

Version 1.0 | Last updated 08 January 2017

Pasha, Cavit

By [Mesut Uyar](#)

Unknown, Hasan *Cavit* (Cavit Pasha, Mirliva Cavit Paşa)
Ottoman general, Turkish politician
Born 01 January 1862 in Çarşamba-Samsun, Ottoman Empire
Died 23 December 1932 in Istanbul, Turkey

A talented administrator but a mediocre general, Cavit Pasha served in various parts of the empire, including commander of Iraq during the first year of the war.

Table of Contents

- [1 Early Life](#)
- [2 Career in the Balkans](#)
- [3 First World War](#)
- [4 Last Years](#)
- [Selected Bibliography](#)
- [Citation](#)

1. Early Life

Cavit Pasha (1862-1932) was born in Çarşamba-Samsun. He graduated from the Imperial Military Academy in 1883 as an [infantry](#) officer. He was selected for the General Staff College and graduated as a general staff captain on 20 July 1885. Cavit was assigned to the Ottoman General Staff's first staff branch (operations) after graduation but he barely served there a year. He was next assigned to the Tripoli Division as a staff officer on 28 November 1886. Tripoli and Cyrenaica (modern Libya) were not only the "backwater provinces" of the [empire](#) but also a notorious place of exile. It took four years for Cavit to regain the confidence of his superiors and managed to return to his former post at the General Staff on 23 September 1890. After only a few months in Istanbul, he was ordered to Yemen in response to the outbreak of rebellions on 24 June 1891. With the help of his father-in-law,

[Hasan Edip Pasha \(1834-1904\)](#), Cavit returned to Istanbul on 10 May 1892, where he spent seven years and was assigned only a few brief field duties like the survey of lead mine in Manyas in February 1894. At the same time, he was rapidly promoted and became a lieutenant-colonel on 9 October 1898. He was also awarded several medals and orders.

2. Career in the Balkans

On 22 January 1899, Cavit was assigned to the Afyon Reserve Division and then to the Aydın Reserve Division on 4 May 1902. During the Ilinden Rebellion of 1903 he was temporarily assigned as the military sub-governor of Pirlep (Pirlepe) and took part in counterinsurgency operations. Even though his power and authority was limited, Cavit achieved some success and fame and was promoted to full colonel on 2 February 1904. When the sub-governorship of Peć (İpek) was temporarily vacated, Cavit was assigned to the post on 20 September 1905. His continuous administrative and military successes in difficult conditions were instrumental in obtaining his following assignments as the commander of the Salonika Gendarmerie Regiment on 29 April 1906 and then the sub-governor of Pljevlja (Taşlıca) on 20 September 1908. It is important to point out that although Cavit stayed away from politics and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), he also remained indifferent to government efforts to prosecute CUP members. Unlike other high ranking officers, Cavit not only preserved his place during the wide scale purges but actually received a promotion to the rank of major general on 3 October 1908 and was assigned as the commander of the 18th Division in Mitrovica (Mitroviçe) on 29 December 1908. He was then assigned to several influential positions including commander of the 5th Division in Gallipoli on 4 November 1909, commander of VII Army Corps in Skopje (Üsküb) on 29 January 1911 and general commander of the Gendarmerie on 1 February 1912.

When the [mobilisation against Balkan states](#) was declared on 1 October 1912, Cavit was immediately assigned as the commander of VI Army Corps in Monastir (Manastır). As a part of the Vardar Army, VI Corps took part in all the major battles and operations including the battles of Kumanova (23-24 October 1912) and Monastir (18 November 1912). He ended the war as the commander of Istanbul Straits Fortifications. During combat operations, Cavit was a good organizer but an uninspiring and mediocre commander. The VI Corps failed in every major or minor combat action and disintegrated after the battle of Monastir. After the war, many high ranking officers faced court-martial and purged from the military under the pretext of incompetence or old age. Although Cavit Pasha lost the confidence and favour of the Ottoman high command, he not only saved himself from purges but also managed to be assigned as the inspector-general of Fourth Army in Baghdad on 6 January 1914.

3. First World War

The Fourth Army was not a conventional army, resembling instead a regional gendarmerie force.

Nevertheless, the start of the First World War drastically changed Cavit's duties. One of the key planning parameters of the Ottoman General Staff's mobilization and concentration was that there would be no serious British or Russian threat to Iraq. The General Staff decided to abolish the Baghdad-based Fourth Army Inspectorate and transferred the XII (35th and 36th Divisions) and XIII (37th and 38th Divisions) Corps to other presumably more vital theatres of operations. Cavit Pasha, now commander of the newly founded Iraq and Surrounding Regions Command, vehemently protested this decision but only managed to keep the 38th (Basra) Division. The 38th Division was a weak formation in every respect. Additionally, this division was supposed to support hurriedly-organized Gendarmerie and border guard battalions which were tasked with securing long borders and to keeping order in an ever volatile region. To make matters worse, Cavit made a fatal mistake by taking several battalions from the 38th Division and assigning them to Baghdad and the [Persian](#) border. He coupled remaining weak battalions with Gendarmerie, volunteers, and tribal levies and distributed them at several critical junctions between Basra and Fao. In doing so he effectively divided his meagre force into independent enclaves without mutual support.

Unbeknownst to the Ottomans, a reinforced Indian divisional group (so-called [Indian Expeditionary Force "D"](#)) was already waiting in Bahrain. It had set sail well before the formal declaration of war and captured the crucial beachhead of Fao (Fav) on 7 November 1914. The Fao detachment's regular component showed a token resistance and then escaped, leaving all [artillery](#) and heavy [equipment](#) behind. Cavit stuck to his defence concept and Force D easily crushed two independent defence positions, Saihan and Zain, in two days and captured Basra on 20 November. The remnants of the 38th Division despairingly tried to defend Qurna (Kurna) but had to surrender on 9 December 1914. Throughout this debacle Cavit tried to command the defensive effort from Baghdad with sporadic visits to frontline. The Ottoman high command held Cavit responsible for the collapse of the [Iraqi front](#) and was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel [Süleyman Askeri \(1884-1915\)](#) on 20 December 1914. Five days later he was forcefully retired.

4. Last Years

Immediately after the end of the war Cavit published a small book about his brief war service and the failure of the CUP government's policy and strategy in Iraq. During the armistice period he entered politics and was selected to the last Ottoman parliament as a representative of Samsun, his hometown. His first experience as a parliamentarian ended two months later when the Entente occupied Istanbul and dissolved the parliament on 18 March 1920. He did not join the new Turkish Parliament in Ankara and did not actively support the [nationalist](#) war effort against the occupation. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, he was again selected as a parliamentarian from Samsun. Cavit remained a committed parliamentarian but tended to shy away from the vicious infighting between the government and opposition. He retired from politics after the end of his second term on 2 August 1927. He died on 23 December 1932.

Section Editor: [Alexandre Toumarkine](#)

Selected Bibliography

Balkış, Behzat / Fırat, Nezihi: **Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. Irak-İran Cephesi 1914-1918 (Turkish War during the First World War. Iraq-Iran front 1914-1918, volume 3)**, Ankara 1979.

Emin, Mehmed: **Osmanlı-İngiliz Irak Seferi ve Hatalarımız (Ottoman-British campaign and our mistakes)**, in: Mecmua-i Askeri (Military Journal) 16, 1920.

Hallı, Reşat: **TSK Tarihi Balkan Harbi. Garp Ordusu, Vardar Ordusu ve Ustruma Kolordusu, volume 3, part 1 (The history of the Turkish armed forces in the Balkan War. Western army, Vardar army and Ustruma corps, volume 3, part 1)**, Ankara 1993.

Paşa, Cavid: **Irak Seferi ve İttihad Hükümetinin Hayâlât ve Cehâlet-i Siyasiyesi (Iraq campaign and CUP government's irrational and ignorant policy)**, İstanbul 1918: Müdafaa Matbaası.

Zat İşleri Erkân Defterleri (ed.): **Department of Personnel General Staff Officers Logbooks, volume 2, no. 193**, İstanbul: Turkish General Staff College Archives.

Citation

Uyar, Mesut: Pasha, Cavit , in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. **DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10966**.

License

This text is licensed under: [CC by-NC-ND 3.0 Germany - Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivative Works](#).