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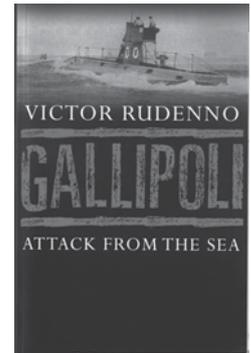
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BOOK REVIEW

Gallipoli – attack from the sea

by Victor Rudenno

University of New South Wales Press: Sydney, 2008, 336 pp., ISBN 9781921410598,
RRP \$44.95 (paperback)



This is a book about the British and French land and sea campaigns against the Turks in the Dardanelles in 1914-16 and the response of the Turks and their German and Austrian allies to them. It explains clearly just how inter-dependent the land and sea campaigns conducted by the British and French were and recounts how offensive naval operations preceded and were concurrent with the land operations right up to the evacuation. It also records that there was a late flurry of activity in January 1918 when the German battle-cruiser, *Goeben*, and light cruiser, *Breslau*, moved to bombard Mudros, where an Allied naval force was on station.

Dr Rudenno details the substantial and costly naval aspects of the campaign, especially the allied submarine and related German U-boat activities. Among the great 'what ifs' of The Great War are what 'might have been' had the attempts by the allied British and French navies to force the Narrows and attack Constantinople from the sea been successful; and of course 'what might have been' had the land campaign on Gallipoli been conducted better.

The author concludes that even if the British Navy had been successful in reaching the Sea of Marmara and had threatened Constantinople, it is difficult to see what could have been achieved in the longer term, unless the Turkish government had been overthrown by internal dissent – an unlikely outcome.

Dr Rudenno does not cover the land campaign in detail as that has been well traversed by others, although much of that coverage gives scant attention to the naval operations. In fact, substantial original research is still being undertaken in Australia into the Turkish aspects of the defence. He explains, though, how the land operations might have succeeded had they been planned and conducted with the same good judgement and attention to detail as the evacuation.

The author describes the allied submarine attacks in December 1914 for which one commander (Lieutenant Norman Holbrook, RN, in *B11*) was awarded the Victoria Cross, and allied naval attempts in February and March 1915 to force the Narrows. The failure of these early 1915 attacks led to the land campaign which was so poorly planned and executed by senior allied commanders. The author covers comprehensively the allied submarine activities during 1915, for which several further Royal Navy commanders were awarded the Victoria Cross, and their effect on the attitudes of allied land commanders. Further, surface naval assets provided gunfire support, resupply, reinforcements and casualty evacuation to their

land forces throughout the land campaign.

Dr Rudenno concludes that while the allied submarines did not make a material difference to Turkey's ability to fight the Gallipoli campaign, they increased the Turks' difficulties in reinforcement and resupply. He argues that the allied submarine campaign and the German U-Boat counter attacks were comparable to the Battle of the Atlantic fought some 25 years later².

There are compelling photos. Also useful are appendices on submarine design and operations, anti-submarine warfare, the extensive combat resources (mainly guns and ammunition) provided to Turkey by Germany and Austria (which also deployed high quality advisers), and an impressive listing of Turkish vessels sunk by submarines.

The author may give insufficient credit to the role of shore batteries in the successful defence of the Narrows and the coastal regions of the Sea of Marmara. Their superior survey and some mobility made them virtually incapable of defeat by naval forces while they had ammunition.

The Index might be fine-tuned in that it includes reference to formations such as 'Australian Infantry Brigade', 'Australian Light Horse' and 'New Zealand Brigade' whereas the ANZAC land forces on Gallipoli were based on the Australian and the New Zealand Divisions.

The Index lists Australian Submarine *AE2* under 'British Submarines', although the Notes acknowledge that *AE2* was paid for by the Australian government and had a composite Australian and English crew commanded by Lieutenant Commander 'Dacre' Stoker, RN. *AE2* was forced to the surface and scuttled. Stoker was awarded the Distinguished Service Order when he returned from Turkish captivity after the war³.

The volume fully justifies the view that the activities of allied submarines in the treacherous Dardanelles represent one of the most inspiring and little-acknowledged events of the First World War. It recounts clearly the joint-service nature of the allied operations and thus contributes to a full understanding of the strategic and operational aspects of the whole Dardanelles tragedy. As such, it is a valuable addition to that war's still unfolding tapestry.

Ken Broadhead

¹A shorter version of this review was published in *Afloat* in June 2008.

²These campaigns primarily pitted U-boats and armed merchantmen of the German Navy against Allied convoys.

³*AE1* and *AE2* were built for the Royal Australian Navy by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness. A recent ABC TV documentary told *AE2*'s story and of its possible recovery from the bottom of the Sea of Marmara.