

MUSTAFA KAMAL

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The war was over. Throughout the entire Near and Middle East the armies of the democracies had been hailed not so much as conquerors, but as deliverers. The Turks themselves were only too glad to be able to lay down arms after almost continuous fighting since 1911. A government formed from the old Liberals was in power in Istanbul, its members and the Padishah himself alike eager to collaborate with the Allies, their conception of the best interests of the nation was that of loyalty to the Armistice and co-operation with the occupying forces of the conquerors. At Istanbul the old British Embassy was now the British High Commission, supported by military and naval detachments. Allied officers were supervising the police and the ports and the normal machinery of the government was practically superseded by orders and suggestions from the Allies.

At this time far away in Eastern Anatolia, one Kiyazim Karabekar with some undefeated remnants of the Ottoman Army, began to obstruct the Allied control officers, refusing to disband his men. Week by week little encounters increased; it was apparent that the Turks were steadily growing bolder. Even in the streets of Anatolia towns their bearing changed. This caused consternation not only among the Allies but in Istanbul itself. Some one must go as the representative of the Padishah and deal with the situation on the spot — a strong capable soldier was wanted. Every indication seemed to point to one man as being suitable for the work, and Mustafa Kamal was the man. At first the British High Commissioner demurred, but his objections were for once overruled, and Mustafa Kamal sailed on the 15th of May, 1919, for the north-east coast of Anatolia as Governor-General of the Eastern Provinces. Scarcely had the small steamer bearing Mustafa Kamal entered the Black Sea than the authorities of Istanbul became suspicious of his intentions and issued orders for the ship to be intercepted. But it was too late.

The very same day it became clear beyond all doubt that the Allies had condemned the Ottoman Empire to be partitioned to the very walls of Istanbul. On the 15th of May, the Admiral of the British Mediterranean Fleet informed the Ottoman governor of Izmir that this great seaport and the rich province of Aydin were to be occupied by the Greeks. The Ottoman troops were hurriedly withdrawn into barracks and the Greek Metropolitan raised the Cross as the first Greek soldiers disembarked.

To all Turkish patriots these events meant that there was only one policy to be pursued. Even those most friendly to the Allies were infuriated by this foreign occupation of the richest and most essentially Turkish of their provinces. Turkish patriotism was no longer vague and undecided, it was a flame burning in the hearts of men and women of all classes — a flame of indignation not of hatred. Even during cruel wars the Turks and the Greeks never

hated each other, and among the Greeks there was little enthusiasm for the Anatolian adventure. A magnificent Greek Royalist officer – Ioanne Metacas – protested strongly to his Government, but the invasion continued.

In a heavy storm Mustafa Kamal's small ship staggered towards the landing stage at Samsun on the coast of Anatolia. At Amisa he met Ali Faut, the commander of a small army corps centred on Ankara, and at a secret meeting of the patriots he sketched out his plan of resistance. First of all, guerilla bands must hold up the Greeks, and covered by these irregulars the patriots must build up the National army, but without any help from Mehmet IV or any one at Istanbul. "As the Sultan and the Central Government are in enemy hands we must set up some temporary government in Anatolia," he continued, "A congress of delegates to represent the real, free Turkey should be called as quickly as possible." Meanwhile Mustafa Kamal set out to tour the villages, preaching resistance and in every place appointing representatives to form centres of patriotic revolt. Yet even the energy and personality of Mustafa Kamal would not have been so effective had not news arrived that the Greeks were advancing. Everywhere the local Turks vowed that death was preferable to rule by Greeks. Moreover, the Allies who had made these plans were far away while near at hand was an un-disbanded Turkish army corps at Diyarbekir. Men came crowding back to the ranks with guns and ammunition raided from the Allied arms dumps.

As soon as Mehmet heard of these activities he ordered Mustafa Kamal to return. The patriot's reply was a long personal telegram to the Padishah urging him, as leader of his people, to come over to Anatolia and himself take the lead against the Greeks and all the foreign enemies — it would be Mehmet's last chance to save himself, the Throne of his forefathers and the Turkish nation. But Mehmet's conception of the best interests of Turkey was co-operation with the powerful conquerors. In these circumstances the only imaginable reply to Mustafa Kamal's invitation was a peremptory command: the rebel must report himself immediately to Istanbul. Back along the wire went the most momentous telegram in the history of the Ottoman Empire:

I shall stay in Anatolia until the nation has won its Independence.

Mehmet IV could see no other way to regain the provinces of Anatolia for the throne than by subtlety. With a sudden movement he unexpectedly proclaimed himself willing to summon a government pleasing to the Nationalists. The delegates in Anatolia could transfer their activities to Istanbul, put Mustafa Kamal's ideas into practice and yet no longer stand in opposition to the Padishah, the Shadow of God. The patriots, who could scarcely imagine their state without a Sultan as its head sooner or later, grasped at these promises — almost all but Mustafa Kamal himself who fought hard for a parliament in Anatolia. He suggested that it should sit in the upland town of Ankara, where it would be centrally situated, well protected, free, absolutely independent of the Allies in a thoroughly Turkish town associated with the history of the Turks and their forefathers. But for once he was defeated and Mustafa

Kamal was left almost alone when on the 19th of January, 1920, the National Assembly assembled in the "City of the Sultan" and began the hopeless task of trying to work up resistance under the very eyes – and guns – of the Allies.

While the delegates were wasting their time on the Bosphorus, Mustafa Kamal was making exceptionally good use of the freedom which the absence of the talkers had given him. For the next few weeks Allied agents were kept busy reporting large armed formations seen in the interior: regular troops of the old Imperial army, armed peasants, women transporting ammunitions and supplies as Turkish women had done in the days before Islam. The position was becoming really serious for the Allied Army of Occupation stationed here and there near the coast. In her diary, an American medical practitioner chronicled the daily deterioration of the position in Anatolia:

"The firing gets worse steadily ... a general massacre of the Armenians is expected All night along the skies are red-lighted in every direction by the raging fires, and the canons roar and the heavens shake The whole city is overhung with clouds of smoke. The Turks are bolder all the time. Surely this is because they realize that this is the end for them, and are desperate."

Every day brought fresh men and new equipment. The Allies began to withdraw their troops from the interior. They evacuated the important Baghdad Railway junction at Estishehir, where immediately the patriots transformed the railway depots into ammunition factories. The Allies replied by putting Istanbul under a collective arrest and dissolving "the National Assembly." Leading Patriots hid or escaped into Anatolia, where they made straight for Ankara to join Mustafa Kamal. There on the 23rd of April, 1920 the revolutionary Turkish Grand National Assembly met with Mustafa Kamal as President. Its first act was to make clear to the world the position of the new Turkish Government. The courage of its words is astonishing.

"The Grand National Assembly sitting in Ankara will preside over the destiny of Turkey as long as the capital is in the hands of the foreigners. It has appointed an Executive Council, which has taken in hand the government of the country, Istanbul, the Sultan, and the Government being in the hands of the enemy, all orders from there are automatically null and void. The nation's rights have been violated. The Turkish nation, though calm, is determined to maintain its rights as a sovereign independent state."

At last as the month of May, 1920 was drawing to its close the Allies published the terms of peace which they were willing to make with Mehmet IV. A small and helpless Ottoman Empire was to be entirely under the supervision of the Allied powers; all the Arab provinces were to become Mandated Territories; the whole of Eastern Anatolia was to be added to the state of Armenia; around Izmir was to be a large Greek district; Cicilia was to go to the French; the Ottoman capital itself was to be an international centre under the control of Britain, France and Italy. Only the immediate hinterland of Istanbul was to remain of the

once extensive "Turkey in Europe."

The terms if widely accepted would have been the death sentence not only of the Ottoman Empire but of what was now correctly described as Turkey. By entertaining the very idea of signing a treaty based on such terms, the Ottoman Government at Istanbul was branded by the patriots as a puppet government of traitors and dotards, and almost the entire Turkish nation accepted the Turkish government at Ankara.

There was no one to enforce the terms of the treaty, in the event of Mehmet signing it. On the 21st August, 1921, the Greeks attacked. In the mountain country above the Sakarya river, some fifty kilometres west of Ankara the two valiant people fought almost man to man for fourteen days under the burning heat of the sun, the Greeks attacking with reckless abandon, the Turks hanging grimly on the heights, Mustafa Kamal now their Commander-in-Chief. By the 4th of September the critical moment had come: the Greeks were at the end of their strength. On the 12th they crossed the Sakarya and began to retire steadily, but there was no question of the Turks immediately following up their advantage. It was not till the end of August, 1922 that Mustafa Kamal was able to sound his famous battle-call: "Soldiers: Your goal is the Mediterranean. Forward."

Six days later the advance guard of Turkish National forces drew within sight of the Mediterranean. There lay Izmir crowded, and overflowing with refugees. There were ships for the Greek soldiers but none for the Greek and Armenian population, crazed with fear. In the harbour towered the Allied battleships, powerless to do anything except to take away as many refugees on board as possible. The Greeks alone were at war with the "rebel" Turks.

A long line of decorated cars entered Izmir on the 9th of September, 1922, on the either side an escort of cavalry. In the leading car was Mustafa Kamal, Commander-in-Chief of the Free-Turkish Forces and "Saviour of Turkey." Three days after the change of government, fire broke out in several parts of the city at once and the greater part of Izmir was reduced to ashes.

Mustafa Kamal now realized that he must at last persuade the Ankara Government to make an end of the puppet show in the old capital. He proposed that the Sultanate should be abolished. The Grand Turkish National Assembly gave the verdict:

"By the Unanimous Vote of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the Sultanate is abolished."

On the 4th of November, 1922, Riffat carried out a coup d'etat at Istanbul. On the following day the Ottoman cabinet resigned office and was not replaced.

For a few days Mehmet stood his ground – the ruler of a palace and a private park. He felt he could trust no one but an old conductor of the royal orchestra, whom at last he sent to Sir Charles Harrington to crave British protection for "the Emperor of powerful Emperors, Refuge of Sovereigns, Distributor of Crowns to the Kings of the Earth, Master of Europe,

Asia and Africa, High King of the Two Seas...."

It was the 17th of November, 1922. A British motor ambulance drew up at a side-door of the palace where Mehmet was staying. Some baggage was brought out of the palace and placed in the car. An elderly man followed. A British Officer took the old gentleman's umbrella as he entered the vehicle. The door was closed and the ambulance drove away. The last of the Sultans was on his way to exile. A greater Sovereign than all the Ottoman Sultans was now in the seat of power at Ankara – the will of the Turkish people expressed through a leader who was at one and the same time both dictator and democrat.

It was the end of an age. On the 29th October, 1923, the name of the Ottoman Empire was wiped from the slate of history. A salute of a hundred and one guns proclaimed the foundation of the Turkish Republic with Mustafa Kamal as the President and General Ismat Inonu as the Prime Minister.

The Great Reformer

On assuming power, Mustafa Kamal's first object was to educate the people. This was a gigantic task, for state education was unknown in Turkey. Therefore there were two problems: to teach the masses and to train as many teachers as possible.

As he was determined to break down this barrier, Mustafa Kamal declared the old script to be abolished and replaced by the Roman script. Thereupon he set out on a series of tours round the country to demonstrate, chalk in hand, how the new script should be used. The whole population went back to school. Nor was Mustafa Kamal a lenient master. He tested people on the most unexpected occasions, naming a day, not far ahead, by which everyone was to have learned the new script.

Once he had simplified the Turkish script, Mustafa Kamal started upon a rather more difficult task—that of simplifying the language. This was urgently necessary for two reasons: first, because educated speech under the Ottoman Empire had been a mixture of Turkish, Arabic and Persian and second, because he realized that the elaborate modes of address and flowery phrases were out of place in the modern world. Accordingly he set up a committee for the purification of the language by substituting genuine Turkish words for those of Arabic and Persian origin.

In the new world created by him there was no need for the old titles and nobilities which meant nothing to the new nobility of effort. The word "Pasha" was abolished: every man became Bay hitherto a title of some honour; women became Bayan.

No less revolutionary was the abolition in 1925 of the national head-dress, called the Fez. The Fez was in origin Greek, but it had come to be associated closely with Turkish life. When the wearing of hats was made compulsory there were barely enough to go round, so that the houses of the foreigners were ransacked and men even went about in Paris models. It

was reported from Izmir that in a village near by, the peasants unable to obtain bowlers, or caps, discovered in the closed shop of a departed Armenian haberdasher a stock of ladies' summer hats, and seizing the entire selection, wore them, ribbons, feathers and all.

Finally, to complete this account of Kamal's reforms, we must mention that which was most striking, namely the abolition of the veil. As early as 1923 he had addressed the people of western Anatolia on the subject of women's rights. "Our nation has decided to be strong," he had said, "and our absolute need today is the higher education of women. They shall be instructed in every field of science and receive the same degrees as men." Mustafa Kamal prepared the country for the change by a tour of the towns and villages during which he addressed himself principally to the menfolk.

No less great was the economic advance. In 1919, there was only one railway in Turkey, and judged by modern standards no roads at all. Mustafa Kamal inaugurated great development and construction schemes both for railways and motor roads. In 1919, there were 150 factories in Turkey, in 1933, 2000, while the Turkish Five-Year Plan, inaugurated in 1934, encouraged heavy industry still further. The banking system was organized and the Ottoman public debt (taken over from the Sultanate by the new Republic) was reduced to one-tenth of its former size. All this was achieved without further borrowing.

The changes in all branches of Turkish life have been stupendous. It would be no exaggeration to say that at the time that Mustafa Kamal set to work, the mental and political development of the masses in Turkey was on a level with that of the people of Western Europe in the mid-eighteenth century. The Turks have now traversed in a few years the road which the people of Western Europe took 150 years to travel. The thorough democratization of the nation, and the awakening of the people and the unchaining of their powers has been the work of Mustafa Kamal.

NOTES

Words Explained:

democracy :	nation with representative form of government, Government of the people, by the people, for the people
collaborate :	do work with one another, cooperate
armistice :	agreement in war to put a stop to fighting for a time
supersede :	take, put another in the place of
remnants :	small remaining quantity or piece
obstruct :	get in the way of, oppose
disband :	break up, disperse
encounters :	meeting in conflict

consternation :	great surprise, fear
demur :	make a little protest
overrule :	make decision of no effect by use of higher authority
intercept :	get person stopped on his way
infuriate :	make very angry
vague :	uncertain, having no direction
stagger :	move in an uncertain way
dumps :	store of guns, etc., near fighting-line
peremptory :	orders given sharply and with decision
subtlety :	cleverness
deterioration :	becoming worse
evacuate :	go away from a place, specially by military
null and void :	of no effect
mandate :	control given to another specially by the League of Nations over nations not ready for self-government
hinterland :	inland part of a country
brand :	give a bad name to
dotards :	old men becoming weak-minded
foolhardy :	ever ready for danger
join issue with :	to take opposite view of a question
reckless :	heedless of danger ahead
crazed :	rendered insane
gloaming :	evening twilight
bobbling :	moving up and down
purge :	purify
puppet show :	persons whose acts are controlled by another
abolish :	put an end to
verdict :	decision
unanimous :	all of the same opinion
coup d' etat :	sudden move or act to get power by violent means
stood his ground :	refused to yield, opposed firmly
crave :	beg
gigantic :	of very large size

lenient :	kind, not hard
elaborate :	worked out in great detail; complex in structure
ransack :	search thoroughly
haberdasher :	trader in small dress goods
veil :	pardah
tightly :	not giving room for motion; closely fastened or fitting
inaugurated :	introduced, initiated
stupendous :	amazing by size or degree
unchaining :	setting free

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

1. What was the attitude of the Turkish government towards the Allies after World War I?
2. Why was Mustafa Kamal sent to Anatolia?
3. What was the reaction of the Turkish patriots to the intention of the Allies to partition the Ottoman Empire?
4. Write a note on Mustafa Kamal's activities in Anatolia.
5. Why did Mehmet order Mustafa Kamal to return to Constantinople?
6. What was Mustafa Kamal's reply?
7. How did Mehmet try to regain Anatolia for himself?
8. Why did his plan fail?
9. What were the terms offered to Turkey by the Allies?
10. Give an account of the Greek attack and its defeat.
11. Give an account of the departure of Mehmet from Istanbul.
12. Describe the reforms introduced by Mustafa Kamal with reference to:
 - (i) the position of women,
 - (ii) removal of illiteracy,
 - (iii) change in dresses,
 - (iv) adoption of the Roman script and
 - (v) the industrial and economic development.
13. Sum up in a few sentences the work of Mustafa Kamal as a great nation-builder.