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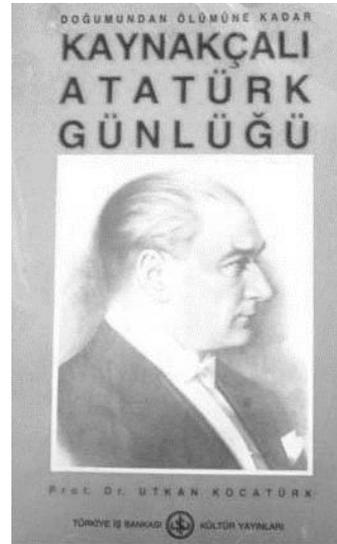
[Translated from [the Turkish original](#) by Bengü Özakıncı with the assistance of David Stephens and Burçin Çakır

Note: this English translation includes additional material added by Cengiz Özakıncı as well as a couple of editorial notes marked HH. The material is a slightly different order to the Turkish original. Any questions about the translation should be referred to David Stephens admin@honesthistory.net.au . The format is as good as we can manage.]

**THE 18 MARCH 1915 NAVAL
VICTORY AND THE
UNFORGETTABLE HEROES**
Cengiz
Özakıncı

In reference to the 1915 Çanakkale battle, sentences such as ‘There is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmet to us, etc. etc.’ written on the monuments over the signature ‘Atatürk, 1934’, were said to have been uttered by Şükrü Kaya at the commemoration of the 19th anniversary of the Dardanelles naval victory, on 18 March 1934, in front of the Mehmetçik Monument in Çanakkale.

This claim was made *firstly* by Utkan Kocatürk *in 1988* – ‘cautiously’:



President of Atatürk Resource Center Prof. Dr. Utkan Kocatürk (1937-2011) and the cover of his book titled *Day-by-day Bibliographical Atatürk Chronology from his Birth to his Death*

18 March 1934: Reading the speech which was drafted for him by Atatürk, Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of the Interior, also addressed the soldiers from the other countries who lost their lives, in the commemoration of the martyrs:

Those heroes that shed their blood in this country! You are in the soil of a friendly country. Rest in peace. You are lying side by side, bosom to bosom with Mehments. The mothers, who sent their sons from

faraway countries! Wipe away your tears. Your sons are in our bosom. They are in peace. After having lost their lives on this soil, they have become our sons as well.” (Uluğ İğdemir, *Atatürk and the Anzacs*, (1978), p.6. and the newspaper *Dünya*, 10 November 1953.)

Even though the date for this occasion is indicated [as 1934, by U. İğdemir. C.Ö.] the month and date are not stated in the bibliographies. Also, in the newspapers published in 1934, there is no explanatory information regarding this; Şükrü Kaya's visit to Gallipoli for another assignment is mentioned. We acknowledge the date of the speech as “18 March 1934” – **cautiously** – until the actual date is determined. ¹ (Emphasis added.)

Utkan Kocatürk's book is the origin of the claims that the date of Sükrü Kaya's speech (written by Atatürk) was 18 March 1934 in Çanakkale at the 19th anniversary of the Dardanelles naval victory. But, as will be shown below, this claim is wrong.

The heroes of 18 March 1915: the Dardanelles naval victory

During the First World War, the plan of Churchill, the British First Lord of the Admiralty, was to capture İstanbul by simply passing through the Dardanelles with battleships.

[For illustration see [Turkish original](#)]

Sir Winston Churchill

According to the plan, the British battlecruisers were, without entering the strait, first going to destroy the Turkish artillery forts on each side of the strait. Afterwards, the battleships would pass through to the Dardanelles and then the British would capture İstanbul. In 1807, the Royal Navy passed through the Dardanelles and reached İstanbul in this way.² On the 108th anniversary of this occasion, 19 February 1915, English battleships started the bombardment of the Turkish artillery emplacements. The American Ambassador, Henry Morgenthau, went from İstanbul to the Dardanelles on 15 March 1915 and saw the consequences of the bombardments.

[For illustration see [Turkish original](#)]

U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau

According to Morgenthau,

the shells that the British battleships fired from the strait have seriously harmed the Turkish forts located on each side of the strait. At the north of the strait, there were several artillery emplacements belonging to the Turks. However, these dated from 1878 and the two Turkish artilleries located at Nara Burnuwere from 1835. Because these old guns had short ranges, the shells they were using didn't have the ability to damage the ships armour; ammunition supplies were very low. There were Turkish mines laid in the strait but English minesweeping ships were able to sweep them. In İstanbul, the capital, both people and the statesman were in panic. Almost nobody believed that the Allied Navy could be defeated in the Dardanelles. Accordingly, the government made transportation arrangements to move to Anatolia.

Several days after Morgenthau passed this information to the British side on the morning of 18 March, the Allied Navy started to open fire for the final

assault. British naval forces had done minesweeping the night before the attack. However, they did not notice the line of mines laid ten days before by the minelayer ship *Nusrat*.

[For illustration see [Turkish original](#)]

Minelayer ship *Nusrat*

Two dreadnoughts, *Irresistible* and *Ocean*, sank after they struck mines and came under attack from the artillery on the shore. *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, *Goulois* and *Souffren* also struck mines and were badly damaged to the extent that they were out of the battle. The French battleship *Bouvet* was sunk by the Ottoman artillery.³ Eventually, the order to withdraw would be given to all the battleships and Churchill's plan to pass through the strait with the navy would end in a great defeat.

[For illustration see [Turkish original](#)]

Bouvet sinking.

While English newspapers were reporting the defeat, the cover of *Harp Mecmuası*, a military magazine published in İstanbul, showed a photograph of Seyit Onbaşı carrying a shell on his back.

[For illustration see [Turkish original](#)]

War Journal (Harp Mecmuası) issue 2, December 1915

The Allied navy bombed the Rumeli Mecidiye fort in the Dardanelles on 18 March. While lots of soldiers at the fort were martyred, the crane carrying the shells (shells that weighed more than 200 kilos each) was also damaged due to the bombing. Seyit, who survived the bombardment, carried the shells on his back, and placed them into the muzzles of the guns. In this way, he kept up the firing against the battleships in the strait.

The Dardanelles 18 March campaign has been remembered for all these years, especially the roles played by the minelayer ship *Nusrat* and Seyit Onbaşı. Until 1934, nobody knew who the soldier was standing behind Seyit Onbaşı in the photograph on the front page of *Harp Mecmuası*. This soldier was to attend the celebration of the 19th anniversary of the victory – the celebration organised by the Çanakkale People's House (cultural centre promoting republican values HH)⁴ on 18 March 1934 – and the name Sergeant Cemal was to be heard for the very first time in the newspaper reports of this ceremony.⁵

18 March Victory (translation from *Hakimiyeti Milliye* 31 March 1934; for illustration see [Turkish original](#))

Çanakkale, (Private) – The People's House celebrated the 18 March 1915 Dardanelles Naval Victory with a great commemorative ceremony.

At 1600 hours, the ceremony started with the public and the band singing the

national anthem together tunefully and with great passion. After the anthem, the headman of the People's House, translator Halil Bey, gave a rousing speech that expressed the national memory about this important day where the public gathered to commemorate the 19th anniversary.

Cemal Çavuş, who was a soldier at Mecidiye Fort and carried shells on his chest to the artillery after the crane broke down, was also present at the ceremony. This hero was presented to public view and he was vigorously applauded for the contribution he had made to the national memory. After that, Yüzbaşı Ali Bey described in very animated fashion the phases of the 18 March battle and the reasons for the victory.

The article titled 'Heroes of 18 March: Sergeant Cemal who carried the 24 inch artillery shell was present during the ceremony that took place in Çanakkale' ⁶ in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* reported:

18 martın kahramanları

24 lük mermileri göğsünde taşıyan Cemal Çavuş Çanakkalede yapılan merasimde hazır bulundu



Çanakkaledeki merasimden bir intiba ve Cemal Çavuş (Cemal Çavuş solda X işaretile gösterilmiştir)

Çanakkale (Hususi) — Çanakkale Halkevi 18 mart Çanakkale zaferi münasebetile büyük bir ihtifal tertip etmiştir. Program mucibince o gün Cumhuriyet meydanında toplanılmış ve saat 16 da Cumhuriyet marşı söylenerek merasime başlanmıştır. Marştan sonra Halkevi reisi Halil Bey, 19 uncu yıldönümünü yad etmek üzere toplanılan bu büyük günün hatıralarını tamamilе tecessüm ettiren çok canlı ve heyecanlı bir nutuk söylemiştir.

(Mabadi üçüncü sahifede)

18 martın kahramanları

(Birinci sahifeden mabat)

Nutkun sonunda şehitlerimizin ruhlarına hürmet için hazırun bir dakika sükûta davet edilmiştir.

Çanakkale harbinde Mecidiye kasasında askerlik eden ve yirmi dörtlük topun vinci kırılması üzerine mermileri göğsünde taşıyarak topla süren Cemal Çavuş ta merasimde hazır bulundurularak halka takdim edilmiş, bu kahraman Türk şiddetle alkışlanmıştır. Bunu müteakip yüzbaşı Ali Bey 18 mart muharebesinin safahatını, zaferin sebeplerini çok canlı bir surette anlatmış ve alkışlanmıştır.

Bundan sonra Vilâyet Maarif müdürü bir nutuk söylemiş ve orta mektepten bir hanım Türk askerine hitap eden çok güzel bir manzume okumuş ve alkışlanmıştır. Nutuklar bittikten sonra asker ve mektep talebeleri kumandan ve Vali Boyın önünden geçerek parlak bir resmî geçit yaptılar, bu suretle ihtifale nihayet verilmiştir.

Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, 26 March 1934.

Çanakkale People's House arranged a big ceremony of commemoration for the 18 March Çanakkale Victory. According to the program, the ceremony started with a gathering at the National Square at 16:00 and singing of the National Anthem. After the Anthem, Halil Bey, the head man of the People's House gave a vivacious and fervent speech that commemorated and embodied this important day's memories on the 19th anniversary. At the end of the speech, the people gathered for the ceremony were invited to observe a moment of silence to show respect for the martyrs. Sergeant Cemal, who was a soldier in Mecidiye Fort at the Çanakkale battle and carried artillery shells on his chest after the crane had been damaged to was also at the ceremony to be presented to the public. This Turkish hero was strongly applauded. Afterwards, Yüzbaşı Ali Bey

described the phases of the 18 March battle phases and the reasons for the victory in a very animated way; he was applauded. After that, the Director of Education gave a speech and a lady from secondary school was applauded for reciting a beautiful poem written for Turkish Soldiers. After the speeches, soldiers and students from the school paraded splendidly before the Commander and the Governor and the commemoration ended with this parade.

Çanakkale muharebesi hatıraları
220 okkalk gülleyi bir hamlede kaldıran Mehmedcik!

18 martta Çanakkalenin gazi tabyalarındaki ağır top mermilerini sırtlayıp kaldıran Cemal Çavuşun harb hatıralarını kendi ağzından dinleyiniz...

Kahraman ordumuzun, Boğazlar minkatını işgali gerefine çıkarmış olduğumuz fevkalâde nişhada Büyük Harbde, sırtında 220 okkalk top mermilerini sırtında taşıyan bir Mehmedcikle arkadaşlarının kahramanlık tarihimize geçen bir resmini neçretmişti.

Çanakkale merasimini takibe giden arkadaşlarımız, bu resimdeki Mehmedciklerin bir tanesinin, Cemal Çavuş isiminde ve sağ olduğunu öğttenmiş ve kendisini civar köylerden Çanakkaleye davet ederek bu kahraman gazi ile konuşmştur.

Cemal Çavuşla olan mülakatını arkadaşımız şöyle anlatıyor:
Jandarma çavuşu yanında bir köylü ile içeriye girdi ve:
— İşte aradığınız adam, dedi.
Cemal Çavuş, biraz yaşlı görünmesin rağmen dinc vücutlu, omuz omuzları



Cemal Çavuş muharririmize anlatıyor: İşte topumuzun mermi mataforası kırılmıştı

Çanakkale muharebesi hatıraları
220 okkalk gülleyi bir hamlede kaldıran Mehmedcik!

18 martta Çanakkalenin gazi tabyalarındaki ağır top mermilerini sırtlayıp kaldıran Cemal Çavuşun harb hatıralarını kendi ağzından dinleyiniz...

Gülhane plânında
Peki buha rakibimize kalbimizde bir vâkıf ki...



AKAR FEFAR

Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, 01.08.1936

See Part II for translation