THE FIRST REPORT OF THE DARDANELLES COMMISSION and the Miswriting of History

by

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ABSTRACT

For the Allies, the Dardanelles campaign of the First World War was a disaster. Published in 1917, the First Report of the Dardanelles Commission criticised prominent individuals of the British government as explanation of this failure. Historians generally imitated this criticism of individuals. However, the First Report, and historians' use of it, are misleading. The Dardanelles Commission lacked documentary evidence, not all witnesses could testify before the Commission, and the report was censored. Furthermore, the evidence was never published, screening biases of the Commissioners. Historians have quoted from the First Report and its evidence without mentioning these important qualifications, thereby perpetuating misinterpretations of the Gallipoli expedition. This paper examines the production, limitations and evidence of the First Report. It concludes with an analysis of an oft-overlooked, but vital, section of the report which outlined "the higher organisation of the war" in Britain, and its broader responsibility for the Dardanelles fiasco.

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To Mom and Dad,
and
To James,
for taking me there in the first place.

CHAPTER I

The First Report and the Historiography of the Dardanelles

The Dardanelles campaign began on 19 February 1915 as an Allied naval attack on the Turkish fortifications guarding the Straits of the Dardanelles.[1] At the outset of operations, the British War Council expected to accrue great political and military advantages from the deliberate forcing of the Dardanelles Straits, against what was presumed to be weak Turkish opposition.[2] If the British fleet reached Constantinople, the War Council hoped that the "Young Turk" government would collapse, or at least would withdraw to the Asiatic portion of Turkey, and pull out of the European war. Either course strategically aided the Allies in a number of ways. At the time, Turkey threatened the Russians in the Caucasus, the Allies were unable to ship much-needed munitions to Russia and the Russians were unable to ship grain to Allied

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[1] The majority of ships that participated in the naval operations were from the British navy, although the French made a substantial naval contribution. In theory, the naval portion of the campaign was a full-fledged Allied effort, as the Russians were represented by the light cruiser, *Askold*. However, from the initial conception, the operations were under British command and control.

[2] It is now widely known that the Turks, along with German military officers to aid them, had substantially fortified the Gallipoli Peninsula in preparation for just such an eventuality. The biggest obstacles for the Navy to overcome turned out to be the mines within the waters of the Straits, and the mobile howitzers and field guns of the Turks, which were easily concealed on the rocky, brush-covered, broken ground of the Peninsula. As the Turks naturally held the high ground on both the Peninsula and the Asiatic side across from it, their guns were able to range over any ships entering the Straits. Consequently, this prevented the British trawlers, used as mine-sweeping vessels, from clearing a path for the larger cruisers and battleships of the naval forces to follow. See chapter one of Arthur Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran: Studies of the Royal Navy in War and Peace 1915-1940 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), for a detailed description of the difficulties with which the naval forces at the Dardanelles were faced.

nations.[3] Furthermore, the War Council expected that a Turkish withdrawal would persuade any of the then-neutral Balkan states with Allied sympathies to join the war effort against Germany and Austria-Hungary.[4] However, the original purely naval operation failed to break through the Dardanelles and the Allies altered the emphasis of the operation to a combined effort by land and sea forces.[5] Yet this plan also failed, and by early January 1916, the last of the British, French and Dominion troops had been evacuated from the Gallipoli Peninsula, unable to overcome the Turkish opposition. Although estimates vary, most sources record the British, French and Dominion casualties during the Dardanelles campaign as approximately 250,000.[6]

The first major Allied alternative effort to break the deadlock of the Western Front battles ended in the failure to attain any of its objectives. Although some historians contend that the Dardanelles campaign could have been

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[3] The Turkish threat in the Caucasus was the precipitating factor initiating the Dardanelles "idea" on 2 January 1915. See Public Records Office (PRO), War Council meeting minutes, 13 January 1915, CAB 22/1. However, by mid-January 1915, this particular military threat to the Russians was not so serious, suggesting other reasons for the decision to initiate operations against Turkey. See Brigadier-General C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, Official History of the War: Military Operations, Gallipoli, Vol. I. (London: William Heinemann, 1929), p. 52.

[4] The specific hopes for the successful completion of the Dardanelles operations are recorded in the 13 January and 26 January 1915 British War Council meetings. See CAB 22/1 for the minutes of these meetings.

[5] On 25 April 1915, the first Allied troops landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This date excludes several small demolition parties which landed during the naval operations to check and destroy the Turkish guns.

[6] Robert Rhodes James, Gallipoli (London: B.T. Batsford, 1965), p. 348. See also George H. Cassar, The French and the Dardanelles: A Study of Failure in the Conduct of War (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 237.

successful under slightly different circumstances, most condemn it as a complete tragedy.[7] The Dardanelles can be viewed today as simply one of several early Allied campaigns ruined by inept planning. However, in January 1916 military catastrophes such as the battle of the Somme still lay in the future. Thus, British politicians and the public, unaware that the Dardanelles would not be the worst disaster of the war, demanded that the causes of this great military and naval fiasco be explained or justified. In July 1916, pressure from members of the House of Commons forced the British Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, to appoint a special commission to inquire into the conduct of the Dardanelles operations.[8] Throughout July and August 1916 the Dardanelles Commission was established, not without protest, partially to satisfy political and public opinion, and partially to stay political criticism.[9] The campaign began as a "sideshow", but the Commission was undeniably a significant

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[7] See Chapter One of Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran, for a more positive outlook on the success of the operations. John Laffin, Damn the Dardanelles! The Story of Gallipoli (Sydney: Doubleday, 1980), gives perhaps the most pessimistic view of the campaign.

[8] Asquith was a Liberal, and British Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916. Historian Stephen Roskill notes that much of the pressure for an inquiry came from Winston Churchill, who was First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915, and who significantly held this post during the initial naval phase of the campaign. There was also pressure from others outside the Commons, such as General Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief of the Dardanelles Expedition from March to October 1915. Churchill and Hamilton in particular hoped that a commission would allow for a chance to clear the damage the Dardanelles had done to their reputations in a public manner. See Roskill, Hankey: Man of Secrets, Vol. I, 1877-1918 (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 279-89. See also Ian B.M. Hamilton, The Happy Warrior: A Life of General Sir Ian Hamilton (London: Cassell, 1966), pp.420-1.

[9] The Dardanelles Commission also arose in conjunction with a similar commission regarding the ongoing operations of the British forces in Mesopotamia. The Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act, 1916, was the official legislation instituting these two commissions. See Roskill, Hankey, pp. 279-89. Roskill also notes Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey's opposition to the whole affair. Hankey was Secretary to the War Committee in 1916.

event.[10]

The Dardanelles Commission produced two substantial reports. These were the First Report of the Dardanelles Commission (hereafter cited as the First Report), which was published in March 1917, and the Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission (hereafter cited as the Final Report), completed in 1917, but withheld from publication until 1919, after the war.[11] French forces at the Dardanelles were under the executive command of the British, and although some French officers were interviewed by the Commissioners as witnesses, the reports investigated British accountability for the fiasco. The Commissioners' mandate was twofold: Parliament called upon them to inquire into military and naval operations at the Dardanelles, but the terms of reference were also, more importantly, to determine the "responsibility" of departments of "Government" involved in developing and supplying the operations.[12]

The Dardanelles campaign itself easily separates into two distinct time periods. The period from August 1914 to 23 March 1915 was one in which the Dardanelles plan was formed by politicians and naval experts in Britain, and in which the naval operations were carried out. The phase ended with the

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[10] Although the term "sideshow" has been used by other authors and historians, here it has been borrowed from Trevor Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 108-21.

[11] First Report of the Dardanelles Commission (London: H.M.S.O., 1917), and Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission (London: H.M.S.O., 1919). The First Report is also commonly referred to as the "interim" report of the Commission.

[12] First Report, p. 1.

decision to introduce land forces on the Gallipoli Peninsula. From 23 March 1915 to 9 January 1916 the operations were primarily military in nature, with the naval component of the forces playing only a subsidiary, supporting role. Therefore, the Commissioners used this separation to divide conveniently the mandate of the Commission into two definable stages. The First Report covered the period between the "origin and inception" of the operations and 23 March 1915. The latter date was chosen specifically because it marked the day on which the naval and military commanders "on the spot" decided to discontinue the purely naval attempt to force the Dardanelles Straits, even though the first military forces did not land on the Peninsula until 25 April.[13] The Final Report covered all operations from 23 March until the final evacuation of the Allied forces from the Peninsula in January 1916. For historians, the publication delay until 1919 of the Final Report further enforces separation of the study of the Dardanelles campaign into two definable periods.[14] In addition, the subjects of the two reports are differentiated by the fact that the First Report affected politicians far more than

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[13] The naval commander was Vice-Admiral de Robeck, officer in command of the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron. De Robeck took over from Admiral Carden, the previous commander, who relinquished his post due to illness on 17 March 1915; General Sir Ian Hamilton was sent to the Dardanelles as the military commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force on 13 March 1915, to organise the military forces in the event that they would be necessary for an attack on the Peninsula.

[14] See T.J. Cartwright, Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees in Britain (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp. 106-7,172-3. An authority on commissions in general, Cartwright notes that the first job of any commission is "to decide how it is going to interpret its mandate", and that often there is "room to manoeuvre" within that mandate. Secondly, there is no fixed rule about the presentation of reports, as "most committees decide on their own initiative whether and when to issue interim reports". Either the subject simply falls into convenient divisions, or some aspect of the subject assumes a greater importance than the others.

the Final Report, which focused specifically on military operations of the campaign. Significantly, it was the publication of the First Report in 1917 which ensured that the Dardanelles campaign was not forgotten or obscured by other prominent events of the war.[15]

The First Report was the first significant published investigation of the Dardanelles campaign.[16] However, despite the vast quantity of scholarly and popular publications in the historiography of the Dardanelles campaign, no single study focuses its examination solely on the First Report. This might lead one to surmise that the First Report does not deserve such a detailed examination, yet the prominence of citations of the First Report within the bibliographies and footnotes of the authors and historians who have covered the campaign suggests otherwise.[17] Thus, it is apparent that historians and authors consider the First Report a valuable source of information about the campaign. Yet it is evident the First Report is neglected in that it has only been used and examined for academic purposes in a very limited manner. That is, a large group of historians and authors have utilised selected quotations and conclusions from the First Report simply to enhance or reinforce an argument or thesis,

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[15] Ibid., p. 218. Cartwright states that often even the "mere fact of the committee's existence may be enough to awaken or reawaken interest in a particular subject".

[16] The other major early account of the campaign was John Masefield's Gallipoli (Toronto: S.B. Grundy, 1916). It was a romantic and poetic account, not concerned with names, dates or technical details.

[17] Nearly every work on the Dardanelles campaign cites the First Report in its bibliography. For further distinctions concerning the use of the First Report, see below, notes 18-19 this chapter.

without explaining the context or circumstances behind the writing of the report.[18] The First Report was a censored document, with many inherent limitations which affected its final form. Historians and authors who do not note this context are misusing the First Report.

A second, smaller group of historians go a bit further in their investigation of the First Report, by surveying the unpublished evidence on which the Dardanelles Commissioners based their findings.[19] These efforts to investigate the First Report on a deeper level are commendable, yet they invariably still fall prey to the folly of neglecting to mention the circumstances under which the report was prepared, the restrictions which the Dardanelles Commissioners faced, and the consequent limitations of the applicability of the First Report in assessing the reasons for the failure of the campaign. Furthermore, an important section of the First Report which effectively criticised Britain's "higher organisation of the war" has been ignored by both groups of historians in favour of more sensational aspects of the investigation. It is apparent that historians cannot be

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[18] For example, E. Ashmead-Bartlett, The Uncensored Dardanelles (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1928); Eric Wheler Bush, Gallipoli (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975); C.E. Callwell, The Dardanelles (London: Constable & Co., 1924); Richard Hough, Former Naval Person: Churchill and the Wars at Sea (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985); Roger Keyes, The Fight for Gallipoli (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1941); Laffin, Damn the Dardanelles!; Peter Liddle, Men of Gallipoli (London: Allen Lane, 1976); Henry W. Nevinson, The Dardanelles Campaign (London: Nisbet & Co., 1928); John North, Gallipoli: The Fading Vision (London: Fabar and Fabar, 1936).

[19] For example, Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War (New York: The Free Press, 1990); David French, "The Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign Reconsidered", History 68 (June 1983): 210-24; James, Gallipoli; Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran; Stephen Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals (London: Collins, 1977) and Roskill, Hankey.

accused of disregarding the existence of the First Report, but their misuse and misinterpretation of its conclusions and the evidence on which it is based exhibit a lack of critical analysis of this primary source of information concerning the Dardanelles campaign.

Historians and authors have been eager to plunder the report as a source of information about the Dardanelles campaign, yet in their monographs, it is very difficult to find any mention of the circumstances surrounding the formation of the Dardanelles Commission. Similarly, the composition of the Commission, and the social backgrounds of its members are mentioned only sporadically, and usually only when the author of a work has a specific criticism concerning one or two Commissioners in particular.[20] To exclude such information is to assume a lack of bias in the First Report.

The First Report is a vital contemporary source, the Commissioners having brought together in it the opinions of nearly all the major players of the operations, and therefore it cannot be ignored. However, in order to preserve its viability, the restrictions influencing its production, and the limitations of its authority must be acknowledged.[21] Part of the problem with the First Report is that the Commissioners could not actually gather all the information necessary to support the judgments that the report contained.

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20 See Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, pp. 422, 424. The author Hamilton, General Hamilton's nephew, suggests that one of the Commissioners, Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, was not only jealous of General Hamilton, but that he had an "utmost hostility" towards him.

21 That is, the First Report brings together the opinions of nearly all the major players of the operations from the origin and inception of the campaign until 23 March 1915.

Even before the inception of the Dardanelles Commission, when its creation was still uncertain, the Foreign Office stated that in the event of an inquiry, it would refuse to submit all documents relating to the campaign. This reflected fear that important state secrets concerning British or Allied policy might be violated or unnecessarily compromised if certain Foreign Office documents were released into the hands of a commission, while the overall policy was still being considered.[22] Second, neither Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War during the entire period under consideration by the Commissioners, nor his personal military secretary for that time, Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald, was able to give evidence as they were both killed on 5 June 1916.[23] The Commissioners believed they had done justice to the "living as well as the dead" by approximating, as much as possible, the truth surrounding the events of the campaign, yet the two brief examples just cited suggest that the First Report was not as complete an investigation as it might have been.[24] These difficulties, and others, have only been complicated by the failure of historians to acknowledge them in connection with the use of the First Report as a historical source.

The most problematic aspect of using the First Report is the nature of the text of the report which was compiled

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[22] Roskill, Hankey, p. 287. The Foreign Office eventually only submitted a limited amount of data.

[23] Kitchener and Fitzgerald were killed when the *Hampshire* was sunk on its way to Russia. Kitchener was Secretary of State for War from August 1914 to 5 June 1916. The First Report acknowledges that Kitchener's testimony is absent, yet the Commissioners go on to speculate and condemn what they assume to have been his motives. First Report, p. 3.

[24] Ibid., p. 4.

mostly from the oral testimony of witnesses. Submissions by the Commissioners themselves, interspersed with various quotations from the testimony of witnesses, comprise the majority of the material cited, yet the evidence placed before the Commission, both oral and written, was never published, either separately or jointly with the main body of the First Report.[25] One authority on commissions argues that often the "output of new fact" is negligible in regard to the publication of oral evidence, and that such evidence is usually a "voluminous mass of absolute irrelevancies".[26] However, this does not apply in terms of oral evidence heard by the Dardanelles Commission.[27] When one examines the oral testimony of the thirty-five witnesses questioned by the Commissioners between September and December 1916, it is clear that in some cases the testimony did not completely and logically justify the conclusions drawn by the Commissioners.[28] There are two possible explanations for this incongruity. First, it may suggest a bias on the part of the Commis-

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25 See Hugh McDowall Clokie and J. William Robinson, Royal Commissions of Inquiry: The Significance of Investigations in British Politics (Stanford University: Stanford University Press, 1937), p. 180, footnote 42. Clokie and Robinson comment that "[s]ince 1927 (for reasons of economy) the practice of printing the volumes of evidence has declined very considerably", as many commissions leave the reporting of the hearings to the press. In the same reference, the authors suggest that the lack of publication of evidence may not be so problematic anyway, as "it is clear that few people ever read these thick tomes after the report is issued". However, this explanation does not account for the evidence of the Dardanelles Commission, which was taken in secret session, and was most likely suppressed due to reasons of secrecy.

26 Ibid., p.179.

27 Verbatim transcripts of oral evidence for the First Report are in PRO, Admiralty and Secretariat Cases, ADM 116/1437B; a duplicate of this evidence is in PRO, Dardanelles and Mesopotamia Special Commissions, CAB 19/33.

28 A larger, and greatly different set of witnesses were interviewed for the Final Report.

sioners. Supporting this assertion are instances of illogical lines of questioning by some of the Commissioners, indicating that they may have formed preconceived judgments about certain witnesses and events. Second, the inconsistencies between the transcripts of oral testimony and the Commissioners' version of events in the First Report may equally question the integrity of the witnesses.[29] Considering the fact that most witnesses gave their testimony a year or more after their involvement in the campaign, preparation and manipulation of evidence was eminently possible. Most likely a combination of these two possibilities influenced the writing of the First Report.

Members of the public, who purchased or read selections in the newspapers from the First Report, were not privy to background information, such as diplomatic correspondence and memoranda, that was excluded from consideration in the criticisms and conclusions published by the Commissioners. Even Members of Parliament (M.P.s) were not able to peruse the unpublished evidence. Consequently, the problems inherent in the First Report were magnified immediately upon its publication, and the debate over it in the House of Commons in March 1917. However, nowhere is the misleading influence of the First Report more evident than in the work of subsequent authors and historians. This criticism is not to suggest that the First Report is invalid, but merely to stress that authors and historians of monographs on the Dardanelles

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[29] See T.H.E. Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model" Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 29 (1994): 403-442. Travers records evidence of collusion by the witnesses before giving their testimony.

campaign have failed, thus far, to acknowledge the limitations and restrictions associated with the report as a source of accurate, factual information. These weaknesses are actually a vital, untold story, and must be considered in conjunction with the use of the First Report.

Asquith, the former Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, the former First Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Kitchener, the former Secretary of State for War, were undeniably easy targets for the Commissioners to blame for the failure of the campaign; by 1917, the first two individuals no longer held their previous offices, and the third was dead. However, historians have generally ignored a significant amount of the First Report which dealt with certain government organisations. In both the text and conclusions of the report, the Commissioners discussed and criticised the War Council, the Admiralty and the War Office, as the three main bodies in charge of running the war for Britain during the period of August 1914 to March 1915. In this sense, the Commissioners fulfilled their mandate to examine the departments responsible for the operations at the Dardanelles. Yet in the historiography of the Dardanelles, citations of the First Report do not mention the Commissioners' examination of these government organisations. Essentially, the fact that the Commissioners allowed Asquith, Churchill and Kitchener to bear the brunt of the blame overshadowed what should have been the main focus of the inquiry as stated in the mandate of the Commission. Historians of the campaign are also responsible for this problem, as they have only highlighted

the misplaced emphasis of the Commissioners and have not addressed the inaccuracies this has engendered.

The War Council, a committee of politicians and military experts who gathered to discuss war policy and operations, had several problems in the early part of the war. The Commissioners stated that these problems, which included confusion of authority and the difficulty of incorporating the opinions of both the politicians and the experts in the decision-making process, hampered arrangements regarding the Dardanelles.[30] At the Admiralty, the Commissioners noted difficulties centering around the relationship of the First Lord with his subordinates, the First, Second, Third and Fourth Sea Lords, and other expert naval advisers permanently employed at the Admiralty.[31] Although this criticism was directed at Churchill as the political head of the Admiralty, it also related to the organisation and division of authority within the Admiralty. Similarly, much of the criticism contained in the First Report centred around the position and responsibility of the Secretary of State for War at the War Office, Lord Kitchener.[32] This was not entirely unfair, considering he was in charge of the strategical direction of military operations, subject to the nominal approval of the War Council and the Cabinet. The Commissioners noted the confusion caused by Kitchener's unique position as a soldier fulfilling an important political role, his difficulty in

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[30] First Report, p. 5.

[31] Ibid., pp. 10-11, 41-3.

[32] Ibid., pp. 41-3.

delegating authority to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), and problems of the much reduced General Staff at the War Office, as many military experts had left for active command in the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) at the start of the war.[33]

It is important to recognise the Commissioners' attempt to examine the departments of the War Council, the Admiralty and the War Office. However, the important criticisms relating to these organisations were eclipsed by the more prominent focus on the individuals who were the heads of these organisations. Historians, quick to adopt the strategy of focusing on the responsibility of individuals for the blunders of the Dardanelles operations, have obscured the notion that problems were inherent in the entire system of British wartime government. Not only was the Dardanelles fiasco a product of these inherent problems, but the problems also affected other theatres of war.[34] Studies of British war policy and command have recognised these faults, but they are not mentioned in connection with the conclusions of the Dardanelles Commission's First Report. The following

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[33] Ibid., pp. 12-13. See also John Gooch, The Plans of War-The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 303-4, 309, 312. David French, British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1916 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 63. French describes Lieutenant-General Sir James Wolfe Murray, CIGS from 1914 to 1915, as being "so much in awe of Kitchener" that he never spoke up in War Council meetings.

[34] See Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p.403. Travers makes the explicit argument that the Dardanelles campaign was not the only product of structural problems, with the comment that, "the campaign cannot be understood without comparing Gallipoli and the Western Front, especially in terms of 'models' of warfare and styles of command, and that the failure of Gallipoli can be best understood not as a series of individual command mistakes, but as a systems or structural failure". Although Travers's focus is mainly on military command structures, the point can be expanded to include broader areas of governmental structure as well.

incidental comment by historian John Gooch appears to be one of the only connections drawn between the two:

> It was not until 1917 and the Report of Enquiry into the Dardanelles that the government met any deep criticism of its relations with its military advisers. But this paled into relative insignificance, then and for far too long afterwards, beside the strictures levelled against Lord Kitchener-who was by that time dead.[35]

Gooch's comment aptly summarises the effect that the First Report had upon subsequent authors and historians who have covered the Dardanelles campaign, as well as demonstrating selective use by historians of the criticisms of the report.

Ironically, the British government most likely realised the true significance of the First Report when it was presented to the House of Commons for debate; that is, the government recognised that the report criticised both individuals and government organisations.[36] Some members of the newly formed David Lloyd George Coalition reportedly welcomed the First Report, owing to the fact that it criticised the old government under Asquith's leadership.[37] In addition, many historians conclude that Lloyd George himself had actively conspired to bring about the downfall of Asquith's government, even though he was, like Asquith, a member of the

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[35] Gooch, The Plans of War, p. 308.

[36] Hansard, The Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 91, 20 March 1917 debate.

[37] See Roskill, Hankey, p. 359. Roskill quotes one of Hankey's diary entries that the new War Cabinet "was delighted" because the report condemned Asquith. David Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1908 to 1915, Minister of Munitions from 1915 to 1916, and Secretary of State for War from June to December 1916. He became Prime Minister in December 1916.

Liberal Party.[38] During 1915-16 the public and ministers had known that Lloyd George was in strong opposition to many of the government's policies, and to those of Asquith in particular; the conscription crisis and the "Irish question" were just two of the main points of contention between the two men.[39] None of the specific criticisms contained in the First Report substantially devolved on Lloyd George individually, and when the Dardanelles Commission's first work was published in 1917, it was just two months after he had assumed the premiership of Britain. Oddly, Lloyd George's record of opposition to the previous government's policies somewhat dissociated him from responsibility for its decisions from 1914 to 1916, despite the fact that he had been a member of the War Council, Dardanelles Committee and War Committee during that period. Lloyd George's dissociation from the previous government enabled him to allow its discrediting in the First Report, yet the Final Report was not published until 1919, even though it was completed late in 1917.[40] Criticism of Asquith's ineffectual war leadership was easy in 1917, but the reasons why the Final Report was

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[38] See G.R. Searle, The Liberal Party-Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929 (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 128; Don M. Cregier, Decline of the British Liberal Party: Why and How? (Murray: Lorrah and Hitchcock, 1985), pp. 6, 27; Don M. Cregier, Chiefs Without Indians (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 70-1; Trevor Wilson, The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935 (London: Collins, 1966), pp. 41, 46, 52.

[39] Wilson, Downfall, pp. 36-8, 66, 73, 76-9, 84-7.

[40] See Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, p. 427. The author comments that one of the main reasons for the delay in the publication of the Final Report was that "the Government was not prepared to disclose its own shortcomings".

not published until after the war are not clear.[41] Most likely the delay in publication was partially a result of War Cabinet concerns that any further denigration of the military commanders who had served at the Dardanelles, some of whom had subsequently assumed commands on the Western Front, would be detrimental to public confidence in the war effort. After all, the Dardanelles Commission was not a military court-martial, and it did not have the power necessary to remove military officers from their commands.

These limitations have been discussed at length because of the fact that the foremost reason for an individual consideration of the First Report is that it has had an inordinate influence on the historical interpretation of the Dardanelles campaign. Memoirs, biographies, popular and academic studies of the major players involved and events surrounding the Dardanelles campaign are rarely impartial works. Rather, studies of this subject tend to focus on either justifying or condemning the actions of individuals, few works providing an evenhanded evaluation between the two extremes.[42] Undeniably, the First Report contributed greatly to, if not initiated, this polemical historical controversy that continues up to the present day.

The First Report specifically singled out three indivi-

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41 See French, British Strategy and War Aims, p. 1. French notes that Asquith was not an "inspiring war leader", and that his colleagues lost confidence in him especially over his "mishandling of conscription and Ireland".

42 See James, Gallipoli, p. 350. James comments that "dispassionate and sober judgments seem to waft away whenever the subject [of Gallipoli] is raised".

duals for criticism: Churchill, Asquith and Kitchener. The Commissioners had a mandate to inquire into the events, and also to determine the "responsibility of those departments of Government" whose duty it was to manage the operations.[43] Yet, somewhere during the analysis of the evidence, the Commissioners decided to interpret the accountability of "departments" as also meaning the accountability of specific individuals. When the task of delineating faults within departments was transformed into making personal attacks, a balanced analysis vanished. The distortions found in the First Report have ensured that examination into individual responsibility has become the focus of the historiography regarding the campaign. An evaluation of the historiography of the Dardanelles campaign will illuminate some of the distortions initiated by the First Report.[44]

It is evident from the previous brief discussion of the significance and influence of the First Report that its importance cannot be underrated. Yet the lack of detailed discussion of the First Report in the Dardanelles historiography denies the work its historical significance. As the First Report was published during the war, interest in the campaign survived despite many other major battles, such as the Somme and Verdun, that had occurred following the Dardanelles campaign. The present discussion of the historiography of the campaign will demonstrate both the influence of the First Report, as well as the previously

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[43] First Report, p. 1.

[44] For the historiographical discussion, see pp. 19-30 this chapter.

stated reasons why it needs to be examined further.

Perhaps the most notable immediate influence of the First Report on written history was an indirect one. Nevertheless, it was a compelling influence. The report spawned several near-immediate replies. Next to the production of the First and Final Reports of the Dardanelles Commission, immediately following the conclusion of the war numerous memoirs, diaries, and personal accounts of the Dardanelles campaign were published.[45] Of these accounts, one in particular was an especially strong rebuttal to the short shrift the author felt he had been given by the First Report. Churchill's The World Crisis was outwardly and theoretically a historical account of events leading up and into the First World War, yet an overwhelming portion of the work was devoted to events at the Dardanelles.[46] Significantly, Churchill's account of events differed in many ways from that of the First Report. It was a blatant rebuttal of the criticisms and charges levelled against him; the First Report claimed that he had exercised more executive authority within the Admiralty as First Lord than was constitutionally and historically acceptable.[47] The World Crisis set out an

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45 For example, Lord Fisher, Memories (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919); Lord Wester-Wemyss, The Navy in the Dardanelles Campaign (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924); Sir Ian Hamilton, Gallipoli Diary, 2 vols. (London: Edward Arnold, 1920); Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis vols. 2-3 (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923, 1927).

46 Robin Prior, Churchill's 'World Crisis' as History (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. xiv. Prior documents that of the original three volumes published (Prior excludes volumes four and five on the aftermath of the war, and the war on the Eastern Front), approximately two-thirds of the work concerns the 1914-15 period.

47 First Report, p. 40.

equally admirable case opposing the charges, and coupled with Churchill's eloquence, it was indeed very convincing. For example, discussing the naval operations between 19 February and 18 March 1915, Churchill commented that:

> [N]o sign of disagreement was manifested. Sir Arthur Wilson, Sir Henry Jackson, Admiral Oliver, Commodore de Bartolomé all were united and agreed to press on and to press hard. The Ministers seemed equally decided. War Office and Foreign Office were eager and hopeful. The Prime Minister did not even think it necessary to summon a council and put the point to them. I have never concealed my opinion. I rejoiced to find so much agreement and force gathering behind the enterprise.[48]

In contrast, the First Report clearly defined differences of opinion between the ideas of Churchill and those expressed by the Admiralty War Group members.[49] Some may argue that The World Crisis was not a true historical work, as "in much of his historical writing [Churchill] was engaged in presenting a case," but it is undeniable that Churchill's arguments significantly influenced later historians.[50] In this case, the First Report cemented personal responsibility for the early Dardanelles blunders, and Churchill gave a personal, and eloquent response.

Churchill was not the only one to respond to the reports personally. In 1920 Hamilton published his Gallipoli Diary in two volumes. Although Hamilton had only played a small

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[48]See Churchill, The World Crisis, Vol. II, p. 217.

[49] First Report, pp. 11-12. See also, Maurice Ashley, Churchill as Historian (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), p.84. Ashley comments that not all the "lower echelon" agreed with Churchill.

[50] Ashley, Churchill as Historian, p. 72. See also Prior, Churchill's 'World Crisis' as History, p. xiii.

role in the operations that the Commissioners considered when preparing the First Report, he began work revising his Gallipoli Diary before the Final Report appeared. In fact, he began preparation for the publication of his work during the Commission's enquiry in 1917.[51] No doubt he expected criticism to come. The delay in publication of the Final Report kept him from a military command for the rest of the war, and one could easily surmise from the tone of the First Report what was impending.[52] Historian T.H.E. Travers notes that Hamilton's "published Diary should sometimes be treated with caution", as he found that the original manuscript was not among the Hamilton Papers, and that there existed at least one discrepancy between the published version and the daily typed diary of Hamilton's staff sergeant at Gallipoli.[53] Although this may be a minor contradiction, it must be treated with suspicion. Once again, all this was an indirect result of the First Report; it created enough suspicion and animosity to be partly responsible for "various early problems in the historiography of the Gallipoli campaign".[54]

Certainly the next important monographs to mention are the British official histories of the First World War, both

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51 Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, pp. 427, 437. Churchill even received an early advance copy from Hamilton, for use as a reference during his testimony before the Dardanelles Commission.

52 See Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 407.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid. Travers recognises some early problems in the Dardanelles Commission and in Hamilton's Gallipoli Diary, but he does not specifically make the connection between the two.

naval and military.[55] Three of the naval history volumes that relate to the Dardanelles were written by Julian Corbett, a civilian naval historian, and the two military history volumes concerning the Dardanelles campaign in particular were written by Brigadier-General C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, who had been a staff officer at Gallipoli.[56] These accounts were not designed to be critical of naval and military strategy, their main purpose being to depict the chronology and results of the operations of war. They were also very heavily censored.[57] However, it is likely that the authors of the official histories were aware of the controversy surrounding the failed Dardanelles operations. Corbett had been employed by the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.) during the Dardanelles campaign. In fact, in February 1915 Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey had called upon Corbett to research for the information of the War Council previous attempts to force the Dardanelles.[58] Aspinall-Oglander had a more personal involvement, as he had actually helped plan a significant portion of the military

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55 Julian Corbett, History of the Great War: Naval Operations Vols. I-III (London: Longmans, 1920-23), and Brigadier-General C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, History of the Great War: Military Operations, Gallipoli Vols. I-II (London: Heinemann, 1929).

56 Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 406. Travers notes that Aspinall-Oglander was actually the chief operations officer at General Headquarters in Gallipoli from July 1915 onwards.

57 Alistair Thompson, "History and 'Betrayal': The Anzac Controversy" History Today 43 (January 1993), pp. 8-11.

58 Corbett, 4 February 1915, "The Dardanelles", CAB 19/28. Hankey was Secretary to the War Council at this time, although the Historical Section of the C.I.D. functioned throughout the war. Hankey had previously been Secretary to the C.I.D. since 1912.

operations. Although the official histories generally abstained from critical comment of individuals, it appears that Aspinall-Oglander's military histories explained the Dardanelles operations by claiming they had been flawed from the beginning, stating that "from its very inception the operation was handicapped by lack of confidence in its success".[59] With this emphasis, it is likely that Aspinall-Oglander was interested in deflecting criticism of the campaign mainly to those involved in planning its initial stages, rather than to the portion in which he had been personally involved. Corbett and Aspinall-Oglander both claimed they had access to all the necessary documents concerning their subjects, yet their lack of overt critical comment meant that their sources, including the First Report, were not subjected to a critical analysis in the text of the official histories.

Following the Second World War, new historical accounts of the Dardanelles campaign were written. The influence of the First Report on these monographs was definitely evident, but now it had a different impact on writers. That is, a new generation of authors and historians who had not been direct participants in the operations themselves were now discussing the campaign. Thus, the memoirs, diaries and personal accounts of the 1920s and 1930s combined with the First Report to constitute a major influence on these authors. One might expect these new accounts to be more balanced critically than the earlier, more personal responses to the First

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[59] Aspinall-Oglander, Military Operations, Gallipoli, Vol. I, pp. 63, 71.

Report. However, in general, the works of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were victims of the misleading preponderance of the First Report in the historiography.

Of special note are studies by historians Alan Moorehead and Robert Rhodes James.[60] Both of these works were intended to be popular accounts designed to garner public interest in the subject, yet the scope of their discussions was quite admirable. However, both authors continued to focus on the personality issues of the campaign.[61] Moorehead was clearly influenced by the First Report as is evidenced by his heavy reliance on Churchill's The World Crisis. Moorehead remarked that it

> was Churchill himself who first restored the reputation of the Gallipoli campaign with the publication in the twenties of The World Crisis, his study of the [F]irst [W]orld [W]ar. He had never really been heard before, and now, step by step, he took the story through the political and military events which led up to the campaign...[62]

Moorehead obviously accepted the case Churchill presented, and decided to champion the latter's explanation of events.[63] Moorehead was not the only author to take up Churchill's

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60 Alan Moorehead, Gallipoli (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956), and James, Gallipoli.

61 See Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 403, and footnote 1, p. 435. Travers comments of the historiography that there is "the tendency to explain the failure of the Gallipoli campaign by focusing solely on the conduct of particular individuals". He states that it is important to examine personalities, "but it is striking how many historians and memoirists have sought fully to explain the failure of the expedition purely in terms of individuals, without reference to other constraints". (In the footnote) Travers in particular points out James's concentration on "personalities".

62 Moorehead, Gallipoli, p. 339.

63 Ibid., p. 7. Moorehead describes the Dardanelles campaign as the "consistency, imagination, and frustration" of Churchill's plan.

interpretation, as the polarising effect begun by the First Report continued.[64]

James's work was better-researched than Moorehead's, but it too focused on the personalities involved in the campaign.[65] Unlike Moorehead, James viewed The World Crisis as an attempt to romanticise or rehabilitate the Gallipoli campaign.[66] James wrote of Churchill's relationship to the Dardanelles campaign that "the initiative was solely his; and the responsibility for what ensued must be principally his".[67] However, more obvious in James's writing is the authority of the evidence of the Dardanelles Commission, quoted several times directly in the text. Apparently, James was able to obtain access to the evidence of the Commission before it was officially open to the public.[68] This was a positive step, but the extent of his use of the evidence is unclear, as the documentation in his text was not created for an academic readership. Thus, James's use of the evidence appears to have been quite sporadic, usually when he wished to make an

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64 See also Jeffrey D. Wallin, By Ships Alone: Churchill and the Dardanelles (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1981). Wallin's thesis is that regarding the Dardanelles, Churchill was used as a scapegoat in party politics. Interesting to note is that Wallin's study was funded in part by a grant from the Winston S. Churchill Association.

65 Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 435, note 1.

66 James, Gallipoli, p. 351.

67 Ibid., p. 31.

68 Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 435, note 1.

especially authoritative point.[69] Selective use of evidence is dangerous, as it removes a statement from its original context, running the risk in this case of misinterpreting a witness's intent. Yet perhaps more disturbing than the misuse of evidence is the very brief comment James devoted to the Dardanelles Commission itself, only a single paragraph in the conclusion of his work.[70] For a reader unaware of the inherent limitations of the Commission, and of the First Report especially, James's use of the evidence might appear to be more impressive than the assessment it actually warrants.

Two of the most authoritative monographs on the origins and naval stage of the Dardanelles campaign are volume two of Arthur Marder's From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, and Stephen Roskill's Churchill and the Admirals.[71] Marder's account contains much technical, operational detail, while Roskill's is primarily notable both for its use of Marder's evidence, and its direct contradiction of several of Marder's arguments. Both are scholarly studies which utilise the unpublished evidence of the First Report; rather than relying on the conclusions of the First Report itself, they often cite portions of evidence. However, once again, these his-

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69 The evidence most heavily quoted is overwhelmingly in "Part One" of the text, which discusses the origin and prosecution of the campaign until 25 April 1915; that is, it is the oral evidence used for the composition of the First Report.

70 James, Gallipoli, pp. 350-1.

71 Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), and Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals (London: Collins, 1977). Marder apparently must also have been allowed access to the Dardanelles Commission evidence before it was opened to the public in 1968.

torians do not mention the limitations under which the Dardanelles Commission operated, and how such limitations may have affected the oral evidence gathered. As well, neither historian has critically compared the conclusions of the First Report with the evidence gathered and organised by the Commissioners themselves.[72] Both of these works are promising, and their academic scholarship lends authority to the studies, but a fundamental difficulty remains, as neither Marder nor Roskill has moved away from the legacy of blame in the Dardanelles historiography. Marder denoted Churchill as a "prime mover" of the "Dardanelles adventure", while Roskill cited Churchill as the chief instigator of the campaign.[73]

In order to find any substantial description of the Dardanelles Commission and its reports, one must turn to works not directly associated with discussion of the Dardanelles campaign. Specifically, Lord Hankey's The Supreme Command 1914-1918, the biography of Hamilton by his nephew, The Happy Warrior, and Roskill's biography of Hankey, are the few studies that contain more than a passing reference to the Commission and its findings.[74] In essence, these studies comprise the fundamental sources of information about the Commission next to the two reports themselves. Yet these

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[72] Roskill only very briefly outlines the legislation that formed the Dardanelles Commission. Interestingly, he comments on Churchill's reactions to the "grotesquely biased" conclusions of the Commission, yet he does not go on to explain how their "biased" nature affected his use of the First Report as a source. Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals, p. 63.

[73] Marder, Dreadnought, Vol. II, p. 260. Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals, pp. 50-1.

[74] See Lord (previously Lieutenant-Colonel) Hankey, The Supreme Command 1914-1918 Vol. II (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), pp. 517-529; Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, pp. 419-427; Roskill, Hankey, pp. 279-306.

studies are problematic because the information concerning the Commission was primarily given from the point of view of the subject's involvement with it. For example, Hankey's writing was most often clear, concise and enlightening about the inner workings of British government during the First World War. Although he was a figure of lesser political and military importance, he was in constant communication with those in the highest positions of authority due to his consecutive service as Secretary of the C.I.D., the War Council, the Dardanelles Committee and the War Cabinet. The difficulty arises with Hankey's specific comments on the Dardanelles Commission, which he considered to be not only a foolish way to impart secret information to the enemy, but also a colossal waste of the government's time and effort in the midst of the war.[75] Similarly, Hamilton's account of his uncle's involvement with the Commission was tinged by a personal bias, and Roskill was of much the same opinion as Hankey.[76] Furthermore, none of these three texts discusses the witnesses' evidence on a larger scale, other than its intrinsic importance to that of the subject of the work. Thus, although these studies provide details of the Dardanelles Commission not found in other historical works on the Dardanelles campaign, they must be utilised with caution.

More recently, an article by historian T.H.E. Travers

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[75] Hankey, The Supreme Command, pp. 518-520.

[76] See Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, pp. 421-424. These pages provide interesting personal background information of some of the Commissioners, but they overwhelmingly concentrate on the hostility the author determined evident within the Commission against Hamilton. See also, Roskill, Hankey, pp. 287-289.

clarified the problem of the preponderance of blame in the Dardanelles historiography. His thesis does much to advance the discussion of the Dardanelles campaign beyond the narrow and isolated scope of most historians. More importantly, Travers moves beyond defining the responsibility of individuals, to a careful consideration of a more fundamental structural problem within Britain's military command system during the early part of the war.[77] Travers does not limit his discussion to Gallipoli alone, but expands his thesis to include British command on the Western Front as well. Undeniably, his article is an important addition to the historiography of the Dardanelles campaign. However, as Travers is mainly concerned with military command structure, evidence of the Final Report, and other primary sources pertaining to Gallipoli from approximately 25 April 1915 onwards, form the majority of his references. This essentially leaves the context and evidence of the First Report unexamined.

The historiography of the Dardanelles campaign is vast, and the present examination necessarily only highlights the most prominent and influential of the lot. An interesting characteristic of the studies mentioned here is that although

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[77] See also John Gooch, "Failure to Adapt-*The British at Gallipoli, August 1915*", in Cohen and Gooch, Military Misfortunes-The Anatomy of Failure in War, pp. 133-163. Gooch advances a similar theory, although not as well formulated a one as Travers's. Gooch argues a structural problem as a reason for the failure of the August 1915 operations on the Peninsula only in so far as the various failures at different command levels "percolated down through the chain of command". He concludes with the statement that "[w]hat the example of Suvla Bay makes clear is that failure to adapt to changing military circumstances is a consequence of systemic and organisational weaknesses and not of individual shortcomings", yet Gooch devotes much of his discussion to the consideration of the various qualities of individual commanders such as General Hamilton.

one must separate the work of academic historians from diaries and other popular historical accounts, there is a single, connecting aspect of nearly all the studies, and that is the legacy of blame begun by the Dardanelles Commission's First Report. This enigmatic document has influenced authors and historians for many years, yet it has never been fully explained.

A critical examination of the First Report is long overdue. It has been a primary source for most historians of the Dardanelles campaign and as such, it has had a great direct influence on the historiography of the campaign. However, very few historians deem it necessary to comment upon the restrictions faced by the Commissioners. Even fewer historians have actually perused the several hundred pages of recorded oral evidence, numerous memoranda and submissions of written testimony on which the conclusions of the First Report were based. No one has yet attempted to ascertain whether the evidence given by the various witnesses in all cases matched the conclusions drawn by the Commissioners. The wider importance of the First Report as a criticism of British wartime administration has not been recognised. Reliance on the First Report as a primary source of information about the Dardanelles campaign without a critical examination of the actual document has set a dangerous precedent within the historiography. This imbalance will be redressed through examination of the formation of the Dardanelles Commission, description of the First Report and its limitations, analysis of the evidence given before the Commissioners, and

most importantly, discussion of the key conclusions that perhaps should have been emphasised from the criticisms delineated by the First Report.

CHAPTER II

The Dardanelles Commission and the Limitations of the First Report

Assessment of the First Report must involve much more than simply examining the sixty-page document. Not only must the several hundred pages of oral testimony be included in any consideration of the report, but one also must examine the many submissions of written testimony, and the minutes of the War Council meetings of November 1914 to March 1915, all of which was utilised by the Dardanelles Commissioners to compose the First Report. Yet the search for information cannot stop there. A complete assessment of the First Report necessitates scrutiny of the formation of the Dardanelles Commission itself, the members of which were the authors of the First Report. The instigation of the Commission, its composition, the mandate of the First Report, and the methods of taking evidence were all important influences on the document's final form, yet it is a story that until now has had to be gathered piecemeal from various disparate sources. Only by following a delineation of this necessary background information is it then possible to move on to a summary of the specific conlcusions of the Commissioners, and a discussion of the collective reaction of Parliament to the publication of the First Report. This manifold pursuit will encompass the first portion of this chapter.

The second major intention of this chapter will be to explain the specific limitations and restrictions of the

First Report. As has already been suggested, too many historians have emphasised judgments stemming from the First Report without properly acknowledging the restrictions acting on the production of evidence and the composition of the report. Evidence that should have been included in the Commissioners' inquiry was excluded for various reasons, but for the most part this was not emphasised by the Commissioners, and it has not been emphasised at all by subsequent historians. For example, the evidence of oral testimony given by witnesses must be considered with caution. Portions of the oral testimony were frequently quoted in the text of the First Report as a major source of information, yet the limits of time and restricitons on the accuracy of the testimony are left to the personal interpretation of the reader.[1] The restrictions and limitations on the First Report are not innocuous, but rather are extremely vital to an accurate interpretation of both the First Report and the Dardanelles campaign.

There was a long history to the actual instigation of the Dardanelles Commission, although the Commission only truly came about as part of calls in Parliament for a Mesopotamia Commission. There were several distinguishing factors to the genesis of the Commission. Initially, from approximately July 1915 to the spring of 1916, criticism of the events and outcome of the Dardanelles campaign was strong

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[1] One of the most important limitations of the First Report is the fact that the evidence was never published, either separately or jointly with the report. As this evidence was the basis of the First Report, it deserves a separate examination of its own. See Chapter Three of this work for a comprehensive discussion of the evidence, its limitations, and the types of submissions received by the Commissioners besides oral testimony by witnesses.

in the House of Commons, but it was disorganised and fragmentary. Thus, the Cabinet was able to defend its actions easily against this onslaught, simply by presenting an impermeable façade and not bending to the calls for closer examination of the Dardanelles campaign, even if the substance behind that exterior was not terribly convincing. However, after several months of verbal wrangling in the Commons, the criticism emanating from M.P.s became collectively stronger and more structured, and the Cabinet was forced to devise a more powerful defence. What they produced did not satisfy those clamouring for an inquiry, and the Commission was finally authorised in July 1916. This has been a brief summary of the history of the Commission, in order to set the overall context for the following detailed examination of the various factors which contributed to its formation. The story begins with the first signs of discontent in the House of Commons.

Parliamentary dissatisfaction with the events of the Dardanelles campaign became noticeable in the summer and autumn of 1915. The first indication that further questions about the problems of the expedition would arise was evident as M.P.s challenged the Cabinet for basic information on the status and success of the operations at the Dardanelles. Other than reports of the events in the press, the House of Commons was kept very much in the dark concerning the Dardanelles situation. Questions regarding casualty figures for the British and Dominion troops were answered, but not much other relevant information was released to Parliament. As

one example, on 5 July 1915 the Under-Secretary of State for War, Harold John Tennant,[2] was questioned as to the truth of a rumour in the public press of a British reverse at the Dardanelles. The answer Tennant gave was that no report had reached the War Office, and "therefore the House may hope that the information is wholly incorrect".[3] It was not much of a response to inspire confidence in M.P.s about a campaign that had once been touted as the expedition that could change the entire course of the war.[4] Furthermore, on 28 July the Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons that he did not "think the present time suitable" for a comprehensive statement on the Dardanelles situation, because he believed "[f]ull reports of recent operations, originating both from the Officer Commanding and from correspondents, [had] appeared in the Press".[5] Yet it was obviously not enough for some, as shortly after Asquith's comments the Liberal M.P. Sir James Henry Dalziel registered the following complaint:

> It is a remarkable fact that notwithstanding the overwhelming casualties we are having in the Dardanelles at the present moment, this House has never been officially informed by any communication made to it with regard to that great undertaking...I therefore say that

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2 Harold John Tennant was Under-Secretary of State for War from 1912 to 1916. He was a member of the Liberal party.

3 Hansard, House of Commons, 5 July 1915, Vol. 73, col. 39.

4 See CAB 22/1, War Council meeting minutes for 13 and 28 January 1915.

5 Hansard, Commons, 28 July 1915, Vol. 73, col. 2280.

I would like to have fuller information...[6]

It was a point that Dalziel in particular, and other M.P.s would often repeat.[7] Yet, at this stage of the agitation by M.P.s, the demands were merely for more information regarding the Dardanelles campaign.

Meanwhile, similar frustration with the lack of information was evident in the House of Lords. On 14 October 1915, a discussion arose concerning the secrecy surrounding the Dardanelles expedition in particular, and also pertaining to "Balkan affairs" in general. Viscount Milner, a man who described himself as being without party affiliation, referred to the Dardanelles and the possibility of holding an open discussion on the situation by stating, "I do not think any harm is done by frankly facing a situation of that kind".[8] He acknowledged the "delicacy" of the situation, but contended that such discussion might force the Cabinet into taking a

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[6] Ibid., col. 2314. Dalziel was a newspaper proprietor, and also a solid supporter of David Lloyd George. The fact that he supported Lloyd George perhaps explains what became his constant criticism of the Dardanelles campaign, and of the Asquith government's inability to justify the campaign's failure, as Lloyd George was also often in opposition to the Asquith administration.

[7] Hansard, Commons, 15 September 1915, Vol. 74, col. 64. In particular, see Hansard, Commons, 22 September 1915, Vol. 74, cols. 471-2 for the following of Dalziel's comments: "I am sure I have no desire, and I do not believe any other hon. Members desire, to unduly press the Government with regard to such an important and delicate matter, but it is only fair to say that the public have not been treated too well with regard to this very important matter. We have never had one word of explanation or justification from the Front Bench with regard to that very important expedition, and all the information the public have had up to the present time has been the dispatches--undoubtedly important dispatches--from Sir Ian Hamilton, and the long list of casualties which have been furnished". Sir Arthur Markham, a Liberal party member, added that such "complete ignorance" could not continue to be perpetuated (col. 479).

[8] Hansard, The Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, 14 October 1915, Vol. 19, col. 1055. Viscount Milner became Minister without Portfolio in the War Cabinet from 1916 to 1918, and was the Secretary of State for War from 1918-19.

"decided line" on the subject.[9] The Marquess of Lansdowne, Minister without Portfolio in the Cabinet, responded to Milner's comments using an argument similar to that Asquith had used in the Commons on 28 July:

> We fully admit that you have a right to raise these questions and to call upon us at the proper time for full explanations. But I venture to urge as strongly as I can that at this moment it would be most improper and unpatriotic to press us for such explanations.[10]

The Cabinet was apparently not yet ready to answer for the British blunders already evident in the Turkish theatre of war. Yet it was not made clear just when would be the proper time to discuss the situation.[11]

By November 1915 the Cabinet was under heavy pressure as a result of criticisms of its management of the Dardanelles campaign, and it was prodded to initiate an inquiry into the difficulties. It was evident to most M.P.s that the campaign had fatally foundered, and with the onset of winter a decision had to be made either to hang on to the position or to evacuate the Gallipoli Peninsula. On 2 November Walter Francis Roch, a Liberal M.P., appealed to the Prime Minister in the House of Commons to provide a day for discussion of Roch's standing motion concerning the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the initiation, conduct, and posi-

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[9] Hansard, Lords, 14 October 1915, Vol. 19, col. 1055.

[10] Ibid., col. 1057. The Marquess of Lansdowne was a Unionist party member.

[11] Although it was not clear when open discussion concerning the Dardanelles would be allowed, the following foreboding comment emerged from the House of Lords debate on 14 October: "I am certain that the Government are only putting off the inevitable day, for sooner or later these questions will have to be gone into". Hansard, Lords, 14 October 1915, Vol. 19, col. 1061.

tion of the Dardanelles campaign.[12] Although Asquith declined to answer until a later date, Roch's motion gained support and momentum as the month progressed. M.P.s no longer demanded simple information concerning the Dardanelles. Rather, they insisted on action.

Later in the day on 2 November, Asquith gave a prepared statement to the Commons summarizing Britain's naval and military situation in the war. In it he attempted to dispel criticism of the failed Dardanelles campaign by emphasizing how carefully the initiation and development of the operations had been planned. He also highlighted the importance of attempting the enterprise in the first place, stressing how the situation had appeared to the decision-makers at the time.[13] In light of Roch's earlier comments, this was evidently an attempt to forestall premature judgments on the wisdom of undertaking the operation. Apparently, the Cabinet was still determined to silence criticism of the campaign, especially at the end of a year in which Britain had suffered a "munitions crisis", and in which the Allies had not achieved decisive victories.[14]

Yet the grievances did not abate. The general trend for the month of November was for M.P.s to make statements in the House of Commons calling for those "responsible" for the mis-

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[12] Hansard, Commons, 2 November 1915, Vol. 75, col. 475. Roch's motion was the first to suggest an actual inquiry into the Dardanelles campaign. Roch later served on the Dardanelles Commission.

[13] Hansard, Commons, 2 November 1915, Vol. 75, cols. 511-14.

[14] French, British Strategy and War Aims, pp. 159, 172, 181.

takes, to be punished for their "culpability".[15] The critics made it clear that this meant both military and naval commanders as well as politicians, although the criticism was not yet organised and focused towards a specific goal. Sir Edward Carson, a Unionist M.P., directed his attack at the "bulging" Cabinet government, as well as suggesting that during the Dardanelles campaign there had been miscommunication between the War Committee and the Cabinet resulting in endless delays and poor decisions.[16] In the meantime, Dalziel became somewhat of a spokesman for those agitating for the need to examine the conduct of the Dardanelles campaign. He kept up pressure for the Cabinet to admit its blunders, rather than trying to "drift on and screen things from the people".[17] Lord Charles Beresford argued that the problem could be found in politicians' interference with the "Executive" of military and naval opinion.[18] Next to the Cabinet's defence of its actions regarding the Dardanelles campaign,

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15 Hansard, Commons, 2 November 1915, Vol. 75, col. 552. See comments of George S. Barnes, Labour party member. In 1917 Barnes became a member of the War Cabinet.

16 Hansard, Commons, 2 November 1915, Vol. 75, cols. 533-4. Sir Edward Henry Carson was a Unionist party member. He was Attorney-General and member of the Dardanelles Committee in 1915, and First Lord of the Admiralty from December 1916 to July 1917.

17 Hansard, Commons, 2 November 1915, Vol. 75, col. 566. See footnote 6 this chapter for more information about Dalziel's possible motives for continuous agitation about the Dardanelles campaign.

18 Ibid., cols. 571-2. Lord Charles Beresford was an admiral with much naval command experience, and a member of the Unionist party. He sat for Portsmouth from 1910 until he was created 1st Baron Beresford in 1916.

very few other M.P.s expressed support of the expedition.[19] An exception was in mid-November, when Churchill took the opportunity of his resignation from the post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to give a long personal statement, including a defence of the Dardanelles operations. Although an inquiry had not yet been approved by the Cabinet, it was evident that Churchill had already begun to plan his personal defence in the event that the campaign might one day be investigated: "I will not have it said that this was a civilian plan, foisted by a political amateur upon reluctant officers and experts".[20]

The Cabinet intractability continued. On 15 November 1915, the Under-Secretary of State for War explained the Cabinet and War Office position as follows:

> The reason why we are not able to lay Papers about the Dardanelles is because it would involve arguments in relation to policy covering the whole of our campaign over the whole world. It is precisely because we do not treat the Dardanelles or any part of the operations in the field as isolated operations, or treat them in watertight compartments, that we are not able to accede to the request to lay Papers on this subject on the Table of the House.[21]

Although it was a vague statement on its own, it would become a common theme in the Cabinet's resistance to holding an

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19 Lieutenant-Commander Wedgwood, a Liberal party member who had commanded at Gallipoli, was one of those in support of the Cabinet's actions. Wedgwood was a Liberal until 1919 when he decided to resign and join the Labour party. On 10 November 1915 in the House of Commons, he stated that "I am one of those who entirely approve of the inception of the Dardanelles expedition. I believed at the time it was justified, even although it was a gamble". Hansard, Commons,10 November 1915, Vol. 75, cols. 1287-8.

20 Ibid., col. 1514.

21 Ibid., col. 1543.

inquiry into events at the Dardanelles.[22] The reasons most often revolved around the fact that discussing the Dardanelles would reveal too much about the Allies' broader plans to the enemy, because the Dardanelles operations had been too much intertwined with the other campaigns of the war. However, the defence was a weak one, considering that the Dardanelles expedition had most often been referred to as a "sideshow" while it was in process.[23] As well, the Cabinet could not hide the fact that by 18 November there was already a Commission of Inquiry on Transport in the Eastern Mediterranean, and perhaps some M.P.s sensed that persistence would bring about an inquiry into the Dardanelles as well.[24]

Dalziel, for one, did not give up. Sanctioned by growing support from others in the House of Commons, Dalziel became more strident in his requests: "[w]e must have an assurance that there will be a complete inquiry into this matter as soon as it can possibly take place with advantage".[25] The reply from Andrew Bonar Law, Secretary of State for the Colonies, reaffirmed the Cabinet's policy that it was still not the right "time" to do so:

> As regards the Dardanelles, the right hon. Gentleman asks that there should be an inquiry. I am sure he would not wish for an inquiry just now. I am sure no one would wish for an inquiry just now. I am sure, so

[22] Although Cabinet representatives most often answered the criticisms of the Dardanelles campaign in the House of Commons, War Office and Admiralty opinion appeared to be very similar.

[23] Roskill, Hankey, p. 187. See also the Minutes of Dardanelles Committee meetings, CAB 22/2, meetings of early June 1915.

[24] Hansard, Commons, 18 November 1915, Vol. 75, col. 2051.

[25] Ibid., col. 2087.

> far as I can judge, that any discussion as to the present position at the Dardanelles can do no good, and might do a great deal of harm.[26]

The criticisms of the Cabinet policy regarding the Dardanelles expressed in the House of Lords were quite similar to those voiced in the House of Commons. However, although the Cabinet's defence of its own actions was weak, not really being a defence at all but rather a refusal to discuss the situation, for the time being it seemed to silence the critics, at least until after the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula by the Allies was completed early in January 1916.[27]

Except for an unsuccessful lone attempt in January in the House of Commons to instigate an inquiry into the Dardanelles campaign, it was not until the spring of 1916 and the debate over compulsory military service, that the discussion again revived.[28] Some of the M.P.s opposed to the institution of conscription argued that the procurement of more men for the forces would only allow for more disasters and "reckless gambles" such as that which had occurred at the

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[26] Ibid., col. 2099. Andrew Bonar Law was Leader of the Unionist party in the House of Commons from November 1911 to March 1921, Secretary of State for the Colonies from May 1915 to December 1916, and was later a member of the War Cabinet, among various other official positions which he held.

[27] For a similar House of Lords exchange, see Hansard, Lords, 3 November 1915, Vol. 20, cols. 131-40. See also Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, p. 419. Hamilton notes that the "Cabinet seemed determined to wipe out all remembrance of the Gallipoli campaign".

[28] On 10 January 1916, James Myles Hogge, a Liberal M.P. who was also a journalist and author, asked, "Will the right hon. Gentleman be now disposed to grant the inquiry asked for by the hon. Member for Pembrokeshire [Mr. Roch]? Other hon. Members are backing up the request. (That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the initiation, conduct, and position of the Campaign in the Dardanelles)". The Prime Minister summarily refused the request. See Hansard, Commons, 10 January 1916, Vol. 77, col. 1673.

Dardanelles.[29] Others argued that to stop the problem of the wastage of men, inquiries must be held into large blunders to discover the main parties responsible for the failures.[30] However, it was a difficult topic, as some of those pressing for the inquiry supposedly belonged to a "Ginger" group of the Liberal party, which some M.P.s said was intent on destroying the Coalition government by "having dirty linen washed in public".[31] As it turned out, the conscription issue was merely a tool used to satisfy demands for an inquiry. Trevor Wilson notes that "no other issue focused all discontents and political aspirations as conscription had done".[32]

When on 31 May 1916 Major-General Sir Ivor Herbert stated in the House of Commons, "I maintain that it is high time now that the whole question of the Gallipoli Expedition was fully inquired into", he summed up approximately ten months of campaigning towards that end.[33] Yet, once again,

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29 Hansard, Commons, 21 March 1916, Vol. 81, cols. 95-6.

30 See comments of Frederick Cawley, a Liberal M.P., in Hansard, Commons, 28 March 1916, Vol. 81, col. 698. Cawley later held the post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from December 1916 to January 1918. Cawley stated that in "my opinion, instead of refusing more soldiers, additional forces are necessary to carry out any enterprises the authorities may think desirable. When there has been a disaster, when there has been great faults of foresight, we ought to have an inquiry into the matter in order to discover who is to blame".

31 Cawley was accused of being part of the "Ginger" group by another Liberal M.P., Athelstan Rendall, after Cawley called for an inquiry into the Dardanelles expedition on 28 March 1916. Rendall was a soliciter and a radical; he joined the Labour party in 1925. Hansard, Commons, 28 March 1916, Vol. 81, cols. 699, 704-5. Rendall stated that the "expedition failed, however, and [the Ginger group] apparently use it as part of their stock-in-trade to run the Government down". Nonetheless, Cawley later became a member of the Dardanelles Commission.

32 Wilson, Downfall, p. 85.

33 Hansard, Commons, 31 May 1916, Vol. 82, col. 2796. Herbert held many military posts during his career, including serving in Egypt and the Soudan. He was a Liberal party member.

the issue was brought forth not individually, but in connection with another problem involving Britain's prosecution of the war. Initially, the Mesopotamia campaign had begun well for the Allies, but by the early summer of 1916 it had encountered serious problems. It was in consequence of questions in the House of Commons regarding the publication of certain "Mesopotamia Papers" that the Dardanelles issue also remained a topic of discussion. In fact, it was largely due to the situation in Mesopotamia that an inquiry into the Dardanelles campaign was granted.[34] Some M.P.s argued that if it was possible to publish a portion of the documents relating to the ongoing Mesopotamia campaign, it was also possible to publish papers regarding the Dardanelles campaign, which was long over.[35] It was at this point that a break appeared in the official obstructionist Cabinet position. On 1 June Bonar Law acted as the House Leader, and agreed that Dardanelles papers could be published. However, in doing so, he did not obtain the proper authorization from any of the War Committee, the Cabinet, the War Office, the Admiralty or the Foreign Office.[36] Presumably Asquith authorized the announement, deciding that the pressure to publish something was becoming too great to deny any longer. Lieutenant-Colonel

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34 See Roskill, Hankey, p. 279. Roskill notes that the "fall of Kut-el-Amara resulted in heavy pressure to lay papers dealing with the disaster before Parliament; and when the government yielded to that pressure the House of Commons seized the opportunity to widen the issue by demanding that papers dealing with the Dardanelles campaign should also be laid". See also Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command, Vol. II, 1914-1918 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 517.

35 Hansard, Commons,1 June 1916, Vol. 82, cols. 2973-7.

36 Roskill, Hankey, p. 279.

Hankey, now Secretary of the War Committee as well as a supporter and unofficial adviser to Asquith, was strongly against the idea of publishing papers which might reveal confidential information. He asked Asquith to retract the promise, but throughout June 1916 it appeared at first that the publication of Dardanelles papers was being "considered".[37] However, suddenly Asquith's position once again altered, as on 26 June he announced that a "considerable period must elapse before these Papers are likely to be ready".[38] This manifestation of indecision on Asquith's part was characteristic of his wartime leadership. There do not appear to have been any new factors influencing Asquith's decision of 26 June to delay publication of papers. A partial explanation might be that perhaps Asquith in part conceded to Hankey's pleas about avoiding the publication of what was sensitive material. Yet as it turned out, he merely postponed matters.

Anxious to have the long-awaited papers published before the summer recess of Parliament, on 13 July in the House of Commons M.P.s prodded Asquith concerning the length of time

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[37] Hansard, Commons, 22 June 1916, Vol. 83, col. 318. See statements of Bonar Law, Hansard, Commons,1 June 1916, Vol. 82, col. 2977.

[38] Hansard, Commons, 26 June 1916, Vol. 83, col. 532. See Roskill, Hankey, pp. 279-80. Roskill notes that at that time Asquith would not completely listen to Hankey's protests, as he stated that Parliamentary pressure was so great that he had to publish something. See also Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 519.

before publication would be possible.[39] Again the situation seemed hopeful when a statement was promised from the Prime Minister for the following week. However, on 18 July, Asquith stated that after consideration by the Cabinet, the War Office, the Admiralty and the Foreign Office, it had been decided that publication of the papers was not feasible at that time. He returned to the common defence that confidentiality of plans and operations during a war must be maintained, stating also that publishing the papers would result in too many omissions and would render the papers misleading and useless.[40] Asquith's announcement was not allowed to stand without much critical comment by other members of the House.[41] These members made it apparent that the situation regarding the Dardanelles had gone so far that it would not be possible to refuse publication of the papers at this point in time.[42]

Thus, merely two days later, Asquith reversed his policy decision, further demonstrating his propensity for indecision and an inability to stand firm in the face of sustained

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[39] Hansard, Commons, 13 July 1916, Vol. 84, col. 528. See Dalziel's statements. Supporting Dalziel were Churchill and Carson. Carson in particular had been a potent critic of the Cabinet's actions during the war. Previously he had criticised it for not prosecuting the war with sufficient force, or not having "heart" in the war effort. Although he had not been the originator of the call to publish Dardanelles papers, or for the call for an inquiry into the campaign, he now turned his criticism of the Cabinet to that topic. See Paul Guinn, British Strategy and Politics 1914 to 1918, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 128-9.

[40] Hansard, Commons, 18 July 1916, Vol. 84, col. 851.

[41] Ibid., cols. 852-60. See Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 520. Hankey notes that Asquith was "sniped a good deal from all sides of the House".

[42] For example, see comments of Carson, Churchill, Dalziel, Markham and others in Hansard, Commons, 18 July 1916, Vol. 84, cols. 851-59.

criticism.[43] On 20 July Carson brought forth a motion to set up "two Select Committees, one to inquire into the conduct of the Dardanelles operations and the other into the conduct of the operations in Mesopotamia".[44] After all the months the Cabinet had spent denying requests for more information and inquiries into the Dardanelles campaign, Asquith announced that it would grant Carson's request for the inquiries.[45] Although it seemed to be an abrupt decision after Asquith's annoucement of 18 July, Wilson notes that the Cabinet really had no other choice.[46]

Originally, in agreeing to the formation of the committees, Asquith made several stipulations; the committees were

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[43] Apparently, on 19 July Asquith told Hankey that he intended to resist the proposals for a Select Committee, and asked Hankey to gather together precedents of wartime commissions and their results. Hankey, The Supreme Command, pp. 520-1.

[44] Hansard, Commons, 20 July 1916, Vol. 84, cols. 1236-7. In later discussions in the House of Commons during the readings of the bill for the Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act, 1916, Carson was given credit for being successful in his bid to force the inquiries. This is perhaps because it was on the particular day that Carson raised the question (20 July) that Asquith agreed to the inquiries, as well as because much of the official wording finally accepted for the mandates of the Commissions was suggested by Carson. However, throughout the history of the agitation for an inquiry into the Dardanelles campaign, it was Dalziel who most often initiated the issue. The subsequent recognition by M.P.s in the House of Commons of Carson's supposed victory in forcing the Cabinet's hand perhaps was a result of the fact that Carson had recently been a Cabinet member, and Dalziel was not as prominent an M.P. as far as holding important official positions.

[45] Hansard, Commons, 20 July 1916, Vol. 84, cols. 1236-40. See also Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 522. Hankey notes with frustration that Asquith gave the speech that Hankey had helped to prepare, and then "gave the show away by promising the Committees!". See also Clokie and Robinson, Royal Commissions of Inquiry, p. 8. Clokie and Robinson refer to the Dardanelles when they state that there have been cases "where the Prime Minister or the Cabinet finds that the best protection against scandal will be the wise display of impartiality shown by the creation of a Commission of Inquiry".

[46] Wilson, Downfall, p. 87. Wilson states that by "mid-1916 there were clear signs that the ministry had just about exhausted the patience of the Commons; on successive days in July it suffered severe rebuffs in the House on minor issues, and only by bowing to a demand for commissions of inquiry into the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia operations did it escape outright defeat".

not simply to be Parliamentary, but were to include members outside of the House of Commons, they were to be kept small so as to be efficient and, considering the topics to be examined, they were also to have the power to sit in secret session.[47] He believed the best way by which to outline clearly and definitively the terms of reference of the committees was to bring in a bill on the topic. This was agreed by the House, and over approximately the next two weeks, the various stages necessary to enact the legislation were completed. During that period, discussion took place concerning the various clauses of what was to become the Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act, 1916. The most hotly contested subjects were the names of the proposed Commissioners, whether naval and military experts should be appointed to the Commissions, the advisability of allowing legal counsel to be admitted during the examination of witnesses, and whether the sessions of the Commissions should be held in public or in private.

The various clauses of the official Act, relating to the Dardanelles, can be briefly outlined. The first clause defined the purpose of the Commission as to inquire into the

> origin, inception and conduct of operations of war in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli, including the supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition, and equipment to the troops and Fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the forces employed in that theatre of war.[48]

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[47] Hansard, Commons, 20 July 1916, Vol. 84, col. 1239.

[48] First Report, p. 1.

This initial clause also named the Commissioners appointed to each inquiry. Although Asquith had hoped to keep the Commissions small, in the case of the Dardanelles, ten Commissioners were eventually appointed. These were the following: Evelyn Baring, 1st Earl of Cromer (Chairman), Andrew Fisher (the High Commissioner for Australia in England 1916-21, an Australian Labour politician and previously Prime Minister of Australia 1908-9, 1910-13 and 1914-15), Sir Thomas Mackenzie (the High Commissioner for New Zealand in England 1912-20, a New Zealand Liberal politician and previously Prime Minister of New Zealand in 1912), Sir Frederick Cawley (a Liberal M.P., see p. 43), James A. Clyde (a Unionist M.P.), Captain Stephen L. Gwynn (an Irish Nationalist M.P.), Walter Francis Roch (a Liberal M.P., see p. 38), Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson (CIGS 1908-12), Admiral of the Fleet Sir William May (Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet 1909-11, Sir William Pickford (Lord Justice) and the Secretary E. Grimwood Mears. One major topic of contention in the House of Commons was the age of the chairman appointed to the Commission, Lord Cromer. Cromer was seventy-five years old in 1916, which some M.P.s felt was too old to chair properly what might be a lengthy and arduous inquiry.[49] However, as they could not otherwise fault Cromer's reputation, a member of the House of Lords and previously Agent and Consul-General in Egypt from 1883 to 1907, he remained chairman. A second area of division in the House surrounded the appointment of

[49] Dalziel and Markham were two of the M.P.s protesting the selection of Cromer. Hansard, Commons, 26 July 1916, Vol. 84, cols. 1708, 1749. Moreover, in this case their fears proved to be well-founded, as Cromer died early in 1917, and Pickford had to assume the chairmanship of the Commission.

naval and military men to the Commissions. Some M.P.s argued that it was not necessary to make such people full members of the Commission, as the Commission was not intended to be a court-martial of any of the witnesses, and thus the naval and military representatives would only be necessary as advisers. However, after much debate, it was decided that if they were to be present at the sessions, it would only be proper to have them as official members of the Commission, and thus one naval and military member was appointed to each Commission.

The second clause dealt with the powers of the Commissioners. They were invested with "all such powers, rights, and privileges as are vested in the High Court or in any judge thereof" in respect to the enforcement of the attendance of witnesses, compulsion of the production of relevant documents, and the punishment of witnesses guilty of contempt.[50] The advisability of allowing legal counsel during the proceedings was left to the discretion of the Commissioners.[51]

The third clause stipulated that the Commissioners, "having regard to the interests of the public and to naval, military, and diplomatic considerations, [shall] allow or refuse to allow the public or any portion of the public" to be present at any time during the proceedings.[52] A certain

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50 According to Clokie and Robinson, Royal Commissions, p. 87, it was "not until 1921 that the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act granted any executive committee or Commission of Inquiry these powers"; the "powers" referred to were those of the "High Court".

51 Hansard, Commons, 1 August 1916, Vol. 85, col. 91.

52 Ibid., 27 July 1916, Vol. 84, col.1951.

amount of controversy arose over this clause as well. In particular, Churchill's comments were predictable. Since leaving the post of First Lord of the Admiralty, he had been preparing a case in his own defence, and now he requested that as much information as possible should be taken in public, to publicize the "truth" of the matter.[53] This decision again was left to the discretion of the Commissioners. As it turned out, the Commissioners held the entire proceedings which resulted in the First Report in secret session, due to what they felt were important naval and military considerations regarding the ongoing war.[54]

The fourth clause was also quite important, as it stated that a witness could not refuse to answer a question or produce a document on the grounds that it might incriminate him. However, a provision was created to protect the witnesses, which stated that in any subsequent criminal proceedings against witnesses who had appeared before the Dardanelles Commission, evidence used to incriminate them had to be produced independently of its appearance in the sessions of the Commission.[55] In other words, this meant that witnesses could theoretically feel free to tell the complete truth as they knew it, without fear of reprisal. Finally, the fifth clause provided for sittings to be held outside the United Kingdom if necessary, and the sixth clause stipulated that any report of the Commission was to be laid before both Houses, with

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[53] Ibid., 26 July 1916, col. 1248.

[54] First Report, p. 2.

[55] Hansard, Commons, 27 July 1916, Vol. 84, col. 1953.

interim reports also a possibility.[56] Altered only slightly by small amendments of the House of Lords, the Act received royal assent on 17 August 1916. Shortly after that date, work began for production of what would become the First Report.

The Commissioners produced the First Report after four months of interviewing thirty-five official witnesses and receiving numerous other submissions of testimony in private, including personal letters, statements, and Admiralty and War Office telegrams.[57] The words "origin" and "inception" were vague enough to give the Commissioners some latitude in their interpretation of the mandate of the Special Commissions Act, and they consequently decided that the mandate for the First Report would extend from the outbreak of war with Germany on 4 August 1914 to the conclusion of the naval portion of operations at the Dardanelles on 23 March 1915.[58] Thus, for the

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[56] Ibid., cols. 1960, 1964. The main reason for stating that interim reports may be made was due to the fact that many M.P.s desired to help the men in Mesopotamia as quickly as possible. They felt that an interim report could possibly suggest ways to correct errors that would aid the troops sooner than if they had to wait until the entire Mesopotamia Commission finished its sittings. As it turned out, that portion of the clause allowed also for the First Report of the Dardanelles Commission, which had very important consequences in its own right.

[57] The first meeting was on 23 August 1916, as the Commissioners gathered to interview General Sir Charles Monro, who was soon to head off to India. They then adjourned for twenty-seven days to allow Hankey to prepare his report of the early part of the expedition on behalf of the official Cabinet position. Following that, there were twenty other sittings where witnesses were called to be interviewed. See First Report, pp. 1-2 for a complete list of the actual witnesses called. See Chapter Four for comments on the reasons Hankey became the official spokesperson for the Cabinet at the Dardanelles Commission. Transcripts of the oral testimony are contained in ADM 116/1437B and CAB 19/33. Other submissions that the Commissioners reviewed are in CAB 19/28, CAB 19/29, CAB 19/30, CAB 19/31 and CAB 19/32. CAB 19/28-31 contains evidence that came before witnesses' testimony, and CAB 19/32 contains evidence received after the oral testimony.

[58] First Report, p. 1.

most part, questioning of the witnesses was confined to events within this period.[59]

The first twelve pages of the First Report comprise the introductory comments of the Commissioners. This includes everything from such basic information as when the Commission met and who the witnesses were, to an often unrecognised, but extremely important discussion and criticism of the structure and organisation of the Admiralty, the Cabinet and the War Office.[60] Following that are twenty-seven pages of narrative detailing the operations at the Dardanelles until 23 March 1915, and two pages of conclusions. This narrative was composed by the Commissioners, who drew on their reading of events and used many selected quotes from the oral evidence of several witnesses. This later became a controversial topic, as the entire evidence was never published, and some M.P.s felt cheated by what was, in essence, a censored report.[61] At the end of the report, only nine of the ten Commissioners signed their names. One, Roch, felt so strongly that the main body of the document did not accurately represent the findings of the Commission, that he composed his own fourteen-page version of events.[62] As well, although Commissioners Fisher and Mackenzie signed the report, they also

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59 The Dardanelles Commission actually continued until September 1917, and met on approximately eighty-nine days. Roskill records that altogether it asked 31, 253 questions. Roskill, Hankey, pp. 303, 313.

60 First Report, pp. 1-13. The Commissioners' examination of the "higher organisation of the war" will be discussed more completely in Chapter Four.

61 See Chapter Three for a discussion of the evidence.

62 See First Report, pp. 46-60 for Roch's "Minute" and "Memorandum".

took exception to portions of it, and each prepared a brief note on their points of disagreement.[63] These dissenting opinions do not appear to have been substantial enough from the main report to have noticeably motivated historians to adopt their point of view, even though Roch's "Memorandum" was fairly lengthy.[64]

As historians most often focus on the conclusions of the Commissioners, these should be briefly summarised before moving on to examine the limitations of the First Report. In all, there were sixteen individual conclusions. Seven of them dealt specifically with the position and function of the military and naval experts from the War Office and the Admiralty who had attended War Council meetings. Earlier in the report, the Commissioners admitted an overriding concern with these individuals, due to what they termed the "technical nature" of the Dardanelles operations.[65] Many of these conclusions were not favourable to the conduct of the principal expert advisers, Lieutenant-General Sir James Wolfe Murray, the CIGS, and Lord Fisher, the First Sea Lord. The main theme of these conjectures was that it had been the responsibility of the expert advisers to make sure their opin-

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[63] First Report, pp. 44-5. Their main points of disagreement revolved around the presentation of the report, as they believed it "traverse[d] particular portions of the evidence" by only printing selected quotes of individuals. See Clokie and Robinson, Royal Commissions, pp. 188-9. Clokie and Robinson note that it is not an uncommon practice to have "dissenting" opinion, but that it does tend to destroy the influence of an inquiry. See also T.J. Cartwright, Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees in Britain (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp. 184-6.

[64] Roch's "Memorandum" contained far more of his own words than it did the quotation of witnesses, unlike the majority report.

[65] First Report, p. 6.

ions and advice were expressed in the meetings of the War Council, during the period investigated.[66]

The conclusions regarding expert advisers were numerous, yet the conclusions which generally have been more popular with historians highlighted the position not of the advisers but of their departmental political leaders, namely Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty and Kitchener as Secretary of State for War. There were several specific references to the failings of Churchill and Kitchener. In particular, the Commissioners found that Churchill "advocated the attack by ships alone before the War Council on a certain amount of half-hearted and hesitating expert opinion", while Kitchener was accused of "not sufficiently avail[ing] himself of the services of his General Staff, with the result that more work was undertaken by him than was possible for one man to do".[67]

The War Council as an organisation was the other main object of censure by the Commissioners. To begin, the Commissioners considered that the War Council had not always fulfilled its investigative functions as well as could have been done. For example, during January 1915, when the proposition of a naval attack on the Dardanelles had still been under consideration, and when Kitchener had stated that there were no troops then available for military operations on the

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[66] Ibid., pp. 42-3. See, for example, conclusion (g): "the Naval Advisers should have expressed their views to the Council, whether asked or not". See also conclusion (o): "We are unable to concur in the view set forth by Lord Fisher that it was his duty, if he differed from the Chief of his Department, to maintain silence at the Council or to resign. We think that the adoption of any such principle generally would impair the efficiency of the public service". Wolfe Murray was CIGS from 1914 to 1915, and Fisher was First Sea Lord for the second time from 1914 to May 1915.

[67] First Report, pp. 41-3. The criticism of Churchill can be found in conclusion (e), and that of Kitchener in conclusion (n).

Gallipoli Peninsula, the Commissioners believed that the War Council had mistakenly simply accepted Kitchener's pronouncement without taking any "steps to satisfy themselves by reports or estimates as to what troops were available then or in the future".[68] The Commissioners also disparaged the fact that there had been no meeting of the War Council between 19 March and 14 May, during which time the exclusively naval portion of the Dardanelles operations ended and the military land campaign began. They believed that during this period there should have been a thorough reconsideration of the whole position, and that it had been the duty of the Prime Minister to summon a meeting, or failing that, the other members of the War Council should have pressed for a discussion of the matter.[69]

The conclusions of the Commissioners were not all critical. The final judgment noted that although "the main object was not attained, certain important political advantages... were secured by the Dardanelles expedition".[70] This was in reference to earlier statements in the report which noted such favourable results of the campaign as the fact that Bulgaria might have joined the Central Powers earlier than it had done if not for the Dardanelles campaign. Here, the Commissioners suggested that the Allied involvement in the Dardanelles campaign may have influenced Bulgarian opinion such that the country was unsure for a certain period

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[68] First Report, p. 41. See conclusion (c). See also conclusion (h) on p. 42.

[69] First Report, p. 43. See conclusion (l).

[70] First Report, p. 43. See conclusion (p).

whether to join the Allied side or the forces of the Central Powers, a delay that in some way aided the Allied effort. As well, the Commissioners noted that for the benefit of the Russians, a large force of Turks had been detained on or near the Gallipoli Peninsula for a substantial period of time, thereby reducing the Turkish forces available for other fronts.[71]

The Commissioners signed the completed First Report on 12 February 1917, and the House of Commons debated it on 20 March 1917. In the debate, the major topic of contention was the presentation of the report, which was proffered without the evidence.[72] However, it was clear that the Cabinet would not publish the evidence, at least until the end of the war.[73] James A. Clyde, one of the Commissioners, also supported this action.[74] He replied on the part of the other Commissioners during the debate, stating that some of the documents they reviewed had simply been too secret to publish. Clyde noted it would be hypocritical to publish the evidence now, given that the public had not been permitted access to the sessions of the Commission.[75] Bonar Law, then the Chancellor of the

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[71] First Report, pp. 39-40.

[72] Besides the fact that the evidence was not published along with the report, certain passages also contained omissions which were made on behalf of the Foreign Office, the Admiralty, the War Office and the Cabinet. Some of these excised passages were later arranged as a three-page "supplement", tacked on to the end of the report after the minutes of the dissenting Commissioners. This was laid before the House of Commons on 19 March 1917.

[73] Hansard, Commons, 14 March 1917, Vol. 91, cols. 709-10.

[74] Ibid., 20 March 1917, Vol. 91, cols. 1808-1815.

[75] Ibid., cols. 1808-10.

Exchequer, further explained that omissions in the report were the result of demands of the Foreign Office that certain documents needed to be cleared with foreign governments before they were mentioned in the report.[76] In a lengthy speech on the subject, Asquith commented critically:

> The Report deals critically and in some cases animadverts, upon the conduct of a number of servants of the state--statesmen, sailors, and soldiers. It purports to be founded upon and to give the effect of the testimony of a number of witnesses. In almost every paragraph the evidence is either textually cited or referred to in the margin, with the number of the particular question and answer. Without the means of verifying those references, and reading at length and in its full context the testimony which is vouched, it is impossible for any reader to form an opinion of any value of his own, either as to the fullness or fairness of the case as presented, or as to the justice of the conclusions which are based upon it.[77]

Asquith and many other M.P.s opposed the publication of the report in its truncated form. In his speech, Asquith also defended his own position and the position of Kitchener against the attacks made upon them in the report.[78] It was ironic that Asquith, no longer the Prime Minister, pressed for the publication of evidence. When the Dardanelles Commission was in the process of being formed and he was the Prime Minister, he had been adamant that the Commission should reveal as little as possible about the state of the ongoing war. Perhaps, having discovered himself as one of the subjects of the Commissioners' criticism, he changed his

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[76] Ibid., col. 1770.

[77] Ibid., cols. 1753-54.

[78] Ibid., cols. 1755-64.

mind about what sort of evidence should be revealed. Similarly, Churchill made a fairly lengthy speech in his own defence.[79] Otherwise, the lack of interest of other M.P.s was evident, especially compared to their concern during the initial calls for an inquiry. Much time had passed since the end of the Dardanelles campaign, and by the spring of 1917 the British public had experienced other terrible struggles, such as the battle of the Somme, which had brought home the horrors of war on an even larger scale than the Dardanelles. This may partially account for the somewhat anticlimactic debate on the First Report. Churchill adequately summed up this view with the following comments regarding the Dardanelles operations in their early stages:

> As to the loss of life, God forbid that I should underrate that, but everything is relative, and, compared with the losses of a military attack, compared with losses which have been incurred elsewhere, compared with the prize which would have been won, the loss of life was singularly small.[80]

Although The Times observed that no other "state paper has created such a sensation...since the beginning of the war as the Dardanelles Report", this excitement was definitely not reflected in the 20 March debate in the Commons.[81] Indeed, The Times printed several articles concerning the reactions of other countries to the First Report, as well as a summary of the report, but only a couple of brief editorials contain-

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[79] Ibid., cols. 1785-1807, for the main portion of Churchill's comments.

[80] Ibid., col. 1803.

[81] The Times, 9 March 1917, p. 9.

ing any critical comment appeared along with these articles.[82]

The foregoing discussion has presented a comprehensive depiction of the formation of the Dardanelles Commission, the terms of reference and mandate of the Commission and of the composition of the First Report itself. However, in order to assess properly the merits and consequences of the First Report and its conclusions, the restrictions under which the Commissioners operated, and the limitations of the evidence from which the report was compiled, must be recognised. One of the first complications stemmed from the formation of the Dardanelles Commission itself. On 26 July 1916, in restating his requests for the composition of the Mesopotamia and Dardanelles Commissions, Asquith maintained that as far as possible, the Commissioners chosen should be individuals who had not previously expressed in public a "biassed or partial point of view".[83] Perhaps it is debatable whether an opinion expressed in the House of Commons is a "public" one or not, but two of the Commissioners eventually appointed most definitely had given statements of their opinions concerning the Dardanelles. In November 1915 in the House of Commons, Roch put forth one of the first requests for an inquiry into

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[82] Ibid., 9,12 and 21 March 1917, p. 9 (each article appeared on p. 9). On 9 March, the editor commented that the report was a "dispassionate examination of the whole method of conducting war". Certain comments were also quite critical of individuals, as on the same date it was stated, "Mr. Churchill remains, as the public have rightly held, the prime mover in the Dardanelles adventure". Thus, it is apparent that The Times, although stating that the report was "dispassionate", did not follow the same path, choosing instead to continue to perpetuate criticisms of individuals, even though the examination of war organisation by the Commissioners had been lauded.

[83] Hansard, Commons, 26 July 1916, Vol. 84, col. 1706.

the Dardanelles campaign.[84] Similarly, on 28 March 1916 Cawley also made his opinion on the Dardanelles "disaster" very clear. Speaking of Kitchener he stated:

> He, I understand, constituted the Imperial Staff, and he is the man we have to look to for an explanation of the disasters that occurred in Gallipoli.... I do not wish to accuse him, but I do think that, until we get some explanation as to who is to blame, it is the man at the head of affairs whom we ought to hold responsible.[85]

Of course, these two men were part of a group of ten assigned to examine the Dardanelles campaign, but the negative biases of two of the members cannot but have had some sort of effect on the outcome of the First Report.[86] It may have been difficult to find Commissioners who had not formed some opinion, but it is undeniable that these two men had previously openly declared their biases.

Another major limitation surrounding the preparation of the First Report was that the Commissioners lacked sufficient diplomatic information to provide the background to the operations. When in June 1916 Bonar Law promised the publication of the Dardanelles papers, his announcement was met by a passionate protest by the Foreign Office. Hankey relates that the Foreign Office "flatly refused" to publish any papers relating to the diplomatic side of the Dardanelles

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[84] See p. 38.

[85] Hansard, Commons, 28 March 1916, Vol. 81, cols. 698-9.

[86] It must be added that General Hamilton commented on what he believed to be a bias against him by Commissioner Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, stating that Nicholson was jealous of Hamilton's career field glory, of which he did not share. See Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, p. 422. Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 405, also records that Nicholson was an old enemy of Hamilton's, and that he did not have a fondness for Kitchener either.

campaign, as doing so might negatively affect both Britain's allies and the interest of several neutral nations.[87] In the actual evidence placed before the Commission, a certain amount of diplomatic history came through as part of strategic memoranda by the War Office and the Admiralty, but in general, it is an area in which there are important gaps in the documentation.[88] Hankey himself actually prepared the 'government' case for the Commission, spending hundreds of hours on the project and consulting all departments concerned, so that the heads of those departments for the period under investigation--Asquith, Churchill and Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary--were able to appear as individual witnesses, rather than more formally as representatives of their former departments.[89] This lack of diplomatic background perhaps in part accounted for what Hamilton called the "confused narrative of events" up to 23 March 1915 in the First Report; certainly Hankey was correct when he predicted that the omission of such evidence made it impossible to understand properly the "Government's" decisions prior to and during the campaign.[90]

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87 Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 519.

88 For example, see "An appreciation of the existing situation in the Balkans and Dardanelles, with remarks as the the relative importance of this situation in regard to the general conduct of the War", CAB 19/28; "Memorandum by the General Staff upon the possibility of a joint naval and military attack upon the Dardanelles", CAB 19/29. CAB 19/29 also contains several telegrams originally eminating from the Foreign Office, but in general most of this information concerns the period after 23 March 1915.

89 Hankey, The Supreme Command, pp. 522-3. See also Roskill, Hankey, p. 292. Hankey did so reluctantly, at Asquith's request.

90 Hamilton, The Happy Warrior, p. 423, and Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 519.

Even in the area of strategic information, the Commissioners were not completely informed of all pertinent details. The harm such absences can foster demonstrates the need to recognise this type of limitation. One of the conclusions of the First Report was that Kitchener unnecessarily delayed the release of the 29th British Division to the Dardanelles, so that the probability of success of the original attack by the land forces was "gravely compromised".[91] However, this conclusion failed to acknowledge that Kitchener had not simply made a peremptory decision, but that there were other complicating factors influencing the situation, whether the final outcome was a positive or negative one. The judgment did not recognise that at the same time that Churchill had pleaded with Kitchener to send the troops to the Dardanelles, Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the B.E.F., similarly had made strong appeals for the division to join his forces on the Western Front.[92] As well, by the early spring of 1915, the War Council had agreed that, despite the operations at the Dardanelles, the Western Front would remain the main theatre for Allied effort. Furthermore, Kitchener had mentioned in War Council meetings of February 1915 that he was concerned about what he perceived as grave failures by the Russians on the Eastern Front. He had suggested that he would like to retain as many troops as possible for operations in France should the Germans shortly

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91 First Report, p. 42, conclusion (j). Grey was Foreign Secretary from 1905 to 1916.

92 Some of French's appeals can be found in PRO, Kitchener Private Office Papers, War Office, WO 159/3 and WO 159/10.

decide to transfer men to the west for an attack.[93] All that the narrative of the First Report noted was that Kitchener had been "uneasy" about the Western Front and the Russian situation.[94] Thus, it is apparent from this one example that the lack of strategic background in the report was instrumental in popularising an incomplete account of events, one which was further complicated by incomplete diplomatic information. This essentially fragmentary account then gained authority and recognition due to its heightened status as a commission. Consequently, the Commissioners were less than accurate when they stated the following in their introduction to the First Report:

> We can, however, give the most positive assurance, both to Parliament and to the nation at large that, in the body of this report, nothing material has been omitted, which can in any way throw a light either on what occurred or on the responsibility resting on the several individuals or departments concerned. Everything necessary to form a correct opinion upon the proceedings has been revealed.[95]

This is not to imply that all of the conclusions of the First Report are incorrect, but rather that they must be viewed and referenced with caution.

Another limitation of the First Report lies in its use of the oral testimony of witnesses. Many of the witnesses were asked to reflect upon events that took place a year or

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[93] CAB 22/1, *passim*. In the War Council meeting of 19 February 1915, Kitchener stated that "the situation in Russia had greatly deteriorated during the last week or two". In the same meeting, he also stated that "it was precisely these reasons which led him to wish to retain the XXIXth Division at home, in order to assist in meeting any resulting emergency which might arise in the West".

[94] First Report, p. 33.

[95] Ibid., p. 2.

more previously, more than enough time for memories of the events to fade. This is especially relevant considering that witnesses were asked to comment upon the potential success of an enterprise that had already failed. Furthermore, few individuals were brave enough to portray themselves as having full confidence in an operation that they knew to be a disaster. In the introductory comments of the First Report, the Commissioners noted the following:

> Without casting any sort of imputation on the good faith of the witnesses themselves, it is conceivable that, in giving to the Commission an account of the past they may have been to some extent unconsciously influenced by their knowledge of subsequent events.[96]

Thus, the Commissioners themselves recognised that the period during which they gathered the evidence was a complicating factor in forming correct assumptions about the Dardanelles operations, yet subsequent historians have not mentioned the difficulty. This point is especially pertinent for those historians who have quoted specific selections of the oral evidence.[97] The oral evidence, although an important component of the First Report, cannot be taken as the irrefutable truth.

A second restriction of the oral testimony, upon which much of the narrative of the First Report was founded, is that there is a strong possibility of collusion between the witnesses. Roskill notes that before the inquiry began, Hankey had visits from many of the principal witnesses, and

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[96] First Report, p. 3.

[97] See Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, and James, Gallipoli.

helped some of them prepare their evidence.[98] T.H.E. Travers states that any collusion was "understandable" considering that their reputations were at stake, and cites instances of its occurrence with General Hamilton.[99] Once again, this lessens the relative importance attached to the oral evidence. It forms a large part of the narrative and evidence of the First Report, yet it is certainly not completely reliable.

As has already been stated, the Commissioners did not receive all the pertinent information regarding the early stages of the Dardanelles campaign. In addition to a thinly-sketched diplomatic background, a problem arose when Hankey was asked to submit his records of the War Council meetings of which he was the Secretary. Hankey states that "acting on instructions", presumably from Asquith, he initially refused on the grounds that the minutes were privileged information.[100] However, the Commissioners were persistent, and eventually a compromise was reached whereby only the chairman, Cromer, would have the right to examine the minutes to check for discrepancies between them and the evidence which Hankey had already produced.[101] Yet, this meant a double restriction in terms of the First Report. Not all of the Commissioners were furnished with all the necessary evidence, and readers, in turn were also deprived of a fully informed

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98 Roskill, Hankey, pp. 294, 302.

99 Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 404.

100 Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 523. See also Roskill, Hankey, pp. 299-300.

101 Hankey, The Supreme Command, pp. 523-4.

perspective.

However, perhaps the largest gap in the First Report was the lack of testimony from Kitchener himself. Kitchener died on 5 June 1916, and therefore was not able to present his version or explanation of events, unlike nearly every other member of the War Council or individual primarily concerned with the Dardanelles operations. The Commissioners noted this omission at the beginning of the report, but then went on to make him one of the foremost objects of censure.[102] Further, the Commissioners made the statement that they had "the utmost confidence that [they] were furnished with all the materials necessary to form a correct and deliberate judgment".[103] The Commissioners must be given credit for openly acknowledging the problem of Kitchener's death, yet statements of their confidence in a sound judgment tend to negate the effect of their earlier recognition of Kitchener's death.[104]

Another vital limitation to note concerning the First Report is that the Commissioners did not adhere strictly to their mandate. The final section of the report, just before the conclusions, was titled "The Results of the Operations". This section quoted several statements of the testimony of Asquith and Grey, which speculated on the effects of the

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[102] First Report, pp. 3-4.

[103] Ibid., p. 3.

[104] See Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 524. Hankey notes that regarding the War Council meeting minutes, other individuals could correct any mistakes they found, but "Kitchener, one of the persons most closely concerned, was dead and no one could check the record of remarks attributed to him".

Dardanelles campaign as a whole, not just the operations up to 23 March 1915.[105] To utilise these comments was to speculate beyond the scope of the inquiry at that point. In fact, in his dissenting minute at the end of the First Report, Commissioner Mackenzie noted that "it may well be that our further investigations will shed a different light on the results attained, and reveal facts which may have the effect of materially altering" specific judgments of the report.[106] Additionally, in the conclusions of the report the Commissioners ranged beyond the date of 23 March 1915. The final conclusion of the First Report commented on the outcome of the expedition.[107] This was not justified at such an early stage of the inquiry, when not all evidence had been examined.

The genesis of the Dardanelles Commission was a lengthy and complicated process, involving several M.P.s and many months of controversy and debate in the House of Commons. However, when the First Report appeared for debate in March 1917, there did not appear to be much interest in it at all in the Commons--except by Asquith and Churchill, who were both censored for their actions during the origin, inception and naval stages of the Dardanelles campaign. In the historiography of the campaign the same was not true of the First Report. There, it became a primary source of information in the sense that many historians drew from the conclu-

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105 First Report, pp. 39-40.

106 Ibid., p. 45.

107 Ibid., p. 43. See also p. 54 this chapter.

sions of the report, mainly to reinforce their judgments of who was to blame for the disaster of the Dardanelles. One important reason for the authority of the report might be to do with a common misconception in the historiography that the Dardanelles Commission was a royal commission, rather than a tribunal of inquiry created by an act of Parliament, as is evident from the records of the House of Commons.[108] The Commission did receive royal assent, but that action did not transform it into a royal commission, as royal assent was common to condone other pieces of special legislation as well. This misconception surrounding the Dardanelles Commission was quite common, as an early authority on commissions records both the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia Commissions as royal ones.[109] A more recent study of commissions and committees of inquiry in British politics sets the record straight, noting the common confusion of the two commissions in question with royal commissions.[110] Although this may seem to be a minor point of contention, it is important as traditionally royal commissions have been considered to be stronger and more prestigious than other types of inquiries. Such prestige may be instrumental in gaining public interest, and in order to sell the findings of the inquiry to the public

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108 Hansard, Commons, 20 March 1917, Vol. 91, col.1809. Clyde stated the following: "It ought to be remembered that this Commission is almost unprecedented in character. It is not a Royal Commission, and it is not a Committee of this House. It is a Commission appointed specially by an Act of Parliament".

109 Clokie and Robinson, Royal Commissions of Inquiry, p. 8.

110 Cartwright, Royal Commissions, p. 9.

and government officials.[111]

Besides this difficulty, one other major problem exists in the historiography of the Dardanelles campaign, and that is that historians have not examined the First Report in enough depth to discover its many inherent limitations and restrictions. The First Report was not a complete account of the Dardanelles operations, and in their use of the conclusions and oral testimony of the report, historians must recognise and account for these limitations. If this is not done, historians inadvertently continue to perpetuate misinterpretations and inconsistencies intrinsic in the report.

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111 Ibid., pp. 27-8.

CHAPTER III

The Evidence

Perhaps the most important limitation of the First Report is that the evidence received by the Dardanelles Commission was never published. The evidence was the raw material from which the report was produced. As such, it is the true "primary" source to be examined. Currently, there is no single historical study, or portion of a study, devoted to the evidence as a whole. Nor is there a critical comparison of the evidence presented before the Commission to the conclusions drawn by the First Report. Yet, the First Report was not merely a summation of the evidence with which the Commissioners were presented. Rather, the report provided only a specific interpretation of that evidence, formulated in such a way as to focus on criticisms of individuals and decisions taken regarding the Dardanelles campaign.

Added to this problem is the fact that the few historians who have chosen to cite portions of the evidence of the Commission have not likewise chosen to examine the evidence in a critical manner. Most often, authors and historians cite portions of the oral testimony of witnesses in order to enhance an argument.[1] The exception to this rule is Travers's recent article, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model," which comments briefly on certain limitations of the Dardanelles Commission reports as

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[1] See Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow Vol. II, and From the Dardanelles to Oran; Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals; French, British Strategy and War Aims; James, Gallipoli.

sources of information. However, even his valuable perceptions do not go far enough, as Travers's article is limited in scope.[2]

This results in two specific problems. First, for those historians who do cite portions of the evidence, rather than only the conclusions of the First Report, it is clear that their exclusive concern has been with the oral testimony of the Commission. This illustrates a difficulty with the First Report in that the text of the report was composed largely of citations or references to the oral testimony of witnesses, and it gave the impression that that was the sole evidence consulted. This is far from the truth. The evidence before the Dardanelles Commission--certainly the portion utilised for the First Report--was also composed of numerous written submissions, memoranda and minutes of official meetings. The oral testimony was thus only one part of the evidence considered.

The second problem is that the oral testimony is the one part of the evidence that must be considered with the most suspicion. Not only must historians attempt to filter out the possible attempts of the witnesses to protect their reputations, but they must also remember that unlike the documents which date from the early 1915 period, witnesses were questioned for the most part more than a year after the events had occurred. As historians have not noted these restrictions in conjunction with their citation of the oral testimony, they have failed to appreciate the limitations of

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[2] Journal of Contemporary History, 29 (1994), 403-42.

this evidence. Such a gap between the purpose for which the oral testimony was collected, and the use to which it has been put, suggests a lack of critical examination of both the evidence and its role within the First Report.

A critical examination of the evidence used to write the First Report reveals several important factors which must be considered in depth. To begin, it is essential to consider the type of evidence the Dardanelles Commissioners utilised. The oral testimony, as mentioned, was a major component of the text of the First Report; examination of the testimony, although somewhat tedious due to a necessary amount of repetition, discloses what appears to be a bias on the part of the Commissioners. Leading questions to witnesses, and perhaps a predetermined agenda for some of the topics of discussion, apparent as early as the third day of testimony, significantly affected the final outcome, the First Report.[3] Second, it is apparent that much information on the outcome of the operations was received in conjunction with evidence concerning the portion of events from 4 August 1914 to 23 March 1915. The object of the Commission was to collect as much information as possible, yet many of the submissions concerning later events cast aspersions on the earlier events. This undoubtedly affected the investigation, writing and conclusions of the First Report. Finally, the minutes of the War Council meetings for this period are also an important, yet often underrated, component of the First Report. Much of the narrative of the report followed a similar time-

[3] In places, the oral testimony reads more like a criminal trial than evidential hearing sessions due to certain challenging questions of the Commissioners.

line to the dates of the War Council meetings of 1914-15, and many witnesses were questioned concerning their memory of decisions taken at these meetings. Testimony, based on memory alone, was frequently vague and therefore the minutes are a vital portion of the evidence. However, the minutes also present their own restrictions. Contrary to what most historians appear to think, and despite a lack of citation of evidence other than the oral testimony, all types of evidence were important influences on the final form of the First Report. If the evidence is not examined in depth, the Commissioners' interpretation of the evidence remains the sole analysis of what was an important contribution to the historiography of the Dardanelles campaign. Each portion of evidence will be investigated in turn to determine its specific role in the production of the First Report.

The oral testimony of thirty-five witnesses was taken in twenty sessions, from September to early December 1916. Some witnesses took up more than one day of testimony, such as Hankey and Churchill, while others appeared at more than one session, such as Sir Graham Greene, Permanent Secretary at the Admiralty, and Commodore Cecil F. Lambert, Fourth Sea Lord. Some were questioned only briefly about their involvement with events, often on days where up to five witnesses appeared before the Commissioners.[4] The most colourful testimony was undoubtedly that of Lord Fisher, the former First Sea Lord, peppered with characteristically forceful and out-

[4] See CAB 19/33 and ADM 116/1437B. Both Hankey and Churchill took up at least two full days of testimony on their own. Greene and Lambert appeared more than once to give testimony, although each time they did not take up the full day of testimony. On both 10 and 12 October 1916, several witnesses were called in front of the Commissioners briefly to give evidence.

landish comments; it was a reminder that the personality of each witness also played a role in how the testimony was received by the Commissioners.[5] In particular, Churchill's manner of giving testimony may also have been an important factor in swaying the Commissioners to a certain extent, although they did not refrain from criticising him for this reason. Churchill came to the sessions very prepared, referring to numerous documents and written appreciations of his role in the Dardanelles expedition, which he also submitted to the Commissioners. As well, much of his initial testimony was more of a speech than a simple 'question-and-answer' session, and the speech was very impressive.[6] A final important note is the fact that on many days of testimony, at least one member of the Commission was missing.[7] Although it is difficult to assess the exact impact this may have had on the First Report, it was not necessarily a great obstacle to the Commission's completing its task, except for the fact that the absent Commissioners were not able to question certain witnesses directly.

One of the most significant aspects of the oral testimony was the major role of Hankey.[8] Hankey was the second

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[5] Fisher appeared before the Commissioners on 11 October 1916. See ADM 116/1437B.

[6] Churchill appeared first before the Commissioners on 28 September and 4 October 1916. See ADM 116/1437B.

[7] For example, on 28 September 1916 Commissioners Fisher and Mackenzie were absent, and on 4 and 5 October Commissioner Gwynne was absent. See ADM 116/1437B.

[8] First Report, p. 43. The Commissioners specifically thanked Hankey, expressing their "high appreciation" of his services.

official witness, and he presented the 'government' case.[9] It was a position he had reluctantly adopted at the suggestion of Lloyd George, and a role which was accepted by Asquith and generally welcomed by other ministers. Hankey spent several hundred hours preparing the evidence, and consulting all the relevant departments.[10] This is interesting, because as the Secretary of the War Council Hankey was privy to all of that committee's important discussions. He kept the only semi-official records of the proceedings in longhand notes, which, because of time constraints, were not circulated to the members of the War Council following the meetings, as had been the custom before the war when Hankey was Secretary to the C.I.D.[11] As well, his assorted written appreciations of the war were ample testimony to the clarity, insight and precise nature of his work.[12] Although Hankey had spoken up in several of the War Council meetings, he was not an official member of the committee, and thus was almost in the position of being an observer.[13] It might seem he was the perfect choice to represent the events for the 'government'

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9 The first official witness was General Sir Charles Monro, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Dardanelles expedition shortly after General Ian Hamilton was recalled from the post. He appeared before the Commissioners on 23 August 1916, as he had to leave very soon after to go to India. However, his testimony reflected only on the military portion of the operations, and was not necessary for the composition of the First Report. See First Report, p.1.

10 See Hankey, The Supreme Command, pp. 522-23 and Roskill, Hankey, pp. 291-92.

11 Hankey, The Supreme Command, pp. 523-24. Also, First Report, p. 5.

12 See Hankey, "Boxing Day Memorandum 1914", and various other memoranda by Hankey in CAB 19/29, for example.

13 See minutes of War Council meetings, 16 December 1914, 24 and 26 February 1915, CAB 22/1.

situation.

Yet the nomination of Hankey to perform this complex task was an obvious relinquishment of duty on the part of government representatives still running the government, such as Asquith, Grey and Lloyd George.[14] One of Asquith's arguments in the House of Commons on 20 July 1916, ironically aided by Hankey, was that it was important that the Commission not interfere with the execution of the war. This argument possibly justified Hankey's central role, because it precluded ministers spending a vast amount of time preparing their testimony. However, Hankey was a busy man too and, on a more crucial level, Hankey's representation of the government was somewhat curious.[15] He was not an M.P. and he was not a member of the War Council. He was not directly responsible for the actions of any of the departments of the Admiralty, the War Office, the Foreign Office or the Cabinet. To entrust the government representation to him was unfair, and the job was an enormous burden. Technically, for the period under investigation, Churchill represented the Admiralty, Kitchener was dead, but Wolfe Murray as the CIGS represented the War Office, Grey the Foreign Office and Asquith the Cabinet. None of these men could decline to appear before the Commission, but Hankey's summary of events substantially lessened the responsibility of each to research

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[14] See Roskill, Hankey, p. 293. Roskill states that Hankey's occupation of this position in front of the Commissioners served to satisfy the "Ministers' vanity".

[15] See Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 523. Hankey states that preparation for giving evidence to the Commission took up his every "free hour" from 24 July to 27 September 1916, and that his "own legitimate work as Secretary of the War Committee suffered" as a result.

and prepare for an appearance. It is notable that Asquith did not testify until nearly the end of the sittings.[16] Perhaps his late appearance was due to his other pressing responsibilities and his schedule, but when he did appear Hankey accompanied him in front of the Commissioners. It is significant that Asquith's testimony very closely followed the line Hankey had taken earlier in his own testimony.[17]

Another important aspect of the oral testimony relates to the Commissioners' methods of questioning the various witnesses. The greater portion of witnesses' testimony comprises answers to questions which required them to provide their opinions on one matter or another, or was made up of explanatory responses to questions requiring the production of various bits of information. For instance, a typical question to a witness was straightforward, designed to allow him to answer freely with an opinion or explanation. As one example, in a line of questioning by the Chairman, Cromer, to Lord Fisher regarding the Admiral's position at the Admiralty in relation to both the First Lord and the other Sea Lords, the following took place:

> Q. 3073 (Cromer) Will you tell us your view as to your relations to the other Sea Lords?
> A. (Fisher) My relations to the other Sea Lords I looked upon as quite different in war from what they were in peace. I looked upon them in war as the men who had to provide the stuff for the different operations of war. Perhaps it is rather rude to say that, but that is what it came to you

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16 Asquith appeared before the Commissioners on 31 October 1916, and his testimony did not even take up a full day. See ADM 116/1437B.

17 See testimony of Asquith in ADM 116/1437B, and Roskill, Hankey, pp. 312-13.

know.[18]

This was an unsolicited response from the witness, and to be fair to the Commissioners, it was the most common type of questioning.

However, on several other occasions the sessions appear to have been more like a criminal trial than an evidential hearing. In other words, on several occasions Commissioners asked witnesses obvious leading questions, meant to elicit a particular type of response. At times witnesses were asked to comment on a personal opinion of a Commissioner, or to answer a question designed to provoke a particular type of response. In some cases the Commissioners were able to obtain what they implied in their question, and in other cases they were not so successful, actually making some witnesses answer in an indignant manner. As the evidence was not published, readers of the First Report are not able to recognise this problem. Some relevant examples of this difficulty will demonstrate what might be termed either a bias on the part of the Commissioners, or at the very least, evidence of a predetermined agenda. Questions to Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, Admiralty staff member at the time of the Dardanelles naval operations, regarding the period of naval and military operations and whether the military force should have been landed earlier than it actually had been on 25 April 1915, included the following:

> Q. 2252 (Admiral Sir William May) At that stage, the 15th February, you expressed very strong opinions about a military force. It was then time to stop and wait and to put the new

[18] Evidence of Lord Fisher, 11 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

> proposition before the War Council as to whether they should not wait or defer this attack on the Dardanelles until the military force was ready. *If they had waited I suppose you would agree with me that we should have had more chance of success?*
>
> A. (Jackson) I think if a military force could have gone straight to the Dardanelles instead of having to go and repack at Alexandria, it would have been a great deal better.[19] [My italics]

Not only did this question require the witness to speculate on events that had not occurred, but it also asked him to accept an opinion of the Commissioner. The Commissioner, Admiral May, had not himself been intimately involved with the Dardanelles operations, even if he was deemed to be a naval expert. Certainly, at this early stage of testimony, he should not have formed such a conclusion about the overall success of the operation, when there were many more witnesses yet to interview, and many more documents to study in connection with the subject. The witness, Jackson, did not completely agree with May, stating only that it would have been helpful to have the military force ready earlier than it actually had been. Thus, Jackson did not completely accept May's suggestion, but the problem remains that the testimony was solicited by a question which suggested what the answer should have been, rather than that answer being given freely.

Another example demonstrates a similar problem in the testimony of Admiral Sackville H. Carden, Commander of the Mediterranean Fleet from 21 September 1914 to 16 March 1915. In questioning by Commissioner Cawley concerning the landing in early March of demolition parties at various points on the

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[19] Evidence of Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, 6 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

Peninsula to check and destroy the Turkish guns, the following occurred:

> Q. 2372 (Cawley) You had a small force with you for landing purposes, and they did land?
> A. (Carden) In February, yes.
> Q. 2373 And they found only 30 per cent. of the guns were dismounted?
> A. About that, yes.
> Q. 2374 Did they complete the demolition of the forts?
> A. Yes.
> Q. 2375 Then you landed another party afterwards, did you not?
> A. Yes.
> Q. 2376 Were they very nearly cut off?
> A. No, they were not nearly cut off, but they were in a very bad position during one afternoon.
> Q. 2377 Are you of the opinion that it would be dangerous to land that small force again?
> A. Under what conditions?
> Q. 2378 Well, the force had been nearly cut off; would it have been dangerous to have landed them again to demolish any other forts that you might need them for?
> A. At that time?[20]

The questioning by Cawley continued. In this case it is obvious that Cawley was determined to believe his own interpretation of events rather than that of the witness. Carden continued to state that the small operations of landing parties to destroy the guns was very possible, as long as the men were landed promptly after the bombardment of the Turkish gun positions. However, in later questions, Cawley again referred to one particular force as having been "cut off", a fact which Carden had explicitly denied earlier:

> Q. 2392 (Cawley) But they did more or less stop them, I understand, in the second landing. They nearly cut them off, did they not?
> A. But that was after the lapse of some days?
> Q. 2393 You think you had got a sufficient landing force really to carry this action through?
> A. This particular action of landing to destroy

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[20] Testimony of Admiral Sackville H. Carden, 6 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

the guns.[21]

Finally, at this stage, Carden had given up correcting Cawley that the force had not nearly been cut off. More importantly, in the cases of the testimony of both Jackson and Carden it appears that the witnesses had no preconceived agenda. However, it appears that at least some of the Commissioners had a preconceived idea about what should have occurred if the Dardanelles operations were to have been successful. At such an early point in the questioning, such preconceptions were unjustified, especially as much of the rest of the testimony had not been heard.

Yet the predetermined agenda of the Commissioners also included opinions of individuals, as well how specific operations should have been carried out. This prejudice was evident as early as the testimony of Hankey, the first witness to appear in front of the Commissioners for the First Report. For example, the following testimony clearly demonstrates that the Commissioner, Nicholson, held a preformed opinion of Kitchener's conduct as Secretary of State for War, and that he tried to elicit confirmation of this opinion from Hankey:

> Q. 364 (Nicholson) ...I am not blaming anybody in the slightest degree; but it is accounting for certain things that happened; it may be these things were due, perhaps, to a too great concentration of authority and responsibility in one person, and perhaps to a depleted General Staff?
> A. (Hankey) Unquestionably it must have had an enormous influence, but I am not going to say whether the influence was good or bad.[22]

Conceivably, in seeking to ascertain why something happened

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Testimony of Hankey, 19 September 1916, CAB 19/33.

an investigator might legitimately postulate a theory, but in this case the theory was completely one of the Commissioner's own making. At this very early stage in the testimony opinions of Kitchener had not yet been stated, and it was significant that what was initially Nicholson's opinion, or theory, became part of the conclusions of the First Report. In this particular case of Nicholson's questions to Hankey, one is reminded of allegations that Nicholson held a personal animosity towards Kitchener.[23] Yet it cannot be concluded that this type of bias was limited to a specific Commissioner, or even to a specific topic within the investigation of the origin, inception and naval portion of operations at the Dardanelles, as the following excerpt from later in Hankey's testimony demonstrates:

> Q. 438 (Cawley) And the Admiralty did not want a joint expedition; they wanted to have all the credit to themselves?
> A. (Hankey) No, I am not going to say that. I do not think so; I do not know at all...[24]

In the specific instructions from Parliament to the Commissioners, it was stated that the speedy production of reports was desirable, and this may have been a factor in the allowance of leading or biased questions. That is, it does not appear from the transcripts of oral testimony that witnesses retained any legal counsel to aid them in their appearances before the Commissioners. This may have occurred solely from the judgment of the witnesses themselves, as Hankey's memoirs indicate that although he encouraged Asquith

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[23] See Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 405.

[24] Testimony of Hankey, 19 September 1916, CAB 19/33.

to retain counsel, Asquith refused to do so, not considering it necessary.[25] However, it was also within the mandate of the Commission for the Commissioners to deny witnesses legal counsel.[26] The Commissioners may have decided that for the purpose of producing at least an interim report as quickly as possible, the presence of legal counsellors would only slow the process of taking evidence.

Perhaps the strongest expression of the bias of the Commissioners is evident with regard to Churchill's testimony, reinforcing the notion that such questioning appeared several times throughout the testimony. Kitchener was a particular target of the Commissioners, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

> Q. 1378 (Cawley) He [Kitchener] was very secretive, was he not, and kept things greatly to himself, so that you really had to take his judgment without any proper data to go upon in the War Council?
> A. (Churchill) I think he was very reserved and commanding in his method of dealing with affairs.
> Q. 1379 And he did not always disclose everything to the War Council that might have been germane to the judgment they would form?
> A. I should not like to suggest that at all. I cannot answer that question at all. I do not know what he knew at any given time.[27]

Moreover, attempts by the Commissioners to incriminate Churchill were equally as obvious as the bias against Kitchener. For example, the Commissioners questioned Carden extensively regarding a telegram Churchill had sent from

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[25] Hankey, The Supreme Command, p. 524.

[26] See Chapter Two, p. 50. This was part of the second clause of the Special Commissions Act.

[27] Testimony of Churchill, 4 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

the Admiralty on 3 January 1915.[28] The following two passages regarding the telegram display the Commissioners' determination to make Churchill responsible:

> Q. 2334 (Chairman) Did you at all gather from the telegram you received from the Admiralty that the Admiralty wished you to do it?
> A. (Carden) No, not beyond a general feeling that everybody would like to score a great success there.[29]

> Q. 2555 (Pickford) I want to ask you a question about the telegram of the 3rd January. I think you referred to it, by inadvertence as your orders. Did you take it as an order to do this, or did you take it as an inquiry as to whether it could be done or not?
> A.(Carden) I took it as an inquiry.
> Q. 2556 I suppose you did form an inference that the First Lord wished it to be done. I should think you would form an impression that the First Lord wished it to be done if it was feasible?
> A. Are you saying that from any answer I have given?
> Q. 2557 No, *I was only looking as the inference I should have drawn from it*, and was asking whether you would have drawn the same inference?
> A. I formed the opinion that the First Lord wished it to be done if it could possibly be done.
> Q. 2558 Did you take that as in any way fettering your discretion in giving your opinion?
> A. No.[30] [My italics]

In this instance, once again a Commissioner, Cromer, asked the witness to accept his preconceived idea of Churchill's conduct and character, rather than allowing the witness to give his own unfettered opinion.

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28 "Naval Operations in the Dardanelles, February-March 1915", CAB 19/30. This submission to the Commissioners included the 3 January telegram from the First Lord (Churchill) to Carden. It stated: "Are you of the opinion that it is practicable to force the Dardanelles using ships alone? Presumably older battleships would be employed fitted with mine bumpers, and merchant vessels or colliers could be sent in first to bump or sweep the mines. Heavy losses might be incurred, but results would be of such importance that losses would be justified. Telegraph your opinion.".

29 Testimony of Carden, 6 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

30 Ibid.

Earlier the Commissioners had also questioned Churchill about the 3 January telegram:

> Q. 1395 (Roch) If I telegraph an expert for his advice and I have given him a strong indication that I want something done, if he said it might be done, he means: "I will give some consideration to it." Would you take it as carrying more than that with it?
> A. (Churchill) Do you wish me to assent to what you are saying?[31]

In this case, Churchill was able to defend himself as innocent of attempting to coerce Carden into complying with the telegram just because Carden thought Churchill wished him to proceed. Carden's testimony supported Churchill. Kitchener was not present to defend himself against this type of accusation.

The questions to Hankey and Churchill regarding Kitchener's authority at the War Office and in the War Council appeared long before there was strong evidence of the effect of Kitchener's authoritative actions. This evidence was provided by Wolfe Murray's testimony:

> Q. 2671 (Fisher) Do you think [Kitchener] centralised too much authority in his own person?
> A. (Wolfe Murray) Yes, I do undoubtedly.[32]

It is evident that although the opinion of Wolfe Murray "undoubtedly" blamed Kitchener, it was only confirmation of what the Commissioners had already decided to believe about Kitchener. The condemnation of Kitchener appeared in a slightly altered form as a conclusion of the First Report.[33]

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[31] Testimony of Churchill, 4 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

[32] Testimony of Wolfe Murray, 10 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

[33] First Report, p. 43, conclusion (n).

Unlike some of the other conclusions, this judgment of Kitchener, although partially confirmed by one of the witnesses, was apparently initiated by the Commissioners. This is not to deny categorically, for example, that Kitchener tended to be secretive and authoritative, but it is important to note that this conclusion was not necessarily drawn exclusively from the evidence, but reflected, in part, the bias of the Commissioners.

Oral testimony demonstrates how biases or a predetermined agenda of the Commissioners influenced the witnesses in their testimony. The vast majority of people reading the First Report would not have had access to the evidence, and thus were unable to detect such problems. On the other hand, the few historians who have examined the testimony have not generally noted this problem in conjunction with their citation of the testimony.[34]

Of course, in citing these portions of testimony, it is important to remember that the Commission took place in light of later events, and therefore the statements of the witnesses must also be used with caution. Yet in the cases of leading questions and biases just cited, the questions of the Commissioners almost assume a greater importance than the answers of the witnesses. One important factor in confirming, if not determining, the biases of the Commissioners might have had something to do with the various dates on which some of the written documentary evidence was received

[34] See Roskill, Hankey, pp. 299, 303. Roskill merely notes that some of the questions of the Commissioners showed "definite hostility towards the actions of the government and of individual Ministers such as Churchill and Kitchener", and that the broad tone of the reports reflected an "anti-government" and "anti-Churchill" bias. He does not provide particular examples of this.

by the Commissioners. Not all of the documents received before the writing and publication of the First Report were necessarily restricted to the period of the origin of the Dardanelles plan or the naval operations. Often documents contained material discussing both naval and army operations beyond the date of 23 March 1915. For example, within the documentary written submissions, General Hamilton began writing letters and appeals to the Commissioners as early as 6 November 1916, while the Commissioners were still hearing oral testimony on the first portion of operations at the Dardanelles, in which Hamilton had only a minor role.[35] In one particular submission, Hamilton complained of a lack of troops and munitions that he had requested from the War Office while in command at Gallipoli, and stated:

> Thus I was placed, though quite unintentionally, in the cruel position of seeming to have been given all I wanted (in formations) and in being given all I wanted (in numbers of effective rifles).[36]

In fact, there are numerous instances of such submissions from other individuals. However, there is a distinction to be made within the group of written submissions received by the Commissioners. Several papers were obviously written in response to letters or questionnaires sent by the Commissioners to various individuals who had been involved in the expedition. This is evident as some of these submissions proposed to answer specific queries, even though the letters

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[35] Hamilton only arrived at the Dardanelles in mid-March 1915. See "Statement by General Sir Ian Hamilton" in CAB 19/29.

[36] Ibid.

or questionnaires prompting such answers were not included in the collection of Dardanelles Commission evidence. Thus, the dates on these submissions reflect when they were sent to the Commissioners. Other submissions were most likely spontaneously sent to the Commissioners by individuals who were participants in the Dardanelles campaign and wished to share their version of events. An important aspect of many submissions of both of these types of written evidence, solicited and spontaneous, is that several were dated between September and December 1916. Although it is difficult to prove unequivocally that each of these early submissions was received and reviewed during the period before the production of the First Report, it is highly likely that many of them were. Further grounds for this assertion is the fact that although some of the submissions dated between September and December 1916 were written by witnesses interviewed for the Final Report, they were grouped in files of the Dardanelles Commission evidence entitled "Submissions Before Giving Evidence". It is likely that these papers had some sort of influence on the Commissioners' questioning for and writing of the First Report.

Certain of these written submissions sent to the Commissioners early in the inquiry demonstrate how it was possible to cast aspersions on the planning and naval stage of the operations by emphasising later failures. One submission stated that the "expedition was initiated and arranged too hurriedly".[37] Another noted that it "was hopeless from the

[37] "Statement by Lieutenant-Colonel L.R. Beadon", p. 3, CAB 19/28. These comments were dated 8 November 1916.

first that real progress would ever be made from Helles", and that the supply of drafts and reinforcements was never adequate.[38] A third, even more critical, argued the following:

> I feel that I cannot say less than that the impression created at the time and confirmed by reflection afterwards is that at no time was the magnitude of the task fully appreciated or adequate means for carrying it out provided. Even the results achieved were obtained only by stretching to the utmost the forces and resources available on the spot at the time.[39]

It is difficult to assess the true extent of the influence such papers may have had on the opinions of the Commissioners when they were preparing the First Report, but these submissions must certainly be considered in any critical examination of the First Report.[40]

Even in the oral testimony, an example of this complicating factor can be found; the first witness who spoke before the entire Dardanelles Commission was General Monro, whose oral testimony was taken on 23 August 1916.[41] Although it was not possible, due to physical time constraints, to interview Monro along with the other witnesses for the Final Report, his comments on the outcome of operations at the Dardanelles cannot but have had some effect on the Commis-

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[38] "Statement by Major-General H.V. Cox", pp. 1-2, CAB 19/28. These comments were dated 9 December 1916, and they were most likely in response to questions from the Commissioners.

[39] "Statement by Lt.-Col. and Bt.-Col. H.E. Street, R.A. (formerly Brigadier-General, General Staff, 8th Corps)", p. 3, CAB 19/31. Comments dated 17 December 1916.

[40] Further written evidence dated between September and December 1916 can be found in CAB 19/28-31.

[41] See note 9, p. 76, this chapter, for Monro's biographical information, and the reasons why he was interviewed first.

sioners, giving some sort of impression of the final failure of the campaign. Thus, it was not possible for the inquiry to be consistently a chronological, step-by-step investigation.

In contrast to the biases and leading questions of the Commissioners, both the oral testimony and written submissions also show that there were several predominant aspects of the campaign which appear to have emerged solely from the available evidence, and not as a result of suggestions or inferences by the Commissioners. First, the possibility for the success of the initial naval bombardments was a popular topic. Most speculation revolved around whether it might have been possible for naval gunnery alone to reduce the Turkish forts on the Peninsula. The opinions on this subject varied. For example, Admiral Reginald Bacon, in command of the Dover Patrol from 1915-18, noted the following:

> I can see nothing impossible in the original scheme or to make success improbable. It was a grave and serious undertaking, but there was always an option left to abandon the attack.
>
> The result of any operation of this nature which bristles with innumerable possibilities that cannot be assessed and with the unexpected ones which are sure to come along, cannot be accurately forseen; but this applies to every operation of major importance and constitutes no reason to refuse to attempt an enterprise so full of potentialities.[42]

On the contrary, the written evidence of Major-General Charles Callwell, Director of Military Operations at the War Office from 1914-15, stated the following:

> It was by no means a purely naval question. The project seemed to me from the outset a dangerous one, mainly because of the mines and the difficulty

42 "Statement of Admiral Bacon", p. 6, CAB 19/28.

> of clearing away these under fire from guns and howitzers which the warships would be unable to deal with. Success was problematical, and one foresaw that the Army might eventually have to come to the aid of the Navy...[43]

The previous two citations have been of written testimony, and one must take into consideration the fact that the more positive view of the situation came from an admiral, while the more negative view came from a military representative, yet the oral testimony of various witnesses demonstrated a similar difference of opinion.[44] More importantly, in the First Report the Commissioners presented their judgment on this topic in what seemed to be a objective manner, stating both the advantages and disadvantages of naval bombardment of land targets.[45]

Another predominant theme was that of the position of military and naval experts at the War Council meetings. This was a point raised particularly in the oral testimony. There were many different views, but the prevailing one was that the naval and military experts should have expressed their opinions at the War Council meetings, especially if they had not agreed with their political chiefs.[46] Lord Fisher and

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[43] "Summary of Proposed Evidence of Major-General Charles Callwell", p. 1, CAB 19/28.

[44] For example, see testimony of Commodore de Bartolomé, Admiral Frederick C.T. Tudor (Third Sea Lord), Carden, Jackson, Fisher and Churchill, in ADM 116/1437B.

[45] First Report, pp. 24-5.

[46] See testimony of Viscount Haldane of Cloan (Lord Chancellor) approximately Qs. 4466-4600; Lord Crewe Q. 5430; Lloyd George Q. 5689; Asquith Q. 5762; Balfour Qs. 4125-26. All testimony can be found in ADM 116/1437B. Testimony by all these witnesses generally agreed that if the expert advisers did not speak up to give their opinions in the War Council meetings, then they must have assented to what the political representatives said. Asquith added that the experts were not constrained in any way, and that they were free to express their views if they wished.

Wolfe Murray strongly objected to this view. They argued that it had not been their place to speak up in the meetings unless asked, and especially if such outspokenness might have contradicted either Churchill or Kitchener, their representative department chiefs at the Admiralty and the War Office. Fisher stated that "it would not tend towards good relations between the First Lord and myself nor to the smooth working of the Board of Admiralty to raise objections in the War Council discussions", and that he made it a "rule that [he] would not at the War Council kick Winston Churchill's shins there".[47] Wolfe Murray agreed:

> Q. 2677 (Chairman) Would it be a correct summary of your evidence as regards your personal position to say that both at the War Office and at the War Council you considered yourself the Staff Officer of Lord Kitchener and that you were not called upon to express any independent opinion unless you were especially asked to do so?
>
> A. (Wolfe Murray) Certainly.[48]

On this subject the Commissioners once again accurately reflected the opinions of the witnesses by recording a sample of the varying degrees of opinion in the text of the report. They recorded the majority opinion as their judgment in the conclusions of the report.

In this instance, and the previous one concerning naval bombardment, the Commissioners appear to have made unbiased judgments based on the evidence with which they were pre-

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[47] These were answers to questions 3089 and 3122 respectively in Fisher's testimony, 11 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

[48] Testimony of Wolfe Murray, 10 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

sented.[49] However, often these judgments were recorded as part of a more partial judgment, which tended to overshadow the positive function of making a fair ruling. For example, conclusion (e) stated that there "does not appear to have been direct support or direct opposition from the responsible naval and military advisers...as to the practicality of carrying on the operation", but it was combined with the statement that "Mr. Churchill appears to have advocated the attack by ships alone" with only a "certain amount of half-hearted and hesitating expert opinion".[50] This may have contributed to the historiographical problem whereby historians have focused on criticism of certain individuals rather than on more balanced findings of the Commissioners.

After oral testimony and written submissions of evidence to the Commissioners, important evidence can be found in the minutes of the War Council meetings from November 1914 to May 1915. The minutes were not quoted directly in the First Report, due to Cabinet secrecy and confidentiality; this was something guaranteed by a deal struck between Hankey and Cromer before Hankey's appearance before the Commission. Yet the minutes were the basis for Hankey's official presentation of evidence to the Commissioners. However, Hankey's evidence was much-quoted in the text of the First Report, and thus the minutes indirectly served an important function.[51] This can

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[49] See First Report, pp. 41-3, conclusions (e), (f) and (o).

[50] First Report, p. 42.

[51] For example, Hankey's evidence was cited on pp. 9, 13-15, 19-21, 24, 26, 29, 30-2, and 34 of the First Report.

be seen by the fact that several of the major sectional divisions of the First Report in the "Narrative of Events" coincided with dates when War Council meetings had occurred.[52]

However, there are problems with these references to the meetings of the War Council. First, as already noted, Hankey only submitted the minutes of the meetings to Lord Cromer, the Chairman of the Dardanelles Commission. The other Commissioners apparently did not have access to the minutes, and thus their analysis of the events of those meetings must necessarily have depended on the oral testimony of the various witnesses who were present at the meetings of the War Council. As many of the witnesses spoke solely from memory, without documentary aid, some could not recall the exact details of each War Council meeting.[53]

A second problem with the minutes is that although they were recorded by Hankey, a very able and efficient secretary, he was not infallible. Mistakes were likely. Notes were not circulated following the meetings to all those who had been present so that they could check for mistakes. Although Hankey stated that the minutes may not have been accurate word for word, he argued that they did capture the gist of what took place.[54] Undoubtedly this was true. Yet Lord Fisher complained in his oral testimony that not all of his comments

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[52] For example, section (a) "From the outbreak of the War until January 13, 1915", section (b) "The Meeting of the War Council on January 13th", and section (g) "Events from January 28th to February 16th".

[53] For example, see testimony of Wolfe Murray, ADM 116/1437B.

[54] Testimony of Hankey, 19 September 1916, Qs. 164-167, CAB 19/33.

were included in the records of the meetings. In particular, Fisher cited a specific instance where not all of his opinions had been recorded:

> Q. 3097 (Chairman) You are reading from the Proceedings of the War Council?
> A. (Fisher) Yes. That is November 25th. Then I put in my note: 'Lord Fisher had explained personally to Lord Kitchener at the War Office, from his experience of three years as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet that Bulgaria was the key of the situation.' That was my conviction. I saw a great many of these fellows and the Bulgarians are savages; all the rest are civilised. The Greeks and the Serbians and the Rumanians are not savages like the Bulgarians. The Bulgarians are war fellows, and I knew they would do the business; I felt sure of it--and they wanted Constantinople.
> Q. 3098 You are reading from the Proceedings of the War Council on November 25th?
> A. Yes.
> Q. 3099 Was that recorded?
> A. No, that is my note.[55]

More importantly, a reexamination of the War Council minutes reveals some interesting observations. At many of the meetings various assorted topics were discussed, and the Dardanelles campaign did not always comprise a major portion of the proceedings.[56] After all, the War Council had many other projects and operations to consider. Concerning the various topics of discussion in the War Council meetings, Hankey stated that the officials "were overwhelmed with problems", and that such "appalling" difficulties were coming in all the time. Thus Hankey argued that it was necessary to focus on the entire prosecution of the war, rather than

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[55] Testimony of Fisher, 11 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B.

[56] See PRO, CAB 22/1. For example, on 13 January, 28 January, 9 February, 24 February, 10 March, and 19 March 1915, many other topics of dicussion regarding Britain and the other Allies' concerns of the war were raised.

completely thrashing out all the possibilities of one particular plan, as might have been done in peacetime.[57] The War Council minutes are an important source of information because they place the Dardanelles operations in the broader perspective of the war itself, something which the Dardanelles Commission, due to security concerns about future plans and operations, could not possibly do. The minutes show that the Dardanelles plan originally was one of many plans; the difference was that the Dardanelles plan was eventually put into action.[58]

Examination of the various types of evidence which the Dardanelles Commissioners considered when preparing the First Report reveals several aspects which the uninformed reader of the report could not possibly identify. The oral testimony, although generally composed of straightforward questions, in many instances illustrates a sometimes not-so-subtle bias on the part of the Commissioners. Certain leading questions to the witnesses appear to have been designed to elicit a particular type of response, one which would confirm the suspicions or opinions already held by some of the Commissioners. It is difficult to prove that this bias extended to all ten of the Commissioners, but it was not just limited to one or two of them. As well, written submissions of testimony discussing all aspects of the Dardanelles operations were received by the Commissioners while oral testimony for

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[57] Testimony of Hankey on 19 September 1916, Qs. 452-5, ADM 116/1437B.

[58] See meeting of 28 January 1915, CAB 22/1. For example, Sir John French and Lord Fisher's planof a naval attack on Zeebrugge was much discussed and considered, but was abandoned on 28 January for the reason that it was not feasible at that time.

the First Report was still under way. It is likely that some of the submissions served to strengthen the predetermined opinions of the Commissioners, as many discussed the failure of the operations. With such a strong and continuing reinforcement that very few aspects of the operations were successful, it was undoubtedly difficult for the Commissioners strictly to limit their questions to the naval operations, nor could they avoid the commonly held view that the campaign bungled from start to finish. In light of this information, it is predictable that certain conclusions arose in large part from the bias of the Commissioners, rather than from the evidence bearing solely on the period covered by the First Report. Finally, a reexamination of the War Council minutes can only aid the modern reader in a full overview of the strategic situation of the Dardanelles campaign. This is something that the Dardanelles Commissioners could not do, and something which historians have failed to do.

CHAPTER IV

The First Report and the "Higher Organisation of the War"

The First Report was never recognised for all of the judgments that it actually contained. Historians and authors who have focused on individuals such as Churchill and Kitchener have tended to note the conclusions dealing with criticism of these men. In this sense the history of the First Report, like the history of the Dardanelles campaign itself, has been explained far too often in terms of "individuals".[1] On the surface, criticism of individuals was evident, and indeed such evaluations were a large part of the Commissioners' intent.[2] Yet, on a deeper level, criticism extended not just to the heads of various departments such as the War Council, the Admiralty, and the War Office, but also to the basic organisation of these departments. In fact, these departments, along with others, including the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Munitions (after May 1915), and various other sub-committees, formed what is often loosely termed the "higher organisation of the war".[3] Thus, the First Report is also an attack on the basic management of the war at the most senior levels.

In the First Report, criticism of the War Council, the

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1 Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army", p. 403.

2 See Chapter Three. This is evident from the oral testimony of the Dardanelles Commission.

3 This is the loose definition used by the First Report, and also by Franklyn Arthur Johnson, Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959 (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 159.

Admiralty and the War Office occurred in two ways. First, a substantial section at the beginning of the report was devoted to the "Higher Organisation Previous to the Outbreak of War" and the "Higher Organisation Subsequent to the Outbreak of War", the latter of which was subdivided into sections describing the War Council, the Admiralty and the War Office. In the presage to this section, the Commissioners stated the following:

> ...we trust that we are not interpreting erroneously the wishes either of His Majesty's Government or the Legislature when we say that, if our enquiry is to be of any real practical use for future guidance, we should not confine ourselves to a bald statement of facts, or even to the mere assignment of a proper share of responsibility to individuals or departments in connection with past events, but that we should go somewhat further and indicate briefly and in general terms the conclusions at which we have arrived in respect to the merits and demerits of the original, as also of the revised organisations which have been instrumental in conducting the war.[4]

Thus, the Commissioners firmly stated their intent to criticise the important departments. However, they were not prepared to go as far as to detail overtly measures which should have been taken to remedy the "defects".[5] It is worth noting, however, that this section of the First Report has largely been ignored in favour of more sensational aspects of the Commissioners' work which looks for scapegoats.

The second way in which the Commissioners levelled criticism at the "higher organisation of the war" was through

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[4] First Report, p. 4.

[5] Ibid.

the conclusions of the First Report.[6] Several of these conclusions dealt specifically with the manner and scope of War Council functions, until that body was permanently adjourned in May 1915 in favour of the Dardanelles Committee. Other conclusions dealt with Churchill and Kitchener specifically, but the departmental organisation was also partially targeted.

By the time the First Report was published early in 1917 many of the departmental and organisational problems it illuminated had been already modified, or were in the process of being changed.[7] However, it is significant that a Commission which began its inquiry into the Dardanelles operations in the summer of 1916 was so clearly able to define existing problems in Britain's direction of the war. What has not been recognised is that this vital aspect of the report laid out the fact that the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, although characterised by many types of political, strategic and tactical blunders on the part of many individuals, was effectively tied to Britain's methods of running the war. The Dardanelles campaign showed faults in Britain's political, military and naval machinery organisation, and it was, therefore, a positive event in that it helped enable that machinery to change. The Dardanelles campaign was not the only factor that initiated change in this area, but as one example, the ineffective War Council was dissolved in favour of first the Dardanelles Committee and then the War Commit-

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6 Ibid., pp. 41-3. See conclusions (c), (d), (h), (l), and (m).

7 See pp. 114-15 of this chapter for a fuller explanation of how the organisations had changed.

tee, gradually altering the management of the war by transforming inefficient bodies into more capable ones. Along with events leading to this and the formation of the First Coalition government under Asquith's leadership in May 1915, the bungling in the Dardanelles up to that point awakened British politicians to the fact that the management of the war needed to be made more effective.[8] Another positive aspect regarding the campaign was the fact that partly due to the failure of the military portion of operations, the CIGS was granted a stronger position of authority at the War Office and in the War Committee in relation to the Secretary of State for War.[9] The First Report came slightly too late to instigate significant change in the organisation of government departments, but nonetheless it is important to recognise this previously undervalued, yet vital aspect of the Commissioners' work.

This begs the question of what exactly the Commissioners had to say about the "higher organisation of the war". The first organisation the Commissioners criticised was the Cabinet for allowing the C.I.D. to fall into "abeyance" at the outbreak of war.[10] The C.I.D., as initially formed in 1902 and then reconstituted in 1904, was a group of "advisers", usually Cabinet ministers, some military leaders and civil

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[8] Roskill, Hankey, pp. 176-81.

[9] Gooch, The Plans of War, p. 299-300. John Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats: the Higher Direction of the War" in Kathleen Burk, ed., War and the State: The Transformation of British Government, 1914-1919 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 60-1.

[10] First Report, pp. 4-5. Actually, the C.I.D. did not completely discontinue meeting until the beginning of 1915, although its effectiveness was greatly reduced at the outbreak of war.

servants, and sometimes Dominion statesmen and members of the Parliamentary opposition, which met and held discussions in order to inform the Prime Minister on political and military matters affecting the "security of the British Empire".[11] It was not intended that the C.I.D. should hold executive powers, yet the committee did have a certain amount of influence. Historians today are divided on the actual effectiveness of the C.I.D. in planning for war, especially its effectiveness in readying Britain strategically for the "continental commitment" it adopted.[12] Some have argued that the C.I.D. facilitated a smooth transition from peace to war, noting that by 1914 the committee had produced "almost complete files of plans for the first phases of the war".[13] Others have stated that initially the C.I.D. had potential for eventually gaining "supreme" command in the formulation of war policy and in the direction of a war, but that mostly due to inter-service and inter-departmental rivalry of the Admiralty and the War Office, the C.I.D. ceased to be a forum for the joint operational strategic planning of the Navy and Army, and that policy, such as it was, remained a departmental affair.[14] Nicholas d'Ombrain has stated that, before the

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11 Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 1.

12 This phrase is taken from the title of a book by Michael Howard, The Continental Commitment (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

13 Johnson, Defence by Committee, pp. 132-4, 142. It is important to note that much of this book was based on the author's personal interviews with Hankey, and as such it perhaps presents as much of Hankey's view of the C.I.D. as it does the author's.

14 Nicholas d'Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain 1902-1914 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 2-19.

outbreak of war, during Hankey's secretaryship of the C.I.D., the committee was kept busy with mainly "trivial" affairs, rather than more important issues of strategy and policy.[15]

Whatever the ultimate effectiveness of the C.I.D. before the war, the committee was one of the only attempts to bring together statesmen, soldiers, sailors and civil servants to plan and prepare war strategy.[16] From the Commissioners' point of view, when the C.I.D. fell into disuse, first in favour of the Cabinet discussing and making strategy and operational decisions and then in November 1914 in favour of the War Council, the abstract "thinking" department of government vanished.[17] Franklyn Arthur Johnson has noted Hankey's assertion that the reason Asquith replaced the C.I.D. was so that it could later emerge from the war with a "clean record".[18] However, the problem for the Commissioners was the ambiguous nature of executive control that resulted from these developments, especially after the formation of the War Council.[19] Until the formation of the War Council, control of Britain's wartime strategy had rested ultimately

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15 Ibid., p. 17. See also p. 114 where d'Ombrain states that the C.I.D. was "at best, a pawn in the struggle between the various factions of the Government and the services, and, at worst, simply moribund. The Defence Committee and war planning were strangers to one another. Not only was the Committee's knowledge of the military policy minimal, but for that reason the C.I.D. knew nothing of naval planning".

16 At this point in time, there was no "joint chiefs of staff" organisation.

17 The 5 and 6 August "councils of war" are not to be confused with the War Council of November 1914 to May 1915. Furthermore, although the C.I.D. did survive the war, only its Historical Section operated throughout the war, on a very limited budget. See also note 10 this chapter.

18 Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 148.

19 First Report, p. 5. Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 141.

with the Cabinet, even if it was "clumsy and inefficient" at the beginning of the war.[20]

The Commissioners' main concern was with the War Council, a body they described as being a committee of the Cabinet with some experts in attendance, and the Prime Minister as the chairman.[21] The War Council was intended to be smaller in composition than the Cabinet, which had twenty-two members, but the Council itself eventually expanded from eight to thirteen members.[22] The Commissioners pointed out that although this new body was mandated to discuss important matters of the war, the Cabinet still theoretically held executive authority. In fact, the War Council decided on the most important matters--like sending the Navy to bombard the Dardanelles--while informing the Cabinet afterwards, when the "necessary executive steps" had already been taken.[23] The Commissioners noted that as a result of this:

> For all practical purposes it may be held that, during the period under review, the powers and prerogatives of the united Cabinet were, in so far as the conduct of the war was concerned, held almost entirely in abeyance.[24]

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[20] First Report, p. 5.

[21] First Report, p. 5. See also CAB 22/1. The following were members at the outset of the War Council: Asquith (the Prime Minister), Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty), Kitchener (Secretary of State for War), Lloyd George (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Grey (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), Balfour (M.P.), Wolfe Murray (CIGS) and Fisher (First Sea Lord) as advisers. Soon added to the Council were the Marquess of Crewe (Secretary of State for India), Viscount Haldane of Cloan (Lord High Chancellor), Sir Arthur Wilson (Admiral of the Fleet), L. Harcourt (Secretary of State for the Colonies), and Reginald McKenna (Secretary of State for Home Affairs).

[22] Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 150.

[23] First Report, p. 5.

[24] Ibid.

Modern historians agree with this observation. John Turner has noted that an "amiable vagueness characterised the War Council's relationship with the Cabinet", and that although the War Council was not supposed to wield executive power, with a quick look at the authority of the names in the War Council, one can understand why the Cabinet would not think of disagreeing often with the Council's decisions.[25] Johnson notes that this ambiguity of authority caused delay and "confusion", among other things leading to the "administrative chaos" of the Dardanelles expedition and the "Mesopotamia Muddle".[26]

Among the conclusions of the First Report, it is evident that the Commissioners further recognised the relative importance of the War Council. The report stated:

> We consider that the responsibility of those members of the Cabinet who did not attend the meetings of the War Council was limited to the fact that they delegated their authority to their colleagues who attended those meetings.[27]

Furthermore, in the criticism of this aspect of the "higher organisation of the war", the Commissioners made a distinction even between the amount of responsibility of the Cabinet ministers who were members of the War Council. Lloyd George as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Grey as the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the Marquess of Crewe as the

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25 Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats", pp. 58-9. In his evidence to the Commission, Churchill noted that the Cabinet was content to delegate authority to those of their body who were on the War Council. See "Statement by Mr. Churchill upon the Dardanelles Operations to the End of the First Phase", CAB 19/28.

26 Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 149.

27 First Report, p. 43, conclusion (m).

Secretary of State for India, for example, were said to have a smaller amount of influence in the discussions of the War Council than men like Asquith, Churchill and Kitchener.[28] In essence, this further enforced the Cabinet's delegation of responsibility, willingly or unknowingly, to a body that was not designed to have executive functions. Turner even went so far as to say that it was the Dardanelles campaign "which changed the role of the War Council by giving it real, if indistinct, responsibilities for the conduct of operations".[29]

A second major criticism of the Commissioners concerning the functioning of the War Council involved the technical issues about the Dardanelles that had come before the Council. The Commissioners stated that such technical detail was the reason for the presence at the meetings of "experts" like Fisher, Sir Arthur Wilson, and Wolfe Murray.[30] Astutely, the Commissioners also defined a difference between the representatives of the War Office and the Admiralty. Kitchener was the senior field-marshal employed at the time of the Dardanelles expedition, and his very presence commanded much authority.[31] In fact, Kitchener's presence was such that his "military rank confused his relations with his professional advisers and the commanders in the field" regarding his

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[28] Ibid., p. 6.

[29] Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats", p. 58.

[30] First Report, p. 6. Wilson was employed at the Admiralty as an expert adviser at the time.

[31] Peter Simkins, "Kitchener and the Expansion of the Army" in Ian Beckett and John Gooch, eds., Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy 1845-1970 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 94.

political role as Secretary of State for War.[32] As a result, in War Council meetings, as was explained by Wolfe Murray in his testimony to the Commission, the weight of Kitchener's pronouncements was so great, that Wolfe Murray felt he was no more than a staff officer to Kitchener, and that it was not his job to correct his military and political superior, especially in front of others.[33] Churchill, on the other hand, despite his enthusiasm, was not a naval expert, and therefore his naval advice should have come from Fisher and Wilson, both very experienced naval officers. Some historians have suggested that Wolfe Murray was entirely unsuited for his role as CIGS, but the same could not be said of Fisher and Wilson.[34]

As a whole, the Commissioners went to great lengths by quoting the oral testimony of many witnesses, to explain how the experts had been delinquent in expressing their views before the War Council, thus hampering a proper investigation of the merits or demerits of first the Dardanelles plan, and then the actual operations. The experts believed they should not have contradicted their political chiefs, while the ministers overwhelmingly believed that the experts had acted as free agents and had been welcome to voice their opinions

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[32] Ibid., pp. 94-5.

[33] See testimony of Wolfe Murray, 10 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B. See also First Report, p. 6. Gooch, Plans of War, pp. 303, 305. Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 152.

[34] Gooch, Plans of War, pp. 303-4. Simkins, "Kitchener and the Expansion of the Army", p. 95. Fisher had had much previous experience as First Sea Lord (1904-1910), and Wilson had previously been First Lord of the Admiralty.

in the Council.[35] In the conclusions of the report, several specific judgments were actually generally unfavourable to these experts, even though the Commissioners stated that either the First Lord or the Prime Minister should have solicited the views of these experts if they had not otherwise been offered.[36] In the text of the report, these criticisms came under the discussion of War Council organisation, and the actual result was a further indictment of a theoretically advisory council that did not function as it had been intended. The way that the Commissioners recorded the problem, the difficulty was considered one of individual responsibility, in that either Churchill or Asquith should have ensured that the expert opinions were aired in the Council. However, it was also recorded as a problem of organisation, in that the division of responsibility between the Council and the Cabinet was not entirely clear. Therefore, the necessity of eliciting expert opinion to justify executive authority was never a definite issue, as ultimate authority was never fully delegated to the Council.

Johnson explains this problem as a partial result of the abandonment of the C.I.D., where the professional advisers, such as the First Sea Lord and the CIGS, had been considered

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[35] First Report, pp. 6-10. At the end of the section discussion the War Council, the Commissioners ultimately came to four conclusions regarding the position of the military and naval experts at the Council meetings: (1) it was not the practice of experts to express their opinions, (2) the experts were generally silent unless specifically asked a question, (3) the Chairman and Ministers of the War Council looked to the naval and military experts to express dissent if they had any; if the experts were silent, then the Council went with the opinions of the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty, and (4) the experts and the Ministers did not generally agree in the function of the experts.

[36] First Report, pp. 41-3. See conclusions (e), (g), (f), and (o).

"genuine members".[37] In the War Council, the naval and military members had been brought in as advisers to their chiefs, rather than in an independent capacity as full members of the group. Johnson believes that this new practice helped maintain civil control over the military. In this regard, the Commissioners gave a large amount of attention to the subject of the expert advisers, as they had indirectly played an integral role in the decisions of the War Council, decisions which had been made in large part without the necessary consultation of the experts. This is something that modern historians also depict as an organisational and administrative problem. However, Gooch notes that this aspect of the report has generally been shelved in favour of focusing on the indictments of Kitchener and Churchill.[38]

The greater significance of the conflict surrounding the role of military advisers was that in their search for responsibility, the Commissioners were also led to consider the administrative organisations of the Admiralty and the War Office. Beginning with the Admiralty, the Commissioners carefully delineated within that organisation a definite dissatisfaction among the various Sea Lords.[39] For the most part, dissention had apparently eminated from those Sea Lords on the Board of Admiralty who had not also belonged to the War Staff Group that had been reformulated by Churchill

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[37] Johnson, Defence by Committee, pp. 151-2.

[38] Gooch, Plans of War, p. 308.

[39] See "Minute by the Second, Third and Fourth Sea Lords Addressed to the First Lord", CAB 19/31.

shortly after the outbreak of the war.[40] Thus, from their evidence the Commissioners concluded that the problem had stemmed from the lack of consultation of the lesser Board members, or "Junior Lords" as they were also called, and consequently the inversely significant position and importance that had been given to the War Staff Group in the planning and conduct of the naval war.[41]

What the Commissioners here defined was a fundamental weakness of the War Staff Group, which was in essence a reformulation of the Naval War Council begun by Fisher in 1909 as an advisory body at the Admiralty.[42] Some historians note that the members of the War Staff Group hardly had any clear idea of what was to be done. One of the most critical views is that of d'Ombrain, who states that the staff was no more than a "body of sycophants established by Churchill to provide the First Lord with the information he demanded (and no more)".[43] This lack of a clear understanding of the functions of the Group was evident in the oral testimony presented before the Commission by one of its members, Admiral Wilson.[44]

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[40] First Report, pp. 10-11. The Board of Admiralty consisted of the First Lord, four Sea Lords, two Civil Lords, the Parliamentary Secretary and the Permanent Secretary. The War Staff Group formed by Churchill consisted of the First Lord, the First Sea Lord, the Chief of Staff (Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Oliver), Admiral Wilson, the Secretary to the Board (Sir Graham Greene), and the Naval Secretary (Commodore de Bartolomé).

[41] First Report, p. 12.

[42] N.A.M. Rodger, The Admiralty (Lavenham: Terence Dalton Limited, 1979), pp. 127-8.

[43] d'Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy, pp. 162-3.

[44] Testimony of Wilson, 5 October 1916, Q. 2014, ADM 116/1437B. Wilson attended the frequent meetings of the War Staff Group, but was often unsure what effect their advice there portended for the conduct of the war.

As the staff had not been encouraged or nurtured before the war, how could it have been expected to function efficiently once the war broke out and with minor modifications, when it essentially became the War Staff Group?[45]

Of course, one cannot ignore the influence of personalities. Despite their valuable criticism of the Admiralty, the Commissioners were quick to note instances where Churchill had overridden Admiralty advisers.[46] Yet, according to the Orders in Council which helped regulate the functions of each member of the Board of Admiralty, Churchill had been within his rights to not consult the Board members on matters of strategy or war policy for the fleet, whether this was acceptable conduct according to the other Sea Lords or not.[47] Unfortunately, as previously noted, the oral evidence of the Commission indicated a certain bias on the part of the Commissioners against Churchill and Kitchener especially, and this was also emphasised in the First Report. Consequently, historians have also emphasised an examination of these individuals in their discussions of the failures of the Admiralty and the War Office in relation to the Dardanelles operations, rather than also considering the more fundamental organisational defects.[48]

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45 Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 157.

46 Ibid. d'Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy, p. 162. See also Greene's evidence before the Commission on 10 October, ADM 116/1437B. In the First Report, p. 11, Balfour's statement that the First Lord had "too much power for safety" was quoted.

47 See Greene's evidence before the Commission, 10 October 1916, ADM 116/1437B. See also "Memorandum by Sir W. Graham Greene", CAB 19/32.

48 Even Marder, who gives one of the best accounts of the expedition, falls prey to this folly.

The Commissioners dealt with the topic of the War Office more briefly in both the text and conclusions of the First Report. Here the criticism was obviously more biased and less objective than in the cases of their examination of the War Council and the Admiralty. Essentially, the Commissioners described most War Office problems as stemming from Kitchener's refusal, as Secretary of State for War, to devolve authority to his subordinates, or to delegate any responsibility to them.[49] For example, organising the production of munitions was a job which, partially because of the shell scandal of the spring of 1915, had only become its own department of the Ministry of Munitions in May of that year. The Commissioners also noted the fact that with the onset of war, much of the Imperial General Staff of the War Office had left for commands in France.[50]

In the conclusions of the report Kitchener was accused of simply not having made proper use of his General Staff. Yet here the Commissioners did not emphasise an important fact; in the early stages of the war, and certainly during the existence of the War Council, rather than the General Staff, Hankey had been greatly involved in drawing up strategic appreciations of the war.[51] In the absence of professional advice emanating from the War Council advisers, what might be called strategic entrepreneurs had stepped in to fill the gap with their own ideas regarding the conduct of

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[49] First Report, pp. 12-13.

[50] Ibid., p. 12. See also Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 157.

[51] First Report, p. 42, conclusion (n).

war operations.[52] Hankey had been one of these people, although probably not as personally opportunistic as Lloyd George or other politicians may have been. On 26 December 1914, Hankey had drawn up the "Boxing Day Memorandum", which outlined several strategic options for Britain's next moves in the war.[53] It had shortly after been circulated to the War Council, along with a similar memorandum by Lloyd George. One of the options Hankey had defined in that paper was an attack by the Allies on Turkey.

Effectively, Hankey's "prescient" paper had helped the War Council to decide to turn its attention to the Dardanelles.[54] Eventually, Hankey became another military adviser to the Council on the subject of the Dardanelles.[55] Johnson writes that as Secretary of the C.I.D. Hankey's "position was at least as influential as that of a Cabinet minister backed by a great department of state".[56] By September 1915, Hankey had held effective control of the Dardanelles operations.[57] Apparently, between January and July 1915 Hankey had submitted to Asquith approximately ten

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52 Gooch, Plans of War, p. 299.

53 WO 159/3.

54 See "Statement by Mr. Churchill upon the Dardanelles Operations to the End of the First Phase", p. 8, CAB 19/28.

55 See CAB 22/1 and CAB 22/2 for the influence of Hankey's advice on the members of the War Council and Dardanelles Committee. See also Gooch, Plans of War, pp. 309-15.

56 Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 128.

57 Roskill, Hankey, pp. 212-13.

appreciations of the Dardanelles situation.[58] In the absence of coherent and succinct appreciations from the War Office, Hankey's papers stood as the strategic military advice to the War Council. It is possible that here the Commissioners only saw certain faults of the General Staff related to Kitchener, rather than including Hankey in the equation as perhaps unwittingly contributing to the problem.[59] Hankey's role in helping the Commissioners to understand the "government" case may simply have been too effective in this regard.

By the time of the publication of the First Report, many of the problems it actually illustrated had already been dealt with, particularly in improving both the political and departmental executive command structure. By the end of 1916, Lloyd George, now the Prime Minister, had established a small War Cabinet to assume ultimate control and responsibility for conducting the war. This administrative system had developed an agenda, a secretariat to ensure the execution of that agenda, and had shown a willingness to devolve authority to "standing committees".[60] Among other things, the new War Cabinet had developed a recognition that departmental activities had to be co-ordinated to be successful. It was not perfect, but it manifested a clearer definition of authority

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58 Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats", pp. 71-2.

59 Turner notes that Gooch, in Plans of War, may have been a bit too harsh in his assessment of Hankey in this regard. Gooch states that by producing these "exceptionally able and distinct" papers, Hankey had contributed to the War Council's false notion that the advice of true strategic experts was not needed in political counsels. Gooch, Plans of War, p. 309. Turner prefers to believe that Hankey had not intentionally assumed the role of the General Staff. Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats", p. 71.

60 Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats, p. 57.

than had existed earlier in the war.[61]

The Admiralty had also gone through several changes, including the experience of two different First Lords after Churchill left, and some reshuffling of the other Sea Lords after Fisher's resignation, but it was still struggling to delegate proper authority, and it could not quite yet agree to adopt the convoy system.[62] The War Office, on the other hand, was in a better position, with the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for War much lessened and those of the CIGS much increased; this change was aided greatly by Sir William Robertson's appointment as CIGS in December 1915.[63] An agreement between Robertson and Kitchener allowed for the Army Council, through the CIGS, to be the sole source of military advice to the Cabinet and then War Committee.[64] Thus, the First Report was not really important for the purpose of instigating change in these organisations, but it did illustrate plainly what had been the previous administrative problems.

It is evident in the First Report that the Dardanelles Commissioners fairly effectively addressed the problem of the organisation of Britain's War Council, Admiralty and War Office, all of which were responsible for planning and conducting operations for Britain in the early stages of the

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61 Ibid., pp. 62-7, 70.

62 Rodger, Admiralty, pp. 131-4.

63 Robertson was previously Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the B.E.F., and he was CIGS from December 1915 to January 1918.

64 Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats", pp. 60-1.

First World War. For the Commissioners to address such a weighty topic might appear to have been outside the limit of the mandate for the Dardanelles Commission, but in fact it was a necessary part of an analysis of the Dardanelles campaign. The Dardanelles campaign was not an isolated incident run by an isolated section of the government; it was largely a product of three departments, departments which were also responsible for every respect of Britain's war effort between August 1914 and March 1915. Yet, such a perceptive analysis, tinged as it might have been by biases of the Commissioners, was an amazing feat for men who did not have a lengthy perspective of time and distance to examine their subject. Historians today, eighty years after these events, still write of the deficiencies in the "higher organisation of the war" in Britain. The only problem with this portion of the First Report is that it has not generally been recognised for the effective criticisms and conclusions it delineated concerning the impact that these deficiencies had on the Dardanelles campaign, as opposed to the more sensational criticisms of the infamous heads of these departments.

It is a little bit more difficult to explain why this imbalance persists. Perhaps it is because those criticised were so eager and active in seeking to protect their reputations. It is notable that both Asquith and Churchill made speeches in the House of Commons in March 1917 during the debate of the First Report and that these remarks were reported in The Times as highlights of the discussion.[65]

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[65] The Times, 21 March 1917, pp. 9-12.

Perhaps it is also because, immediately after the war, many individuals who had been involved with the Dardanelles campaign published their memoirs and accounts of the expedition, giving credit to the notion that the criticism of individuals was the most important aspect of the First Report. Another possible explanation is that scapegoats and blame are much more interesting than a mundane discussion of organisational and administrative details. Whatever the case, the portion of the Commissioners' analysis dealing with the "higher organisation of the war" undoubtedly deserves more attention than it has received from historians to date.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the historiography of the Dardanelles campaign, the First Report has been misused and misinterpreted. It has been erroneously labelled the result of a royal commission, and its phrases have often been selectively quoted and removed from their original context. Often, authors and historians of the campaign have devoted no more than a single sentence, or a couple of brief paragraphs to the Dardanelles Commission and its reports combined, despite several citations of either or both reports in the text of their works. These problems have become so ingrained within Dardanelles historiography that it has taken over three quarters of a century for anyone to attain enough perspective about the campaign to recognise this problem. The First Report is not without its faults, but such misinterpretation and neglect of the circumstances of the Commission and the limitations of the report only compounds its intrinsic errors.

In essence, it is important to recognise that there are two very distinct aspects of the First Report. The first is that the most celebrated feature of the judgments of the Commissioners is the criticism of individuals, primarily of Churchill and Kitchener. In March 1917 after the publication of the First Report, The Times recorded that the Commissioners had produced a very apt assessment of the situation through an impartial analysis.[1] Yet the editor of that newspaper did not imitate his own judgment, instead creating

[1] The Times, 9 March 1917, p. 9.

headlines such as "The Blame Fixed" and "Three Men in Charge", while at the same time praising Lloyd George as the Prime Minister for restoring, instead of weakening "the unity of the supreme control", and for "systematiz[ing] and quicken[ing] the conduct of the war".[2] Titles and individual chapters of subsequent books about the Dardanelles campaign only reinforced this popular opinion. In Churchill's case this was true even though the Dardanelles campaign continued for more than seven months after Churchill left the post of First Lord of the Admiralty.[3] It is evident that "blame" of these individuals existed in the public mind before the production of the First Report. However, the First Report was the first official analysis of the conception, planning and operation of the British activities at the Dardanelles up to 23 March 1915. Thus, it was to this written condemnation of the campaign that authors and historians at the end of the First World War turned to refute or confirm the blame of individuals. Some authors personalised this endeavor. It would not be fair to say that the First Report was the sole source of the blame, but it was the first entry in the written polemic on the subject.

The second important aspect of the First Report is its criticism of the "higher organisation of the war". Whereas the majority of the report pointed the finger of blame at individuals, a more perceptive analysis came from the discus-

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[2] Ibid.

[3] For example, Trumbull Higgins, Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles (London: Heinemann, 1963), and Wallin, By Ships Alone: Churchill and the Dardanelles.

sion of defects in the machinery of the War Council, the Admiralty and the War Office. Yet, in histories of the British administration of the First World War, this has not been associated with the First Report, even though modern historians echo some of the same criticisms the Commissioners originally illuminated in 1917.

It was the responsibility of the Dardanelles Commissioners to examine the witnesses and available evidence of the Dardanelles campaign to try to determine how the operations at the Dardanelles had been planned and carried out. However, it is doubtful whether the Commissioners had adequate perspective to complete that task as instructed. Several of the Commissioners were M.P.s, undoubtedly having been exposed to criticism and discussion of the campaign in the House of Commons for many months before being appointed to the Commission. Yet, had the Commission been instituted after the war in 1919, too much of a distance might have come between the Commissioners and their subject. If collusion among the witnesses and the failed memory of these individuals could be determined in 1916, a year after the events, it could only increase by 1919 or later, with the inevitable interference of other events.

Besides these two important aspects of the First Report, it is also important to examine the report in the broader context of primary sources in general. In essence, this particular study of the historical circumstances, composition, conclusions and effects of the First Report is really a case study of a wider difficulty within the discipline of history.

As is evident with the case of the First Report, it is not always possible to reconstruct past events accurately with the available oral, written or pictoral evidence. This is why it is important to study how historians themselves "write" history.

The Dardanelles campaign has been much-celebrated by historians, but often various historians' interpretations of the expedition contain wide discrepancies concerning the amount of praise or blame to be assigned to any one aspect of the operations. What the First Report demonstrates is the need to examine primary sources carefully. In the case of the First Report, a quick examination reveals only surface criticisms of individuals. A closer look divulges information that has been overshadowed by the exterior commentary, details which are valuable to an examination of the system of British administration of the First World War.

It is important to consider the role of individuals in the determination of events, but often, although personalities may seem to be potent agents of history, they are only operating within an established system which can only be altered by their actions to a limited extent. Essentially, the Dardanelles campaign cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the events of the First World War, even though geographically it was not the main theatre of operations. Thus, the future of historiography in this area appears to lead to a revision of historians' work concerning the Dardanelles Commission in particular, and of the Dardanelles campaign in general, in light of systemic

problems in the "higher organisation of the war". Yet it is essential that this revision should be combined with a truly dispassionate analysis of the actions of individuals within the system.[4] Each of these factors played an important role in the planning and occasion of the Dardanelles campaign, and the history of the expedition will not be complete until they can both be included in a single study of the subject.

[4] This new type of interpretation of the campaign has started in a small way with the works of Cohen and Gooch, Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War, and Travers, "Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army".

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