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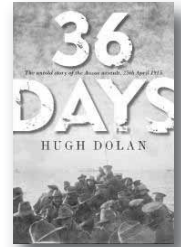
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## BOOK REVIEW

# ***36 days: the untold story behind the Gallipoli landings***

by Hugh Dolan

Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd: Sydney; 2010; 445 pp.; ISBN 9782405039857; RRP \$34.99 (paperback); Ursula Davidson Library call number 575 DOLA 2010



At Gallipoli, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) had only 36 days (21 March to 25 April 1915) in which to plan and execute the largest seaborne assault ever conducted; and it had to execute the assault at multiple points along on a well-prepared and well-defended shoreline without the element of surprise. The MEF consisted of 30,000 ANZACS, 30,000 British and 20,000 French Colonial and Indian troops. This book, *36 Days*, throws new light on those events, both by drawing on a wealth of unpublished material and recent research, and by focusing on intelligence gathering and how each side used intelligence during the pre-invasion planning.

The author, Squadron Leader Hugh Dolan, is well-qualified to write this book. He holds a master's degree in history from the University of Oxford and is an intelligence officer in the Royal Australian Air Force. He has served in intelligence postings on headquarters in Australia and overseas; and in an earlier career in the British Army, witnessed the importance of military intelligence in operational planning in Bosnia.

On 12 March 1915, General Sir Ian Hamilton was appointed by Lord Horatio Kitchener to command the MEF for the attack on Constantinople. To quote Dolan: "Hamilton received such dubious additional information from Kitchener that it could easily be contradicted by a naval rating on HMS *Queen Elizabeth* or a gun layer on HMS *Albion*". Fortunately, when Hamilton arrived on station on 17 March, he was given a more accurate briefing on the situation by his naval counterparts. He learned that the navy was planning to break through 'the Narrows' the next day, with a view to enabling the army to march on Constantinople. Unfortunately, the naval attack on the straits did not go as planned and after losing three battleships sunk by mines or shells, and many others seriously damaged, the Allied Fleet withdrew, and so probably avoided being totally wiped out. The ignominious defeat of the Allied Fleet of 18 warships, 10 trawler/minesweepers and submarines, however, made Hamilton's position even graver than before, as now the campaign relied solely on the army to break through to Constantinople. The army would have to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula before the navy could gain entry to the Sea of Marmara which lay beyond the Dardanelles. In these strained circumstances, the quality of the intelligence on which Hamilton's plans would be based, would be crucial to the success or otherwise of the amphibious assaults and to the MEF gaining a lodgement on the peninsula.

Spies were one source of intelligence. Charles Palmer, the British vice-consul in Channakale (Çanak-

kale), the principal port in the Dardanelles, knew Turkey well. After the declaration of war in Europe on 4 August 1914, Palmer operated part-time as a spy. He travelled casually around the Dardanelles recording all manner of military intelligence – forts, guns, shipping, army camps, and German activity. The signing of the German-Turkish alliance on 28 October 1914 signalled an end to these activities, although Palmer was able to witness allied warships bombard the Turkish forts on both sides of the straits on 3 November, before he escaped from Turkey on 30 November 1914. The allies subsequently received military intelligence from the Russians confirming Palmer's intelligence reports.

The two new *enfant terrible* of war in 1914 were the submarine and the aeroplane – both were valuable for intelligence gathering and both were used during the Dardanelles campaign. Ten aircraft – six seaplanes and four land-based planes – arrived at Gallipoli aboard the first experimental aircraft carrier, HMS *Ark Royal*, on 31 January 1915. The land-based planes could take off from the carrier, but for recovery, they had to pancake-land beside the *Ark Royal* and then be raised to the deck by steam-driven cranes. These cranes were also used to lower and raise the seaplanes. A further 22 land-based aeroplanes subsequently arrived aboard HMS *Abda*. The real-time intelligence gathered by these aircraft was crucial to the planning of the amphibious landings. After Hamilton transferred executive control of their landing plans to the ANZACS, they found the daily intelligence reports from the aeroplanes to be invaluable in the formulation of their plans, which they were able to adjust as enemy dispositions changed.

In late February 1915, raiding parties of Royal Marines landed at Sedd el Bahr and Kum Kale to destroy forts on the northern and southern entrance to the straits without much opposition. During repeat raids in early March, however, the Turks inflicted heavy losses on the Marines, despite Royal Navy warships maintaining a constant bombardment on the Turkish Forts.

Dolan has a very fluent writing style making for easy reading of the chronicled, day-by-day countdown to 25 April. The author has used extracts from diaries, orders, instructions and papers from people who were on the ground. He has written the book virtually through the eyes of the relevant participants on both sides very effectively and has produced a riveting historical work that sheds a fresh light on the original ANZACS. This is a highly recommended read.

Ian Boys