



MEMORIAL SITES III
The Bosphorus Bridge
Script

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER 01.02 - 01.12

“Each morning I wake up in Asia and pass on to Europe for work. I take this trip every day.”

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 01.12 - 01.18

“Whenever I cross the bridge I say to myself it was a good decision to have it built.”

Int: Tacettin GÜRGÜN 01.18 - 01.27

“In many ways the bridge made life easy for us, yet, it made life difficult in some ways.”

Int: Hayri TOP 01.27 - 01.31

“I am devoted to the bridge. It is like family”

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 01.31 - 01.37

“We knew the bridge would be useful, but we were a bit frightened...”

NARRATOR 01.49 - 03.26

In the haze of an October morning in 1973, people of İstanbul woke up in the only city of the world located on two continents. In their best costumes, they went out to witness the grand meeting they had been waiting for a long time. This was not an ordinary meeting. Two continents were to meet, not people, communities or leaders. The first bridge on the world to connect two continents was to open that day.

The bridge to be opened would change “things” in the life of the people living in İstanbul. Many were not aware that this bridge was to change the destiny of the city forever.

Actually, this was a very old dream to come true.

The first attempts of connecting Asia and Europe with a bridge around the Bosphorus, where the two continents get close, dates 4,500 years back.

However, the designs of the bridge were completed in the 1950’s.

The necessity to connect the two banks of the city turned out to be a must in the 1950’s. One of the main reasons was the inequality in the development of the two banks of the city. Crossing the natural barrier that kept Europe from Asia would create new fields of inhabitation, trade and industry. This would bring development opportunities to the Asian bank and the city would skip the risk of being single centered.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 03.26 - 03.52

“Before the World War II, the Anatolian bank was comparatively desolate. It was such a quiet place. All activity in İstanbul was on the European bank. There was the famous İstiklâl Street. The administration and everything was on this side.

NARRATOR 03.53 - 04.20

Another reason for a possible bridge project was to stop the movement of the city towards the north. İstanbul had always been a point of attraction in terms of migration and the local migration movement around the 50’s and 60’s had brought the problems of ghettos. Development of the city towards the north began threatening natural sources like water springs and forests. A possible bridge would maintain city development on the east-west axis.

NARRATOR 04.44 - 05.00

The rise in population brought more commercial and industrial activity which began to be a pressure on the insufficient transportation network of İstanbul. People began waiting for hours to cross over to Europe from Asia on ferries.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 05.05 - 05.36

“We used to wake up at five in the morning and come to Kabataş to cross over to the other bank. We used to wait for hours in Kabataş. Night time was no different. We would wait for hours in Üsküdar as well. This was such a torture. I remember waiting for 3-4 hours. Crossing over took only 20-25 minutes. Waiting for 3-4 hours just for a 25 minute crossing was something against civilization.”

NARRATOR 05.39 - 05.56

It was time for a more efficient way to cross the Bosphorus in this city of waters. The government of the time with Süleyman Demirel as the Prime Minister started the construction phase of a bridge.

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 05.56 - 06.25

“The bridge became a necessity at that time. It would be very difficult to cross over to the other side in a couple of years, say five years, if the bridge had not been built. It would be impossible to reach the Marmara from the Black Sea because the Bosphorus would be far too crowded with ferries and steamships carrying people from one side to the other.”

Int: Tacettin GÜRGÜN 06.25 - 06.59

“It was impossible to cross over especially in the foogy days of winter. We had to get to the other bank. There were small boats for that purpose. In the boats we would keep praying during the crossing. One day, we even set foot on Eminönü instead of Kabataş. There were no navigating instruments on those boats.“

NARRATOR 07.00 - 07.15

A contract was signed with the English-German consortium called Cleveland-Hochtief AG in 1967. Waves of opposition began to raise from various parts of the country.

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 07.15 - 07.42

“Many people opposed to the idea of building this bridge with the slogan “Cholera to the poor, bridges to the rich.” We told them that we were going to make Asia and Europe meet. We told them that the bridge was not going to be the property of İstanbul and that the poor as well as the rich would cross over. Everyone would be getting to Europe from Anatolia..”

NARRATOR 07.42 - 07.58

Opposition against the bridge had two reasons. Building a bridge with the tax income was a waste and it was “luxurious.” Some were worried that the bridge would harm the natural and historical texture of İstanbul.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 07.59 - 08.31

“We knew the bridge would be useful, but we were a bit frightened. The Bosphorus has dimensions and the hills around it have dimensions. Some wild and high poles being built seemed unbearable to us. The idea of noise in the traffic over the Bosphorus made us nervous.”

NARRATOR 08.35 - 08.49

Despite all the opposition, Cevdet Sunay, the President of the Republic and Süleyman Demirel, the Prime Minister attended the foundation ceremony of the bridge at the Beylerbeyi leg in 20th February 1970 and construction began.

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 08.49 - 09.07

“As an engineer, I had always dreamt about the İstanbul bridge. I was a student in the 40’s when I had dreamt about it. It had become a passion for me after seeing other bridges abroad.”

NARRATOR 09.08 - 09.14

35 engineers and 400 technicians worked on the bridge that was completed in 3 years.

Int: Hayri TOP 09.15 - 10.01

“Working conditions were tough and disciplined. Ordinary welders were not employed. One had to pass tests in order to be a welder on the Bosphorus bridge. After a few tests I began working as a welder in the site. We worked in hard shifts. Engineers kept an eye on us at all times. They did not let us out. It was too hot inside. When we got out at the end of shifts we would go crazy. Instead of going to the Beylerbeyi direction, we would sometimes go to Ortaköy. We would only realize that when we reach Ortaköy.”

NARRATOR 10.03 - 10.24

The height of the towers were 165 meters and the distance between the two towers was 1,074 meters. The bridge was constructed with 6 lanes. The total length of the bridge was 1,560 meters and its cost was 516 million TL which is about USD 40 million.

NARRATOR 11.01 - 11.11

As the monumental symbol of the development in Turkey after the foundation of the Republic, the Bosphorus Bridge was officially opened on 30th October 1973.

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 11.11 - 11.30

“Finally, Europe was to meet Asia. It was an historical event. The road from London to Peking was opened. There were no further obstructions on the Silk Road. The Bosphorus was the largest water barrier on the Silk Road.”

NARRATOR 11.30 - 11.51

The opening was made by President Fahri Korutürk and Prime Minister Naim Talu. The crowds walked from Asia to Europe singing the 50th Year Anthem. The interest shown to the opening was literally “shaking.”

Int: Mübeccel GÜRGÜN 11.51 - 12.00

“They made me go back. It began to swing. They said there was a threat and did not let me go any further.

Int: Tacettin GÜRGÜN 12.00 - 12.21

“The bridge swung on the opening day since it was overcrowded. Half the people were sent back on the bridge and only the remaining half completed the crossing on foot.

NARRATOR 12.22 - 12.38

Politics and jokes of life blocked some to attend the opening. Süleyman Demirel, who played the leading role in the past of the bridge was no longer ruling the government. He watched the opening at home on TV.

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 12.38 - 12.59

“Politics is something strange. We were not fortunate enough to be there. But the important thing was to have it made. The pleasure of seeing the bridge there was enough for me. I was really pleased.”

Int: Hayri TOP 12.59 – 13.21

“I went there but couldn’t attend the opening, it was overcrowded. I had just married at the time. My brother in law was with me. I took him on my shoulders. There was a barrier there and they didn’t let anyone in. It was very crowded and we decided to go back home.”

NARRATOR 13.22 - 13.37

A structure that would change the destiny of İstanbul was finally in service. The applause of the crowds was accompanied by the song “Bosphorus Bridge” performed by the famous performer Emel Sayın.

*(“The Bosphorus Bridge” song,
performed by Emel Sayın)*

In the 50th year of the Republic
Europe is connected to Anatolia
Finally the dream came true
The best decoration of my heavenly İstanbul
It is like a crown, the Bosphorus Bridge

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 14.12 - 14.36

“I was 52 years old when I crossed the bridge in my car in 1973. We had never seen İstanbul from there. We had never looked north and south from that point on. In a way, we were happy. I thought to myself, “so this is how it looks from here.”

Int: Tacettin GÜRGÜN 14.36 - 15.02

“I crossed the bridge on foot once. There used to be elevators in the towers at the time. One could pay 1 TL at the elevator stand, climb up and cross the bridge. They closed the bridge to pedestrians when suicidal attempts increased.”

NARRATOR 15.03 - 15.28

Because of problems related to security reasons, the bridge was closed to pedestrians after four years of service.

The bridge not only increased the rate of crossing from Asia to Europe, but the social and economical life on both sides as well. Almost all industrial sites in İstanbul were located on the European part before the bridge was built. But industry leaped to Asian bank in no time. Large and middle scaled industrial sites were created.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 15.28 - 15.54

“There was not a single shop on Bağdat Street. Now, the street is something else. There are many business centers. People of my generation may find this strange. It is hard to understand the logic in this. We lost the places we lived in. I sometimes look for the city I lived in.”

NARRATOR 15.55 - 16.05

As expected, the bridge caused population movement on the two sides. Parallel to the development of industry, the population of the Asian part increased.

Int: Tacettin GÜRGÜN 16.05 - 16.50

“Because the bridge was built here and because of migration Beylerbeyi turned out to be the most expensive region in all İstanbul. Unfortunately, the bridge brought high expenses to us living around here. The region took a great deal of migration from inner Anatolia and finding a house for rent was not easy anymore. We wished to rent a house around here but the rents were so high. The landlord said it was all because of the Bosphorus Bridge. It was because of the view.

NARRATOR 16.51 - 16.59

Although the bridge brought a solution to the traffic problem in the first years, traffic jammed on it earlier than presumed.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 17.01 - 17.10

Number of cars in traffic increased wildly. Many can afford automobiles nowadays, it is easier to buy automobiles.

NARRATOR 17.11 - 18.07

Almost all problems that led the government to build a bridge re-appeared a couple of years later. Migration to İstanbul increased a great deal because of new job opportunities. More migrants meant more ghettos. Contrary to expectations, settlement in the city was moving north. It was planned to move on the east-west axis. Construction of a second bridge was inevitable. The second Bosphorus Bridge was opened on 3rd July, 1988.

There has been an important development on the Asian bank, still it has not reached the European bank. With the increasing number of large business centers and apartments, the European bank of the city is still the center of attraction.

NARRATOR 18.28 - 18.42

Although the population on the Asian bank increased after the bridges, the European bank is still the crowded side. Two thirds of the people in İstanbul live on the European bank and one third of the population live on the Asian bank today.

Int: Mübeccel GÜRGÜN 18.47 - 18.59

“That side is more crowded. I feel alright when I come back. Beylerbeyi is so nice although it may seem crowded. It is much better than the other bank. This is how I feel.”

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER 18.59 - 19.18

“I live on the Asian shore. Population here is less comparatively. There is more green space and houses are not on top of each other. I like it here because houses have gardens. This is why I live on this shore.”

NARRATOR 19.22 - 19.37

73 % of labour and 65 % of the population is on the European bank today. The 8 % difference means that 8 % of the city population move from Asia to Europe for work everyday.

NARRATOR 19.45 - 19.51

The Anatolian bank is like a “pension” for some who live there.

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER 19.52 - 20.16

“Most of the business centers are on the European bank. That is why prices and rents of flats are higher than the ones on the Asian bank. The working class prefers to live on the Anatolian bank.”

Int: Tacettin GÜRGÜN 20.16 - 20.39

“We are used to living on the Anatolian side. The other bank is a little luxurious for us. We do not want to be a part of it. You must have a higher income to meet that standard.”

NARRATOR 20.43 - 20.51

Approximately one million people move from one continent to the other everyday. An average of 100 thousand vehicles cross over the two bridges daily.

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER 20.52 - 21.46

“Some spend at least 4 hours of their day on the road. This causes a great stress. Crossing on the bridge could have been organized in a different manner. It would be better for the people of İstanbul if priority was given to busses. Unfortunately, only motor vehicles use these bridges. There is still the lack of trams and fast trains. The conditions in busses in busy hours are terrible. It is so crowded. The bridge has been useful but it is not enough. It was a necessity but it has not been enough.”

NARRATOR 21.52 - 22.02

The bridges brought two continents closer but the traffic on it became such a mess that people became hesitant to cross over.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 22.02 - 22.12

“We began organizing our lives according to the traffic on the bridges.”

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER 22.15 - 22.43

“I set out late, around nine, in order to quit the traffic jam.

- Ohhh, is it not possible to pay in cash, here? Okay. Thank you. Good evening.

It really is a mess between seven and nine. That is why I generally set out after nine.”

NARRATOR 22.47 - 22.57

Steamships and small trips on the sea were the essentials of old İstanbul. Steamship transportation reduced because of the two bridges built.

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 22.58 - 23.33

“Steamships were a lifestyle in their time. People getting back home from work used to meet in the decks of these steamships to have decent conversations. Some even played cards. There were no problems of crossing to the other bank. Life is not that easy for us now. We are facing difficulties in crossing over although we have two bridges built. We never had such a problem in the past.

NARRATOR 23.37 - 24.02

The Bosphorus Bridge is one of the places where social events take place. The opening of the bridge had suffered opposition, ironically the bridge became a center of “opposition” itself in time. Many individual and social opposition activities take place on the bridge today.

NARRATOR 24.05 - 24.13

Although closed to pedestrians, various sports activities create a colourful “habitat” on the bridge.

NARRATOR 24.26 - 24.34

The Eurasia Marathon enables athletes and citizens to cross from Asia to Europe once every year.

NARRATOR 24.37 - 24.59

Before the bridges, İstanbul was a city of fairy tales with its silhouette of domes and minarets. The “steel necklace” of the Bosphorus became the most significant item of the silhouette today. In spite of the problems and endless discussions it causes, the Bosphorus Bridge turned out to be a piece of life in İstanbul...

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 25.42 - 25.53

“Without the bridges and the roads connected to them, we could not talk about an İstanbul with a population of 12 million people. Life would be very difficult without them.”

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER 25.54 - 26.06

“It is not possible to think of an İstanbul without the bridges. The city formed according to them. Settlement in the city reached the other bank.”

Int: Süleyman DEMİREL 26.06 - 26.11

“Whenever I cross the bridge I say to myself it was a good decision to have it built.”

Int: Hayri TOP 26.11 - 26.22

“I make my living here. I feed my family here. I have a devotion to the bridge. It is like family, like one of my children. That is how I see it.”

Int: Aydın BOYSAN 26.22 - 26.45

“I could not get used to the silhouette of İstanbul with the bridges. Still, it would be useless to say they should not built them. Being that romantic, I presume, would be far from seriousness. That’s why all I can do is imagine İstanbul without the bridges.”

NARRATOR **26.52 - 27.09**

Many people crossing the bridge are not aware of the fact that they are crossing from one continent to another.

Although it is ignored in the routine of daily life, this is a privilege that only a few can witness in a lifetime.

Int: Mehmet Naci TUNCER **27.09 - 27.33**

“I never think about it as crossing continents. It is a part of my life since 20 years. Since it is a daily routine, it does not feel interesting anymore. For me, it is something ordinary. I used to look at the sea while crossing the bridge earlier, now I don't even do that. It only feels like going to some part of the city from another. “

End Credits