CONCLUSION
Mustafa Kemal died seventy years ago (November 10, 1938). His legacy lives on and even to this day Turks continue to pay homage to their Father-Turk (Ataturk) by observing a minute of silence at 9-05 A.M. each November 10. Ataturk is omnipresent in Turkey. His portrait is in every home and place of business and on the postage and bank notes. His statues are every where. He certainly left his stamp on the nation more indelibly than any other person. In Ulus Square in Ankara stands a large equestrian statue of Ataturk and on its pedestal is carved a tree with a huge branch shattered near the trunk, and a new vigorous growth springing from the top: the Turkish Republic growing from the Ottoman Empire. Of course, the Republic had risen out of the failures and collapse of the Empire, but also out of the Empire’s experience and progress. As already discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the Republic and its founder both owe a lot to the Ottoman Empire. Ataturk was a product of military institutions established by the Ottoman sultans and later served as an official of the sultan. The process of Westernization had started by the reforming sultans’ long back (chapters 1 to 4 deal with the process). Ataturk speeded up the process and embarked on a bold and sometime rash transformation, keeping in view the predominantly traditional leaning of the Anatolian rural population. Historians, mainly Europeans, are so much enamored by Ataturk that they have downplayed the continuities between the Republic and the Empire. This “received wisdom” that the Republic was a clean slate which bore only the imprint of Ataturk is being challenged by recent researchers. Justice has not been done to the Ottoman Empire and its Sultans by a number of writers. For
example phrases like “sick man of Europe” or “oriental despotism” used in the heat of confrontation between the Western states and Ottoman Empire have been so much repeated and recycled as to give an impression that these are the general characteristics of the Ottoman Empire. This is incorrect. Ottomans built up the largest and militarily the strongest power in the world at that time which played a unique and vital role in world history. Despite continuous wars with European powers and despite internal decay, how come that the “sick-man” survived for about two and a half centuries – his total life exceeded 600 years. After the World War when Germany and those who fought on its side, including Ottomans, were defeated, how come that Turkey alone mustered so much power as to inflict two devastating defeats on Greeks, forced the Allies to sign the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), and evacuated all the Allied forces from Turkey. All this shows that the Ottoman Empire had a strong base, it was a strong military power and had a capable bureaucracy. Similarly sweeping remarks against sultans and others as if it is a “parade of salacious sultans, evil pashas, hapless harem women, and obscurantist clerics” would be uncalled for. There may be some sultans and other top bureaucrats who may not be upto the mark, but that does not justify such general denigrations. On the whole Ottomans established a vast empire with multi-religious and multi-racial communities who lived in harmony, had a strong military force, an efficient administrative and executive branch and a fair administration of justice.

A good deal of rich and valuable source material about Ottomans is in Ottoman language. The change of alphabet by Ataturk in 1928 from Arabic to
Roman script had the effect of cutting the younger generation off from access to the rich heritage of Ottoman literature. However, Turks are curious about their past history and are trying to equip themselves with the Ottoman language.

History teaches us that civilizations flourish, die and disappear. Sometimes they die swiftly, sometimes in a slow lingering death. And sometimes as with the Roman or Ottoman and others, echoes of that civilization find new life in later cultures. To forget or distort the entire civilization is tragic, because each civilization no matter how grand or flawed is a laboratory of human ideas and ideals, of dreams and nightmares. We can learn from them.

However, 18th century turned out to be a century of defeats for Ottomans. Internal decay and military failures and territorial losses started. These are spelled out in Chapter I. Islamic world, including Ottoman Empire, now faced European modernism. Europe was now far more powerful than that which the great Sultans of the past had defeated. The lesson for the Ottomans was that if they have to survive they have to borrow from the West technology, and other advancements brought about by various thrusts of modernism. The process of Westernization now makes a beginning. Chapters 2 to 4 deal with this. Every reform offer in Turkey met with opposition. The question raised was to what extent can norms of an alien system be grafted on to a Muslim society which is to be governed by the Sharia’h?

The Republic of Turkey stepped up the process of Westernization. Atatürk wanted to transform Turkey into a modern state. He must have
developed these ideas from his early age. He did not go to the religious schools, but he did study Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire and above all Auguste Comte, a radical modernizer who studied French Revolution in great detail. He did not like the model which the Reforming Young Turks had conceived. Instead, he wanted a “modern, bourgeois, secular Turkish Republic on the model of laicist France and its separation of church and state.” After the Treaty of Laussane when the political problems in the aftermath of World War I were settled, Ataturk now proceeded to reform the Turkish society in a very comprehensive manner. His vision and philosophy is contained in the Six Principles (Six Arrows) which he sought to implement. The most controversial and troublesome principle turned out to be Secularism. There was opposition, but Ataturk’s towering personality overpowered it. Sheikh Said’s revolt was ruthlessly crushed. Ataturk also got rid of his opponents, some of whom had been very close to him, by holding their trial on alleged charges of attempt to assassinate him. However, after Ataturk’s death, the position changed when his successor, Ismet Inonu, conceded to the demand of a multiparty system. The 1950 Parliamentary elections brought Democratic Party to power and since then there has been a return to religion creating a situation of confrontation between the pro-Islamic ruling parties and the secular elites (the military and the Constitutional Court, the so-called guardians of Kemalism). This has created “a tier” (to borrow from Samuel Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilizations”) in the Turkish society. The two decisions handed down by the Constitutional Court of Turkey in 2008, and referred to in chapter 6, highlight
this confrontation. Islam still plays an important role for the personal identity of Turks. It is being remarked that Kemalists have applied “too rational and too European a standard to Turkey.” However, many Turks would take “Kemalism as synonymous with progress and, therefore, with freedom.”

Despite the foregoing criticism, Atatürk will be remembered as the savior of Turkey, the most successful military commander and charismatic statesman that Turkey ever had. Under his leadership, the country and the nation have been firmly established.

Westernization made great strides. Secularization had made advances, though with some problems. A comprehensive biography of Atatürk written by a Turk is entitled Tek Adam “Unique Man”. This is a fair characterization of Atatürk there is no other like him. The word Tek also means solitary/alone which he was also. By his single-minded driving force, Atatürk did so much and heralded such vital changes in Turkish society in such a short time that he rightly deserves to be titled as Tek Adam.