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The Great National Assembly of Turkey and Its Place Between Sultanate and Republic

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with a foreword by Çiğdem OĞUZ

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1/ The Great National Assembly of Turkey and Its Place Between Sultanate and Republic

Erik Jan ZÜRCHER

with a foreword by Çiğdem OĞUZ

ABSTRACT: *It is almost a commonplace to say that the Ottoman Empire was succeeded by the Republic of Turkey. Nevertheless, it is not true. When the Ottoman sultanate was abolished in November 1922, that abolition in itself was not fiercely contested. The debates concentrated on two other issues: the creation of a “spiritual” Caliphate (a complete novelty in the world of Islam) and first and foremost guarantees that the current system of government in Ankara would be maintained. That system was that of the National Assembly which elected individual commissars from its midst. It was this political system, with a very powerful elected legislature and a weak and dependent executive, that replaced the Ottoman Empire.*

ABSTRACT: *È ormai una consuetudine affermare che all’Impero Ottomano sia succeduta la Repubblica di Turchia. Tuttavia, non è vero. Quando il sultanato ottomano fu abolito nel novembre del 1922, l’abolizione in sé non fu contestata in modo feroce. I dibattiti si concentrarono su altre due questioni: sulla creazione di un Califfato “spirituale” (una novità assoluta nel mondo dell’Islam) e soprattutto sulle garanzie per il mantenimento del sistema di governo all’epoca vigente ad Ankara. Tale sistema era quello dell’Assemblea Nazionale, che eleggeva al suo interno i singoli commissari. Fu questo sistema politico, con un corpo legislativo eletto molto potente e un esecutivo debole e dipendente, a sostituire l’Impero Ottomano.*

Foreword

On November 1, 1922, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey approved the motion for the abolishment of the Ottoman Sultanate. The Treaty of Lausanne signed on July 24, 1923, officially brought about the end of one of the most long-lived empires in history. On the occasion of the centenary of the end of the Ottoman Empire we organized a two-day international conference at the University of Bologna on October 24-25, 2022, with my colleagues from the Department of History and Cultures and Department of Political and Social Sciences.

The conference aimed to bring together scholars to discuss new approaches to Ottoman history, the dynamics that brought about the end of the empire, the politics of imperial memory, and the political and social relevance of studying the history of the Ottoman Empire today. During

the conference, speakers discussed a wide range of topics, from the politics of population in Ottoman/Turkish historiography to the post-Ottoman order in the Middle East and the Balkans, and from nostalgia for the empire to the political use of its memory during the Cold War.

Prof. Erik Jan Zürcher participated in the conference with a keynote lecture focusing on the very last years of the Ottoman Empire; from the formation of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara in 1920 to the proclamation of the Republic in 1923. His lecture addressed one of the key premises of the conference: thinking Ottoman and post-Ottoman history beyond the confines of national narratives. In doing so, he invited us to rethink the historical role of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, the government in Ankara that ruled the country from 1920 to 1923, as a government in its own right, reflecting the different tendencies of its members, rather than a natural step predestined to pave the way to the proclamation of a republic.

Below you will find the article based on Prof. Zürcher's keynote lecture, which he kindly submitted to our journal for publication.

The Great National Assembly of Turkey and Its Place Between Sultanate and Republic

The proclamation of the Republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923 is seen as the essential watershed in the modern history of Turkey, both in Turkey itself and in the international academic literature on modern Turkey. While there may be good reasons for taking this view, an unfortunate consequence has been that the history of the period between the end of World War I in 1918 and the proclamation of the republic in 1923 is seen as a kind of “prehistory” and that the important events of that period have been interpreted exclusively as presaging the republic. The first congress of the Republican People's Party, founded as the People's Party in September 1923, was held in October 1927, but both at the time and in the later historiography it has always been called the “second congress” of the party. The reason for this is that the first nationwide congress of the post-war resistance movement, the “Society for the Defense of the National Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia” in Sivas in September 1919 has been retrospectively claimed as the first congress of the party – a party then still four years in the future. This obviously was done to claim the prestigious heritage of the resistance movement for the ruling party.

As a result of this tendency the notion that the Ottoman Empire was succeeded by the Republic of Turkey has become so widely accepted that it has become almost a commonplace. Yet, it is not true. If we take the abolition of the sultanate on 2 November 1922 to be the moment when the Ottoman Empire was relegated to history, its place at that point was taken by “the Government of the Great National Assembly of Turkey (GNA)”. This was a political entity that had been in existence for two and a half years and which would remain in being for almost another year.

Because of the tendency to see the history of the post-war era as prehistory of the republic, a tendency that ultimately has its roots in Mustafa Kemal Pasha's great six-day speech at the party conference of 1927, this political structure has received relatively little attention as a separate and interesting phase in the development of modern Turkey. The first one to really treat it as a separate topic was Tarik Zafer Tunaya in a short publication in 1963 (*The Establishment of the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and its Political Character*¹), but he has had few followers. The most substantial study so far is no doubt Ahmet Demirel's 1994 *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet* (Opposition in the First Assembly)².

The assumption seems to be that the government of the GNA was really a republic in all but the name from the beginning, but if that were true the decisions of 2 November 1922, the abolition of the sultanate and preservation of the caliphate, would not have been such a big deal. But they were, and a closer look at the developments in the two preceding years shows us why.

The government of the GNA was formed as a consequence of the British decision to occupy Constantinople militarily on the morning of 16 March 1920³. After the British occupation authorities had arrested a number of deputies on that day and the next, the last Ottoman chamber of deputies suspended its work and dispersed on the 18th. The next day Mustafa Kemal Pasha, as president of the Representative Committee of the Society for the Defense of the National Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia issued his famous proclamation in which he announced the convening of a «National Assembly» in Ankara and ordered all electoral districts to elect five representatives in it within two weeks. At the same time those deputies to the Ottoman parliament who could make it to Ankara were also invited to sit in the assembly. Over the next few weeks dozens of former deputies actually managed to reach Ankara. Among them was the president of the Ottoman chamber of deputies, Celalettin Arif Bey. On his arrival in Ankara he publicly approved the convening of a national assembly, something which – because of his position – gave the assembly legitimacy as the successor of the Ottoman parliament. His approval carried added weight because Celalettin Arif was a specialist in constitutional law.

Arif's argument was that the convening of a national assembly in a national emergency was not foreseen in the Ottoman constitution, but that it was an existing mechanism that was enshrined in other constitutions, for instance that of the French Third Republic⁴. Both men also must have been well aware of the fact that there was a precedent in the recent Ottoman past. During the anti-constitutionalist rebellion of April 1909, when the capital had also been occupied

¹ TUNAYA, Tarık Zafer, «The establishment of the Government of the Turkish grand National Assembly and its Political Character», in *Annales de la faculté de droit d'Istanbul*, 19, 1963, pp. 47-76.

² DEMİREL, Ahmet, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet İkinci Grup*, İstanbul, İletişim, 1994.

³ CRISS, Nur Bilge, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation 1918-1923*, Leiden, Brill, 1999, pp. 11-14.

⁴ GOLOĞLU, Mahmut, *Üçüncü Meşrutiyet 1920*, Ankara, Başnur Matbaası, 1970, p. 129.

– not by foreign troops but by internal rebels – members of the chamber of deputies and the senate had convened in the San Stefano Yachting Club as a «National Assembly» under the protection of the constitutionalist troops brought over from Macedonia⁵.

On the opening day of the assembly in Ankara, 23 April 1920, the first order of business was to clarify the nature of the assembly and its *modus operandi*. Here Mustafa Kemal Pasha carried the day. In his opening speech he made it very clear that he did not see the assembly as a copy of the Ottoman parliament. Rather he argued for an assembly that would not just limit itself to legislative and controlling functions while leaving the executive powers to a cabinet. Rather, he wanted the assembly to take direct responsibility for government by uniting in itself all aspects of the *trias politica*. The national emergency, he argued, did not allow the assembly members to distance themselves from the actual business of government. In the pasha's proposal the assembly could delegate its functions to a committee in charge of everyday government, but that committee was a committee of commissars, each of whom was to be individually elected by the assembly from its midst. It was not a cabinet (with collective responsibility) and those who served on it were not ministers, even if modern Turkish literature on the subject, even by so great a specialist as Tarik Zafer Tunaya, tends to describe them as such. Ottoman Turkish had a perfectly good word for minister, *nazır*, which had been in use for eighty years. The official title of the members of the Ankara government was not *nazır*, it was *vekil* – delegate or commissar.

The members of the Ankara assembly undoubtedly saw themselves as being part of the Ottoman imperial framework. Their first proclamation declared “liberating the sultan-caliph” to be their primary aim and all members swore loyalty to the monarch. Their exact position with that framework still needed to be clarified, however. Although the need for such clarification was widely felt, the emergencies of the year 1920, in which the Defense of Rights movement fought for its survival against a loose coalition of regional forces that aligned with the government in Constantinople, meant that more urgent matters were dealt with first. That is why it was January 1921 before the assembly could lay down its position and role in a legal text.

This text was, of course, the Law on Fundamental Organisation (*Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu*) passed on 20 January 1921.

It is important to set out clearly what this law was and, even more importantly, what it was not. The general tendency, described earlier, to see the TBMM era as prehistory of the republic means that the 1921 law is generally presented as the first republican constitution in Turkey. This is a deeply rooted tradition. When the four politicians who would go on to found the Democrat Party put forward their *Dörtlü Takrir* (memorandum of the four) demanding democratization in Turkey in 1945, they did so by referring to the provisions of the 1921 law. The tradition is still

⁵ AKŞİN, Sina, *31 Mart Olayı*, Ankara: Sevinç, 1970, pp. 176-194.

very much alive today. The law is represented as the first constitution of the republic on the official website of the Turkish government and the much used site *Türkiye Hukuk* says: «It was the law that created the state of Turkey on 20 January and at the same time it was the first constitution of Turkey»⁶. This is obviously wrong. The law was not intended to be a constitution and it did not create a state. It did, however, mark an important stage in the development of democracy in the late Ottoman Empire.

The relationship between the existing Ottoman constitution and the new Law on Fundamental Organization was explicitly discussed in the assembly. The debate that led to the passing of the law was triggered by the question whether death sentences that had been pronounced by tribunals could be confirmed by the National Assembly. Under the Ottoman constitution this was one of the prerogatives of the ruling monarch. The debate was soon broadened, however, when people like Hüseyin Avni, a constitutional lawyer who represented Erzurum, pointed out that there were other royal prerogatives that the assembly might want to take over, and suggested changing the constitution for this purpose. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, however, managed to convince the majority of his position that changing the constitution now was not opportune and that the aim should be limited to clarifying the position and authority of the assembly and the way it was to run the country during the national emergency. The formula agreed on was that those articles of the Ottoman constitution that had not been superseded by articles in the Law on Fundamental Organization, would continue to be valid. Throughout the debates Mustafa Kemal Pasha and his group tried to steer a median course in which the political powers of the assembly and its system of administration would be clarified, but rejected more radical proposals for changing the nature of the assembly to that of a constituent assembly, which would draft a new constitution, or for a corporatist system.

Of the 23 articles of the law 14 deal with the provincial and local administration and only the first nine concern the assembly. Most important of these are the famous articles one and two, which state that all sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation and that the assembly is the sole legitimate representative of that nation. The absolute way in which national sovereignty is described as the sole source of legitimate power has rightly received a lot of attention in the historiography. The article has gained iconic status in Turkey, being inscribed on many office walls as well as that of parliament. In its radicalism it is clearly indebted to the French revolution, but it should be remembered that almost the same expression was used a century earlier much closer to home, in the Greek constitution of 1823.

⁶ «Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu», in *Türkiye Hukuk*, URL: < <https://www.turkiyehukuk.org/teskilat-i-esasiye-kanunu-1921-anayasasi/> > [accessed 10 November 2022].

Just as important as articles one and two is article seven, which states that «fundamental rights like the implementation of the rules of the Sharia, the passing, changing, and abolishing of laws, the conclusion of treaties and peace, and the proclamation of the defence of the fatherland (war) belong to the Great National Assembly».

Clearly, the assembly arrogated not only the prerogatives of the Council of Ministers under the Ottoman system, but also those of the sultan. Taken together with the continued professions of loyalty to the sultanate and the empire, the fact that the Ottoman constitution was maintained where it was not superseded by the Law on Fundamental Organization meant that in effect the political system introduced in 1920 and formalized in 1921 was that of a constitutional monarchy in which the head of state, the monarch, was no more than a symbolic figurehead, and all power was vested in the elected representatives. In other words: the Law on Fundamental Organization did not replace the Ottoman constitution, but it modified it significantly.

This was the system that was changed by the same assembly's radical decision on 2 November 1922 to abolish the 600-year-old Ottoman sultanate.

Now that after almost a century the existence of the Republic of Turkey has become self-evident, in a world in which all of its near neighbors in the Middle East, Southeastern Europe or the Caucasus are republics as well, it is easy to underestimate how radical the 1922 decision was. In November 1922 all the states in Southeastern Europe (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; Greece; Romania, Bulgaria, Albania) as well as those few Middle Eastern countries that had a measure of independence (Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Hejaz) were monarchies. The only states to have abolished the monarchy that were in proximity to Turkey were, in fact, those republics that would form the Soviet Union in 1923. Sultan Mehmed VI Vahidettin had deeply compromised by his opposition to the national resistance movement and could probably not continue on the throne, but then again: in neighboring Bulgaria King Ferdinand had been compromised by his collaboration with the Germans during World War I and in Greece King Constantine was held responsible for the Greek defeat in Asia Minor. Both kings had been forced to abdicate, but in both cases they had been succeeded on the throne by the crown prince. There had been no question of abolishing the monarchy.

The process through which this radical decision was taken has been studied in detail by Michael Finefrock in his unpublished PhD thesis almost half a century ago⁷. For my analysis I rely on his work and on that of Mahmut Goloğlu⁸. Both are based on the published minutes of the assembly (*Zabıt Ceridesi*), which are now available online as well⁹.

⁷ FINEFROCK, Michael M., *From Sultanate to Republic: Mustafa Kemal and the Structure of Turkish Politics, 1922-1924*, Princeton University, Unpublished PhD thesis, p. 197.

⁸ GOLOĞLU, Mahmut, *Cumhuriyete Doğru 1921-1922*, Ankara, Başnur Matbaası, 1971.

⁹ «Açık Erişim TBMM» in *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi Devre 1*, URL: < <https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/>

The events that triggered the decision to abolish the sultanate are well known. Although the armistice of Mudanya had been signed between the British and the Nationalists only, it was widely expected that the Entente would now invite delegations from both the Istanbul and the Ankara government to the coming peace talks, as they had done with the London conference in the spring of 1921. It was with this eventuality in mind that the head of the sultan's government, Grand Vizier Tefvik Pasha, on 17 October sent a telegram to the leadership in Ankara through its representative in Istanbul, Hamid Bey [Mehmet Abdülhamit Hasancan], proposing that both governments join forces for the upcoming negotiations.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha immediately replied to this telegram, stating that the Turkish state would be represented at the peace conference by the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey alone, in other words: that the Istanbul government (which after all had a record of collaboration with the occupying powers) was not expected to play any role at all. The reply was sent in a coded telegram to Hamid Bey in Istanbul, who, however, regarded it as an instruction for himself rather than as a message to the Grand Vizier¹⁰. He made clear Ankara's position in a number of conversations with different people but never handed over an official answer to Tefvik Pasha. The 18th anyway was the last day of his unofficial role as the sole representative of the Ankara leadership in Istanbul as on the next day, the 19th, general Refet Pasha [Bele] arrived in Istanbul aboard the steamer *Gülnehâl* and took over as official representative of the Ankara government.

At this point, the nationalists still seem to have preferred a voluntary transfer of power on the part of the sultan's government. On the 29th Refet spoke for four hours with the sultan, trying to convince him to abdicate and to have his government hand in its resignation. To no avail. In the meantime, the Entente powers had indeed invited both governments to the peace conference to be held in Lausanne and Tefvik Pasha (who, after all, had not received an official reply from Ankara because that had stranded with Hamid Bey) repeated his offer of cooperation to the National Assembly. These things now quickly came to a head. On the 30th the assembly met in session. Mustafa Kemal Pasha opened the debate by reading the telegrams received from Tefvik Pasha. The fact that the latter had repeated his offer of a joint delegation eleven days after his original one had been firmly rejected was seen as a provocation by the representatives, who were of course unaware that that rejection had never officially reached the Grand Vizier. By now there was strong support in the assembly for the radical step of ending the sultanate and thereby also the Ottoman Empire as such after an existence of more than 600 years.

handle/11543/1677 > [accessed 10 November 2022].

¹⁰ Mustafa Kemal Pasha explains this confusion in his 1927 speech. Cf: ATATÜRK, Mustafa Kemal, *Nutuk 1919-1927*, KORKMAZ, Zeynep (ed.), Ankara, AKDITYK, 1991, p. 466.

The actual resolution proposing the abolition of the sultanate was drafted during the debates of 30 October by Rıza Nur Bey, independent deputy for Sinop, a radical nationalist and one of the few leading politicians who were not former members of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress. By allowing an independent deputy who was not a member of either his own group of followers (the Defense of Rights Group) in the assembly or that of the opposition (the Second Group) to take the initiative. Mustafa Kemal emphasized the broad-based nature of the move. The resolution was signed by 81 members of the Defense of Rights Group, including the president of the assembly (Mustafa Kemal) and the president of the council of commissars (Hüseyin Rauf Bey), but it was not adopted on the 30th of October because by the time discussions ended the number of deputies had dwindled and no quorum existed anymore. The next day, the 31st, there was no parliamentary session, so both groups used the day for the drafting of alternative versions of the resolution. There was general agreement on the abolition of the sultanate, but the future of the caliphate caused a lot of debate. In his original proposal Rıza Nur had only stated that: «The Turkish government will rescue the legal office of the caliphate from its captivity in the hands of the enemy» (Article 6). For the opposition this was too little on the one hand (in that it did not say anything about the future position of the caliph) and too much on the other as it seemed to open the door for military action to liberate the caliph. The Second Group came with its own counterproposal, drafted by the lawyer Hüseyin Avni [Ulaş]: «The caliphate belonging to the Turkish state and to the house of Osman, the most eligible of this dynasty as regards knowledge and character is elected Caliph by a two-thirds majority of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The only buttress of the Caliphate is the Turkish state».

In the late afternoon of 1 November the assembly reconvened. The assembly's joint Shari'a and Justice Committees were charged with providing a solution to the caliphate issue, but before it started its deliberations, Mustafa Kemal took it upon himself to instruct the assembly of which he was the president. He did so in the shape of a lengthy speech on the history of the office of the caliphate.

He started off with a summary of the political situation of the day, fiercely attacking Tevfik Pasha and his government for sending telegrams that show a "mentality that tries to show as weak the position of our national government that has been so successful in defending our sacred cause." This act of the Grand Vizier has shown that it is once again necessary to insist on the principle of national sovereignty and that it is a mistake to agree to the personal rule of a single person. Then he asks the members of the assembly for permission to illustrate this truth by a short review of Turkish and Islamic history.

In this quite long and detailed historical overview which goes back to the "*asr-ı saadet*" he develops the key argument that the Selçuks, and after the Mongol invasions, the Mamluks of Egypt had maintained the caliphate as an independent institution, even though the rulers of the

time could easily have usurped the caliphate themselves. The fact that Sultan Selim, after conquering Egypt, claimed the title of caliph for himself he explains away as a form of expediency: the last Abbasid caliph at the Mamluk court was such a weak figure that leaving him in position would have weakened the caliphate. In order to give back the strength to the caliphate that the Muslim world needed, the sultan had taken it upon himself. Over the last three hundred years, however, the Ottoman sultanate had been responsible for the weakening of the empire, and it was clear that now only the Turkish nation itself could give back its stature to the caliphate.

In his peroration, Mustafa Kemal answers the rhetorical question what the position of the caliph would be after the end of the Ottoman sultanate and he answers it in this way: it can exist side by side with the Turkish state just as it had existed side by side with Selçuk and Mamluk rulers, but this time the person to hold the office would not be a weakling or refugee, but an exalted person supported by the Turkish state. This would be to the benefit of Turkey and the Islamic world and, according to Kemal: «The Turkish and Islamic state of Turkey will be the luckiest state on earth because it is the source and the root of the occurrence and appearance of two kinds of happiness»¹¹.

Although his speech was met with applause, it did not convince the members of the judicial, shar'i, and fundamental law subcommittees, who debated the question for three hours in a joint session without coming to a conclusion. It was then that Mustafa Kemal Pasha famously lost his temper, broke into the committee proceedings, and demanded that the right conclusion be reached, and that otherwise some heads would roll. That intervention was highly effective. The joint committee recommended the acceptance of the text of the Second Group with only minimal changes and at three in the morning on November, 2nd, this motion was adopted.

As Finebrock has pointed out, the proclamation stated that the sultanate had been abolished effective from March 16th, 1920 (the day of the occupation) by the National Assembly that was the only legitimate representative of the Turkish people, and whose rights could not be abandoned, split up or devolved onto any other institution.

This formula, which originally came from the Second Group opposition, was not just meant to give a clear statement on the abolition of the monarchy. It was aimed as much at Mustafa Kemal Pasha as at Sultan Vahidettin in the sense that it served notice that the assembly would not yield its authority to any single person or institution after the abolition of the monarchy. In the assembly in general, but certainly in the Second Group there was a strong suspicion that Mustafa Kemal, who after all had been granted full delegated powers by the assembly during the Greek offensive in the summer of 1921, would establish a permanent form of personal rule.

¹¹ ZÜRCHER, Erik Jan, *Mustafa Kemal Paşa'nın İslam tarihi yorumu*, in ALKAN, Mehmet Ö. (ed.), *Yakın Türkiye Tarihinden Sayfalar*, İstanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası, 2014, pp. 327-340.

As we know, this fear was well founded. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Pasha through a succession of measures – changes to the High Treason Law, the elections in which only hand-picked candidates were allowed to stand, the founding of the People’s Party – increased his grip on the political system. In October 1923 his instruction to of his followers in the assembly to refuse to stand for election as commissar in a new government triggered a crisis which brought about the fall of the Government of the Great National Assembly and the proclamation of the republic with much stronger powers for a separate executive, with a prime minister appointed by the president, and a cabinet put together by the prime minister with the president’s approval. There was nothing inevitable about this. There was no breakdown of the system. It was an artificial crisis was triggered by the refusal – on express instructions from the president – of members of the People’s Party to serve on the executive committee of the assembly as *vekil* or commissar, which Mustafa Kemal then interpreted as a systemic crisis that needed to be solved.

When we look at the proclamation of the republic this way – as an internal coup in an already essentially democratic system – we better understand the reaction of the opposition. The old “Second Group” opposition had been eliminated in the elections of 1923, but a group of former leaders of the national resistance had been elected to the second assembly on the basis of their status as national heroes, but they did not have the president’s confidence and had been left out of the preparations for the proclamation of the republic. In fact, most of them were in Istanbul at the time, and were taken by surprise. The day after the proclamation Hüseyin Rauf as their spokesman gave an interview to the Istanbul press in which he expressed strong criticism of the decision. His argument was that there was nothing wrong with a republic, but that the really important thing was to have democracy and popular sovereignty and that in itself a republic did not guarantee those, as witness many Latin American republics, which were in fact military dictatorships.

The message was clear and it was understood by the People’s Party in Ankara. Rauf was brought before the parliamentary party to explain himself. He was fiercely attacked for what was interpreted as his reactionary tendencies. He stuck to his argument, emphasizing time and again that the important thing was that sovereignty should belong to the representatives of the people. In the end he narrowly escaped being expelled from the party¹².

This leads us to the conclusion: the weight of Turkish historiography based ultimately on the 1927 speech of Mustafa Kemal Pasha has turned the Government of the Great National Assembly into a transitory phase between empire and republic, a kind of republican prehistory, but it was a unique system with a character of its own, whose members believed in their role and displayed a lot of self-confidence in taking the radical step of abolishing the monarchy. The majority of the

¹² ZÜRCHER, Erik Jan, *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic. The Progressive Republican Party (1924-1925)*, Leiden, Brill, 1991, pp. 34-36.

assembly wanted the constitutional monarchy they had already made much more democratic in 1921 to be abolished altogether, but they also wanted to make sure that it was replaced permanently with government by the assembly itself. That the system was changed to a more orthodox republican one with the creation of a separate and much stronger executive in October 1923 was not a sort of natural development. It was the result of a deliberate move by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, not a necessary outcome of the workings, or the failings, of the GNA government. That government – which led the country from 1920 to 1923 – deserves its own independent place in history.

THE AUTHOR

Erik Jan ZÜRCHER (Leiden, 1953) was awarded his Ph.D. at Leiden University in 1984. He has taught at Nijmegen and Amsterdam Universities and been attached to the International Institute of Social History twice (1990-99 as senior research fellow and 2008-12 as general director). From 1997 to 2018 he was full professor of Turkish Studies at Leiden University. 2018-20 he was director of the Leiden Institute of Area Studies. He has been a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences since 2008 and affiliate professor in Stockholm University from 2013 to 2016. Zürcher has written or edited twenty books, mostly on Turkey in the 20th century. His primary focus is on the transition from empire to nation state. His *Turkey: A Modern History* has been translated into ten languages, and been reprinted in Turkey over 25 times.

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