de Robeck prompt the question of why he was appointed in the first place to be deputy to another Admiral whom Churchill thought rather light weight. Finally by stating that de Robeck was not a deep thinker on matters of naval strategy and tactics Churchill is predisposing the reader to question the Admiral's decision to call off the naval attack on March 23rd. Yet it may be wondered if any great strategic insight was needed on March 19th to see that the naval attack had failed.  

The account of the great attack of March 18th. in The World Crisis is generally accurate and told with Churchill's usual skill. 

However in the course of his narrative Churchill makes many scathing references to the description of the March 18th. attack given in the

(2) The World Crisis, p. 635-6.  
(3) Ibid.  
(4) Ibid., p. 639-43.
Official History of naval operations. He describes the account as having "so little order...and with such slight or erroneous discrimination between the relative importance of facts and events that no clear picture is afforded to the lay reader....(Indeed) the author almost seems to have sought refuge in obscure and inconclusive narration."¹ A reading of Corbett's account in the Official History shows that these harsh judgements are hardly justified. A great mass of facts is given and the work is not light reading, but correct chronology is maintained and the main course of events is quite clear. The conclusions drawn by the Official History are, however, very unfavourable to the line followed by Churchill. Corbett calls the operation "a severe defeat"² and suggests that "it looked extremely doubtful whether the Navy unaided could ever force a passage".³ One is drawn to conclude that it was these opinions rather than the actual structure of the work which was not to Churchill's liking.

In a later chapter are included some scenes from the aftermath of the March 18th. attack. In one of these Churchill has described "the crippled Inflexible listed and slowly steaming out of the Straits".⁴ In an earlier version of this section Churchill had written, "drifting precariously out of the Straits",⁵ a more accurate picture but one which perhaps conjured up the vision of defeat.

What effect does Churchill claim that the opening of the naval attack had on opinion at home and abroad? Concerning the Admiralty in general he states that at the beginning of March

"The greatest satisfaction (at the progress of the naval attack) was expressed at the Admiralty, and I found myself in these days surrounded by smiling faces....If the Dardanelles Commissioners could only have taken the expert evidence on the feasibility of ships attacking forts in the first week of March, 1915, instead of in the spring of 1917, (in fact most of the naval witnesses were called in Autumn 1916) they would have been impressed by the robust character of naval opinion on these

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¹ The World Crisis, p. 638
² Corbett Sir J., Naval Operations V.2, p. 223.
³ Ibid.
⁴ The World Crisis, p. 654.
⁵ Churchill Papers 8/144.
questions. They would also have been struck by the number of persons who were in favour of the Dardanelles operations and claimed to have contributed to their initiation.¹

This seems to be a fair summary of the change in opinion which became general at the Admiralty in early March. It has been shown that Oliver, Richmond, Hamilton and even Fisher, expressed confidence in the naval attack at this time. However, Churchill is less accurate in examining his own position. He does not mention that his own opinion concerning Carden's plan had also undergone a recent change and that after several weeks of doubt he too had a new found optimism that the navy would get through alone. Instead he claims that he continued urgently to push for troops² and as proof publishes his letter to Kitchener of March 4th, in which he said that the need for the 29th. Division was "grave and urgent".³

However it was shown earlier that the main thrust of that letter was that the Straits could be forced by ships alone and would be in the Marmora before large contingents of troops could be assembled and that "naval operations in the Dardanelles cannot be delayed for troop movements". The view was then put forward that anyone reading this letter could be forgiven for thinking that the provision of troops had now become a secondary consideration for Churchill and it is clear that the fall of the outer forts, rather than acting on Churchill as a spur for military action as claimed in The World Crisis, pursued him that after all the navy could achieve success.

Churchill is of course aware that Admiralty opinion underwent a reversal when the naval attack began to falter in mid March. He states, however, that his own confidence in the operation was unaffected by this set back. This was the time for those "who did not share these clear-cut conclusions, who had doubts—had always had doubts about the feasibility of the operation,

(1) The World Crisis, p. 613-4.
(2) Ibid., p. 614.
(3) Ibid., p. 616.
about the margin of the Grand Fleet, about the utility of operations in the Eastern theatre! [to come forward].... Here surely was the time for Lord Fisher. He could say with perfect propriety and consistency, 'We have given the Carden plan a good trial. I never liked it much. It has not come off...now let us break off altogether or turn to something else.'...But what happened? So far from wishing to break off the operation, the First Sea Lord was never at any time so resolute in its support. He assented willingly and cordially to the new decision which was now taken to change the gradual tentative limited liability advance into a hard, determined and necessarily hazardous attack....He even offered to go out and hoist his flag and take command at the Dardanelles himself, saying that the responsibility was so great that it could only be borne by the highest authority. Subsequently, although it greatly complicated his position, Lord Fisher himself informed the Dardanelles Commissioners of this fact in a very frank and chivalrous manner.'

This long and important quotation will now be discussed in detail. Without doubt there is something to be said for Churchill's view that Fisher could have intervened in mid-March to stop the operation. A more determined and courageous First Sea Lord could certainly have done so. However, Fisher's difficulties should not be underestimated. His paper of January 25th. had made it clear that he did not like the operation and that he would have preferred action elsewhere, but it had been ignored. Now that the operation was underway, to object was much more difficult.

In the passage quoted Churchill also exaggerates the amount of support given by Fisher to the operation at the time. It was noted earlier that Fisher had told Churchill as recently as March 4th. that the more he considered the Dardanelles the less he liked it and that on the 15th. he had told Jellicoe that things were going badly there. These opinions could hardly be described as "resolute support". Furthermore, Churchill has exaggerated the differences between the naval attack up to March 8th. and the operation on March 18th. It is hardly accurate to describe the first method as gradual and tentative with limited liability and the other as something different and more hazardous. Exactly the same method was used on March 18th. as on previous occasions.

(1) The World Crisis, p. 632.
All that was different was the scale of the attack. Churchill's reason for trying to differentiate between the two operations is clear. He is attempting to prove that Fisher not only approved of the original tentative operation but had now agreed to something larger and more dangerous. In fact, it was found to be difficult to perceive from the documents exactly what Fisher's attitude to the March 18th. operation was, but if he agreed with it he was hardly going further than he had on January 28th. when he had reluctantly sanctioned the initial attack. It is also a dubious judgment on Churchill's part to see Fisher's offer to take command at the Dardanelles as evidence that Fisher supported the operation. As suggested earlier it is far more likely that by this time Fisher was convinced of Carden's incompetence and that the offer was made in desperation to try and salvage something from the ruins.

The only other high official whose opinion is considered in this section of _The World Crisis_ is Jackson. His memorandum of March 11th. is quoted in full by Churchill, who states that it "reveals a certain confusion of thought", as no one had suggested rushing the Straits. It was shown earlier that there is a good deal to be said for this point of view and that Jackson's paper was indeed confused. It was also suggested however that as the paper contained a clearly stated preference for the military occupation of the Peninsula this recommendation should have been examined more closely by Churchill. However it is difficult not to sympathize with the view expressed by Churchill in _The World Crisis_ that more perspicacious advice might have been expected from such a high authority at this crucial time.²

The effect which the naval bombardment had on the Balkan states is now investigated by Churchill. He claims the effect was "electrical". "The attitude of Bulgaria changed with lightning swiftness...The attitude of Roumania also become one of

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(1) _The World Crisis_, p. 629.
(2) Ibid.
extreme and friendly vigilance....On March 2 our Minister at Bucharest telegraphed that the Roumanian Prime Minister had said that his conviction that Italy 'would move soon' had become stronger."¹ There is no doubt that Churchill is justified in the view that the opening of the naval bombardment had an effect on the Balkan states. It was shown earlier that several countries immediately expressed more sympathy to the allied cause.

But the impression given by The World Crisis is that there were a group of states awaiting the first opportunity to declare for the Entente. This was by no means the case. No commitments of any kind were received by the allies during the period of the naval attack. Moreover, in stressing that the situation changed with lightning swiftness Churchill has ignored the fact that it could change back again at the same speed. The opinions of the Bulgarian and Roumanian authorities which were quoted in the first part of this chapter suggest that the situation was extremely volatile but that the Balkan states were very cautious in their approach. Churchill also ignores the fact that these states were far more likely to be influenced by events on the Russian front than by the activities of a handful of obsolete battleships at the Dardanelles. Thus changes in Balkan attitudes cannot always, or even often, be put down to what was happening at Gallipoli. Churchill is prepared to admit that the cession of Constantinople to Russia "was bound to cause unfavourable reactions in Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania"² but he does not follow this statement through and investigate the form which those unfavourable reactions took. Nor does he seem to be aware of the possibility that the news of the Russian acquisition might have been regarded in the Balkans as being more important to their destinies than the naval operations at the Dardanelles.

It is, however, the reaction of Greece to the operation on which

¹ The World Crisis, p. 618.
² Ibid., p. 617.
Churchill concentrates. He recounts how the Greek offer of troops was
made and the hopeful prospects which it opened up. He then continues,
"But now a terrible fatality intervened [note once more the
intervention of the fates]. Russia—failing, reeling backward
under the German hammer, with her munitions running short,
cut off from her allies - Russia was the Power which ruptured
irretrievably this brilliant and decisive combination. On
March 3 the Russian Foreign Minister informed our Ambassador
that:- 'The Russian Government could not consent to Greece
participating in operations in the Dardanelles, as it would
be sure to lead to complications.'" 

It should be noted that this passage once more contains the assertion
that a victory at the Dardanelles could have saved Russia and somehow
enabled Britain and France to augment her depleted supplies of munitions
from their own non-existent surplus. However, the main point to
observe is that Churchill considers that it was the Russian veto which
caused the Greeks to withdraw their offer of troops. Yet it was shown
earlier that it was the opposition of the Greek General Staff and the
King that led to the offer being withdrawn. Churchill, however, quotes
a letter from the British Military Attache in Athens which makes it
appear that the Greek General Staff approved of the offer of troops
but this quotation does not make it clear that the Staff would have only
supported the offer in the event of Bulgaria declaring for the allies
and attacking Turkey. Furthermore Churchill does not explain that although
the Russians modified their position a week later and agreed to limited
Greek participation, this had no effect on the Army or the King. It
may be thought, that as the chronology of the incident is complicated and
as Churchill now without access to Greek records, he might be excused
his error. However it is revealed by the Churchill Papers, that
although this may have applied to the first edition of The World Crisis
it should not be applied to later editions. Just after the publication
of Churchill's second volume, he received a letter from Venizelos, who it

(1) The World Crisis, p. 620.
(2) Ibid., p. 619.
will be remembered was Greek Prime Minister in early March 1915. Concerning the withdrawal of the Greek offer Venizelos said, "Neither King Constantine nor the Chiefs of the parties summoned to the two Crown Councils held under the presidency of the King in February of 1915, took the opportunity to invoke the Russian objections to the action of Greece in favour of the opinion held by some of them that it was in the interest of Greece to take no part in the Dardanelles attack." Thus, Churchill was aware that the Greek decision came about through internal political considerations rather than from the Russian veto. Yet he chose not to correct the account given in The World Crisis in later editions. The reason for this must remain speculative and could be as simple as an unwillingness to spend further time on the book. However, the fact remains that the version of events supplied to Churchill by Venizelos would have dealt a serious blow to the chain of "fatalistic causation" which Churchill was building up to explain the British defeat at the Dardanelles. It suited this theory to have the Greeks quixotically rebuffed by Russia, thereby encompassing their own doom rather than to put the decision down to cold political calculation.

Churchill's version of the events surrounding "Admiral de Robeck's change of plan" must now be discussed. It is noticeable that Churchill accepts Hamilton's version of the crucial meeting on the Queen Elizabeth that decided to cancel the naval attack, that is, it was de Robeck who first suggested that this course of action be followed. It has been shown that the importance of who first suggested the combined operation has been rather exaggerated, all parties being agreed that the purely naval attack was at an end. However, Churchill does allow Hamilton a part in the decision. He states that the sight of the sinking battleships and the slowly steaming or precariously drifting Inflexible "aroused, in a

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(2) The World Crisis, p. 660.
nature chivalrous to a fault, an intense desire to come to the aid and rescue of the sister Service."\(^1\) The reasons which led Hamilton to undertake a land attack with the meagre resources available to him will be discussed later, but it is doubtful if the sight of some striken battleships played a large part in his decision. It has been shown that Kitchener's telegram of March 19th. ("You know my views - that the passage of the Dardanelles must be forced") was a major influence but this message is not published by Churchill.

Churchill now speculates on what led de Robeck to call off the naval attack. Naturally he is unaware that de Robeck had expressed the opinion that troops would be needed well before March 18th. He concludes that it was the shock of losing so many ships that broke the Admiral's resolve to continue,

"to an Admiral of this standing and upbringing, these old ships were sacred. They had been the finest ships afloat in the days when he as a young officer had first set foot upon their decks. The discredit and even disgrace of casting away a ship was ingrained deeply by years of mental training and outlook. The spectacle of this noble structure on which so many loyalties centred, which was the floating foothold of daily life, foundering miserably beneath the waves, appeared as an event shocking and unnatural in its character. Whereas a layman or soldier might have rejoiced that so important an action as that of March 18 could have been fought with a loss of less than thirty British lives [so much for the 600 Frenchmen lost on Bouvet] and two or three worthless ships, [one third of de Robeck's force was sunk or out of action] and that so many valuable conclusions had been attained [what were they?] at such a slender cost, Admiral de Robeck was saddened and consternated to the foundations of his being."\(^2\)

This passage has been quoted at length because it is one of the most fatuous pieces of writing in The World Crisis. It will be remembered that de Robeck's reasons for breaking off the naval attack were cogently and logically set down in his telegram to Churchill of March 27th, and that they had nothing to do with feelings of sentiment towards old battleships.

It was also noted that Churchill's comment on this telegram was "the

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\(^1\) The World Crisis, p. 654.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 661.
reasons you give make it clear that a combined operation is indispensible". In fact de Robeck's telegram is included in The World Crisis directly after the passage quoted above, but Churchill's contemporary response is omitted and he merely says that the telegram "consolidated all the oppositions to action". Furthermore by giving prominence to his own interpretation of de Robeck's action Churchill implies that the reasons put forward by the Admiral in his telegram were not valid.

Concerning his response to de Robeck's decision Churchill states that his major worry was the difficulty of the impending military attack.

"I feared the perils of the long delay; I feared still more the immense and incalculable extension of the enterprise involved in making a military attack on a large scale. The mere process of landing an army after giving the enemy at least three weeks' additional notice seemed to me to be a most terrible and formidable hazard. It appeared to me at the time a far graver matter in every way than the naval attack." If this was really Churchill's attitude at the time it was short lived. Looking ahead, we find him telling the War Council on April 6th, that he "anticipated no difficulty in effecting a landing", and soon after this he told Balfour "You must not be unduly apprehensive of the military operation". Nor is Churchill's description of his attitude in The World Crisis consistent with his other statements to the War Council that if the naval attack was "temporarily held up by mines" a military operation would be required or his message to de Robeck that a military attack was "indispensible". It is thus hard to avoid the conclusion that Churchill's apprehensions about a military attack in The World Crisis owe a great deal to hindsight.

In an earlier version of the paragraph quoted above Churchill had originally written "I read this telegram with consternation. It was plain

(1) The World Crisis, p. 661-4.
(2) Ibid., p. 664.
(3) Ibid., p. 647.
to me from the beginning that some absolutely confused decision had been come to on the spot between the naval and military authorities and that a dangerous compromise had resulted.¹ Churchill later deleted this section. It certainly implied that he placed the blame partly on Hamilton as well as de Robeck for breaking off the naval attack and he may have wanted to avoid this criticism of his friend. Furthermore, correspondence with Hamilton while The World Crisis was being written reveals that Hamilton informed Churchill that this decision had been de Robeck's alone,² an opinion that Churchill was probably only too glad to accept.

In a short passage Churchill discusses the Admiralty War Group meeting which over-ruled his decision to order de Robeck to resume the attack. He condemns this decision and claims that he "saw a vista of terrible consequences behind this infirm relaxation of purpose".³ Initially he had gone much further than this in his criticism of his Admiralty colleagues. In a draft chapter he had written,

"the Admirals seemed entirely happy that the army was going to pull the chestnuts out of the fire...they seemed to think that a military attack on the Peninsula in the prevailing conditions was a small thing compared to breaking their old ships up to fight the Turkish forts in the Straits...everybody pulled long faces at the petty losses of March 18 and appeared quite cheerful about the awful impending slaughter of April 25."⁴

This deleted passage is important for indicating the depth of Churchill's feelings against those who thwarted a further naval attack.

Churchill gives an incomplete account of the reply which he sent to de Robeck on March 24th. The second version of this message is quoted in full⁵ but it is not stated that this was a modified version, forced on

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(1) Churchill Papers 8/183.
(2) Hamilton to Churchill 21/6/23, Churchill Papers 8/44.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 648.
(4) Churchill Papers 8/183.
Churchill by Fisher, of the one which was quoted in our earlier discussion of these events. Of Fisher's attitude to the second telegram Churchill says "This telegram the First Sea Lord was induced, with some difficulty, to agree to". In fact it has been shown that Fisher took his opposition to the first telegram to the point of resignation and that he apparently never agreed even to the modified version being sent.

The consequences of de Robeck's decision to break off the naval attack are now summed up by Churchill.

"It was a far-reaching decision. It put aside altogether the policy of the Government and of the Admiralty, with which, up to this, the Admiral had declared himself in full accord. The plans which had emanated from the Fleet, on which both Admiral and Admiralty had been agreed, were cast to the winds. It withdrew the Fleet from the struggle, and laid the responsibilities of the Navy upon the Army. It committed the Army in the most unfavourable conditions to an enterprise of extreme hazard and of first magnitude."²

This statement makes far too much of de Robeck's decision and assigns to him a responsibility more properly borne by others. All de Robeck had decided was that the navy could not get through the Straits unaided.

It was not he who "committed the Army to an enterprise of extreme hazard". This decision was made by Kitchener, Hamilton and - though it was by default - the War Council and the Cabinet. The onus was on these authorities to veto the military landing if they thought the risk too great. Churchill, for instance, could have at any time registered a protest about landing an army under such "unfavourable conditions" but as we saw this was far from his attitude at the time. De Robeck did not "put aside" the policy of the Government and the Admiralty as Churchill claims in *The World Crisis*. Those bodies put aside that policy themselves and no dissenting voice was raised against the landing of the army.

We must now deal at some length with a speculative chapter in *The World Crisis* called "The Case For Perseverance And Decision" which

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(1) *The World Crisis*, p. 653.
(2) Ibid., p. 660.
immediately follows Churchill's chapter on the naval attack. It is divided into two main sections, a discussion of whether the fleet could have got through after March 18th. and the deteriorating military situation faced by the British between March 19th. and April 25th. It is proposed to deal with the first half of this chapter now and to defer consideration of the second until events leading up to the military attack are discussed.

Churchill states that the defences within the Straits consisted of four factors, forts, mobile howitzers, minefield batteries, and minefields.

"all [were] well combined but all mutually dependent. The minefields blocked the passage of the Straits and kept the Fleet beyond their limits. The minefield batteries prevented the sweeping of the minefields. The forts protected the minefield batteries by keeping battleships at a distance with their long guns. The mobile howitzers kept the battleships on the move and increased the difficulty of overcoming the forts. So long as all four factors stood together, the defences constituted a formidable obstruction. But not one could stand by itself, and if one were broken down, its fall entailed the collapse of the others."\(^1\)

There are several dubious assumptions here. For example let us imagine that the mobile howitzers had been eliminated. This would have enabled the battleships to anchor within the Straits and consequently the accuracy of their fire would have been improved. But was this a vital factor? In the two weeks firing on the intermediate defences and at the forts at the Narrows only a handful of guns had been put out of action. No doubt this performance could have been bettered if the ships had been able to anchor. However the main minefield still would have kept the ships at a range long enough to make hitting the guns at the forts a very protracted procedure. It is open to question whether the Fleet had the necessary ammunition to engage in this kind of operation or whether the continued firing would have not worn down the old guns to such an

\(^1\) The World Crisis, p. 672.
extent that their accuracy was destroyed. To take another factor, suppose the forts at the narrows had not existed or had been abandoned. Churchill assumes that this would have enabled the Fleet to close up to the edge of the minefield and destroy the minefield batteries which would have then enabled the sweeping to begin. But would the Fleet have been able to destroy these batteries? Many of them were concealed from direct view. Would the low trajectory guns of the ships have been able to range on these small targets? Obviously these questions are a matter of some debate but it would not seem to follow that the fall of one sector of the Straits defences automatically meant the fall of the others. Of course Churchill's passage in The World Crisis is rather irrelevant to the actual operation for the British Fleet proved unable to destroy any of the four components of the Turkish defence.

Churchill now turns his attention to the forts.

"The forts by themselves could not withstand the Fleet. They were vulnerable to indirect fire from over the Peninsula. They could be dominated and greatly injured by direct fire from inside the Straits below the minefields. Lastly, they could be forced to exhaust their ammunition in conflict with the Fleet. The amount of ammunition possessed by the Turks is therefore cardinal."

All of these assumptions can be challenged although it is probably true but rather irrelevant to say that the forts alone could not have withstood the Fleet. It was never proved, that the forts were vulnerable to indirect fire. Several shells from the Queen Elizabeth hit the forts but no irreparable damage was done. Secondly it was proved conclusively that the Fleet could not greatly injure the forts from inside the Straits and it is incredible that Churchill can make a statement to the contrary. Perhaps some further evidence on this point should be produced. It was found that during the naval attack some 2,000 rounds of all types were fired at fort No. 8 (Dardanos). Not one of the five guns in the forts

(1) The World Crisis, p. 672.
was hit.\(^1\) In addition it is by no means certain that the forts could have been forced to exhaust their ammunition by the ships. This assumes that the Fleet had a supply of ammunition large enough to subject the forts to a long and steady bombardment and that this would have always provoked a reply by the forts. In fact it was shown that the ammunition supply for the Fleet was strictly limited. Also it would not have been necessary for all the Turkish guns in the forts to respond to an attack by the Fleet. It was seen that on many occasions the forts fell silent only to resume firing when the ships closed in. Thus it was possible for the Turks to conserve their ammunition in ways that were not open to the Fleet.

Concerning the "cardinal" question of the Turkish ammunition supply, Churchill quotes figures which are an amalgam of those given by Enver Bey and Djevad to the Mitchell Committee,\(^2\) although the fact that they came from the report of that committee is not mentioned. Also quoted are the much lower totals given by Captain Serr\(^3\) but it is not mentioned that the Mitchell Committee suggested that his evidence was unreliable and based on hearsay. The main figures used by Churchill are, however, as reliable as any likely to be obtained but he then goes on to say "that for the heavy guns which alone could injure the armoured ships, they had not twenty rounds apiece."\(^4\) Now to reach this total Churchill cannot be using the figures of Enver or Djevad for they reveal that the 14" guns had 40-47 rounds per gun remaining and the 9.4" 79. He is perhaps using figures from the German official account which, as we have seen, quoted approximately 20 rounds H.E. per heavy gun. In fact this evidence is contradicted by a note by the Mitchell Committee which says that most of

\(^1\) von Usedom, Despatch, N.D., Cab. 45/215.
\(^2\) The New Crisis, p. 672.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 673.
the forts had 20 H.E. and 20 Armour Piercing left per heavy gun and as
A.P. was also effective against armoured ships this doubles the total
effective shells per gun remaining to the Turks. Further doubt is
thrown on the German figures by the fact that their estimate for the 9.4"
gun is between 30 and 50 shells per gun and the figures given to the
Mitchell Committee were almost double at around 79 shells per gun. In
The World Crisis both sets are quoted by Churchill but he does not
comment on the discrepancy. Perhaps if he had noticed it he would have
been less confident that the figure of 20 rounds per gun included all
the shells capable of inflicting damage on the Fleet and more wary of trying
to build a case on such shaky foundations.

The conclusions drawn from the Turkish ammunition figures by Churchill
are as ambiguous as his arithmetical calculations. He states that
"We knew at the time from secret sources, the credit of which was unquestion-
able, that the Turkish Army was short of ammunition. We had only to
resume a gradual naval advance and bombardment to discover the wonderful
truth that they had, in fact, scarcely any more ammunition". It is not
clear if Churchill intended his first statement to apply to the Turkish
Army as a whole. If he did then the alleged shortage did not materialize
during the Gallipoli campaign. Churchill's next statement that the forts
had "scarcely any more ammunition" is contradicted by the figures which
he quotes on the previous pages and by the conclusion drawn from the
figures by the Turks, which Churchill seems to accept, that two more
attacks on the scale of March 18th. could have been sustained. Perhaps
Churchill regards a supply of ammunition for two more attacks as being
"scarcely any more". However, it should be pointed out that the guns of
the Fleet would have been considerably worn after two more such attacks

(1) Note by the Mitchell Committee, Adm. 116/1713.
(2) The German Figures are on p. 674.
(3) The World Crisis, p. 673.
and the number of ships available for the Marmora substantially reduced. In fact, as Churchill admits, after exhausting their modern ammunition the Turks would have switched to the older shells and by this means could have engaged the Fleet in an indefinite number of attacks.

This point brings us to the crux of the debate about Turkish ammunition. It was suggested earlier that the ammunition question was not as crucial as Churchill thought it to be. For, as has been shown, provided the forts were firing some kind of shells the British would have been forced to engage them at long range and whether the shell could destroy the ships was hardly relevant as hits were made so infrequently. At long range it had been proved that the ships could destroy neither the forts nor the minefield defences. Churchill never addresses himself to this problem. Furthermore, his whole argument about ammunition rests on the assumption that once the forts were silenced the minefield defences could have been destroyed and the minefields swept, an assumption, as our previous discussion showed, which was hardly warranted by the previous performance of the Fleet.

Churchill next attempts to prove that there was no shortage of ammunition for the Fleet. He does this by quoting figures which prove that the stocks of 12" shell held by the Admiralty remained at the same levels from the beginning of the war until March 1915 (56,000 rounds) and from then on greatly increased deliveries were received. Similar statistics are quoted for the smaller calibres.\(^1\) However, these are total figures for the entire Fleet and the magazines which held these stocks were all in Britain. A much more relevant question, which Churchill does not answer, is the extent to which these stocks were available to Carden and de Robeck. They were clearly low on supplies throughout the naval operation as the continuous requests to the ships to limit their expenditure of

\(^1\) The World Crisis, p. 673.
shells shows. Presumably increased supplies could have been sent out but one witness to the Dardanelles Commission suggested that the Majestic and Albion class battleships, which largely made up the Dardanelles squadron, required a special kind of ammunition of which there were no reserves.\(^1\) If this was the case Churchill's statistics are hardly relevant. A further point to be made is that it is questionable whether the old guns could have engaged in repeated heavy bombardments without cracking or requiring reboring. Even Churchill admits that this was a "limiting factor".\(^2\)

Two more facets of the defence, torpedo tubes and floating mines, are then examined by Churchill. He claims that "No factor exercised a more deterrent effect upon the attackers than the possibility and alleged existence of large numbers of torpedo-tubes on each side of the Straits,"\(^3\) and he then goes on to prove that the tubes were a negligible quantity. Now it is true that in the letter explaining why the naval attack had been broken off, de Robeck mentioned that torpedo-tubes increased the difficulties for the Fleet. But to say that this factor was among the greatest deterrents to further action is a wild exaggeration. Even the most casual reading of the Admiral's message reveals that the vital factors were the unswept minefields and the inability of the Fleet to destroy the defences protecting them. Moreover the information to Churchill in 1923 concerning the torpedo-tubes was hardly available to de Robeck eight years earlier.

Exactly the same point can be made about Churchill's paragraph on floating mines. He states that the Turks had only forty of these available and half of them had been released by March 18th.\(^4\) De Robeck

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(1) Dardanelles Commission, Evidence of Rear-Admiral Morgan Singer (Director of Naval Ordinance) 12/10/16, Q3973, Cab. 19/33.
(2) The World Crisis, p. 673.
(3) Ibid., p. 675.
(4) Ibid., p. 676.
could not possibly have known this at the time. The damage caused to the ships on March 18th. mainly occurred in an area supposedly free from mines and that the Turks had floated mines down the Straits seemed to be the most likely explanation. Floating mines had to be taken into calculation by the Admiral on the spot and Churchill does little to strengthen his case by pointing out with knowledge gained after the war that they could have been ignored.

In one paragraph of this chapter Churchill does admit that "the force of minesweepers provided by the Admiralty was...inadequate both in numbers and efficiency". However, the Churchill Papers reveal that he was originally in a much more chastened mood. In a retrospective section, at first included in the chapter on Suvla Bay, and which looked back over the whole operation, Churchill gave three reasons for the failure of the naval attack. These were, the inadequate amount of ammunition available to the Fleet, the inadequate spotting force and the inefficiency of the minesweepers. He then went on to say, "These three serious defects in detail brought to temporary failure a conception in itself sound. For all of them in spite of their technical character, I must accept to the full a general responsibility." This last sentence was then crossed through but eventually the whole section was omitted. The paragraph is interesting because it is the only occasion on which Churchill admits responsibility for anything other than the quality of the minesweepers and even then he did not assume direct responsibility. Furthermore in the chapter under discussion so far from admitting that the ammunition supply was inadequate he has gone to considerable lengths to prove that it was sufficient. Finally, although the defects admitted were of a technical nature, in a sense Churchill was correct to take responsibility

(1) The World Crisis, p. 676.
(2) Churchill Papers 8/91. Originally this section consisted of about 20 pages of material. Most of it was condensed in the form of a table listing the "missed opportunities of the campaign". For a discussion of that table see Chapter 11.
(3) Ibid.
for them. For by rushing through the operation he ensured that adequate
time to consider technical problems was not available. However it is
clear that he had no intention of admitting this in The World Crisis.

Churchill endeavours to strengthen his opinion that the Fleet could
have forced the Straits after March 18th. by quoting the views of a
number of Turkish and German officers. With the exceptions of Enver
Pasha and Major Endres all the officers quoted in The World Crisis were
interviewed by the post-war Mitchell Committee although Churchill does not
acknowledge this fact. One general comment on the worth of these in-
formants is in order. They were representatives of the losing side
facing a series of questions from the victors. That there would be a
certain urge to please their interrogators and supply the type of answers
that was thought to be wanted would seem a reasonable conclusion. However,
no caution or any qualification about their evidence appears in The World
Crisis and Churchill obviously expects the reader to take their comments
at face value.

Of the seven Mitchell Committee informants quoted by Churchill five,
Souchon, Balzer, Serri, the Dardanos signal officer, and the Lieutenant
on the Hamideh all expected that the allied Fleet would get through.
One, Salahidden, thought that the ships could get through if the mines
were disposed of (a fairly fundamental qualification) and another, Djevad,
did not expect the Fleet to succeed.¹ However, the Mitchell Committee
interviewed 10 officers and they divided; five in favour of the Fleet
getting through, four against, and Salahidden doubtful.² Thus three
officers who took a pessimistic view of the Fleet's chances are not quoted
by Churchill. One of these officers, Major Zati, Chief of Staff
to G.O.C. Dardanelles, was described by the Mitchell Committee as an

(1) The World Crisis, p. 679-681.
officer who "did not appear to possess any great knowledge or ability". Another, Commander Hîmi Bey, a Turkish Navy gunnery officer, was said by Mitchell to be "Friendly and anxious to please. Some detailed knowledge of gunnery, but not much weight should be attached to his general opinions". Thus far Churchill could be excused for deciding to omit the testimony of these informants.

The exclusion of Enver Bey is a more serious omission. Enver thought that the British would be held up by the minefields and the Mitchell Committee suggested that "Some weight must...be attached to his opinions, owing to the opportunities of the position he held on the Naval Staff [C.O.S. to Souchon] particularly as regards the capacities of the Turkish Fleet." It seems reasonable to conclude then that any truly impartial survey of these men should include Enver Bey on the negative side.

More serious defects in Churchill's account are found when the remainder of his list is examined. Thus Churchill describes Col. Salahidden, whom he places on the positive side, as a "very capable Turkish soldier". This is a quotation from the Mitchell Committee Report but Churchill has omitted the remainder of the sentence which reads "and in general, though not always, his statements were reliable". Furthermore the Report described the signal officer at Fort Dardanos (Lt. Hussan-Ed-Din) who is quoted in The World Crisis, thus "Although willing to impart information, this officer did not appear to be very capable or reliable". This qualification was not printed by Churchill. In addition Mitchell pointed out that the First Lieutenant of the Hamidieh whom Churchill also quotes had as his "main object" the desire to please "and no weight can be given to his opinions". No mention is made of this

(1) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 86.
(2) Ibid., p. 87.
(3) Ibid.
(4) The World Crisis, p. 680.
(5) Mitchell Committee Report, p. 86.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Ibid.
statement in The World Crisis. Thus although Churchill has omitted those informants thought to be unreliable who took a negative view of the chances of the Fleet, he has included all those with a positive outlook no matter how untrustworthy they seem to be. Moreover, one of the more reliable informants whose views coincide with Churchill's Lt-Commander Balzer, was located in Berlin during the entire naval attack. His contribution must be regarded then as entirely theoretical.

The major contribution by an "expert authority" comes from Major Endres, who was C.O.S. of the First Turkish Army and answered a set of questions on Gallipoli sent to him by Churchill. His general opinion was that the Fleet should have pushed on after March 18th, as the ammunition reserves were low. He also thought that the Turks must have surrendered if the Fleet had entered the Marmora and that a military landing after March 18th. must have succeeded. It is not intended to discuss these statements in detail. Some have already been dealt with. Others will be dealt with in later chapters. The key question to be put at this stage is how reliable an informant was Major Endres. This question also occurred to Churchill and he asked the opinion of Sir John Edmonds, the official British historian. Edmonds replied, "I should say that he has a good knowledge of Turkey & the Turkish Army but as he was not with Limans army would have no special knowledge of Gallipoli". This is a very important qualification and would seem to reduce the value of Endres' opinions. However, this did not prevent Churchill giving Endres' answers to his questionnaire great prominence in The World Crisis or using them to help prove his case.

What are the main characteristics of these chapters of The World Crisis? One of the most noticeable is that in describing the naval attack

(1) The World Crisis, p. 681-3.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Edmonds to Churchill 2/7/23, Churchill Papers 8/44.
Churchill always assumes that the basic plan was sound. Thus the fall of the outer forts is used as evidence to show that Carden's plan was succeeding when, as has been shown, this was anything but the case. Subsequent failure to progress is explained solely by Carden's lack of vigour, when lack of adequate ammunition was at least an equal factor. Spurious emotional arguments such as de Robeck yearning after his lost ships, are introduced to explain the decision to call off the attack, when the Admiral's stated and intrinsically more probable reason is ignored. But Churchill's premise also takes him further. It leads him to construct a long speculative chapter which seeks to prove that great results could have been achieved had the naval attack been resumed, when this can only be done by incorrectly using statistical data or by distorting the balance of post-war Turkish evidence. Indeed this section shows Churchill at his worst as a historian.

Secondly, two themes are carried on from previous chapters. Admiralty opinion is either solidly behind Churchill (witness Fisher's failure to speak out) or confused (Jackson) and Kitchener is once more solely to blame for the failure to provide troops. As stated before, what these assumptions ignore is that Churchill himself played a significant part in bring about the situations he condemns. Thus Fisher fails to speak out partly because his objections have been ignored by Churchill in the past. Jackson is confused because he is trying to hedge his bets and is never the firm supporter of the naval attack that Churchill assumes. Kitchener is ambivalent about the 29th. Division partly because of Churchill's repeated assurances about the integrity of the naval attack.

Thirdly, it is noticeable that to fulfil his own prediction Churchill has to overestimate the effect of the operation on the Balkan states and to underestimate the extent to which these countries were governed by events which took place on the Eastern Front. We also have another link forged in the chain of fate when Russia quixotically vetoes Greek
participation at the Dardanelles and this explanation is later maintained in the face of clear evidence that this was not the case.

Fourthly, and most importantly, it should be obvious from the previous points that these chapters of *The World Crisis* contain a major contradiction. On the one hand Churchill laments the vacillating policy regarding the use of troops adopted by Kitchener which prevented the arrival of the 29th. Division in the east coinciding with the culmination of the naval attack. On the other hand his discussion of the naval attack itself has the underlying assumption that the Carden plan was sound and that great results could have been obtained by the fleet alone had the attack been renewed after March 18th. This contradiction results in his condemnation of Kitchener for his failure to supply troops, and his bitterness towards de Robeck for deciding that the use of troops was necessary. Thus *The World Crisis* mirrors the contradictory policy adopted by Churchill at the time, with the exception that in the book no hint is given of the second change of opinion concerning Carden's prospects which was undergone by Churchill in early March.