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PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

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SPEECH FOR THE PRIME MINISTER
LONE PINE CEREMONY
GALLIPOLI - 25 APRIL 1990

The landings on Gallipoli seventy-five years ago were followed by eight months of untold sacrifice and suffering, which were to claim the lives of more than one hundred thousand men of the armies of Turkey, Germany, France, Britain, India, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

No place on the Gallipoli Peninsula was more fiercely contested than these few acres where we now stand - known to the ANZACS who captured it as Lone Pine, and to the Turkish soldiers who defended it to the last, as the Ridge of Blood. In three days of literally hand to hand combat, in August 1915, more than two thousand Australians and five thousand Turks died here. Seven of the nine Victoria Crosses awarded to Australians at Gallipoli were won here.

In a unique act of honour to fallen foes, the people and Government of Turkey have dedicated this ground as a memorial to the eight thousand seven hundred Australians who died on Gallipoli.

In making this Pilgrimage today, we first pay the tribute of honour to the fallen of Turkey, fighting on their own soil, dying in defence of their homeland, inspired by the indomitable leadership of a Man of Destiny, Mustafa Kemal - known to history as Kemal Ataturk.

Let it be said at once: for us, the people of Australia and New Zealand, the heirs to ANZAC, the meaning of Gallipoli can never be measured by mere numbers of the slain. In those terms, Gallipoli was but an initiation to the killing fields of France and Flanders.

And let it be said also that we do not come here to glorify war.

For us, no place on earth more grimly symbolises the waste and futility of war - this scene of carnage in a campaign which failed.

It is not in the waste of war that Australians find the meaning of Gallipoli - then or now.

I say "then or now" for a profound reason.

For the meaning of the ANZAC tradition, forged in the fires of Gallipoli, must be learned anew, from generation to generation.

Its meaning can endure only as long as each new generation of Australians finds the will to reinterpret it - to breathe, as it were, new life into the old story: and, in separating the truth from the legend, realise its relevance to a nation and a people, experiencing immense change over the past three-quarters of a century.

In the continuing quest for the real meaning of ANZAC, our way is lit by the shining presence here today of the little band of first ANZACS, who have returned.

This is, for all of us here, and for all our fellow Australians at home, an honour, an experience, an emotion, which goes beyond words.

These men know the truth of Gallipoli.

They would be the last to claim that they were heroes - but indeed they were.

They did not pretend to fathom the deep and immense tides of history which brought them to these shores, at the cross-roads of civilisation, so far from home, so far from all they knew and loved.

They did not see themselves as holding in their hands the destiny of six mighty Empires - all now vanished.

Nor could they begin to imagine that the vast and terrible forces unleashed upon the world in 1914 would still be working their way through human history 75 years on.

But they knew two things:

They had a job to do; and they knew that in the end, they could only rely on each other to see it through - they knew they depended on their mates.

The Official Australian War Historian, Charles Bean, expresses it in this way:

"To be the sort of man who would give way when his mates were trusting to his firmness; to be the sort of man who would fail when the line, the whole force, and the cause required his endurance; to have made it necessary for another unit to do his own unit's work - that was the one prospect which these

men could not face ... Standing upon that alone, when help failed and hope faded, when the end loomed clear in front of them, when the whole world seemed to crumble and the heaven to fall in, they faced its ruin undismayed".

In that recognition of the special meaning of Australian mateship, the self-recognition of their dependence upon one another - these Australians, by no means all of them born in Australia, drawn from every walk of life and different backgrounds, cast upon these hostile shores, twelve thousand miles from home - there lay the genesis of the ANZAC tradition.

And at the heart of that tradition lay a commitment. It was a simple but deep commitment to one another, each to his fellow Australian.

And in that commitment, I believe, lies the enduring meaning of ANZAC, then and today and for the future.

It is that commitment, now as much as ever - now, with all the vast changes occurring in our nation, more than ever - it is that commitment to Australia, which defines, and alone defines, what it is to be an Australian. The commitment is all.

When the order was given for the evacuation from Gallipoli in December 1915, it is recorded that many of the Australians expressed their grief at leaving the graves of so many thousands of their mates in hostile hands.

One of them said: "I hope they don't hear us going down the gullies".

In all the story of heroism and human waste that was Gallipoli, nothing is more honourable than the custodianship of this hallowed ground by the people and Government of Turkey for seventy-five years.

Australia does not forget.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.

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