



# Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey

By Andrew Mango



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Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was virtually unknown until 1919, when he took the lead in thwarting the victorious Allies' plan to partition the Turkish core of the Ottoman Empire. He divided the Allies, defeated the last Sultan, and secured the territory of the Turkish national state, becoming the first president of the new republic in 1923, fast creating his own legend.

Andrew Mango's revealing portrait of Atatürk throws light on matters of great importance today-resurgent nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and the reality of democracy.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In 1923, reports Mango, a satirical magazine ran a cartoon showing the three faces of Turkey--the nation, the assembly and the government. All were identical: the features were those of Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938), an army officer who had salvaged the core of defeated Turkey after the 1914-1918 war to create a secular republic. A decade later, still trying to structure an identity for what remained of the polyglot, ramshackle Ottoman Empire, he decreed--as virtual dictator of a nation now largely populated by Muslims--that inhabitants had to take surnames. For himself, he adopted Ataturk, literally Father Turk. Mango (a retired BBC expert on Turkey and author of three previous books on the country) gives this man, one of the least-known nation-builders of the last century, full treatment, from his earliest days to his ascension to power and his death, from cirrhosis at the age of 57. Few leaders have so modernized an ancient society, instituting radical changes in dress, religion, government, education--even the alphabet. Ataturk abolished the monarchy, divided WWI's victors bent on partitioning all of Turkey, defeated rapacious Greeks intent on expanding their expatriate communities in Asia and destroyed or co-opted his domestic rivals. That so much of his legacy survives is evidence of his success. Mango's admiration for Ataturk doesn't keep him from displaying the dictator's arrogance, ruthlessness and authoritarianism; his Turkish expertise enables him to flesh out Ataturk's complex life via sources he translated himself. Mango gives a rounded, finely detailed portrait of the man who created modern Turkey. B&w photos. (Apr.)

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From Library Journal

Although there is no shortage of information on Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkish, no comprehensive biography has appeared recently in English. Mango's new book fills that gap in superlative fashion. Mango, born in Istanbul and fluent in Turkish, has published numerous articles and three other books on Turkey. Now more than ever, Ataturk is a controversial figure in Turkey, so new sources on him continue to appear, on which Mango relies heavily. Almost unknown in the West in 1919, when he became the leader of the Turkish nationalist movement, Ataturk had already accomplished much and set his course long before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. English readers are fortunate that Mango could distill what took place in Ataturk's life up to the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. This is a balanced and exhaustively researched account of the influential life of one of the most complex and controversial figures in 20th-century world history. Given its scholarly nature, it is highly recommended for academic and special Middle East or military collections and for larger public libraries.

*-Ruth K. Baacke, Whatcom Cty. Lib. Syst., Bellingham, WA*

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From [Booklist](#)

Perhaps more than anyone in the twentieth century, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk tried to fit the description of the enlightened despot, though, as to be expected, he often demonstrated the oxymoronic nature of the term. Still, his shortcomings don't taint the sympathetic tone of this ultimate biography, which examines Ataturk's career from the perspective of the driving force of his ambition: the modernization of Turkey and its acceptance by the Western nations. Ironically, Ataturk was born in Salonica (now part of Greece) during the end of the Ottoman empire, which he helped to dissolve. He was involved with, but not a leader of, the 1908 movement that became known as the Young Turks and later distinguished himself at Gallipoli during World War I. Afterward, Ataturk consolidated his political position in the War of Turkish Independence to free Turkey from Greek and other invaders. From the early twenties until his death from cirrhosis of the liver in

1938, Ataturk was the absolute ruler of his nation--the Gazi. So tightly did he control life in Turkey, he even organized the opposition party. More than 60 years after his death, Ataturk's legacy, down to the mishandling of the Kurdish cultural and political questions, continues to influence Turkey. *Frank Caso*

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