

## CHAPTER XII

### DEFENSIVE MEASURES BY THE TURKS

(Sketches 17, 16, 22)

THOUGH the Turks could fairly claim that the first six weeks' June fighting on the peninsula had gone in their favour, Enver Pasha and his German advisers were nevertheless persuaded at the beginning of June that their real hour of trial was yet to come. The early arrival of strong reinforcements for the Allies was confidently predicted. The British Government, it was argued, having once undertaken to force the Dardanelles, were unlikely to abandon the struggle without a further effort, and this belief was confirmed by a widely quoted speech made at Dundee on the 5th June by Mr. Winston Churchill.

In this speech not only Dundee but Constantinople, too, was informed that Lord Kitchener had not embarked upon the Gallipoli enterprise without carefully considering its requirements in relation to British needs on all fronts. The struggle on the peninsula, Mr. Churchill predicted, would be heavy, and the losses cruel. But victory would come and would make amends for all. General Liman von Sanders has admitted that this utterance helped him to realize that the British attacks would surely be renewed with increased violence,<sup>1</sup> and, owing to the small progress made at Helles and Anzac, he made up his mind that the next effort would probably consist of a landing at some new point on his long coast-line between Enos and Besika Bay.

The problem that now faced him was not dissimilar from Sketch the one he had had to solve on first reaching the peninsula. He<sup>12.</sup> must again be ready for a landing at Enos or Bulair, at Suvla or south of Gaba Tepe, or on the long stretch of coast on the Asiatic shore. But there was this difference. Nearly all his available troops were already at close grips with the enemy, and few were available to counter a new attack elsewhere.

His first step was to arrange that strong bodies of resting

<sup>1</sup> " Fünf Jahre Türkei ", p. 104.

June. troops from the battle-front should always be kept at Bulair and on the Asiatic side of the Straits. The naval commander at the Dardanelles, Admiral von Usedom, was also enjoined to increase the number of ferry boats and barges in the Straits, so that large numbers of men could be hurriedly moved from one side to the other, as circumstances might require.

With the Salt Lake at Suvla beginning to dry up, the Suvla area was a more likely place for a landing than it had been in the early spring. Moreover, the recent activity of the Anzac corps on its northern flank had aroused the suspicion that Sir Ian Hamilton might intend to break out from this direction and attack the heights of Koja Chemen Tepe, coupled perhaps with a new landing between Ari Burnu (Anzac Cove) and Nibrunesi Point, the southern horn of Suvla Bay. Six battalions and 19 guns were consequently detached from Essad Pasha's (northern) Group to guard his right flank and to put the Suvla zone in a state of defence. This force, called the Anafarta Detachment, was at first made responsible for holding the foothills opposite the New Zealand outposts, Suvla Bay, the Kiretch Tepe ridge, and Ejelmer Bay.

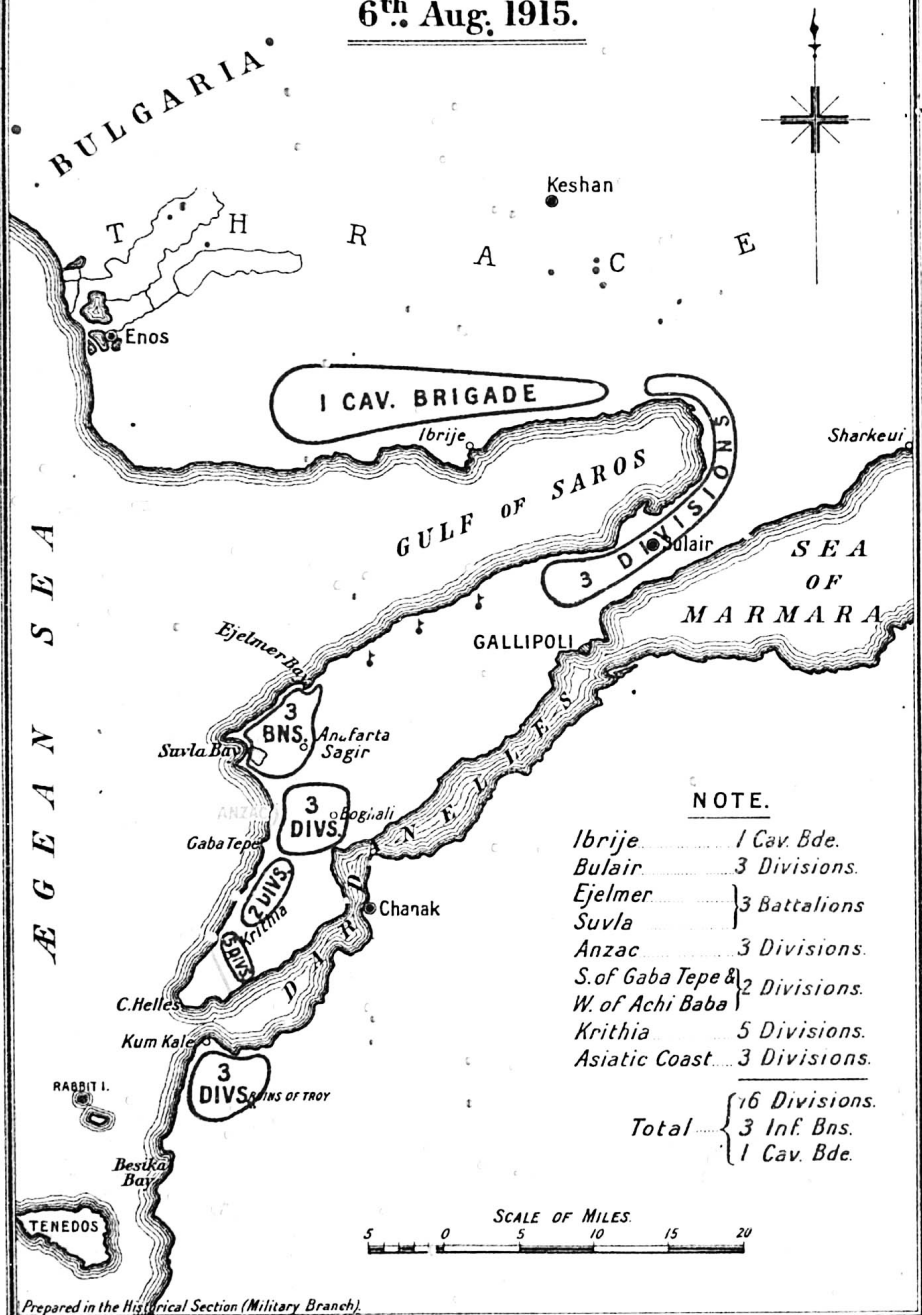
The contingency which offered the gravest preoccupation to the Turks at this time, however, was that of a landing to the south of Gaba Tepe, coupled with an attempt by the Anzac corps to break out from its southern flank in the direction of Midos. From the moment when the peninsula was first threatened in February this part of the coast had been regarded by the Turks as a special danger point, and it was the sight of its glittering lines of new wire on the 18th March which had made Sir Ian Hamilton rule it out at that time as a possible landing-place. During the heavy fighting in April and May this neighbourhood had been temporarily denuded of its garrison. But early in June, at the first threat of a new landing, urgent steps were taken to reoccupy it, and the Turkish *9th Division*, at that time resting and reorganizing in the Krithia sector, was placed under General (then Colonel) Kannengiesser, and sent to hold and improve the existing trenches on a three-mile front from south of Gaba Tepe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Kannengiesser's "Gallipoli", pp. 156-7, gives some interesting details of the strength of the position between Gaba Tepe and Kum Dere when his preparations were complete. "The flat sandy shore", he writes, "was about twelve yards wide, and offered good facilities for landing. . . . Then the coast rose steeply to a continuous scrub-covered ridge some fifty feet high about 700 yards inland. My front line was near the shore, and was ideally split up by three small promontories. Deeply dug flanking works on these three headlands would enfilade the beaches with terrific fire at effective range, whilst the trenches on the small ridge inland would also command the beach with a second tier of fire. It was a better

Sketch 12.

# TURKISH DISPOSITIONS

## 6<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1915.



**NOTE.**

<i>Ibrije</i> .....	<i>1 Cav. Bde.</i>	
<i>Bulair</i> .....	<i>3 Divisions.</i>	
<i>Ejelmer</i> .....	} <i>3 Battalions</i>	
<i>Savla</i> .....		
<i>Anzac</i> .....	<i>3 Divisions.</i>	
<i>S. of Gaba Tepe &amp; W. of Achi Baba</i>	} <i>2 Divisions.</i>	
<i>Krithia</i> .....		
<i>Asiatic Coast</i> .....	<i>3 Divisions.</i>	
<b>Total</b> .....	} <i>16 Divisions.</i>	
		<i>3 Inf. Bns.</i>
		<i>1 Cav. Bde.</i>

Prepared in the Historical Section (Military Branch).

From Kum Dere southwards to the right flank of the Krithia July position, the coast was ill-suited for a landing. But Liman von Sanders was determined to run no risk of his southern front being turned by a landing on that flank. Towards the end of July, when more troops had at last become available, the *8th Division* was made responsible for watching that part of the coast.

At the British ports of embarkation the secret of the despatch of the new divisions was well kept, and it was not until the 16th July that definite news reached Liman von Sanders of the approach of reinforcements. A report from Salonika then stated that 140 transports and war vessels were assembled in Mudros harbour, where a force of between 50,000 and 60,000 British troops was waiting ready to embark.

The prospect was certainly disturbing. In view of the heavy Turkish losses in Gallipoli between the 28th June and the 5th July, Liman von Sanders had been obliged to allocate all his new reinforcements arriving from Constantinople to strengthen the Krithia front. Before these troops had all arrived, however, the Allies had renewed their attacks on the 12th July; the Turkish line in the south had again been badly dented; the local commander had saved the situation only by throwing in his last reserve; and, according to the Turkish official account, it was not until the 20th July that the Krithia front could again be regarded as secure. Yet now, on the 16th July, if the report from Salonika were true, a new landing by 50,000 men was imminent, supported by a powerful fleet.

Once again the Turks could gain no clear indication of the direction of the impending blow, and Britain's command of the sea would again offer Sir Ian Hamilton the chance of effecting a tactical surprise.

Liman von Sanders was disinclined to believe that further large forces would be landed at Helles. Nevertheless, the Krithia position had to be held against the divisions already opposed to it, and it was to that part of his front that he had been obliged to divert the whole of his fresh troops.

At Anzac Essad Pasha, commanding the Northern Group, was by this time firmly convinced that General Birdwood intended to break out from his southern flank. Liman von Sanders, less influenced than his subordinate by recent local encounters at Anzac, did not agree. He still believed that if a big attack was to be made from Anzac it would be developed

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"example of an ideal coast line for defence than I have ever seen explained by teachers of tactics."

July. from General Birdwood's northern flank, and would aim at reaching the crest of the main ridge, which was clearly the key position. But though the activity of the New Zealand outposts gave him some indication that this plan was in General Birdwood's mind, he was far from regarding the Anzac neighbourhood as the most likely theatre for the new British offensive, and he made no attempt to strengthen Essad Pasha's force. That 25,000 fresh troops could be landed in absolute secrecy at Anzac, and hidden underground till the moment for attack arrived, was a possibility that never entered his head.

By the end of July Liman von Sanders had at his disposal a force of rather more than sixteen divisions, as against the six divisions available on the 25th April. Of this force, four divisions, with a fifth in reserve, held the southern defences at Krithia. Two divisions watched the coast between Krithia and Gaba Tepe. Three divisions and one regiment<sup>1</sup> were opposed to General Birdwood at Anzac, whilst just to the north the Anafarta Detachment, now reduced to four battalions, watched the coast from Azmak Dere<sup>2</sup> to Suvla and Ejelmer Bay. Three divisions mounted guard in the neighbourhood of Bulair, and three divisions watched the Asiatic coast as far south as Besika Bay. Between Ejelmer Bay and the Bulair defences the coast was patrolled by a cavalry regiment, and the remainder of the cavalry brigade was distributed along the coast between Bulair and Enos. Liman von Sanders's headquarters were in a secluded valley near Boghali.

Aug. Examining these dispositions in greater detail, it should be noticed that the three divisions under Essad Pasha's command—the 5th, 16th and 19th—had all been serving in that area for several weeks and had suffered heavy losses. Their total strength on the 6th August was approximately 20,000 rifles, with 76 guns. General Birdwood's force on the same day numbered approximately 37,000 rifles.

Sketch  
16.

Essad Pasha's dispositions on the morning of the 6th August were apparently as follows. From Gaba Tepe northwards to the northern end of 400 Plateau was the 16th Division. Thence to Baby 700 and the Nek, with posts opposite Walker's Ridge, was the 19th Division. Under the command of the 19th Division, too, were two battalions<sup>3</sup> of the 5th Division, which

<sup>1</sup> The 45th Regiment (2 battalions) guarding the foothills north of the Anzac outposts had now been taken away from the Anafarta Detachment and attached to Mustafa Kemal's division (19th), which was holding the right of Essad Pasha's line opposite the Anzac position.

<sup>2</sup> There are several Azmak Deres in Gallipoli. This particular one runs west from Biyuk Anafarta to the sea.

<sup>3</sup> These belonged to the 14th Regiment, and had relieved the 45th Regi-

were holding the foothills and ravines between the Anzac northern outposts and Azmak Dere. The other two regiments of the *5th Division* were in corps reserve near Boğhali; they and the *45th Regiment* were the only fluid reserves in Essad Pasha's hands. In addition, however, Essad would seem to have had a call on two regiments of the *9th Division* from the coastal sector south of Gaba Tepe.

Particular interest attaches to the Turkish dispositions for defence in the Suvla zone.

Major Willmer, a Bavarian officer, was appointed to command the Anafarta Detachment on the 18th June, and, as already mentioned, his front at first extended from the foothills opposite the Anzac outposts to Suvla Point and Ejelmer Bay. A landing, he was informed, might be attempted either astride the mouth of Azmak Dere, in Suvla Bay or immediately south of it, or in Ejelmer Bay. The actual orders issued to him by Essad Pasha were: "The Anafarta Detachment will prevent a landing by the enemy, or any extension of his existing front, to the north of Ari Burnu."

At the beginning of July the sector between the Anzac outposts and Azmak Dere was withdrawn from Major Willmer's command and placed under the *19th Division*. Thenceforward the responsibilities of the Anafarta Detachment were confined to opposing a landing between Azmak Dere and Ejelmer Bay. The troops at first available for this task were four battalions of infantry,<sup>1</sup> one pioneer company, a squadron of cavalry<sup>2</sup> and 19 guns.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a labour battalion was available to dig trenches.

Previous to Major Willmer's arrival little or nothing had been done to prepare the Suvla area for defence, but his predecessor had posted the whole of the *Gallipoli Gendarmerie Battalion* to guard Ejelmer Bay, and was contemplating the construction of a continuous line of trenches from the Kiretch Tepe ridge to Azmak Dere for the protection of the Suvla front.

ment a few days earlier. They were holding Table Top, Old No. 3 Post and Battleship Hill with detachments, while the bulk of the force was encamped in Azma Dere, south-east of Hill 60.

<sup>1</sup> The *Gallipoli* and *Broussa Gendarmerie Battalions*, the *131st Regiment* and the *232nd Regiment*. The *Gallipoli Gendarmerie* was composed of very fine troops, but the *Broussa Battalion* was not so good. The efficiency of the *131st Regiment* was regarded as "fair".

<sup>2</sup> After deducting despatch riders, this squadron provided a dismounted troop of 30 carbines. It belonged to the *12th Cavalry Regiment* guarding the coast north-east of Ejelmer Bay.

<sup>3</sup> Two batteries of field artillery, two batteries of antiquated mountain artillery, and three old-pattern field guns without teams. The total amount of ammunition available for these 19 guns was about 4,000 rounds (25 per cent common shell and 75 per cent shrapnel).

July. Major Willmer was so convinced that Ejelmer Bay was unsuitable for the landing of anything but very small parties that his first step was to reduce the garrison of that locality. He next decided that his force was far too weak to hold a long line of trenches successfully, and that his defensive arrangements must consist of a chain of mutually supporting strong-points.

The problem which faced the Anafarta Detachment at the beginning of July makes an interesting tactical study. It was highly probable that a landing in force at Suvla would be combined with a heavy attack at Anzac. In this case no help could be expected for the Anafarta Detachment from Essad Pasha, and the nearest reinforcements would be the infantry divisions at Bulair. None of these troops could begin to arrive, at the earliest, till 36 hours after they had begun to move south. Major Willmer anticipated that the task set to a force landing in Suvla Bay would be to turn the right flank of Essad Pasha's position by advancing beyond Biyuk Anafarta. His problem would be to prevent such a force from gaining the Anafarta spur for at least 36 and preferably for 48 hours after it had begun to land. The difficulty of this problem was increased by the fact that his infantry had no machine guns, and that no wire was available for making entanglements.

Major Willmer recognized that it would be impossible to prevent the landing of a large force. He was too weak numerically and his artillery was insufficient. The best he could hope to do was to delay the enemy once he had got ashore, and with this object he placed three out of his four battalions in forward positions and the remainder of his force in a main position on and near the Anafarta spur. The forward troops were to interfere as much as possible with the enemy's disembarkation, but were given strict orders not to run the risk of being cut off. Before becoming irretrievably engaged, they were to retire in good order to the main line of defence.

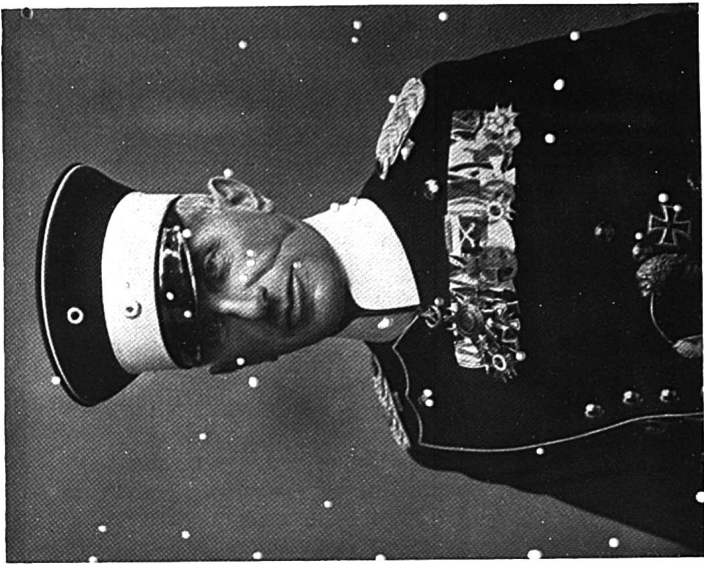
In view of his very small numbers, Major Willmer's whole task bristled with difficulties; but he felt that, with good luck, these dispositions might just enable him to carry it out successfully. It would be a race against time, with no margin for accidents. But provided he could keep the enemy from advancing beyond his forward positions for twelve hours, and could then get his garrison back successfully, he felt fairly confident that his main line could be held for another 24 hours. By that time Turkish reinforcements should begin to arrive from Bulair.

Sketch  
22.

The forward position consisted of three strong-points: one on the summit of Kiretch Tepe, one on Hill 10, and one on



**MARSHAL LIMAN VON SANDERS**  
Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army in Gallipoli



**MAJOR WILLMER**  
who commanded the Turkish detachment at Suvla when  
the IX Corps landed.



Chocolate Hill and Green Hill. The main position consisted of July. another chain of posts on the line Baka Baba—W Hills, astride the track which runs from Suvla Bay to Anafarta Sagir.

The Kiretch Tepe post was held by two companies of the *Gallipoli Gendarmerie* with one company pushed out in front towards Suvla Point. The Hill 10 post was held by one company of the *Broussa Gendarmerie*, with two companies in concealed shelters in rear, and a chain of sentry groups on the eastern beach of Suvla Bay. The Chocolate Hill and Green Hill post was held by three companies of the *1/31st Regiment*, with one company (about 70 rifles) on Lala Baba and sentry groups in the direction of Nibruæsi Point.

The trenches in the strong-points were very narrow and at least six feet deep, and everything possible was done to keep them inconspicuous. Major Willmer states that Hill 10 was the weakest of the three, and when the Salt Lake dried up in July and no longer formed an obstacle he looked upon this position as practically untenable.

The intervals between these three strong-points were guarded by short lengths of trench, each held by an infantry section.

In the main line of defence were the pioneer company and thirty dismounted cavalrymen. The reserve battalion, which lived in bivouacs south-west of Turshun Keui, would be used either to assist in holding this position or, in the case of necessity, to take up a position astride Azmak Dere to prevent a direct advance up the valley.

In place of machine guns five of the eight mountain guns were emplaced in the three forward strong-points to give the infantry close support, and as no barbed wire was available a few contact mines and trip-wires were placed in front of the trenches. Contact mines and trip-wires were also put out on the various likely beaches in Suvla Bay.

The two batteries of field guns were posted on the forward slopes of the Tekke Tepe ridge, so as to bring fire to bear on the gaps between the strong-points. Alternative positions were prepared on the reverse slopes of the ridge.

The three old field guns without teams, together with one company of the *Gallipoli Gendarmerie*, guarded Ejelmer Bay. Of the three remaining mountain guns, two were posted on the W Hills and one guarded a small cove to the west of Ejelmer Bay.

Throughout the month of July everything possible was done by Major Willmer to deceive the British air service with regard to his dispositions. No infantry movements were allowed by day to the west of the Tekke Tepe ridge and all digging was

July. done at night. Tactical exercises were carried out in the Turshun Keui plain, and the troops from the forward area taking part in them had to get there before daybreak and return after dark. The actual positions of guns were constantly changed; the guns were camouflaged; and dummy batteries were erected in various places. Sometimes field guns would be taken to the W Hills to fire at Anzac Cove; but, contrary to British belief at the time, no heavy or medium guns were ever employed in the zone before the Suvla landing. General Birdwood's anxiety about these guns was, in fact, entirely groundless.

Major Willmer had heard towards the latter end of July that a great British attack was now considered imminent, but the only clues which gave the slightest colour to the possibility of a landing in Suvla Bay were a slight increase in aeroplane activity, and the arrival off the coast on the 3rd Aug. of three British ships, which fired a few rounds.<sup>1</sup> These signs, however, gave him food for thought, and on the 6th August he spent the whole day in his forward positions. There in the afternoon he heard the opening of the bombardments for the British attacks at Helles and Lone Pine. On ringing up Essad Pasha's headquarters to ask for news, he was told that the British were attacking with newly arrived troops, and were probably trying to extend their right in the direction of Gaba Tepe. Very soon afterwards, however, he received an order, not from Essad Pasha but direct from Liman von Sanders, to send his reserve battalion to reinforce the troops holding the foothills to the north of the Anzac outposts. Liman von Sanders, at least, had not been deceived by General Birdwood's feint attack, and, even at the risk of dangerously weakening the Suvla front, he was already taking steps to increase the defences of the ravines up which the New Zealand troops would soon be advancing to the assault of Chunuk Bair.

Till after sunset Major Willmer remained on the top of Lala Baba, searching the horizon for any sign of ships. But no movement was visible, and a little later, after issuing an order for instant readiness throughout the night,<sup>2</sup> he started

<sup>1</sup> This was done in an unauthorized effort to see whether the Salt Lake was dry.

<sup>2</sup> On this day Willmer was particularly impressed by the fact that, now that the Salt Lake was bone dry, the Lala Baba company might easily be cut off by a British force advancing south-east across the lake after landing in Suvla Bay. As his reserve battalion had been taken away from him it was more important than ever to guard against this risk. He consequently gave the company commander specific orders that if the British landed he was to avoid becoming heavily engaged, and was to retire in good time to his own battalion on Chocolate Hill.

to ride home. There, about a quarter to ten, the news reached Aug. him that British troops were landing at Nibrunesi Point.

On his way back from the front Major Willmer had met his own reserve battalion already on the march to assist in blocking the gullies and spurs which lead to Koja Chemen Tepe. He now telephoned to Army headquarters, reported the news of the British landing at Suvla, and begged that the battalion might be restored to him. But by this time the New Zealand attack was developing on the Anzac northern flank. Liman von Sanders personally refused Major Willmer's request, and a little later he ordered him henceforward to report direct to Army headquarters as well as to Essad Pasha.