

THE WORLD GOES TO WAR [edited text]

On June 28th 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a Bosnian radical in a daring attempt to relieve his country from Austro-Hungarian rule. As the several countries within the empire erupted in chaotic war, so did the rest of Europe. Great Britain called upon her dominions of Australia and New Zealand to help their effort. In those days, people in our parts of the world perceived an attack on Great Britain as an attack on New Zealand or Australia. New Zealand mobilized more than 100,000 men to fight in Europe.

1

THE DARDANELLES: A GAMBLE

In November of 1914, Winston Churchill of England suggested an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsular. The Dardanelles were all that stood between the Allies on the Western Front and reaching Constantinople (modern day Istanbul, Turkey). The plan was simple. Take Gallipoli, take Constantinople and then have a direct route to reach Russia. Gallipoli was seen as a game changer but also a huge gamble for the allied forces as the terrain and resources worked in the Turk's favour. A landing was proposed on the Aegean Seaside of the peninsular and on 25th April 1915, just before dawn, the Anzac soldiers landed at Anzac Cove on the rugged Gallipoli Peninsular ...

2

3

EIGHT MONTHS OF HELL

Moving the soldiers onto the peninsular was a huge task that saw many casualties and took well into the late afternoon. Due to the high relief features of the peninsular, Turkish forces were able to see the soldiers coming - basically like sitting ducks. Many not even making it past the beach. New Zealand soldiers didn't land until 5 PM that day and the scene they found was described by Kiwi soldier Hartley Palmer as a horrific place where "The wounded and killed were lying about in all directions. I should say a thousand or more of them".

4

The allied soldiers were never given an opportunity to build themselves a base in the first few weeks. So they dug trenches. A large part of the reason for supporting Russia to open an Eastern Front was to find a means of fighting that avoided trench warfare and broke the Western Front deadlock. Yet here they were at Gallipoli, having to dig trenches again.

5

CHUNUK BAIR: A BATTLE TO REMEMBER

One of the most important battles of the campaign concerning New Zealander's was the attack on Chunuk Bair in August 1915 during the August Offensive. In the whole campaign it was imperative to capture as many high points as possible due to the surrounding terrain as the further inland the Allies could capture, there was always a high point for the Turkish forces to make use of. Chunuk Bair was aimed at capturing the entire Sari Bair Ridge - starting with Chunuk Bair. After the Turkish had been dealt a heavy blow in the Battle for Krithia against the British soldiers, the Anzac's moved quickly to plan their attack before the Turkish forces could regroup and bounce back strong. The plan involved two columns of men advancing up the ridge to capture three key high points: Chunuk Bair, Hill Q and Hill 971 during the night over 6th and 7th August 1915. Australian forces performed a diversionary attack to distract the Turkish forces from what was happening. As dawn broke on the 7th August 1915, an attack from the New Zealand forces from Chunuk Bair and Australian forces from Russell's Top (another key high point previously occupied by Australian forces) against the heavily fortified Turkish position at The Nek meant completely capturing the Sari Bair Ridge ...

6

7

8

THE EVACUATION OF GALLIPOLI

After the failure of the August Offensive, doubts within the Allied war council in London were being raised about the successfulness of the campaign in the future. Public opinion in Britain was against the idea of more troops to be sent to Gallipoli and to a much lesser extent Australia and New Zealand as people from these two far flung antipodes were still hearing the call from the Commonwealth to fight for them. However, Sir Ian Hamilton was replaced by Sir Charles Monro as head of the British forces at Gallipoli in mid-October. A huge storm in November drowned men, trenches and supplies so the call for evacuation was heard by the soldiers in Gallipoli. The bitterly cold conditions and snow that followed the storm leaving many Australian and New Zealand soldiers who had never seen snow before dead. This sealed the fate of the campaign as both sides of the ridge were exhausted, miserable and weakened. The evacuation of Gallipoli could be described as the greatest victory for the Allies over the whole campaign. Both Sulva Bay and Anzac Cove were to be evacuated by late December with the last troops gone by 20th December 1915. A self-firing rifle was developed by Australian William Scurry which fooled Turkish soldiers into thinking that the Anzac's were still there and going on. As the last Allied forces were evacuated, many of the supplies fell into Turkish hands ...

THE LEGACY OF GALLIPOLI

Firstly, the death toll of this 8 month hellish campaign was immense. 87,000 Turkish, 21,000 British, 8,149 Australians and 2,721 New Zealanders. Almost 100,000 Allies were injured and more than 160,000 Turkish were also injured. 19,441 Australians and 4,752 New Zealanders were among these injured Allies. As a proportion of population to New Zealand those figures represent killing or seriously injuring the entire population of Blenheim plus a few thousand more!

After the evacuation of Gallipoli, many soldiers were transferred to the Western Front as it was becoming more and more important to the British and French governments. Men were expecting to return back to their homelands of Australia and New Zealand, but so many remained in Europe until the Armistice of November 1918. It affected thousands of families in New Zealand but the developing sense of nationhood was becoming evident.

SIGNIFICANCE TO NEW ZEALANDERS

The first ever Anzac Day was held in Cairo, Egypt on April 25th 1916. It was decided for this date as it was the date the first Anzac's landed at Gallipoli. Marches in Sydney, Auckland and Wellington were also held by families of the fallen, returned servicemen and the general public wishing to pay their respects for the men who gave their lives for the greater good. To honour the 75th anniversary of landing at Gallipoli led by then Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke and broadcasted live to Australia and New Zealand brought a new wave of younger people who were interested in their culture and background. In almost every town and city in Australia and New Zealand there is an Anzac memorial and a park named 'Anzac Park'. To this day in larger towns and cities around both nations there are annual dawn services and marches down main streets, as over 10% of the population of New Zealand went to fight in WWI. On a final note, we were given a term after the Anzac's returned from WWI and that term has been echoed for generations, and likely will for generations to come. Lest We Forget.