

# ATATÜRK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ DERGİSİ

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## A T A T Ü R K

### THE GREAT LIBERATOR AND FOUNDER OF THE MODERN TURKISH REPUBLIC\*

Org. NECİP TORUMTAY

In one of his poems the famous Italian artist Michelangelo said: "There is a statue of Venus in every block of marble and the true artist is the one who can shape this statue from that block of marble." Undoubtedly, this also holds true for statesmen and leaders. Both the life and destiny of humanity and nations are determined, in most cases, by the strength, personality and ambition of their leaders, be they kings, sultans, shahs or presidents elected through democratic procedures. These men impress their characters and strong personalities upon the societies from which they emerge. Some of these have plunged humanity into sheer disasters and tragedy while a few others either created their nations afresh, exalted them or opened up new eras of history.

For example the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet, the conqueror who, by capturing Istanbul (then Constantinople) from the Byzantines in 1453, started a new age. Cromwell shaped the future of Britain while in France Robespierre gave direction to his country's future. In the new world, George Washington created a new and powerful nation. Abraham Lincoln

\* This article was lectured in English in the Army, Navy and Air Force War Colleges, War Academies, Staff Colleges and Universities of the American Armed Forces, and the University of National Security by our Chief of the General Staff, General Necip TORUMTAY in October 1981, when he was lieutenant general and invited by the United States on the occasion of the centenary of Atatürk's birth with the intention of publicizing Atatürk and Turkey.

added further dignity to this new nation. Atatürk created today's modern Turkey from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. He is the able architect of today's Turkey.

Occupying an important strategic position in the Middle East, which has currently been the scene of very serious developments and potentially explosive, Turkey, with its 45 million, population is a staunch ally of the West and a reliable member of NATO.

When we look back to 1918 at the end of World War I, we visualize the great Ottoman Empire in the last decadent stage, defeated together with Germany, her armies disbanded and disarmed. There existed almost no hope of survival for the Turkish nation whose land was divided up and then occupied by the super-powers of the time. Under such circumstances, a 38 year old, dynamic general, Mustafa Kemal started the Turkish War of Independence by giving a new spirit to a defeated nation and by organizing her resistance against the occupation forces. Thus, he miraculously defeated the enemy and established the national boundaries. After the war Mustafa Kemal worked tirelessly to install the Western democracy in the country and created today's Turkey through a series of reforms by the unyielding support of his people. The year 1981 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of this great patriot, soldier and statesman.

Atatürk was born in Thessaloniki, then a part of the Ottoman Empire, in 1881 and was given the name "Mustafa". His father was a liberal minded businessman and his mother was a devout Muslim, loyal to traditions. Mustafa lost his father when he was only a youngster. He opposed his mother's wishes for him to be placed in a religious school, and applied for and passed the entrance tests of a military high school.

In military school, young Mustafa's teacher, who was also called Mustafa, admired his student's exceptional ability in mathematics and said one day, "We are both named Mustafa. There must be a difference. We'll call you Kemal." This new name, which means "perfect", lasted a lifetime and Mustafa's name became Mustafa Kemal. The name "Atatürk" was given to him later while he was President. It means "The Father of the Turks."

The very successful years in school for Mustafa Kemal coincide with the worst period of administration in the Ottoman Empire. With wars one after the other, internal upheavals and gradually worsening economic and social structures and under a powerless and inept administration, the

country faced great sufferings. Such chaos was a constant preoccupation of this young and alert student and evoked in Mustafa Kemal certain ideas concerning his country's future. Deeply rooted now was his perception that the Empire was on the brink of material and spiritual bankruptcy. It could no longer cope with a changing world and the nation was rapidly being driven to sheer disaster. It was now essential to prevent such disaster and move the country up to the level of Western civilization. In time, this perception had become Mustafa Kemal's unaltered objective.

Always the focus of much attention because of his brilliant intellect, exceptional character and straightforwardness, he later distinguished himself in the staff college because of his perceptive views on tactics and strategy.

As an exceptional personality, his friends all held the opinion that Mustafa Kemal would accomplish significant achievements in the future.

He experienced war on the Empire's battle fronts spread over three continents. First as a captain and later as a major he fought in Syria, the Balkans and North Africa (Libya). When Italian troops landed in North Africa, he went to Tobruk, fought the Italians at Derne. In 1913 he was appointed military attache in Sofia. While at this post, he followed political developments closely both in Europe and the Balkans and through continuous reports tried to draw the Sultan's attention to a rapidly approaching world war. Furthermore, he warned the Ottoman administration that was at that moment cooperating closely with the Germans and had signed a secret pact with them, that the Empire must remain absolutely outside such a war, because if she allied herself with the Germans the result would be catastrophic.

In his opinion, centuries of continuous wars and internal clashes had already worn out the Ottoman Empire and she was not ready for another war. Moreover, despite her military strength, Germany had a poor chance of winning such a war.

Coming as it did from an officer of low rank, this warning was not heeded. And on 28 October 1914 upon bombardment of the Russian ports of Sebastopol, Odessa, and Novorosisk by the Turkish fleet which also included two battleships bought from Germany, Russia penetrated the eastern frontiers of the Empire and the Turks found themselves in World War I.

With the outbreak of war, LTC Mustafa Kemal asked the Ministry of War for a frontline assignment and was appointed to Gallipoli in February 1915 with the mission of organizing and commanding the 19th Division. This appointment which went almost unnoticed at the time was to change the course of history.

#### GALLIPOLI WARS

Gallipoli is a narrow, long stretch of peninsula north of Dardanelles where the Aegean joins the Sea of Marmara. The narrowest point is a mere one mile. When engaged in war with Czarist Russia, Turkey had naturally closed her straits, thus cutting off Russia's sea link with her allies. In the spring of 1915 England and France sent an expeditionary force to the Dardanelles in a bid to open this important waterway, but operations lasted far longer than was intended by the British war planners and there was much blood shed.

After nine months, the whole affair ended with the defeat and withdrawal of both British and French units. During the course of this bloody campaign, that went down in history as the Gallipoli War, this small peninsula turned into a vast, enormous graveyard with some half a million casualties from both sides. Mustafa Kemal's personal daring and military leadership had a tremendous, almost unbelievable impact on the outcome of the Gallipoli campaign. During the fight he initially commanded the 19th Division, but before it was over he had commanded more than an Army Corps.

For a closer look into these wars it will be useful to remember the overall situation at that time.

It will be recalled that the First World War had started in early August 1914. At the outbreak of hostilities, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire formed the Central Powers, while England, France, and Italy formed the Powers of Entente with whom the U.S.A. later joined. As for Russia, she had sided with the allies from the beginning. When the Turkish Straits were closed and Russia's sea links with her allies were cut off, the Commander-in Chief of the Russian forces, Grand Duke Nicholas, asked England to open a second Turkish front either on land or at sea to alleviate Turkish pressure on the Caucasus. Acting on this request, the British war council decided on the formation of an expeditionary force whose main objective was to capture Istanbul by first opening the Dardanelles.

Formed near the end of February 1915, this expeditionary force shelled the Turkish coastal batteries at the entrance to the Dardanelles and managed to silence part of them.

The final attack by 18 large sized battleships, numerous of destroyers, submarines and various other vessels of the British and French navies aimed for quick, decisive victory and passage through the straits. However, this attack was a complete failure and because of heavy losses was cancelled.

This defeat of the allied naval forces caused great concern and the enemy decided to launch a combined amphibious operation on the southern and western coasts of the peninsula.

Meanwhile, based on the evaluation that an amphibious operation was now probable, the Turkish authorities formed the 5th Turkish Army initially comprising six divisions for the defense of the Dardanelles. The Chief of the German Military Mission in Turkey, Marshall Liman Von Sanders was appointed as the 5th Army Commander.

By 20 April 1915, four out of the six divisions of the 5th Army were deployed around the Gallipoli Peninsula and the other two to the south of the straits; Mustafa Kemal's 19th Division was held to the south of the town of Gallipoli as the army reserve.

The Allied maneuver plan can be summarized as follows:

Main Forces to be landed on the southern tip of the peninsula at two different points would take the hills controlling the straits. To accomplish this, an ANZAC Corps (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) composed of two divisions would land in the Kabatepe region and a force consisting of two British and one French division and an Indian brigade would sieze the Seddulbahir area. Simultaneously, as a deception, a secondary landing would be conducted in the Kumkapı region to the south of the straits and some naval units would sail toward Saros Bay to give the impression of a landing there.

The expected amphibious landing began in the early morning hours of 25 April 1915 under intensive naval artillery support and the initial objectives were captured from the relatively weak and poorly positioned Turkish troops. The ANZAC Corps units which had landed just south of Kabatepe region were moving toward the key hill of Kocaçimen without any serious resistance. However, within the very first hour of this landing

operation when nothing was yet clear, Mustafa Kemal, on his own initiative, moved his division to this area to counteract a possible serious threat. He later reported his action to the Army Commander and secured his approval. Mustafa Kemal's immediate reaction with his forces prevented the fall of Kocaçimen Hill to the enemy and seriously influenced the final outcome of the battles. Mustafa Kemal's order to the 57th Regiment as it was hastily sent against the enemy, is remarkable:

"I don't order you to attack; I order you to die. In the time it takes us to die, other troops and commanders can come and take our places." With this order, he sent his men against the intense enemy fire. The regiment followed the order and was virtually annihilated. The regimental commander himself died during this attack, but the time needed was gained when fresh forces reached the area, the enemy advances were stopped then and there.

Undoubtedly what's essential in war is not to die, but to kill; however, it would be difficult to kill without being ready to die! Mustafa Kemal's own evident readiness to die made others ready to die at his orders.

Both sides introduced reinforcements during the very bitter fighting that lasted until August; but the situation remained unchanged and the British forces were held to a stalemate.

In a final attempt to take the Kocaçimen Hill from the north, General Hamilton, the British Commander, landed an additional army corps at Suvla Bay. On the Turkish side, forces were depleted. Heavy losses had reduced the force levels considerably, a lot of units had lost their commanders and there was difficulty in receiving supplies. Furthermore, in this narrow piece of land, areas of responsibilities of several units overlapped.

No Turkish reserves existed in the region and the Army Commander ordered the deployment on foot of the two Turkish Divisions from Saros to the south. On August 8th, the Chief of Staff of the Fifth Army asked Mustafa Kemal, on behalf of the Army Commander, for his views of the situation as well as for what he proposed. Upon this, Mustafa Kemal sent a message, asking him in the name of the country and its safety to attract Von Sanders' attention to the critical position on Conk bayırı. Shortly afterward the Chief of Staff, on Von Sanders' behalf, called Mustafa Kemal on the telephone to ask for his views. He gave them forcibly. The offensive was general in nature, as a result of landings, the enemy was greatly

superior. Urgent action was essential if the whole ridge were not to be lost. "There is one moment left," he said. "If we lose that moment, we are faced with a general catastrophe."

Asked what was the remedy, he replied, "A unified command." He went further, "The only remedy is to put all the available troops under my command." The Chief of Staff asked ironically, "Won't that be too many?"

"It will be too few," Kemal replied.

On the night of 8 August, the Army Commander appointed Colonel Mustafa Kemal -he had been promoted to Colonel in June- to the command of the newly formed Anafartalar Group.

The Group comprised seven divisions. Disregarding the fatigue of the two divisions just deployed to the area and their need for reconnaissance, Mustafa Kemal issued the necessary orders during the very short time period between his assuming command at 02.00 hours and daybreak. At dawn, his counterattacking units gained the initiative and blunted the enemy attempt right at the beginning. The following day, Kemal attacked Conk bayırı causing the enemy back, inflicting heavy casualties. Thus, the destiny of the Gallipoli Battle was determined.

Upon the recommendation of the British Commanding General who saw no chance of success, England decided to withdraw from the Gallipoli Peninsula and left the Turkish soil on January 9, 1916.

Started in great expectations and after intensive preparations nine months earlier, the Gallipoli campaign was followed with worldwide interest. So were, in fact, the repercussions from the final results.

"Seldom in history," wrote the British official historian, "can the exertions of a single divisional commander have exercised, on three separate occasions, so profound an influence not only on the course of a battle, but perhaps, on the fate of a campaign and even the destiny of a nation."

The Gallipoli campaign was kind of war in which men fought tooth and nail. However, the fighting men of this war gained respect for each other and fought in high spirits.

That is why the British have referred to Gallipoli as "The Gentle War." On certain days of intensive fighting, cease-fires were called for certain periods to allow time for picking up the smelling dead bodies. Du-

ring such periods, soldiers from both sides even conversed with each other in the buffer zone before resuming their bitter fighting. Just like a football game. Similarly, cease-fires were declared on the religious holidays by both sides and soldiers exchanged gifts by throwing them into each other's trenches.

Today, sixty-six years after this memorable war, Turkish, British and French military cemeteries, monuments for those fallen and museums on the Gallipoli Peninsula still perpetuate the atmosphere, the excitement, the emotion and the enthusiasm of those days.

In 1934 Atatürk made the following comments to the foreign combatants whom he had fought as his enemies only a few years before: "Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... You are now lying 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 to the war, wipe away your tears, your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."

These words are engraved on a brass plate on the ANZAC Memorial in Queensland Province of Australia.

From the very beginning of the Gallipoli Campaign, Mustafa Kemal realized the importance of naval power.

Toward the end of the campaign, he said to Turkish and foreign press members: "We are a landlocked nation just like the Russians. They are bound to collapse because I have locked them into the Black Sea by blockading the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. I have thus cut them off from their allies. But we too are bound to break down, and for the very same reason. True, we sit on the fringes of the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, but we are unable to venture out on any ocean. As a land power without sea power, we will never be able to defend our peninsula against sea powers which can bring up their land forces unchallenged."

As we all know, Russia collapsed two years after that.

While the outcome of the Gallipoli Battles was a heavy blow for the British and French, it inspired national spirit for the Turks who had suffered from material and spiritual adversities during the preceding years;



and in a way the outcome planted the seeds of the War of Independence. Turkish soldiers who shed their blood in Gallipoli symbolized their will to create a new country from among the debris of an Empire in the personality of Mustafa Kemal and constituted the abundant source of inspiration for his struggle for the future.

As a famed Turkish poet said: "A land is homeland only when it has people ready to die for it."

#### YEARS 1916 - 1921

Following the Gallipoli Campaign Kemal was first assigned to Edirne in Thrace and then to the Eastern Front. Now he was a general. Soon after he arrived in the East as the 16th Corps Commander, the Russians took the offensive in Eastern Turkey. While inflicting heavy casualties on the Russians, Turkish units withdrew to suitable positions in the rear.

In the course of the retreat a Turkish soldier grumbled to him, "What cowardly commanders are these? I was killing Russians all the way. Why do they drag us back?"

Kemal replied, "Very well. But the battle will not be decided just by your killing Russians. This is a big army and there may be reasons for the retreat that you don't understand."

"And who may you be?"

"I am your commanding officer."

The soldier looked surprised and conceded, "Oh, well, that's different." Mustafa Kemal was right on the frontline at all critical times. Wherever he went he brought action and vitality. Soon after this withdrawal the 16th Corps conducted a counterattack and regained Bitlis and Mus and some strategic passes in the region. For this he was awarded the Golden Sword Medal. Later on, as a result of this success he was made commander of the Second Army under which his corps fought.

In 1917, Mustafa Kemal was reassigned as commander of the Seventh Army operating on the Syrian and Iraq fronts. At that time German Marshall Falkenheim commanded the Turkish forces in the area grouped under the name "Thunderbolt Army Group". Kemal did not approve of the decisions of this commander who, he thought, was leading the Turkish forces to an endless adventure against Turkish interests. He resigned and was transferred to the War Ministry in Istanbul.

In August 1918, he was again assigned as Commander of the Seventh Army and on 31 October 1918 he assumed command of the Army Group.

Later with the signing of the treaty ending the war and the disbanding of the Army Group, he returned to Istanbul.

The very day he arrived by train from Adana the British Navy was anchoring in Istanbul and was disembarking occupation troops. In the face of such a sad sight Kemal said the following to those with him: "As they have come, so they shall go!"

Having lost the war the Ottoman Empire was divided and occupied by the Allies, according to Mudros Truce and later as per the Articles of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. From this vast Empire only a thin slice of Anatolia remained to the Turks. Her armies were disbanded and disarmed, and all her resources confiscated and an independent country that enjoyed freedom since its birth was virtually shackled.

Furthermore, England had allocated Western Anatolia to Greece and well equipped Greek units landed in Izmir on 15 May 1919.

Under such circumstances, the Turkish intellectuals envisaged three possible solutions: British mandate, American mandate or splitting up into smaller states for eventual future independence.

Mustafa Kemal and his close friends had a firm and unified belief: A nation with freedom and independence for centuries had better die than live as slaves. Hence their decision and motto was, "Freedom or death!" This signalled the beginning of the War of Independence.

While Mustafa Kemal was beginning the National Struggle, the defeated Sultan and his puppet government complied with the whims of the occupation forces. Under these circumstances and with the help of his friends in key positions who shared his views, Kemal was appointed to an Army Inspector's post in Anatolia, where there were two army corps still not disbanded, with limited manpower and material.

On 16 May 1919, Mustafa Kemal boarded a small boat in Istanbul and landed in Samsun on 19 May 1919 to start the national struggle. Thus, four days after the Greeks had set up their standard of conquest on the shores of the Aegean, Kemal set up his standard of liberation on the shores of the Black Sea. The battle for Anatolia was about to begin. A new chapter had been opened in the history of the Turkish people. For

this reason, 19 May is a day of special significance in Turkish history and it is celebrated as a national holiday every year.

Traveling inland, Mustafa Kemal visited the cities of Amasya, Sivas and Erzurum meeting peoples, representatives and military commanders wherever he happened to be and set up the basic principles that were to govern the national struggle for independence. In the meantime, however, suspicious of Kemal's contacts, talks and meetings in Anatolia, the government of Istanbul first warned him about such activities and then ordered him back to Istanbul. In response to this invitation, he returned both his uniform and all honors and decorations that went with it and declared that he did not recognize a government bowing to the whims and atrocities of the enemy and that he joined the ranks of the masses in the national movement as a simple Turkish citizen. From then on, in addition to the foreign enemies, he had the Sultan and his sympathisers to deal with.

The Greek forces in Izmir were in the process of expanding their occupation inland to Anatolia. Thus the local people experienced occupation for the first time in their history. Finding this unacceptable, they began unorganized resistance. The Greek occupation created intensive reaction throughout Anatolia and with even a firmer decision for national resistance and the Turkish people responded by uniting around Mustafa Kemal. Kemal's crossing to Anatolia attracted the people's attention and raised their hopes. Immigration from the occupied areas, principally Istanbul, to Anatolia began in earnest.

Mustafa Kemal was elected as the delegation head of representatives by provincial delegates at the 2nd Congress held in Sivas on 4 September 1919. Thus, a conscious and legal unification movement was started under the leadership of their national liberator.

The U.S. General J.G. Harbord, who was sent to Turkey by President Wilson to study the Armenian question and developments in Turkey had a meeting with Mustafa Kemal about a week after the Sivas Conference and inquired about his intentions. When Mustafa Kemal replied that he would unify his divided nation, drive out the enemies and set up a free and civilized nation, Harbord suggested that such a hope was against logic, against military facts. "We know that individuals, now and then, commit suicide. Are we now going to see the suicide of a nation?"

Kemal replied, "What you say, General, is true. What we want to do, in our situation, is explainable neither in military nor in any other terms. But in spite of everything we are going to do it, to save our country, to establish a free and civilized Turkish state, to live like human beings. If we can't succeed," he continued, "rather than fall into the palm of the enemy like a bird and be condemned to a gradual, dishonorable death, we prefer, being the sons of our forefathers, to die fighting."

Harbord was impressed by his resolution, his spirit. "I had taken everything into account," he said, "but not that. Had we been in your place, we should have done the same thing."

The national struggle founded its own state on 23 April 1920 when Mustafa Kemal called the Grand National Assembly in Ankara, composed of representatives of the nation. This date marked the declaration of liberty by the national struggle movement at home and abroad. 23 April signifies the selfassertion of the movement. With the government it formed, the national assembly rose up as a new state and ended both the government in Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire which had been in existence since 1299. From this point on, Ankara's voice counted and was heeded to. Simultaneously new problems arose.

Forces loyal to the Sultan started sporadic resistance against Kemal with an occasional revolt and uprising here and there. With his still much dispersed and scattered forces he managed to suppress these attempts.

Bolshevik Russia was watching closely the incipient national movement in Turkey. Meanwhile, Kemal had talks with the new Russian leaders regarding Armenian minorities, who, encouraged by President Wilson's fourteen principles, were trying to set up an independent Armenia. In their answer the Russians expressed their readiness to help Turkey on condition that she consent to the annexation by Armenia of the Turkish cities of Van and Bitlis that were recaptured only recently from the Russians. Informed of this stipulation Kemal decided to counteract and ordered his Eastern Army to occupy so called Armenia, whose commander, General Karabekir lost no time in capturing the Turkish cities of Kars, Ardahan, Sarıkamış and Batum that had been lost to the Russians at the time of the Turco-Russian War of 1877. Batum was later returned to Russia.

This military victory was affirmed and finalized from a political point when a pact was signed to this effect on December 3, 1920 at Gümrü

with the Russians. It established Turkey's eastern frontier with Russia which still remains unchanged.

Now it was time to halt and expel the Greek forces advancing on the western front. The forces that had occupied Izmir and its vicinity began their eastward advance in January 1921. However, for the first time at İnönü these forces were faced with organized and disciplined Turkish forces rather than sporadic militia.

The Greeks were stopped by stubborn resistance and withdrew after Turkish counterattacks.

Shortly after this successful operation, the first diplomatic agreement was signed with Russia in Moscow. As such, the national government was officially recognized for the first time by a foreign country.

At the end of March, the Greeks started a new offensive on two fronts with the objective of gaining Eskişehir. This time they suffered even heavier losses and retreated in panic. Shortly before this operation, Mustafa Kemal had started organizing the irregular militia into a regular army.

Reinforced and re-equipped, the Greeks repeated their offensive into Anatolia in June 1921. Their sole objective was again the railway junction at Eskişehir and this time the plan envisioned an encirclement from the south.

Closely observing the enemy's maneuver, Mustafa Kemal made an extremely difficult and historical decision. He would leave only the rear guard elements in contact with the Greeks, and withdraw the main forces 90 miles eastward to fight the decisive battle here along the Sakarya River. This decision had adverse effects in the Grand National Assembly and on the public opinion. However, vested with the responsibility of commanding all Turkish forces as per the decision of the Assembly and by explaining all the relevant military considerations, Mustafa Kemal controlled the situation.

Based on the extraordinary authority granted to him by the Assembly, Kemal asked his people to provide full support for the upcoming decisive war by exploiting all available means.

Per his orders, all families would have to turn over to the national forces 40 % of foodstuffs, garments and leather, 20 % of cattle and other

animals and all the arms and munitions that they currently held. All blacksmiths and similar craftsmen were requisitioned to manufacture rapidly as many weapons and ammunition as they could. He also demanded from each household a contribution for the forces of a parcel of linen, a pair of socks and a pair of shoes. This, as Kemal saw it ahead of his time, was total war. It was not, he said, "two armies fighting against one another but two nations who are both risking their existence and who summon for the fight all their resources, all their possessions and all their material and moral forces. For this reason, I had to interest the Turkish nation in the war in all their actions, their sentiments and their conceptions, in the same way as the army at the front. Every single individual in the village, in his home, in the fields, had to consider himself in the same way as those fighting in the front." He added prophetically, "In the future wars also the decisive element of victory will be found in this conception."

Churchill, who was to find it so many years later, describes how Kemal now, "called upon the wives and daughters of his soldiers to do the work of the camels and oxen which he lacked."

#### THE BATTLE OF SAKARYA

The merciless, tooth and nail battle that lasted 22 days and nights during which the river ran crimson with blood, is one of the turning points in Turkey's history.

By delaying the enemy forces in the Eskişehir area, Mustafa Kemal withdrew his forces and reorganized them on the eastern banks of the Sakarya River. He kept some divisions in reserve to be deployed against the probable encirclements from the south. The historical order of the Commander-in-Chief at Sakarya was, "There will be no line of defense, but a surface of defense, and the surface is the whole country. Not an inch of the country should be abandoned until it was drenched with the blood of the citizens."

Such orders and directives given by Mustafa Kemal during the War of Independence and the former battles constitute brilliant examples in their expressiveness, logical order and verbal style. These orders are now study material in our military schools.

After almost two months of preparations, on 13 August 1921, the Greeks started an advance in the direction of Sakarya. The battlecry of

the Greek King and Commander-in Chief was "Objective Ankara". British liaison officers in the Greek army were invited by the Greek King to a "celebration dinner" in Ankara. The Greek army expected to follow the historical road of Alexander the Great and cut the Gordion Knot at Polatli once again.

Initially the Greeks intended to encircle the main Turkish forces from the south, as expected, but were unable to. They changed to a frontal attack and gained penetrations in some areas. However, relentless and intensive counterattacks forced them west of the river. Following 22 days of continuous and persistent fighting, the enemy realized that Mustafa Kemal's willpower and energy was stronger than their own and they left the battleground to him. On 12 September the Greeks started retreating. However, due to his own losses in men and equipment Mustafa Kemal abstained from a pursuit but immediately began to reorganize and re-equip his forces.

Because of this victory, the Grand National Assembly promoted Mustafa Kemal to the rank of Field Marshall and awarded him the title, "Gazi" meaning a distinctive war veteran.

Years later Kemal was presented by an artist with a large picture of the Battle of Sakarya, in the foreground of which he was shown prancing across the battlefield on a magnificent charger. The painter, awaiting his congratulations, was taken aback when he ordered sternly, "That picture must never be exhibited." There was an embarrassed silence. "All those who took part in the battle," he explained, "know very well that our horses were all skin and bone and that we were hardly any better ourselves. Skeletons all of us. In painting those fine warriors and sleek horses, you dishonor Sakarya, my friend."

Mustafa Kemal's victory in Sakarya accelerated the recognition of the National Turkish government by other countries. Only a month after Sakarya, the Kars Agreement was signed with the Soviet Caucasus Republic and following that the Ankara Agreement was concluded with France. India, Afghanistan and other countries of the Orient followed. Soviet Russia started a financial aid program. Initially expecting to exploit the Anatolian Revolution in their own favor, the Russian communist administration was disillusioned when they found out the true aims and objectives of Mustafa Kemal and his friends. Kemal had an eye for the West, and in his heart, he cherished Western-type democracy. Nevertheless, he desired to build

up good relations with the neighboring countries and he kept a good but controlled and restrained relation with Russia. The time now had come to eliminate the enemy from the homeland. The winter of 1921 and the spring of 1922 were spent in military preparations for a general counter-offensive. Meanwhile, the Greeks fortified a perfect, seemingly impenetrable defense line along the Eskişehir-Kütahya-Afyon axis. British and Greek strategists claimed that this defense line could never be broken by the Turks.

#### THE FINAL OFFENSIVE

While all preparations were being completed for the final attack, troop movements were carried out secretly. Different opinions arose among the commanders and Mustafa Kemal on the maneuver plan. The majority favored a frontal attack to make a breakthrough along the railway axis. Mustafa Kemal, on the other hand, was thinking of a main attack from the south, to outflank the enemy and destroy them by cutting off their main line of retreat. However, the terrain in the south was mountainous, rugged and more favorable for defense, and such plan was risky too.

Finally, Kemal's plan was adopted. The offensive was to start the morning of 26 August 1922.

Mustafa Kemal maintained that the success of the offensive would depend heavily on the element of surprise. Consequently, he exercised maximum security and deception. To cover his departure to the frontline from Ankara, he ordered the distribution of invitation cards to an evening party to be held on the day of the offensive. He left Ankara in a car rather than the train. He said to his close friends, "I'll destroy the Greeks within 14 days and force them back to the Aegean."

At dawn the morning of 26 August with intensive artillery fire, the offensive commenced all along the front line. Fighting was short and fierce. By 09.30, all but two of the division objectives were captured. The division commander at Ciğil Tepe failed to reach his objective on time due to very rugged terrain and strong enemy resistance, so he committed suicide. A few hours later that division also reached its objective at the cost of heavy casualties.



The offensive was so rapid and intense on all fronts that the enemy commander failed to identify the main attack and the army corp in reserve remained unmoved until it was too late.

The majority of enemy forces were encircled and destroyed by 30 August 1922 and the rest driven back into the Aegean at Izmir following a nine day pursuit. It was so sad to find many Turkish villages burned and destroyed with their inhabitants by the enemy forces during their escape westward.

However, immediately after the victory of 30 August, when the captured Greek commander, General Trikopis was brought into Mustafa Kemal's tent, the victorious commander shook his hand in sincerity and said: "You must be tired. Please have a seat," and he offered him a cigarette and a cup of coffee. General Trikopis said, "I didn't realize you were so young, General," and they sat and discussed the past operation.

Later when Mustafa Kemal entered Izmir, he noticed that a Greek flag was spread out like a rug on the steps leading to the Governor's office. Refusing to step on it he said: "A flag is the symbol of a country's independence," and he immediately ordered that it be removed.

The Turkish capture of Izmir ended the three years of Greek occupation. Victory in the Great Offensive had taken fifteen days. Later when Mustafa Kemal was back in Ankara, he apologized to his friends, "Forgive me. One can sometimes make mathematical errors. I was one day off in my estimate." Following the liberation of Izmir, the Turkish Straits were retaken; Istanbul was cheerfully captured and the Mudanya Agreement signed in October. Eastern Thrace was given back to Turkey. Immediately after that, active and fiery discussions in the Grand National Assembly ended in the abolition of the Sultanate and the termination of the seven century long Ottoman Dynasty.

The Lausanne Peace Conference was convened and after long and difficult discussions, a treaty was signed on 24 July 1923. The main text of the treaty comprises 143 articles and officially recognizes Turkey with her present boundaries and complete sovereignty.

As the aftermath of the Turkish victory, British Prime Minister Lloyd George who wanted to create a new Greek empire on Asia Minor, could not stand the severe criticism of the opposition in the parliament and resigned. As British author Lord Kinross said in his book, "After three ye-

ars of fighting the despised Turkish rebel had helped to bring down a British government and a renowned Prime Minister. The romantic had fallen to the realist. The Macedonian had defeated the Celt."

#### BUILDING A NEW COUNTRY

With the termination of the war, Mustafa Kemal had reached the first of his long term objectives. The country was free of the occupying forces. The next objective was to create a new country.

According to Atatürk, "Each substantial war and each great victory must give birth to a new world. Otherwise, victory in itself will only be lost effort." The task was to replace the medieval social system suffering from centuries long religious influence with a modern one based on western civilization.

Mustafa Kemal approached this objective step by step by careful examination of circumstances. A full series of reforms were essential. Being far-sighted in planning and practical in implementation, he decided to take the first important step right after the war and proposed his idea of declaring a republican regime to the Grand National Assembly. This proposal was approved and on 29 October 1923 announced throughout Turkey and the world. The whole nation celebrated the declaration in great excitement and Mustafa Kemal was elected as the first president.

It was also essential to abolish the Califate in order to avoid the extreme influence of religion on the new administration. This would break the final bond between Turkey and the medieval age. Calif was a title that the Ottoman sultans carried as the highest theocratical authority in the Islamic world and as the representative of the Moslem Prophet Mohammed.

As may be surmised, it was not easy for the Assembly to decide on this abolition and change a centuries long tradition. However, using his logic and his power of persuasion, Kemal overcame this rather thorny problem.

Another reform was aimed at attire and headgear reformation. The society had to be modernized not only spiritually and in its way of thinking, but also formally in all ways. The almost century old fez seemed to be a symbol of backwardness. However, its replacement with a European type hat was bound to cause heavy reaction in the religious circles. Shortly it was a "now or never" decision.

To clear up the problem once and for all, Mustafa Kemal picked as his testing area the conservative town of Kastamonu, the inhabitants of which had made important contributions to the War of Independence. The news of the visit to Kastamonu of the great national liberator Mustafa Kemal had created much excitement in the area. Imaginary large size pictures of Kemal were painted on many walls in town. These pictures depicted Mustafa Kemal with a huge moustache and a fez, with a long sabre in his hand. On the day of the visit when Mustafa Kemal arrived at the town in a convertible car, people were surprised and some mumbled things. Mustafa Kemal wore a Western type summer suit, a panama hat and he had no moustache! This was exactly the dress of the infidels that had wanted to occupy the country! It was a shocking sight. But later when the people gathered around the car and Mustafa Kemal started talking to them, they kept quiet and listened with interest.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "the Turkish people, who founded the Turkish Republic, are civilized; they are civilized in history and reality. But I tell you... that the people of the Turkish Republic, who claim to be civilized, must prove that they are civilized, by their ideas and their mentality, by their family life and their way of living... They must prove in fact that they are civilized and advanced persons in their outward aspects also... I shall put my explanation to you in the form of a question."

"Is our dress national?" (Cries of no!).

"Is it civilized and international?" (Cries of no, no!)

"I agree with you. This grotesque mixture of styles is neither national nor international.. A civilized, international dress is worthy and appropriate for our nation, and we will wear it. Boots or shoes on our feet, trousers on our legs, shirt and tie, jacket and waistcoat - and of course, to complete these, a cover with a brim on our heads. I want to make this clear. This head covering is called 'hat'."

With some disenchanted exceptions, the people Kastamonu approved the liberator's offer and later a law was passed for the replacement of the fez with the hat.

Next it was time for the emancipation of the women. In the Orient, the man is generally in the foreground. Despite the legal equality of the two sexes, under many circumstances man is considered superior and enjoys social advantages and wider liberties.

In Islamic countries, women would allow only their own husbands to see their faces and bodies. Moreover in many Islamic countries, religiously a man may marry more than one woman. Turks did that during the time of the Ottoman Empire.

It would be virtually impossible to westernize the society without getting rid of this legal and traditional inequality between the sexes. Carefully estimating the probable reactions of the tradition bound people but in clear boldness, Mustafa Kemal tackled this problem as well. Today, men and women have exactly equal rights in Turkey. They live and find employment under equal social opportunities. Women do not hide their faces under a veil anymore. Although traditional attire is still worn in some village, outfits in cities, towns and the majority of villages are entirely westernized. Women are not afraid of men. Men can marry only one woman. The two sexes enjoy equal rights in marriage and divorce. Formerly, all that the men had to do was to say, "I have divorced you!".

One of the most important novelties approved by the Grand National Assembly was the secularization of the Turkish Republic as in the West. Thus state and religious affairs were completely separated and all the citizens were left free in their religious beliefs without any discrimination whatsoever. One of the important reforms to associate Turkey with the West would be the alphabet. The Arabic script hindered Turkey's intellectual relations in the international sphere and held up her cultural development. After having written in Arabic script for several centuries, Turks adopted the Latin alphabet in 1928. The new script being much easier to learn, caused a rapid increase in the rate of literacy.

Later on the weekend holiday was changed from Friday to Sunday, the Gregorian calendar, metric weights and measures were adopted; the Turkish language was stripped of excessive foreign influence. A law was passed in 1934 having the adoption of family names and the name of "Atatürk" was awarded to Mustafa Kemal by the people.

Furthermore, theological schools and cult centers degenerated by religious fervor were closed down and new schools based on modern science were opened. Teachers were provided who had contemporary education. Mustafa Kemal's saying: "The truest guide in life is science" emphasizes the importance he attached to modern knowledge.

Theological tribunes and shariat law were abolished and replaced with a new legal system based on the Swiss Code. The tribunal system was provided with autonomy.

All these developments made Turkey a very dynamic country in the 1930's with her intense economic and social activity.

The post-World War I difficulties and the economic crisis of the early thirties constituted huge handicaps for Turkey. Prior to and during the war, rural economy was prevalent in the country. People made their living basically by their own local production.

Under such circumstances, for promoting rapid development, while the private sector was still encouraged and supported, large investments and productions that necessitated funds beyond the people's capabilities were undertaken and subsidized by the State, such as railway networks, mining, highway construction, arms and ammunition production, cement industry, sugar production etc. This was what is called a mixed economy. As the private sector developed, it was expected to replace State Economic Enterprises in certain areas. During the last 50 years, this system has been implemented in Turkey and actually the private sector has increased its share in the economy. In this context opportunities have been provided for the importation of foreign technology, goods and services not yet produced domestically. Today, the Turkish economy continues its process of development under such a general system.

To realize the Western type democracy that he always longed for, Mustafa Kemal twice attempted to establish a multi-party system. He formed the Serbest Fırka - The Liberal Party - in 1930. However, this lasted only three months and as in the first attempt, following exchange of bitter arguments in the Assembly and some religious unrest in some areas, the party was dissolved upon its leader's request.

Despite his strong wishes, Mustafa Kemal was unable to witness a multi-party system in his lifetime. Such a system was introduced only six years after his death.

As to foreign policy, in formulating Turkey's relations with the neighboring countries and others, Atatürk based his main line of thinking on the principle of peaceful co-existence. His saying: "Peace at home, peace abroad" has always been his principal guidance in external relations. Treaties of friendship were signed with Russia and the neighboring Arab countries; problems were rapidly settled with the British and good rela-

tions were established. Bitter memories were set aside and friendly relations up to the level of brotherhood were established with Greece. For example, Mr. Venizelos, then the Greek Prime Minister, during his visit to Turkey, was so overwhelmed by the hospitality that he even proposed a sort of unification between the two countries. On the other hand, upon observing the newly emerging threat against world peace from two rising dictators in Europe, Hitler and Mussolini, Atatürk pioneered the formation of a Balkan Pact and a treaty which was signed in 1934. Similarly, relations with Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq were greatly improved.

Atatürk was neither a man of theories nor an ideologist. He was always practical in thinking and implementation and never forcing his ideas on others. When a group of teachers asked him one day if he was really a dictator as claimed by some European writers, he answered kindly, "If I were one, you would not have been allowed to ask such a question."

Single party regimes headed by powerful leaders are known as dictatorships. Such regimes follow an expansionist policy to ensure internal power. They create external dangers. Atatürk's foreign policy, on the contrary, was based on retraction of frontiers. Even at a stage when he was the winner, he did not think of annexing his hometown of Thessaloniki which is close to the Turkish border with Greece. He thereby proved his clear stand against imperialism. Moreover, Atatürk has always relied on the law and democratic institutions and he considered the basic principles of the nation's sovereignty, the free functioning, liberal discussions and voting practices of elected congresses and parliaments. He was a peace loving leader who had the full support of his nation, not a dictator. In 1930, he classified Hitler and Mussolini as two dictators jeopardizing world peace. For Mussolini, who intended to play Caesar's role, he prophesied that "he would be hanged by his own people one day".

During his visit to Turkey in 1932, General Douglas Mac Arthur discussed with Atatürk on the then current world affairs and they expressed their anxieties concerning the future. Atatürk pointed out that the winners of WWI had signed only a treaty no different than a mere accord, thus disregarding the reasons that led to the war and leaving the future of peace insecure by placing Europe's destiny in Germany's hands. He claimed that this highly disciplined and dynamic nation would disregard the Versailles Treaty to create another world war possibly around the years 1940-1945 and that the subsequent American participation in such

a war would lead to Germany's defeat. He added, however, that the true winners of the war would be the Bolsheviks and that they would introduce grave problems into the world.

General Mac Arthur shared the same views and he added his anxiety concerning Asia and the Pacific. History have proved the accuracy of these two leaders.

One of his more illustrious visitors was King Carol of Romania. The visit, however, was not a success. The king said to him: "The Sudeten affair is of primary importance in Europe today. The President of the Czechoslovakian Republic, Dr. Benes is complicating the situation by his obstinacy, and the result is that there may be a war in Europe." Atatürk stiffened in his armchair and with a flash of the old fire turned to his foreign minister, saying, "Ask his Majesty this. What sort of attitude does he expect from a President of a Republic who is the person mainly responsible for the independence of his country?" The King went pale, and switched to the safer subject of Romania's adherence to the Balkan Pact.

Before anything, Atatürk was a realist in his perceptions of world events. He held the opinion that the prosperities of all nations were mutually interdependent. He expressed this view in the following words:

"We must consider the world as a human body and the different nations as the organs of that body. When some sort of problem arises in some part of the world, we must never say that it's irrelevant for us. We must show as much interest in the problem as if we are the ones that face it."

Atatürk, who spent his life in continuous struggle under extremely hard conditions, died of cirrhosis in 1938 at the age of 57. The whole nation wept in deep sorrow of losing a liberator and a protector... We have all seen people weeping at the deaths of their beloved ones. But for our generation, it is an unforgettable memory to have witnessed and lived through the weeping of the young, the old, the children, in short the whole nation.

The whole Turkish nation was in total loyalty to him. We believed in him, we trusted in him, we loved him. The nation considered him as the symbol of all that is good and sublime. He, on the other hand, kept repeating that he was but a humble and mortal personality and that what was sublime was the nation itself. In every endeavour and in all success,

he relied on the power and the support he drew from the nation. He got his inspiration only from the nation. Dozens of countries, far and near, sent their most distinguished troops of honor to the state funeral arranged for this great soldier and statesman on his last journey. How sad it is to remember now that these same soldiers who had met on this sad and sorrowful occasion on a land both peaceful and peace loving, were to take aim barely ten months later at each other in a most terrible war yet. This was the dark future strongly predicted but not witnessed by Atatürk.

As in the past, today, the geo-strategical posture of Turkey is the subject of conflicting interests of various countries and poses serious problems for the Turks.

Today leftist extremists and conservative elements both aim at deviating Turkey's path from Atatürk's principles against communism or religious fanaticism. With his sharp perception of these two different threats, Atatürk forewarned the nation against domestic and external dangers and with his historical and eternal declaration to the young generations. He has entrusted the republic he founded in the hands of this dynamic group. This declaration by Atatürk aims at showing the path to be followed by the Turkish youth for securing and safeguarding the Republic of Turkey and its eternal independence.

When an in depth study is made on the life of Atatürk, which I tried to summarize here, certain aspects of his leadership and character stand out. Briefly, they are as follows:

Above all, he was freedom-loving and independent.

He was true patriot who loved his country and always wanted to bring glory to it.

For serving his country, he has always picked up long term objectives and kept approaching them unbudgingly and persistently. These objectives have never represented unrealistic desires. Reality and practicality are his striking characteristics.

In approaching his objectives, he applied very accurate timing in successive phases, and watched for the most suitable moment for implementation.

In both military life and state affairs, he was pragmatic. He consistently informed his troops and his people of all developments and employed his convincing style in the adoption of important decisions.



He demonstrated all the essential characteristics of able leadership and set an example both as a statesman and a soldier. He was on the front line with his soldiers and among his people, when he was needed.

He knew in precise detail the abilities of his troops and people. He knew for sure, when he ordered his men "to die" that they would willingly march on to death. Undoubtedly, Atatürk's success stems from his dependence on his nation for power and inspiration.

Atatürk the nationalist was also Atatürk the humanist. He was a champion of equal rights and opportunities for all humans.

Despite the 43 years elapsed since his death and a most terrible world war followed by serious crises everywhere, the Republic of Turkey marches on with sound and vigorous steps on the path originally drawn up by Atatürk, side by side with the nations of the free world and as an honored and respected member of the NATO Alliance.

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