

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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# MUSTAFA KEMAL'S ARMISTICE NOTEBOOK

FALIH RIFKI ATAY

## Synopsis

In this work, Falih Rifki narrates the process of Mustafa Kemal's transformation into Atatürk by bringing together what he hears from others and what he witnesses. Mustafa Kemal, influenced by the stories of the heroes of other countries, desires to be one of those heroes. The government's lack of foresight when signing the Armistice of Mudros in 1918 shapes the conditions. When the national struggle he starts ends with the proclamation of the republic, he introduces many reforms in a short time, embracing the identity of Atatürk. However, he does all this despite Mustafa Kemal, who is a product of the Ottoman culture.

## People

Ali Fuat Cebesoy	Soldier and politician
Chiang Kai-shek	Chinese soldier and politician
Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby	British soldier
Eleftherios Venizelos	Greek politician
Enver Pasha	Soldier and politician
Fethi Okyar	Soldier, diplomat, and politician
Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın	Journalist, writer and politician
İsmet Pasha	Soldier and politician
İzzet Pasha	Soldier and grand vizier
Latife Hanim	Atatürk's ex-wife
Louis Félix Marie François Franchet d'Espèrey	French soldier
Mark Lambert Bristol	American admiral
Nikolaos Trikoupis	Greek soldier
Rusen Esref	Journalist, writer, and politician
Salih Bozok	Soldier and politician
Samih Rifat	Poet, linguist, and politician
Sattar Khan	Azerbaijani reformer
Sir Somerset Arthur Gough Calthorpe	British soldier
Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu	Journalist, writer, and politician
Yusuf Ziya Gokalp	Writer, sociologist, and politician

## Events

### *To Be That Great Man*

One evening when Mustafa Kemal is in a gathering, his friends praise Eleftherios Venizelos and Sattar Khan. Fethi Bey complains that the Ottoman Empire does not have such great men. Upon this remark, Mustafa Kemal starts to think deeply. One of his friends guesses what he is thinking; he considers he can be one of those great men. They discuss it for the rest of the evening.

At dawn, Mustafa Kemal invites Fuat Bey to his home. When Mustafa Kemal's mother implies that they must have had a lot of fun since they are late, Fuat Bey tells her that Mustafa Kemal was stuck on a subject and talked about it all night long and then Fethi Bey took them to another place to silence him, but her son continued to talk about the same thing. She says how smart Fethi Bey is and then asks what he did this time where they went. Fuat Bey replies that he did not listen to her son and spent his time with other things. Then she repeats how smart Fethi Bey is.

### *Mustafa Kemal's Concerns*

Although Mustafa Kemal has many concerns about entering the First World War, he fulfills all the duties assigned to him during the war and never makes an effort to show that he is proven right.

When the Armistice of Mudros is signed, he records the terms of the armistice and the correspondence he made about it a book. Thinking that the Ottoman and British interpret the terms of the armistice differently, he warns the government against the true intentions of the British.

Finally, Vice Admiral Calthorpe demands the surrender of Iskenderun and declares that otherwise General Allenby will occupy the city. Thereupon, Mustafa Kemal, in his final reply to Grand Vizier Izzet Pasha, writes that someday even ministers will be elected by the British government.

#### *About Mustafa Kemal*

In August 1913, Falih Rifki meets Enver Pasha while visiting Governor Haci Adil Bey to write about Thrace for the *Tanin* newspaper in Edirne, which was retaken during the war. From that day on, he has Enver Pasha sign his articles so that he can publish them quickly, without having the censor board read them.

One day, the governor invites him on a trip. Falih Rifki meets Mustafa Kemal on this trip. Later, he hears his name in World War stories. When he learns that Mustafa Kemal refused to be sent to Hejaz and supported to direct the military forces to the war in Palestine, he is impressed by the fact that he was a commander who preferred to leave the tomb of the prophet.

#### *Cafer*

After the Armistice of Mudros is signed, the only thing that is talked about in Falih Rifki's entourage is whether the country will be divided or taken under the rule of foreign powers. One day, his Cafer visits him in the newspaper *Aksam*. As one side of the building faces the Bosphorus, Cafer sees the British navy approaching the port while looking out the window. He clenches his fist and leaves angrily.

#### *General Franchet d'Espèrey*

When General Franchet d'Espèrey arrives at Galata pier on his white horse, he whips people in the Ottoman band greeting him, on the grounds that they frighten his animal. Later, he orders the sultan to be removed from the Dolmabahce Palace because he desires it for himself. The government has to persuade him to choose another palace in Istanbul.

#### *The Occupation of Istanbul*

While Falih Rifki works in the *Aksam* newspaper, two Armenians dressed as British soldiers and a British soldier come to the newspaper and announce that Istanbul is under occupation. The newspaper immediately requests information from the council of ministers. Thereupon, the government sends a notification. Armenian translators explain the situation to the British soldier. However, the British soldier orders them to put their own communiqués at the top of the page and the government's at the bottom. Since a word in their communiqué contains a spelling error, Falih Rifki and his colleagues do not correct this mistake so that it can be understood that the official notification was given by foreigners.

#### *The Waiting*

As the Greek army advances towards Catalca, everyone puts their hopes on the politics of the French army. One day, one of Falih Rifki's friends rushes to the newspaper and says that he has a piece of news but is not sure of its accuracy. The army mobilized in Kocaeli, but it is unclear whether this was the start of an attack.

In the following days, they go everywhere to find out what happened. They want to learn something from English, French, and Greek newspapers but can't. Moreover, the Greek media constantly reports on the failure of the Turkish army. Finally, in a newspaper published in Greek, it is reported that the Turkish army started to attack. That is surprising as the Turks are thought to remain on the defensive. The following days bring new pieces of information that need confirmation.

One evening, Falih Rifki sees the Greeks chatting happily on the ferry, and then he asks his friends what happened and hears that Mustafa Kemal was captured along with his army in Usak. However, the next day, he learns that the captive is not Mustafa Kemal; he is Nikolaos Trikoupis and his army, and that the Turkish army is advancing to Izmir. He calls Yakup Kadri right away and suggests going to Izmir.

### *In Izmir*

Later, he arrives in Izmir with Yakup Kadri. They leave their belongings at the Kramer Palas Hotel. Afterwards, Rusen Esref, whom they come across, takes them to the headquarters. There, they peek inside a mansion through the open window. When they see two British soldiers standing in front of Mustafa Kemal, their anger against the Allied Forces due to the persecution of the Turks in Istanbul fades.

After a while, Mustafa Kemal welcomes them with Ismet Pasha. He asks about Istanbul, says that everything has just started and then informs them that they will become a deputy in the future. Falih Rifki is impressed by the fact that if there were someone else in Mustafa Kemal's place, he would go to Istanbul and look for ways to become a sultan or grand vizier. On the contrary, he prefers to engage in a war of ideas. He is convinced that Mustafa Kemal is the first non-Oriental commander.

Since a big fire starts in the city, he decides to stay in the headquarters with Yakup Kadri instead of returning to the hotel. There, they watch the British soldiers on the British ships push the Greeks back with their bayonets, who are trying to board the ships. When the fire approaches the headquarters, Mustafa Kemal's chief aide, Salih Bey, tells Falih Rifki and Yakup Kadri that Mustafa Kemal refuses to leave the headquarters, but they may persuade him to leave. However, they state that they hesitate to give advice to Mustafa Kemal. Finally, Mustafa Kemal gets into a car driving behind a truck full of soldiers to go to the mansion of Latife Hanim, who invited him.

Then, he invites them to Latife Hanim's house. As Falih Rifki sees him in casual clothes at the mansion, he is very impressed by his gentle demeanor. The next day, Mustafa Kemal asks Latife Hanim if she can write in French. When he receives a positive response, he requests her to pen an ultimatum to the British navy to withdraw within 24 hours. Meanwhile, some claim that war will break out with the British in the end, but when the time expires, the British navy moves away from Turkish waters.

The people around him ask Mustafa Kemal to send the soldiers to Thrace. However, he says that since the Allied Forces are still in Istanbul, he will not endanger the life of a single Turkish soldier unless an armistice is signed. Falih Rifki thinks that if Enver Pasha were in his place, he would try to take back Syria and Iraq and lose what is already gotten back. Likewise, he notes that if Mustafa Kemal had been in Enver Pasha's place in 1914, he would never have dragged the country into war.

Falih Rifki and Yakup Kadri return to Istanbul after inspecting the villages that were attacked by the Greek army. Afterwards, they attend the meeting organized by Mustafa Kemal in Izmit. At the meeting, Mustafa Kemal declares that he plans to establish a political party and then asks attendees what name should be given to it. At the end of the discussions, he decides that its name should include "the people."

### *The Pasha of People's Dreams*

One day, while Mustafa Kemal Pasha is wandering around Cankaya with his aide, he stops by a village house. While chatting with the landlord, he asks if he knows Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha. The landlord says he knows him and describes Gazi Pasha as a tall man with a beard and mustache. Mustafa Kemal Pasha leans in his aide's ear and asks him not to spoil his dream.

### *Seeking a Regime Change*

One day Mustafa Kemal comes to the assembly a little early and invites Falih Rifki and the others to his room. He takes out of his pocket a copy of the bylaws to be approved that day and reads a sentence aloud in French. It reads that the French Republic is one and indivisible. He deletes the sentence after expressing that he saw it while reading about the French Revolution. He asks how to

translate "republic" into Turkish. One of them comments that they need to change the form of government when they are at their strongest. Upon this, he puts his pen on the table and says that they are at their strongest now, and then reads the first article of the new constitution declaring Turkey a republic. Afterward, they discuss who is to be the chairman of the parliament, how long he needs to stay in office, and the difficulty of keeping right and left-wing people in a single party. Mustafa Kemal states that they have to preserve the hodjas until the new constitution is approved, and it is useful to have a name that the hodjas are willing to support.

### *A Difficult Car Travel*

One day in winter, Mustafa Kemal tells Falih Rifki and a few people to pick up some stuff for a few days because they will go on a journey. One of the ministers states that they cannot go very far as Ankara is covered in snow. Mustafa Kemal argues that they can go. When they reach Balâ, the aide-de-camp goes to wake the commander, but the commander does not wake up because he does not believe that Ataturk can be there on a stormy night.

While Falih Rifki and Rusen Esref think they can't go further, the aide informs them that they will continue. They head toward Kirsehir, following Ataturk's car. However, at one point, their car gets stuck in the snow. Seeing that a van is waiting for them in a distant village, they barely walk all the way there. They get into the van with a few soldiers. Falih Rifki sits next to the driver, as Rusen Esref sits in the back seat. When Rusen Esref feels something under his seat, the soldier notifies him that he sits on a box of grenades. This notification serves nothing but to increase their fear.

Despite the blizzard, they reach Kirsehir. They are surprised to see that Ataturk's car is stuck right in front of the governor's house. Inside, they find him happily chatting. After eating, Ataturk informs them that they go to the train prepared for them at the railway station the next day. Falih Rifki and the others wonder about the condition of the road but do not say anything.

A car takes the lead, and a truck with gendarmes follows it in the morning. When the car goes off the road, the soldiers in the truck put it back on the road. Falih Rifki and Rusen Esref are scared, thinking they will die while climbing steep hills. However, on the other hand, they are swept away by the courage and charm of Ataturk, who is in the car they follow. When they finally arrive at the train station, Ataturk gets out of the car and says, "We had a dangerous but pleasant journey." Falih Rifki asks what they would have done if they had been stuck in the snow. Ataturk replies that they would have continued their journey with horses and oxcarts.

### *Mustafa Kemal's Business Adventures*

Mustafa Kemal resigns from the command of the Thunderbolt Army Group and arrives in Istanbul. The people around him recommend him that he invest with the money he saved and then mention a broker in Istanbul. The person in question invites Mustafa Kemal to dinner in his mansion. Mustafa Kemal goes to dinner with Fethi Bey. All night long, they talk about everything but money and business. After they leave the mansion, Fethi Bey complains that the man did not talk about money. However, Mustafa Kemal attributes this to the man's politeness. The next day, he delivers all his money and one hundred and fifty liras of his aide Cevat Bey to the man.

Later, a relative of his tells Mustafa Kemal that the man will buy and sell figs, making a lot of profit, so, his money will double. Time passes, but he hears nothing. Fethi Bey tells Mustafa Kemal that he has been defrauded. Then, Mustafa Kemal visits the man, but he chats about everything except trade, believing that the man does not like to talk about money because he is extremely polite. After a while, when he hears that a sailboat full of figs will dock at the port of Istanbul, he waits for it for hours in a place overlooking the sea in Sultanahmet. But the sailboat does not show up. He finally realizes that he has lost his money. He does not deal with the man again, but Cevat Bey catches the man on the Galata Bridge and threatens to throw him into the sea if he does not give the money back. In this way, he takes his one hundred and fifty liras back.

After a while, Mustafa Kemal publishes the *Minber* newspaper in partnership with Fethi Bey. Mustafa Kemal reads the newspaper at home and likes it very much, but when he goes out, he sees none read it. The newspaper eventually shuts down because he fails to grasp the commercial side of the job.

When he is in power, he owns the newspaper, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*. When it is necessary to buy a machine for the newspaper, he hands it over to the party. While politicians exploit governmental sources to keep their newspapers afloat, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk does not do this even though he has the opportunity to do so.

#### *The First Party With Both Men and Women Present*

Among the national fighters are commanders who complain about unveiled women. Among the deputies are those who gossip about their colleagues because they go to the bazaar with their veiled wives and those with more than one wife.

In order to solve these problems, Ataturk first has the curtains separating women from men on the trams removed. Afterward, he gives an invitation. Everyone is invited with his spouse. However, men and women sit on opposite sides. Only a few people remain standing. Ataturk takes care of them, leaving the sitting guests alone. He tells people that the effect of the invitation will be visible the next time.

#### *Wearing a Hat*

On an evening when they gather in Cankaya, they talk about the hat law, decide to punish those who attack the citizens who wear hats. They think that if officers wear a hat, people get used to it. Thus, everyone can embrace it over time. The next day Falih Rifki goes to Bolu. While chatting with the governors of Bolu and Izmit, he brings up the hat law. Both governors claim that the people cannot digest the hat. The next day, they hear Ataturk's speech about the hat in Inebolu. This time, both governors say that with the intervention of Ataturk, this matter is settled.

Time passes. Falih Rifki asks Ataturk why he preferred a conservative place like Inebolu to wear a hat. Ataturk expresses that because of the fact that he went there for the first time, the people who wanted to see him very much would embrace whatever they saw on his head. If he had worn the hat Izmir, for example, the people would only notice the hat on his head as an alien object.

#### *Going to Mecca with a Hat*

Turkey is invited to one of the Islamic congresses held in Mecca. Ataturk tasks one of his deputies, Edip Servet Tor, to go to Mecca with a hat in order to destroy the superstitions that prevent Muslims from articulating with the civilized world. Edip Servet Tor does what he is told and becomes the most respected among the Muslim delegates.

#### *Malatya*

Ataturk stops by Malatya on his way back from a trip. When he goes to see the mayor, he likes the apricots in a showcase where local crops are exhibited. The mayor takes the apricots out of the showcase so that Ataturk can take a closer look at them. Ataturk continues to compliment, thinking that apricots will be served. However, the mayor does not offer anything. Ataturk gets angry and returns to Ankara right away. He takes his anger out on Malatya deputies saying that he planned to spend the night in Malatya but did not want to stay in a city that did not offer him even an apricot.

#### *The Language Reform*

Falih Rifki comes to Dolmabahce Palace to present the final decisions of the alphabet commission. He conveys to Ataturk the conflict between those who are looking for letters and signs suitable for foreign words that have settled in the language and those who oppose this, arguing that the new alphabet will not only eliminate the old alphabet but also the language. Ataturk asks how soon they can achieve the alphabet revolution. As he learns that it is fifteen years, he states that everything must happen in three months. Otherwise, he says, people tend to read the things written in the old alphabet.

#### *A Debate over Language*

Whatever word Yusuf Ziya Gokalp hears, he states that its origin is Turkish and makes explanations in his own way. A serious discussion starts about this. In those days, Falih Rifki comes to Istanbul from a

congress in Moscow and visits Ataturk in Dolmabahce Palace. There, he learns from Ataturk that the language congress invited many writers to dinner to share their ideas, including Huseyin Cahit, and that Huseyin Cahit replied with a letter. Huseyin Cahit supports the simplification of Turkish, but he is against inventing new words to replace the words that have settled in the spoken language. In his letter, he explained his ideas and requested that his letter be torn up and thrown away if his ideas were not found appropriate. After Ataturk had this letter read to him, he did not care about some people's claim that Huseyin Cahit was against the language revolution and demanded that he be invited.

At dinner, Ataturk asks Falih Rifki how he finds Huseyin Cahit's ideas. When Falih Rifki states that he agrees with many of them, Ataturk asks him to answer his friends' questions like Huseyin Cahit. Falih Rifki does what he is told and answers everyone like Huseyin Cahit. Afterward, he advises Ataturk not to invite Huseyin Cahit to the meeting, stating that most people will agree with his thoughts. After the guests leave the table, Ataturk then tells Falih Rifki not to speak to him in such a discouraging manner in front of the crowd again.

Huseyin Cahit silences everyone by giving intelligent answers to the questions in the meeting. Thereupon, Ataturk summons Samih Rifat, who is sick in bed. Samih Rifat takes some medicine to attend the meeting and shakes Huseyin Cahit's spirit a little at the meeting. However, at the end of the meeting, the young people surround Huseyin Cahit and compliment him.

The next evening, when Falih Rifki is about to enter his house, a car takes him to Ataturk. All his friends, who were at the table the previous evening, are there. After sitting at the table, Ataturk hints to him how right he is, then points to the blackboard behind him and says that Huseyin Cahit erased everyone like an eraser that erases writing on the blackboard.

That evening, Falih Rifki realizes how overwhelmed Ataturk is with this issue. Although he is not generous, he gifts a house to Samih Rifat, the only person who could successfully respond to Huseyin Cahit. Later, Ataturk tells him that it is impossible to find a Turkish equivalent for every foreign word, and therefore it is necessary to leave the language in its natural state.

#### *Assassination Attempts*

A group of men who want to assassinate Ataturk in Ankara wait for him, hiding in the cemetery opposite the club where he spends the night. However, since Ataturk is hosting Admiral Bristol at the club that night, he is into the conversation until the morning. The assassins give up as it gets light.

Some former members of the Committee of Union and Progress provoke the masses that are against the revolutions. Their assassins hide and wait in a spot where Ataturk's cabriolet is expected to pass by. However, when Ataturk's car breaks down, one of the assassins turns himself in to the governor, thinking that Ataturk won't come to Izmir because he is aware of the assassination.

#### *Fabricated Assassinations*

Some people in Ataturk's entourage make him believe that he will be assassinated. One day, when Falih Rifki visits him at Dolmabahce Palace, Ataturk tells him that he learned that some Armenians plan to come to the palace at dinner time in a military costume to make the guards open the door. When they enter, the lights suddenly go out so that they kill everyone at the table. Falih Rifki knows that this is a fabrication but cannot say anything. He is sure that some people try to keep Ataturk under control by fabricating such stories.

Some tell Ataturk that the roundabout near the parliament will make it easier for those who want to assassinate him. Falih Rifki presides over the zoning commission. One day, Ataturk comes to his office, examines the plans and decides to keep the roundabout in place. Falih Rifki is pleased with this. Thanks to the roundabout, accidents are prevented as vehicles have to slow down.

#### *Nakedness*

One day, Falih Rifki asks Ataturk at the mansion in Florya if he used to swim in Thessaloniki when he was a child. Ataturk replies that it was not well received to see people naked. In fact, people are used to swimming in wooden sea huts, as it is not considered a polite custom to swim in Istanbul.

## *Praises*

Falih Rifki joins the delegation that goes to Berlin to celebrate Hitler's birthday in 1938. While greeting the Turkish delegation, Hitler says that Ataturk is the person who demonstrated that even if it is deprived of everything, a nation can create the means to rescue itself, that Mussolini is his first student while his second student is himself.

When they are in India in 1942, the representative of China tells them that although Chiang Kai-shek does not appreciate other nations, he likes the Turks and even keeps a book of Ataturk at his bedside.

A Hindu leader also states that Ataturk proved that an Asian country can be freed from the control of capitalist states and become independent.

And in an interview, the Indonesian president and prime minister state that Ataturk is their instructor.

## *Ataturk's Illness*

After returning from his trip to Germany, Falih Rifki sees Ataturk in his mansion in Florya. At dinner, Ataturk recalls a discussion that happened a few days ago and asks Falih Rifki if he was right or not. Falih Rifki is very sad to see that the memory of Ataturk, who is only 56 years old, is blurred like this. For Ataturk used to have such a strong memory that when they met, Falih Rifki asked him where they first had seen each other, and Ataturk replied that he had seen him for the first time in 1913 when he came to Didymoteicho with the governor of Edirne.

Moreover, he becomes an angry person. Falih Rifki smokes a pipe from time to time as he tries to quit smoking. One evening, he leaves the dinner table to go to the aides' room, but a waiter comes right after him and says that Ataturk is summoning him. When he returns to the table, Ataturk angrily asks where he went. Falih Rifki explains his situation because he knows that Ataturk cannot tolerate such things as he believes people avoid him. But Ataturk asks him to sit back instead of giving him time to smoke a pipe.

Over time, his nose bleeds, and his skin itches. He can't stand bending over to scratch his legs. For he is known as a courteous person, who could not ask for a toilet break during the parliamentary meetings. Instead, he used to leave the meeting room with someone, pretending to talk with him in private. After the diagnosis of cirrhosis, he starts to follow a strict diet. One evening, when Falih Rifki comes to dinner with his wife, Ataturk tells everyone at the table that he will no longer drink but asks them to drink and enjoy each other's company.

## *Ataturk against Mustafa Kemal*

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's taste is in harmony with the Ottoman lifestyle. Since he has music training, he knows how to sing following a *makam*, a modal framework for melodic development in Classical Turkish Music, and loves it very much. He also follows the oldest techniques of the old script. His biggest dream before he dies is to drink milk on a cool plateau and listen to the noise of a flock of sheep.

However, since he is convinced that Westernization is needed to modernize, he does not give up this conviction for the sake of his taste. When the Latin alphabet is adopted, Falih Rifki and many of his friends carry on using the old script. Even the government departments use both the Arabic and Latin letters for a long time. However, Ataturk never uses the Arabic letters again.

## **Themes**

**Grandiosity** Mustafa Kemal, influenced by the stories of Eleftherios Venizelos and Sattar Khan, begins to question why he cannot be a hero himself. As the conditions in the country deteriorate due to the rulers' lack of foresight, he finds the opportunity to increase his influence and power as in his dreams and turns into a hero. His state of mind during the dangerous journey he takes with Falih Rifki and Rusen Esref is another reflection of his unwavering belief in his own capacity.

**Naivety** Although Mustafa Kemal earns his life as a commander, who fights on the fronts, with his mastery of using violence in the most efficient way, he is inexperienced and naive in many areas of life. For example, instead of asking the broker to account for his irresponsibility, he reconciles himself to that he made a mistake. Once he starts a newspaper business, it takes time to realize that good ideas are not good products. In his last business adventure, he does not exploit state resources for his newspaper, even though he has the entitlement.

**Manipulation** Mustafa Kemal implements some strategies for making the people embrace the reforms. For example, in order for the law replacing the fez with a hat to be accepted, he goes out for the first time wearing a hat in Inebolu, a very conservative place. In this way, he thinks that people who see him for the first time do not find the hat strange.

**Revolutionism** After Mustafa Kemal is successful in the national struggle, he does not take refuge in the sultan and does not ask for a high office from him. He plans to form a brand new government in Ankara and redesign society. After declaring Turkey a republic, he introduces many reforms to modernize the society. He wants all of the reforms to be put into action quickly to avoid any reactionary opposition. For example, when he introduces the letter revolution, he is told that in order to accustom the people to the new script, newspaper columns written in the Arabic letters will gradually be replaced by the Latin letters. However, he opposes this, anticipating that people will not give up their habits and wants the change to happen immediately. Although he, as Mustafa Kemal, is in harmony with the Ottoman music, language, and routines, he leaves them all in a short time in order for his identity as a revolutionary leader to be effective but continues to miss them.

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