



The Atatürk Society of America

Mr. Paul Daley
The Guardian
536 Broadway, 6th floor
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June 4, 2015

Mr. David Stephens
1) Secretary, Honest History
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Dear Mr. Daley and Mr. Stephens,
Your reporting of 20 April, 2015 in the Guardian Australia, and on April 21, 2015 Independent Australia websites, respectively, titled "Atatürk's famous words of 1934 in doubt" were admittedly based on a so-called "research" published in the Turkish "Butun Dunya" journal's March 1, 2015 edition. The author of that "research", C. Ozakinci, is not an academic person, but a self-declared "researcher". Therefore, his report does not stand a serious scrutiny, or scientific credibility. We, the Atatürk Society of America, regret that you, as a reporter and as a guardian of Honest History, reported the unscientific claims made by that "researcher" without verifying the relevant sources. Your oversight, however, may be due to your unfamiliarity with the circumstances in Turkey. We found it, therefore, necessary to straighten your records with our assessment of the "research" in question, and with our concern that an unreliable report originating in Turkey may offend our ANZAC brethren. We are well aware that the Gallipoli battle was not just another battle in WWI; it was the beginning of nation-building for both the Turks and the Australians and New Zealanders, as a result of victory for Turks against Britain, and of defeat for ANZACs not in the hands of Turks but of Britain. The affirmation of their national being was the victory for both the Turks and the Australians and New Zealanders.

There are two claims in the said "research". In the absence of record of Sukru Kaya's 1934 speech, it must be assumed that Atatürk may not have uttered at all the words inscribed on Gallipoli memorials in Australia and Turkey; and, the English translation differs from the Turkish text.

According to the "researcher's" own account, the text originated from a 1969 guide book for Eceabat town near Gallipoli, obtained in 1977 by an ANZAC "digger", Alan Campbell. He, later on 12 Sept. 1977, enquires the veracity of those words from the Turkish History Society. The Society replies to Mr. Campbell that the text was an Atatürk message read in 1934 by the then Minister of the Interior and

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Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sukru Kaya. The Society bases this information on an interview with the deceased Mr. Kaya made in 1953. Mr. Campbell then informs the Society that he inscribed those words in an ANZAC monument “with a minor change”. The Society does not object to the change.

First, the “researcher” compares the text with a speech delivered by Kaya in 1931, which does not contain it. He did not find Kaya’s 1934 speech. The only existing record is Kaya’s statement that he delivered such a speech in 1934. Since the “researcher” cannot challenge deceased Kaya, the sole source, he concludes that there was no such speech in 1934; Kaya confused the dates. Now, to give your own interpretation because you cannot disprove the sole evidence is not scientific. We may recall, instead, that the status of Dardanelles was not transferred to Turkey until 1936 Montreux Treaty, and the building of a memorial could only start after WWII, the completion of which took from 1946 to 1958. The inscription must have come into question sometime during that period, which may coincide with Kaya’s 1953 statement. The “researcher” could have used, instead, this inference to corroborate the veracity of the text. The “researcher’s” claim must be dismissed as conjecture, to say the least, or deliberate misguidance to conform to recent Turkish politics to erase the name of Atatürk and replace it with Erdogan.

As to the phrase in the English translation of the text, Mr. Campbell seems to have found it more meaningful for ANZACs to translate the Turkish sentence, “Sizler, Mehmetciklerle yan yana, koyun koyunasiniz” as “the Johnnies and the Mehments lie side by side here in this country of ours”. He, in fact, pointed out to the change as being minor in his letter to the Society. Mr. Campbell having a better command of English as well as an understanding of ANZAC feelings far better than the Society officials do, the Society let it stand. We agree that the verbatim translation of the Turkish phrase would have been very awkward indeed; a translation is not of words but is of the meaning. For the text to have a meaning for ANZACs, “Sizler (You)” has been rightly translated as Johnnies. The phrase “Mehmetciklerle yan yana, koyun koyunasiniz (are snuggling Mehments)” has been translated as they have been, in order to avoid any *misinterpretation*, to say the least. Should ANZACs produce a better translation of that phrase than the one made by Mr. Campbell, an ANZAC himself, Turks should not have any qualms about it, like the Turkish History Society did not at the time. It is not for a dubious researcher as Mr. Ozakinci to challenge the translation.

Therefore, we find it absurd to conclude that the absence of a record of Kaya’s 1934 speech and the difference in translation can be cast as “Atatürk’s famous words of 1934 in doubt”. We find such “research” injurious to those who faithfully commemorate the fallen ANZACs in Gallipoli, and an affront to the memory of the liberator and founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. We hope that you will inform the ANZAC community of our concerns expressed above in a manner you deem appropriate.

Yours respectfully,
The Atatürk Society of America
Executive Board

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