**March 18 Victory of Çanakkale: the Honour of Turkish History**

More than 3,000 Azerbaijanis who took part in this holy war, became heroic martyrs, sharing the same fate as 253,000 Mehmetchiks who died for Turkism, Islam, and the Motherland.

The Battle of Çanakkale (Dardanelles Campaign), which lasted from March 18, 1915 to January 9, 1916, is of great significance for the history of Türkiye. The straits belonging to the Ottoman state were considered the most favourable chance for the Entente states from a strategic point of view. By seizing the straits, their goal was to isolate Germany and Ottoman Turkey from each other and to end, once and for all, Ottoman Turkey's dominance in the Black Sea by capturing Istanbul. The security of the Dardanelles Strait, which was the only real gateway to Istanbul, was taken under control as early as August 1914. On November 3, 1914, British and French forces approached the mouth of the strait. The British bombarded the fortresses of Seddulbahir and Ertugrul, while the French bombed the fortresses of Kumkale and Orhaniye on the Anatolian part of the Dardanelles Strait. British submarines entered the strait on December 2 and torpedoed and sank the Mesudiye armoured ship, which was located 750 meters ahead. With these claims, Britain decided to go to war with the Ottoman Empire on January 28, 1915, and France made a decision to join. On February 19, the enemy warships advanced considerably with relentless bombardment. On March 18, the Anglo-French ships began to fire heavily. The fortifications of Mecidiye and Hamidiye were successively fired upon.

During this period, Mustafa Kemal Pasha was assigned to lead one of the army groups on the Anafartalar front. At that time, the situation at the front was difficult. Realizing the impossibility of capturing Dardanelles by attacking from the sea, the enemy, as Mustafa Kemal said, changed tactics and began landing troops at Seddulbahir. On April 25, 1915, the bloodiest battles of that time began between the Ottoman army and the Anglo-French soldiers, who landed in the mentioned direction. The number of Ottoman soldiers was very small in the face of numerous enemies who were armed from head to toe. Seeing that the soldiers ran out of ammunition during the heavy fighting, Mustafa Kemal ordered them to put their bayonets into their rifles and said, "I order you to die. After we die, other forces and other commanders will take our place," he said. It was perhaps the greatest test and battle of honour seen throughout history. Martyred soldiers were being replaced immediately. Soon, on December 20, the Anafartalar and Ariburnu fronts, and on January 8-9, 1916, Seddulbahir were liberated from the enemies. Thus, the combined forces of the enemy were forced to retreat and left the battlefield. In general, the first hour of this heavy war, which began in 1914, was quite terrible.

Çanakkale (Dardanelles) War — a sea and land battle between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente states (Britain, France, Anzacs) during the First World War between 1915 and 1916. Allied powers entered the Dardanelles Strait as the first target for taking Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, in order to take control of the straits, to open a reliable food and military trade route with Russia, and to weaken one of the German allies. However, their attacks were unsuccessful, and both sides suffered heavy losses, and the Allied powers retreated. This battle became legendary as a great victory of a country in a state of destruction, and remained in the memory of every citizen. The battle, which revealed the strength of a nation and showed what it can do, also influenced the Turkish War of Independence. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the day when British and French fleets were forced to retreat, that is, March 18, was declared as the Çanakkale Victory and Martyrs’ Day. For the Allies, this battle was considered a symbol of military incompetence and disaster. The anti-war song "And The Bant Played Waltzing Matilda" written by Eric Boltz is about this battle.

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**Background**

The Ottoman government signed an agreement with Germany on August 21, 1914. However, this agreement was kept secret because the Ottoman Empire was poorly prepared for war. Mobilization started immediately after this agreement. German heavy cruisers, retreating in front of the British fleet in the Mediterranean Sea under the leadership of Admiral Souchon on August 10, 1914, crossed the Dardanelles and arrived in Istanbul, thereby causing great tension. Allowing these ships belonging to the German fleet to pass through the strait would be considered a cause of war. However, the Ottoman State managed to reduce the tension by announcing that these ships had been purchased from Germany. The aforementioned ships joined the Ottoman fleet on August 16, 1914 under the names of Yavuz and Midilli. The German sailors on these ships continued their duties by wearing the uniforms of officers and soldiers of the Ottoman fleet, and Admiral Souchon was the commander of the Ottoman fleet. Thus, Germany, aimed at using its two big weapons against Russian ports in the near future, moved those weapons through the Mediterranean Sea and threw them near the Black Sea. On October 27, 1914, the Russian Empire and Great Britain declared war on the Ottoman State due to the bombardment of the Russian ports on the Black Sea coast by the Ottoman fleet, which included Yavuz and Midilli cruisers, under the command of Admiral Souchon.

**Economic and strategic importance of Çanakkale (Dardanelles)**

These developments in Europe forced the Great Britain and France to support their ally - Russia. In any case, Russia could not exert a strong enough pressure on Germany. British and French support was needed due to limited industrial capacity. There were four possible ways in which France and Britain could provide that support. Two of the northern transport lines were impassable. The North Sea was frozen for most of the year, preventing sea traffic, while the Baltic Sea was controlled by the German Navy. The European land route, which was the medium transport route, was also under the German control. The fourth route was the sea route through the Dardanelles and Istanbul straits under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Europeans thought that they would expel the Ottoman State, which they considered weak, with an attack from the straits. Hence, it would be possible to support Russia, and with the defeat of the Ottoman State, Germany would lose an ally. If they were to win, the Suez Canal, under Ottoman control, would provide England with a Far Eastern transport route. The opening of maritime transport across the Black Sea with Russia was particularly important. The capture of the Straits would bring huge profits for British and French firms.

**The onset of the war**

On February 19, 1915, the British battleship Elizabeth with strong French forces bombarded the Ottoman coastal forces and launched the first attack on Çanakkale (the Dardanelles). A huge fleet of at least 16 warships under Admiral Robeck tried to sail across Çanakkale (the Dardanelles). However, they were heavily damaged by sea mines placed on the Asian side of the strait by the Ottoman mineslayer – Nusrat Mineslayer. Although some fishermen were commissioned by the British to collect mines, they ran away, fearing the artillery fired by the Ottoman army. These in-situ mines sank three British and French warships. Several other British and French warships were heavily damaged. The defeat of the British fleet gave the Ottoman soldiers incredible morale. These heavy losses made it clear to the Allied powers that they could not cross the Dardanelles by sea. The Allied powers wanted to clear the coast from cannons by starting land operations. The Allies planned to defeat the Ottoman state by landing troops on the peninsula. The attack was carried out from two fronts, Sedulbahir Front and Ariburnu Front.

**Naval warfare**

**During the war**

The first target of British and French units on the Seddulbahir Front was the village of Kirte (Krithia) and Alchitepe in the north. After all three attacks failed, the front commanders, British Commander H. Weston and French Commander Gouraund, considered it necessary to attack from a more limited line, not the entire front line. The first operation of the plan was carried out in Kerevizdara, the far right (eastern) area of the front. The artillery fire that started on June 18 continued for three days. On June 21, the French managed to capture the hill. Then the attack on Zigindere began. Having passed from hand to hand several times until the morning of June 30, 1915, Zigindere finally remained under the control of the British. Repeated attacks of Colonel Hasan Basri's division on Zigin ridge and of the division under the command of Colonel Nicolai on the eastern slopes of Zigindere were unsuccessful. Following the attacks from both wings, this time the attack was started from the central part of the front line. The attack, which started on the morning of July 12, 1915, after three hours of preparatory fire, in which 60,000 cannon shells were used, lasted for two days. The British launched an offensive, which began after the preparatory fire, taking over the first line trenches where no fighters survived, but retreated with heavy losses in the second line trenches. The attack launched by the British reserve brigade in the afternoon entered the trenches of the third line, but was forced to retreat in the face of the Ottoman counteroffensive. The next attack began on August 6 in the direction of Kirte Village. The British entered the first line trenches, but were thrown back by a counterattack. On the second day of the attack, the British offensive ended up occupying a part of a garden in the south-west of Kirte Village. Upon the failure of the British offensive, General Sir Ian Hamilton ordered that no military actions be undertaken on the Seddulbahir Front.

The forces of the Anzac Corps, which attacked the Ariburnu Front on the morning of April 25, 1915, were forced to retreat with the attack launched by Colonel Mustafa Kemal on the morning of August 10. In order to achieve serious results on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the British General Sir Ian Hamilton decided to open a third front (Anafartalar front) in the north. On August 6, 1915, troops landed at Suvla Bay. The landing, which started on the night of August 5-6, continued throughout the day. The Ottomans managed to protect their position. A division of 5,000 thousand in Egypt was deployed to the front. A general attack was planned with the forces of the Anafartalar Front, reinforced from inside and outside. On August 21, the day when the second general attack took place, the Anzac units' offensive on Bomba Tepe was unsuccessful and it was the last battle of the Dardanelles. Although the clashes on Bomba Tepe continued until August 29, the hill remained under Ottoman control.

The fronts were closed against the resistance of the Ottoman forces. Bulgaria joined the Allied powers on October 14, 1915. The railway line between Germany and the Ottomans across the Balkans started working on October 29. Three days later, General Ian Hamilton was dismissed and replaced by General Charles Monroe. On November 16, the Salonika Front of the Allies was also attached to General Monroe. General Birdwood was appointed Commander of Allied Forces at Gallipoli, subordinate to General Monroe. On December 7, 1915, the Allied forces on the Ariburnu and Anafartalar Fronts were withdrawn and deployed to the Salonika Front, while the forces on the Seddulbahir Front remained in their places. It was decided to evacuate the forces on this front on December 27, 1915. Evacuation operations were completed on January 9, 1916. Thus, the Gallipoli battles resulted in the victory of the Ottoman forces.

In this battle, Mustafa Kemal took part in military operations in Anafartalar and Ariburnu of Jonkbayiri ridge. His intervention in Jonkbayiri on the first day of the war and the tasks he undertook in the final stages of the battle revealed Mustafa Kemal's military abilities and ensured his recognition as the "Hero of Anafartalar", hence brought out the national leadership ability in Mustafa Kemal.

**War casualties**

Dead and Wounded

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Dead | Wounded | Total |
| Australia | 8,709 | 19,441 | 28,150 |
| New Zealand | 2,701 | 4,852 | 7,553 |
| Great Britain | 21,255 | 52,230 | 73,485 |
| France | 10,000 (Estimated) | 17,000 | 27,000 |
| India | 1,358 | 3,421 | 4,779 |
| Allied powers | 44,072 | 97,037 | 141,109 |
| Ottomans | 45974[1][2] | 174,634 | 251,000 |

**Legacy**

The significance of the Gallipoli campaign is felt strongly in both Australia and New Zealand, despite their being only a portion of the Allied forces[3]; the campaign is regarded in both nations as a "baptism of fire" and had been linked to their emergence as independent states. Approximately 50,000 Australians served at Gallipoli and from 16,000 to 17,000 New Zealanders[4]. It has been argued that the campaign proved significant in the emergence of a unique Australian identity following the war, which has been closely linked to popular conceptualisations of the qualities of the soldiers that fought during the campaign, which became embodied in the notion of an "Anzac spirit".[5][6][7][8]

The landing on 25 April is commemorated every year in both countries as "Anzac Day". The first iteration was celebrated unofficially in 1916, at churches in Melbourne, Brisbane and London, before being officially recognised as a public holiday in all Australian states in 1923[9]. The day also became a national holiday in New Zealand in the 1920s[9]. Organised marches by veterans began in 1925, in the same year a service was held on the beach at Gallipoli; two years later the first official dawn service took place at the Sydney Cenotaph. During the 1980s, it became popular for Australian and New Zealand tourists to visit Gallipoli to attend the dawn service there and since then thousands have attended. Over 10,000 people attended the 75th anniversary along with political leaders from Türkiye, New Zealand, Britain and Australia[10]. Dawn services are also held in Australia; in New Zealand, dawn services are the most popular form of observance of this day[11]. Anzac Day remains the most significant commemoration of military casualties and veterans in Australia and New Zealand, surpassing Remembrance Day (Armistice Day)[12].