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By Ships Alone: Churchill and the Dardanelles

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jects in history. Polmar details the Polaris story, and then brings the sea-based ballistic missile program up to date with his coverage of the massive *Ohio* class submarine, which, with the Trident missile, will provide the seaborne leg of the long-range nuclear weapon "triad" into the 21st century.

The public has always been fascinated by the submarine, from Captain Nemo's "Nautilus" in "Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" to the true life adventures of men such as Captain Edward L. Beach, who commanded the USS *Triton* on her historic *submerged* circumnavigation of the earth in 1960. Norman Polmar's excellent book is filled with enough information and photographs to take away some of the mystery, but none of the glamour, of the American submarine.

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Wallin, Jeffrey D. *By Ships Alone: Churchill and the Dardanelles*. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1981. 216pp. \$12.95

For most of us, the story of the attempt on the part of the Allies to storm the Dardanelles in 1915, was a sideshow to the real action which took place in Europe. If we know anything at all of the story, it is probably the Army side of the action, popularized in a book, *Gallipoli*, by Alan Morehead, or, more recently, as told in a popular Australian film of the same name. That the action was principally a naval action, and that it failed, and that it was something of a disgrace to Winston Churchill, who was then serving as First Lord of the Admiralty, is less well known. Churchill in fact was wholly blamed for the failure and was forced to resign his position. After the disaster at the Dardanelles, his reputa-

tion and political fortunes went into decline for the next twenty-five years.

The military and political situation in 1915 which led to the decision to attempt the action at the Dardanelles is well known. After a year of stalemate in the trenches of France, it had become obvious to the Allied military planners that the war would not end quickly as had been envisioned by the helligerents in all the capitals of Europe. Thus, even given the combined efforts of the British and the French, sufficient forces simply did not exist, either in numbers of troops or in weapons and equipment, which were capable of dislodging the German armies entrenched from the lowlands to the Swiss border. Reality then was the appalling picture of years of set-piece battles back and forth over a few yards of mud. In addition, the possibility that Russia would weaken and quit (as she eventually did) seemed real enough. Linked with that was the Western fear that more German troops, freed from the eastern front, might sway the balance in France in favor of the Central Powers.

To Churchill, the Army faith in yet another offensive seemed suicidal. To him, the only solution to this dilemma was some alternative plan, completely separate from the Army notion that victory could be won in the trenches if only enough men and equipment could be amassed to break through the German front. Thus, the First Lord concentrated on some sort of innovative idea such as a flanking movement, or the creation of an alternative front.

Churchill's first plan was to formulate a combined amphibious invasion from either Borkum Island or Helgoland in the North Sea. The advantage there would have been a complete outmaneuvering of the Germans behind the western front, and a breaking of the stalemate in the trenches. The Germans

would have found themselves in a great pincer between the British in the north and the French in the west and south. Although this plan seems even now to have some merit, in 1915 it gained little support. Professor Wallin hints that the idea was too innovative and detracted from the beloved "offensive" so strongly advocated by the Army planners.

By contrast, a second Churchill plan, to force the Dardanelles, either by ships alone, or with the assistance of troops ashore, did gain support. The principal players in the decision (all of whom later denied they had supported the Churchill idea) were wartime Prime Minister Asquith, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, and Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, who headed the War Council.

Professor Wallin's description of the machinations of these men surrounding the planning of the Dardanelles action, after the decision had been made to go ahead with Churchill's plan is distressing and at once revealing. At various times, Lord Kitchener supplied troops, then withdrew them again, and then at a critical time, ordered the loading of supplies halted. Lord Fisher put in and withdrew ships several times, all the while, like Kitchener, hedging his bet, playing off Churchill's plan against the needs of the Home Fleet. Even Asquith, after strong support initially, was capable of turning on Churchill and sacking him.

It is hardly surprising then that the action for the ships did not go well in the Dardanelles, nor that the troops ashore in Gallipoli failed in their objective, given the lack of clear-cut support from the War Council. After some initial successes in naval gunfire assaults against the Turkish forts in the Dardanelles, the Royal Navy's battleships stalled part way up the strait and then the fleet began to voice serious doubts about ever

breaking through to the Sea of Marmora. After the troops most of whom were Australians and New Zealanders, got ashore, they fought valiantly but never quite broke the Turkish defense. Soon they too were stalemated like their counterparts in Europe.

Although the description of the actions by the Navy in the strait and the Army at Gallipoli is well told by Professor Wallin, the heart of his book is not the failure of the ships and troops, but what he calls, "the failure of statesmanship." Given the potential outcome, had the action been supported wholeheartedly by the War Council, success would surely have changed the outcome of the war. Despite Churchill's best efforts to marshal support and to optimize the plan to ensure its success, he was thwarted at nearly every turn and, in a great irony, blamed for its failure. It now seems tragic indeed that politics, personality, and duplicity were more important than a sound strategy.

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Cable, James. *Gunboat Diplomacy, 1919-1979*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. 266pp. \$25

This second edition of a book which first appeared in 1971 comes at a time when the United States is wrestling with the dilemmas of the structure, deployment, and use of naval forces. Its central thesis is that the political applications of limited naval force deserve attention as one of the many instruments that are sometimes available to governments seeking to secure an advantage or avert a loss in the conduct of their peacetime international relations. In this respect, Cable's work can be highly beneficial to the current dialogue about the design and use of American naval forces.