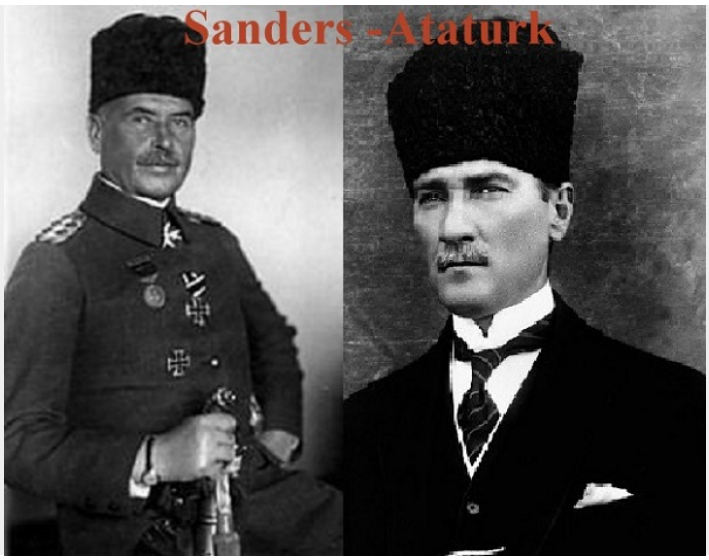
A SHAM VICTORY

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Category: Opinions

By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, September 2020

Gallipoli Day is a national holiday in Turkey. Thousands of students are bussed (expenses paid by the government) to Gallipoli while travel agencies provide bus tours to the public. Bombastic speeches are made, battle enactments are held, and songs of victory are sung. Countless garish banners and oversized blood-red flags of Turkey flutter across the blood-drenched grounds where 85,000 Ottoman soldiers were killed and 97,000 wounded during the nine-month battle against Allied troops in 1914-1915.

Turks consider Gallipoli the defining moment of modern Turkey. The 'victory' has also become an ersatz religious event per Erdogan who ascribes the 'triumph' to Islam. Turkish historian Kenan Celik says: "They're telling people 'We won this by the hands of God.'" Rather than give credit to Germany, Turkey has blithely appropriated the victory. Welcome to the Mecca of Turkish religioso nationalists.

Although the Turkish 'victory' was a farce, it's understandable why a desperate Turkey saw the need to transform a battle--far away from the main theatres of war--to a crucial event. A country which had lost the overwhelming majority of its wars in the previous two centuries needed to elevate Gallipoli to mythic heights.

The German military began to cooperate with the sad sack Ottoman army in the mid-1750s. In the 19th century, one of the greatest military strategists and theorists Karl Bernhard von Moltke led the upgrading of Ottoman army training. General Field Marshal Freiherr von der Goltz succeeded von Moltke. But despite German efforts, the Sick Man of Europe kept losing wars to the Russians, Italians, the English, and French and even to the weaker Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbians.

In 1911 to 1912, the Italians gave a bloody nose to the Ottomans as they wrested Libya from them. From 1912 to 1913, the Ottomans lost the First Balkan War. In the process they also lost 83 percent of their Balkan territories and 60 percent of the Turkish population.

After Turkey's defeat in the First Balkan War, grand vizier Muhammad Sefket Pasha wrote: "I intend to send for a German military mission in the grand scale and, if necessary, I shall even intend to send for a Germany military mission and appoint a German general to command a Turkish army corps, place German staff and regimental officers in command of every unit...and in this way form a model army corps."

Thus, Gen. Marshal Liman von Sanders became the commander of the Ottoman Fifth Army which was responsible for the defense of Gallipoli. Some 500 German officers accompanied him and assigned key functions. The German officers were in charge of strategy, of laying underwater mines, placing cannons on both shores of the Dardanelles Straits, and training the Ottoman army. As such, they played wide-ranging and key roles in the land, sea, and aerial battles. As expected, howitzer units, 35.5 centimeter guns, mines, anti-submarine barriers, and the batteries were furnished by

Germany. Without German leadership, the cannon fodder 'Turkish' army would have rolled and died.



In his memoirs titled "Five Years in Turkey", von Sanders wrote about the Turkish defenses before the arrival of the Germans: "...those military preparations, which the Turkish headquarters had ordered between February 20 and March 1 to meet a successful passage of the allied fleet through the Dardanelles, might have been fatal. Had these orders been carried out, the course of the World War would have been given such a turn in the spring of 1915 that Germany and Austria would have had to continue the struggle without Turkey, because these orders exposed the Dardanelles to a hostile landing!"

One can effortlessly blame the British and French military leaders for the high casualties of ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand) troops: More than 8,700 Australian soldiers were killed and 19,441 wounded at Gallipoli. New Zealand dead were close to 2,800 and the wounded totaled 5,212. British and Irish dead were 21,255 and French losses 10,000. The high ANZAC casualties were the result of several badly-planned and highly-dangerous missions ANZAC troops were ordered to undertake.

One big winner at Gallipoli was one Mustafa Kemal—a lieutenant-colonel--who had just returned from the Libyan War Turkey, had lost to Italy. Somehow he became *the* hero of Gallipoli. In the fifty-five pages devoted to the Gallipoli Battle, von Sanders mentioned Col. Kemal (commander of the 19th Division) several times but far less frequently than he did that of Jhaved Pasha and Essad Pash. At

the end of the Gallipoli campaign, Jhavad Pasha was given command of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Von Sanders' memoirs are replete with the names of German officers: Admiral von Usedom, Captains Pieper, Nicolai, Wassildo, Prigge, Muhlmann, and Colonels Wehrle and few mentions of Turkish officers.

Without taking the credit from the Germans ... the Allied forces were fated to lose: they had no realistic goals or coherent plan, and carried too many inexperienced troops. Lack of sufficient intelligence data, negligible artillery support, and inadequate logistical and medical arrangements were other challenges.

Why haven't the Germans revealed it was their troops who made the Turkish" victory possible? In the '20s Germany continued to be friendly with Turkey and even allowed genocidier Young Turk leaders to live in Germany. In the '30s, Germany wouldn't contradict the Turks because Ataturk was Hitler's hero. The Nazi dictator admired the Turks for the efficient "deportation" of Armenians. Hitler planned to imitate his idol and "remove" Jews from Europe. After WWII, Turkey and Germany became NATO members and renewed their bond. There are about four million Turks in Germany.

Meanwhile, Turks--desperate for military victory--make a bee-line to Gallipoli to celebrate a shameful sham. It takes a special kind of inferiority complex and self-deception to claim another's victory. People who steal the words of others are called plagiarist. What's the word for a state which steals the credit of another state's victory? But then again, Turks are past-masters at fabrication. After all, they discovered America, were the first to explore outer space, and their languages is the mother of all languages although most major Turkish newspapers are named *Cumhuriyet, Hurriyet, Sabah, Hayat, Istiklal,* and *Vatan*—all Arabic words. Zaman, which is Arabic for time, was shut down by...you guessed it...fabricator-in-chief Recep Erdogan.

Comments



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It is alleged that had the Turks not emerged victorious over the Allied forces in the Gallipoli campaign, the Turks would not have committed the Genocide of the Armenians. Dr. Apelian, in his book "The Antiochians" notes that "no one can definitely be sure whether or not British diplomacy at that time favored an early occupation of Constantinople. A premature collapse of the Sultan's government could seat a victorious Russia at the peace conference". Having read that, it occurred to me that the Allied forces would not have secured a political advantage had they defeated the Turks in the Gallipoli campaign and occupied Constantinople early on. It was important for the Allied forces to have Turkish forces concentrate and victorious on the Eastern front against Russia. Constantinople was for the taking of the Allied forces and they did after a few years and ruled over Constantinople for four years as they ruled over Berlin some thirty years later and brought Germany to justice in Nuremberg but let the Turks go in Constantinople. Today, in his informative presentation, Prof. Taner Ackcam stated that the Gallipoli Campaign and the Sarikamish battle had no relevance with respect to the Turks planning the extermination of the Armenians.