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THE SECOND PHASE OF THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

MAY 6th to include the BATTLE OF SARI BAIR

—By—

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The second Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, commencing May 6, 1915, naturally sub-divides itself into three parts, 1st, the Operations on the Apex of the Peninsula in the Cape Helles Area, 2nd, The Engagements from the Anzac Position Culminating in the Battle of Sari Bair, and 3rd, The Suvla Bay Landing. These three sub-divisions of the Second Phase will be considered in the order named.

On May 6th, the Allies had in the Helles area in preparation for the planned offensive of that date about 33,000 men disposed as follows: Left, 29th British Division (re-enforced by a Lancashire Territorial Brigade and the 29th Indian Brigade). Right, French Division supported by part of the Naval Division. Reserve, Two Anzac Brigades that had been brought from Gaba Tepe. The plan was simply a push forward by the entire line. The left and center were to occupy the Krithia Ridge and the Right to advance across the valley of the Kerevez Dere.

At 11 a. m. on the morning of the 6th, the French Division, proceeded by a half hour artillery preparation, advanced to the assault, and by 5:30 that afternoon had pushed forward about one mile, and had dug themselves in on the slope of the Kerevez Dere, but could not dislodge the Turks on the reverse slope. During the same period, the 29th Division on the left had advanced a few hundred yards with heavy casualties.

On the following morning, May 7th, the fleet bombarded the Turkish right on Achi Baba and at ten a. m. the 87th and 88th Brigades (29th Division) assaulted the Turkish positions between Krithia and the Sea while the Naval Brigades pushed forward toward Krithia Village. This attack successful at first was held by the Turkish second line. At about six p. m. these forces attempted to take the hill between Krithia and the Sea without success. On the right, the French attacked during the afternoon and held their slight advance after severe fighting. The result of the days fighting showed but very little advances.

The fighting was resumed at ten a. m. on the morning of the 8th when the British Left and Center attacked following a fleet bombadment. Slight advances were made. The attack was resumed at five p. m. with only small successes and the fighting ceased at seven thirty p. m. The three days battle advanced the Allies line more than one thousand yards, but utterly failed in its objective to dislodge the Turk from his strongly held position.

The balance of the month of May was spent by the Allies in improving their landing places and in strengthing their positions. Neither side took the offensive except for an occasional minor raid. During this period the Allied force was augmented by two divisions. the 2nd East Lancashire (Territorial) and a new French Division. On June 4th the Allies undertook an offensive preceeded by artillery preparation from both the shore batteries and the ships. Their force at this time numbered about 17,000 with 7,000 in reserve. The French 2nd and 11th Divisions were on the right, the Royal Naval Division, right center, 42nd Division, left center, 29th Division and 29th Indian Brigade, left. The French on the right made some advances at the beginning of the attack, but were to give way under violent Turkish counter-attacks. As a result the Royal Naval Division, and the 42nd Division were in turn taken in enfilade and compelled to fall back. The net result of the offensive was an advance of about 400 yards on a three mile front.

On June 21st, the French established themselves on the forward slopes of the Kerevez Dere. On June 28th, several hundred yards of Gulley Ravine was taken by the British. On July 12-13th, general attack along the line was launched. This resulted in an advance of two to four hundred yards, but did not in any way alter the situation.

During the latter part of July and the early part of August, General Hamilton received re-enforcements of three complete divisions and the infantry of two Territorial Divisions, so that by the beginning of August his army numbered on paper 160,000 men. Actually he had about 110,000 effectives. This force was made up of the 10th, 11th, 13th, 29th, 42nd, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, Royal Naval, 1st Australian, Australian and New Zealand,

1st and 2nd French Divisions, an Indian Brigade and four Anzac Mounted Brigades. The Turkish Army at this time consisted of probably more than a dozen divisions in the Gallipoli Area though nothing definite on this has ever been published.

General Hamilton now decided on a push from Anzac to capture the dominating heights of the Sara Bair Mountains.. From these commanding positions further advances toward the Kilid Bahr Plateau and the Narrows were to be made. At the same time a landing was to be effected at Suvla Bay for the purpose of securing a new base and to assist the left of the Anzac attack. A general offensive was to be made at Helles in order to prevent Turkish re-enforcements from going from this Area to Anzac. The plan involved a surprise landing at Suvla Bay and the disembarkation of troops and supplies at Anzac in the dark. As the bulk of the re-enforcements would arrive during the first few days of August when the moon would be dark, it was decided to launch the attack at this time.

The British forces at Anzac having made good their landing of April 25th had held on to the narrow strip of coast-line in spite of numerous Turkish counter-offensives, and had beaten back a particularly violent one on May 18th. On the nights of August 4th, 5th and 6th, the re-enforcing troops for the attacking force on Sari Bair were landed and placed in prepared under-ground passages. The plan of attack from Anzac was for the main assault to be made against the higher ridges of Sari Bair, and for a secondary attack to be launched against the Turkish positions from the Neck to the Lone Pine Plateau.

The secondary attack was launched on the afternoon of August 6th by the 1st Australian Brigade on Lone Pine Plateau. The Turkish trenches were taken, and the position held against Turkish counter-attacks on the 6th, 7th and 9th. Other parts of the line were unsuccessful in their attacks between the Pimple and Quinn's Post, and against the Turkish trenches on the Neck and Baby.

The troops for the attack on Sari Bair consisted of the Australian and New Zealand Division, 13th Division, 29th Brigade of the 10th Division, 29th Indian Brigade, and the New Zealand Mounted Brigade. The geography of the country over which this force advanced is so well described by Callwell that it is quoted in full. "Three valleys debouching on Ocea Beach bite into the hill mass on this side. The two nearest to Anzac, the Sazli Beit Dere and the Chailak Dere lead up to the main ridge known as Chanak Bair. The other further north, the Aghyl Dere runs up Hill Q and Koja Chemen Tepe which latter is the culminating point. All three of these pronounced depressions partake of the character of gullies and ravins rather than valleys, they are deep, winding, rocky, rise rapidly and are choked with scrub, while the spurs between them are also the minor promontories separating the small gullies that fork out from the main depressions are steep-sided, serrated in some cases crowned with hillocks of most difficult access." The troops were divided up into a Right Assaulting Column which was to move up Saxli Beit Dere and Cailak Dere with Chanak Bair as its objective; and a Left Assaulting Column which was to move up Aghyl Dere with Q as its objective. The Assaulting Columns were preceeded by two Covering or Advance Forces. The Right Covering Force was to take the foot-hills at the mouth of the Sazli Beit Dert and Chailak Dere and the higher ground of Bauchop Hill and Table Top. The Left Covering Force was to take Demajalik Bair, to cover the left of the advance and to connect up with the troops landing at Suvla Bay.

During the night of August 6th and 7th, the Right and Left Covering Forces quickly and successfully accomplished their missions. The Left Assaulting Column worked its way up the Aghyl Dere without attempting to assault Hill Q. The Right Assaulting Column was considerably delayed in their night advance by the difficult and unknown ground and by the Turkish defenses. They took Rhododendron Spur, but their advance had been so delayed and tedious that, instead of launching a surprise attack on Chanak Bair at dawn as had been planned, they were only able with the utmost effort to assault Chanak Bair at nine thirty a. m. This they did with exhausted troops and upon an enemy who was now fully aware of their plans. The attack was unsuccessful, and the attackers decided to hold fast and reorganize for a fresh attack in the morning.

At four-fifteen of the 8th, both Assaulting Forces launched an attack, The Right against Chanak Bair and the Left on Hill Q. (Hill Q is separated from Koja Chemen Tepe by a well marked depression. Its elevation is about fifty feet above Chanak Bair to which it is connected by a neck). The Right was able to

bite into the southwestern end of Chanak Bair. The attack on Hill Q was unsuccessful.

On the morning of August 9th, the attack was to be continued under the following plan: The Right was to hold its position on Chanak Bair, the Center was to attack on neck joining Chanak Bair to Hill Q, and the Left was to attack Hill Q. The assault was to be preceeded by a heavy bombardment by everything ashore and afloat. The Left did not come up in time to join in the attack due to difficulties of the ground and to getting lost, and failed to support the Center. The Center succeeded in reaching their objective, the neck connecting Chanak Bair with Hill Q. Their success (6th Lancashire and 6th Ghurkas) was but momentary for almost the instant they reached this crest a salvo of six inch shell from British guns burst in their midst. The Turks seized the opportunity of resultant confusion to counter-attack and drove the Center down the slope upon the Left which was just arriving on the scene. The days fighting left the British positions unchanged. The Turks attacked the British position on Chanak Bair at dawn on the 10th and drove them from the heights. The net results of the four days fighting had been an extension of the Anzac lines, but the commanding heights of Sari Bair remained in Turkish hands.

As a part of General Hamilton's plan, a landing at Suvla Bay was to made simultaneously with the launching of the attack from Anzac on Sari Bair. The objective of the landing as already stated was to secure a new base and to assist the left of the Anzac attack. The immediate objectives of the landing force was the high ground at Lala Baba and Ghazi Baba and the Hills near Yilghin Burnu (Chocolate Hill) and Ismail Oglu Tepe (Hill W). A small force was to take posession of the hills due east of Suvla Bay. The plans were shrouded in the utmost secrecy.

The British forces consisted of the 11th Division, 10th Division, Highland Mountain Artillery Brigade and 1st 4th Lowland Howitzer Brigade. The Turkish forces in the vicinity of Suvla Bay according to British information consisted of three battalions at the Anafarta villages, one battalion at Ismail Oglu Tepe, one battalion near Yilghin Burnu, small outposts at Lala Baba and Ghazi Baba, and a few Gendarmarie on the hills due east of Suvla Bay. The total Turkish forces in the vicinity of Suvla Bay that would have to be combatted at the out-set was probably not more than 4,000.

The troops which were to make the landings had been concentrated at Mitylene, Lemnos and Imbros. The largest contingent, the 11th Division came from Ombros. It was planned that this division should make a surprise night landing and that all of its brigades should be put ashore south of Nibrunesi Point. The 32nd and 33rd Brigades landed south of this point beginning at about ten p. m. August 6th, and by two p. m. the 2nd Battalion took Lala Baba Heights. The 34th Brigade was put ashore at A Beach where the landing was retarded due to fire from Lala Baba and Ghazi Baba. The Turks who had been forced out of Lala Baba entrenched themselves at Hill 10. From this position they were driven out about dawn by the 34th and 32nd Brigades.

Shortly after dawn, part of the 10th Division dis-embarked at C Beach, though it had been intended that all troops of this Division should be put ashore at A Beach. The original plan had been for the 10th Division to support the Left of the 11th Division. When they landed at C Beach the same instructions were given them which made it necessary for these troops to march up the narrow causeway of the Salt Lake in order to take up their originally intended position. Parts of the 30th and 31st Brigades (10th Division) which had dis-embarked at C Beach moved across the causeway, and in the early afternoon received instructions to support the right of the 34th and 32nd Brigades, and to move against Chocolate and Green Hills. The 34th and 32nd Brigades which had remained at Hill 10 and scarcely moved for six hours, had suddenly started moving eastward. This change of instructions caused a further dispersion of the 10th Division and a useless march around the Lake for these troops. In the meantime, the balance of the 10th Division, which had been put ashore at A Beach, moved toward the Karakal Dagh and the Kititch Tepe Sirt and at night the line ran from these points to Anafarta Ova-Sulajik to Green Hill.

The following day, August 8th, the landing troops did absolutely nothing with one exception. The 32nd Brigade occupied Scimitar Hill and as far south as Abrikja with almost no opposition. Sir Ian Hamilton arrived at Sulva in the afternoon and urged General Stopford, who was directly in command of the landing, to make an immediate attack, but this was not deemed practical by the Divisional and Brigade Commanders.

They were opposed to night operations with new troops, also there was some doubt at Division and Corps Headquarters as to the exact location of the different units.

A general attack was planned for the 9th to be made between the southern Azmak Dere and the heights north of Kuchuk Anafarta by the 11th Division assisted by the 31st Brigade. The 32nd Brigade was brought back during the night from its position on Scimitar Hill to take part in this offensive. The 32nd Brigade was placed on the Left, the 31st Brigade in the Center, to attack over the same ground the 32nd had just given up, and the 33rd on the Right. The 32nd Brigade took Baka Baba, the 33rd made some advances on Oglu Tepe and the 30th obtained a position on Scimitar Hill. However the 30th was driven back and Oglu Tepe and Scimitar Hill recovered by the Turks in violent counter-attacks. The day closed with the 11th Division practically back to where it started.

On the following day, August 10th, the attack on the high ground east of the Sulva Plain was repeated without results, and the British dug in on the line of the 7th.

COMMENTS.

This exceedingly brief sketch of the events of the Second Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign has been made up entirely from British resources. As far as is known, nothing on the subject has been written in Turkish, and the few German accounts of the operations in existence were written during the War for consumption in Germany, and are consequently of small value. So necessarily, this Campaign has been viewed from only the British side. It is regrettable that there is not at hand their opponents thoughts, plans and actions. It is with these recognized handicaps that these comments are made.

Viewing the Second Phase of the Campaign as a whole, it is questionable, even, if any of the offensives from Helles, Anzac or Suvla had been successful in obtaining their immediate objectives, that, it would have solved the main problem. namely, first, the possession of the Narrows, and, second, a safe passage through the Dardanelles. It does not seem that there were ever sufficient reserves to have pressed on to exploit an initial victory. Even had the British taken Sari Bair Mountain. It does not follow that they could have marched on to Maidos. The Turks always had as many division in the Gallipoli as the British, and undoubtedly had more available in the interior. And also their source of supply of men and munitions was close at hand. Lack of replacements near at hand made it impossible for the British to push their offensive after a few days effort. Their losses could not be replaced. They could go so far, and then settle down to hold what they had until replacements were sent from England—a matter of months. The ability of the Turks to quickly bring their divisions to threatened points indicated a well-working staff. It would seem that the British had sadly underestimated the Turkish fighting organiztion and ability.

The three days battle for the Krithia Heights were undertaken two weeks after landing. During this time the Turks had time to strengthen their defensives and to pour re-inforcements to this threatened area. It is well recognized that, the element of surprises having been lost, to attack an enemy in a strong defensive position unless the attacker has an overwhelming preponderance of men and munitions serves merely to court casualties. The push should have been made immediately upon landing, not two weeks later when the Turks had had time to concentrate and prepare.

Reconniassance and knowledge of the terrain over which an advance is to be made is highly essential for the success of any operation. The advance of the forces from Anzac at night over practically unknown ground, topographically exceeding difficult and through unknown Turkish defenses could only have been successfully made as a surprise against a weak defender and with good fortune. The plan to attack Chanak Bair at dawn undoubtedly was a bit ambitious. Even so, had it been possible, it probably would have brought success where the attack four hours later against a prepared and rapidly gathering foe brought failure. The attack on the Heights of Sari Bair at dawn on the 7th of August was a part of the plan that was absolutely essential for success and had it been made at that time would probably have won the Battle.

Likewise, lack of knowledge of possible landing places about Suvla Bay resulted in the necessity of dis-embarking units at places other than those intended by the Commander-in-Chief, and brought about in-

termingling of units and confusion of plans.

The surprise landing at Suvla Bay, in an area held by a greatly numerically inferior foe, held for the attackers a golden opportunity that they threw away by enaction and inertia. In making a surprise landing is is absolutely essential for the attacker to push on with utmost vigor before the defense can gather. If he does not take the ground before him at once he may never have another opportunity. The 32nd Brigade of the 11th British Division was able to take Scimitar Hill almost without opposition. The entire Turkish line was weakly held by hardly more than groups of outposts. Had the advance been vigorously pushed during the first and second days, it would undoubtedly have been successful and with but a small loss. After the second day Turkish re-inforcements arrived on the scene in such large numbers that the delayed attacks were fruitless.

The recall of the 32nd Brigade from Scimitar Hill on the night of August 8th to take part in a general offensive which included the ground they had been withdrawn from merely indicates that General Headquarters had no information of their location. It is always essential that every command should know the location of its units, and more necessary than ever that they should have this information when there is an intermingling of units with its incident confusion.

The secrecy maintained by General Headquarters in the plans for the Suvla Bay landing was carried to such an extreme that when the troops were put ashore they apparently had no clear idea of what they were to do. Secrecy of plans was necessary to prevent the Turks from knowing just where the landing was to be made, however, once the transports having put out to sea there was no necessity for further concealment. Information should have at that time been given different units as to what the general plan was and what they were to do once they were ashore. This probably would have been a great step in overcoming the in-action of the first two days.

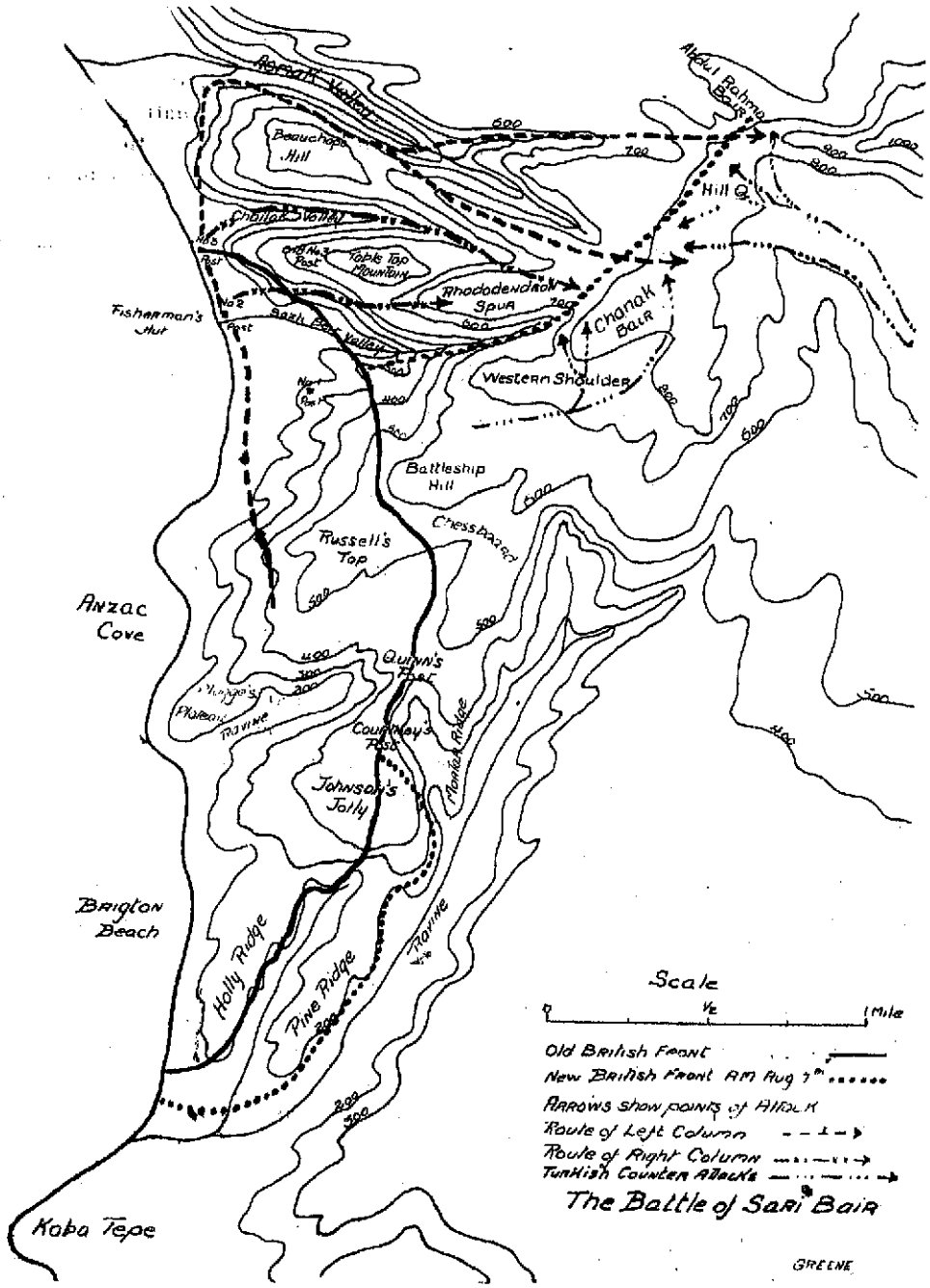
The salvo of six inch shell that had such a disastrous effect at Chanak Bair will probably always remain a mooted question as to their source. That they were British no doubt. It but illustrates the absolute co-ordination necessary for all arms when the Infantry is advancing behind an artillery barrage.

The value of an immediate counter-attack was demonstrated time and again in this campaign. As soon as a British attack would spend itself, and before they had time to fully consolidate their position, the Turks would vigorously counter-attack, and almost invariably regain the ground they had lost.

LESSONS.

1. In a campaign it is necessary to have replacements near at hand to make up losses.
2. In any advance, information of the enemy, and reconnaissance are of prime importance.
3. Surprise is of greatest value in an assault. With this element lacking, unless the attacker has much greater strength, the outcome is apt to be disasterous.
4. It is of utmost importance to make an immediate push forward on landing.
5. The different headquarters must know the location of their units.
6. There must be absolute co-ordination between the Infantry and Artillery when the former follows an artillery barrage.
7. Secrecy of plans can be carried too far.
8. A vigorous and immediate counter-attack will often be successful in regaining lost ground.

References:—The Dardanelles, Callwell; History of the World War, Buchan; Gallipoli, Masterfield; Gallipoli Diary, Hamilton; British Campaigns in the Nearer East, Dane.


Aghdi Bahma Bair
Hill Q
Beauchop Hill
Table Top Mountain
Rhododendron Spur
Chanak Bair
Fisherman's Hut
Western Shoulder
Battleship Hill
Chessboard
Russell's Top
Anzac Cove
Quinn's Post
Courtney's Post
Johnson's Jolly
Monash Ridge
Brigton Beach
Holly Ridge
Pine Ridge
Ravine
Kaba Tepe
Scale
½
1 Mile
Old British Front
New British Front AM Aug 7th
Arrows show points of Attack
Route of Left Column
Route of Right Column
Turkish Counter Attacks
The Battle of Sari Bair
GREENE