



PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT OFFICIAL DINNER
GIVEN BY PRIME MINISTER AKBULUT
ANKARA - 23 APRIL 1990

Mr Prime Minister and Mrs Akbulut
Distinguished Guests,

I am privileged to be the first Prime Minister of Australia to visit this great country, so rich in its history, its civilisation and its cultures. It is a happy coincidence that today should be the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, an institution to which you, Mr Prime Minister, made such a notable contribution as Speaker.

It is a remarkable illustration of the strange workings of history, Mr Prime Minister, that I should be here in Turkey to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the first great encounter between our two countries - a tragic meeting, as adversaries, on the field of battle.

Let it be said at the outset, however, that this was not a conflict which engendered lasting hatred. Indeed, even before it was over, it had imbued the adversaries with a deep and abiding respect for the courage, prowess, endurance and self-sacrifice of the other. It is these noble qualities we celebrate in commemorating the landing of the ANZACs on Gallipoli, and honouring those who fought and fell there.

The Gallipoli campaign, of course, has a special and solemn significance for Australians.

The Australian Commonwealth had been created only fourteen years before. It was at Gallipoli, for the first time, that the youth of Australia came together in the supreme ordeal of war. In these fires were forged many of the qualities we still most value in the Australian character. The events of Gallipoli have never lost their hold on the minds and hearts of the Australian people.

It is for these reasons Gallipoli is regarded as such a significant event in the development of Australian nationhood.

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And in that context - the context of our mature sense of nationhood - I should acknowledge the very welcome and representative presence tonight of the Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Parliament, Dr John Hewson, who accompanies me on this pilgrimage, not as a political opponent, but as a parliamentary colleague.

As you have remarked, Mr Prime Minister, the Gallipoli campaign also marked an important step towards the emergence of modern Turkey.

It was through his brilliant defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula, as well as his exploits on other fronts in the First World War, that the great Mustapha Kemal Ataturk demonstrated the singular qualities of leadership which enabled him subsequently to create the Turkish Republic.

It is remarkable to reflect that the tragedy of our first encounter has been the source of nationhood for both our countries.

As you have noted, Mr Prime Minister, we are living through a period of profound change in the world, a period, indeed an epoch, not without its dangers certainly, but of immense promise and hope.

But, even as we note and welcome the historic transformation, in Eastern Europe especially, it is important to acknowledge the continuing relevance of the role of nations like Turkey, as a NATO partner and, in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia. It is as important as ever that we should maintain the strength and stability essential to ensuring that the opportunities now beckoning achieve their potential.

Australia and Turkey have achieved international reconciliation and mutual understanding. These are the same objectives which we must encourage in international relations generally in the last decade of this century, a century which has seen such dreadful conflict, such destructive antagonisms.

The encounter between our countries in war has been transformed into a constructive relationship in peace.

Since the Tenth Anniversary of the Gallipoli landing was commemorated with a beach ceremony on Gallipoli in 1935, thousands of Australians have visited your country to pay homage to the fallen. In doing so they have increased Australia's knowledge of Turkey and our regard for its people.

In 1985 on the 70th Anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, in an exceptional gesture of friendship to a former foe, your Government agreed to rename that part of the Gallipoli Peninsula where the ANZAC landing took place, "Anzac Cove".

To reciprocate this gesture we established the Ataturk Memorial Garden in Canberra, within the precincts of the Australian War Memorial.

The garden features a commemorative stone with a bas-relief of Ataturk and an inscription of his tribute to his opponents in the Gallipoli campaign. This memorable tribute, written by Ataturk in 1934, is eloquent testimony to the complete reconciliation of former enemies.

It reads:

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... You are now living in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours ... You, the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosoms and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well".

These same words are inscribed on the memorial stone at Anzac Cove.

We have also named a part of the Northern Shore of Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin, "Gallipoli Reach" and the entrance to Princess Royal Harbour in Albany, Western Australia, from where the ANZACs sailed, "Ataturk Entrance".

These gestures symbolize the bonds of peace and friendship which unite our nations, reinforced over the past twenty or so years by migration from Turkey to Australia.

There are now over 60,000 people of Turkish origin in Australia. The members of this community are making a valuable contribution to Australia's multicultural society and I am delighted that so many Turks have chosen to make Australia their home.

I myself have the honour of representing over 3,000 members of the Turkish community who live in my own constituency in Melbourne.

Mr Prime Minister, the talks I have had today with President Ozal and yourself reflect the maturity of the relationship which has developed between our two countries. Accordingly, our wide ranging discussions covered the full scope of political, economic and trade issues of mutual interest, including the rapid pace of change in Europe and the USSR, developments in the Middle East, the need for a just resolution for Cyprus, and human rights.

I have been particularly impressed by the reports I have seen and by what I have heard here in Ankara on the South-Eastern Anatolia (GAP) Project which will be one of the world's great agricultural engineering feats. Australian

companies are actively seeking to participate in this project and assist in bringing it to successful completion.

It is indicative of the importance my Government attaches to the further development of trade with Turkey that tomorrow, in Istanbul, I will open a new Australian Consulate-General and Trade Commission Office.

With the signature of the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement between Australia and Turkey in 1988 we now have a mechanism for regular consultations on trade and economic cooperation. We look forward to welcoming a Turkish Government/Business Delegation to Australia later this year for the first round of consultations under the Agreement.

Mr Prime Minister, we are indebted to you for the great generosity and cooperation shown by the Turkish Government at all levels in making this pilgrimage possible. There could not be a stronger testimony to the nature of the relationship between our countries than this visit we Australians are making, the reason for that visit, and the circumstances we attach to it.

I believe one can search the annals of war and not find a parallel - the honour, care and respect shown to the memory of a departed enemy by a people who were defending themselves against an invader; and seventy five years later, for the surviving representatives of the invasion to return to be the honoured guests of that people.

This in itself contains a great tribute to the spirit of the people of Turkey.

Mr Prime Minister, the mutual respect between our nations which was forged on the battlefields of Gallipoli has proved to be a sound and enduring foundation for the warm and substantial relationship which has developed between us, a relationship which I am confident will continue to develop and deepen in the years to come.

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