

Hellenic Electronic Center
with 35,000 Hellenes and 34 Hellenic Organizations
as Associated Members in the US and abroad www.greece.org The following letter is in
response to Norman Webster's June 3 misinformed commentary on

Turkish dictator and murderer Mustafa Kemal. The fact remains that Kemal was a brutal tyrant
and dictator who established an authoritarian state and a personality cult around himself, still
revered by Turkey's military today. Cults of personality are incompatible with democracy. They
are exclusive to dictatorships as can be seen by the examples of Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao,
and Saddam Hussein. The real Mustafa Kemal can be thoroughly exposed by the life and
example of a truly admirable individual opposed all that Kemal represented -- Greek Orthodox
Archbishop Chrysostom of Smyrna. Butchered on the orders of one of Kemal's Generals when

the Turkish nationalists conquered Smyrna in September 1922, Archbishop Chrysostom
shared the fate of 130,000 Greek and Armenian Christians put to death under Kemal's
leadership

when that Christian City was torched and its Christian residents massacred. Furthermore,
Mustafa Kemal's legacy is in ruins. Islamic fundamentalism is overtaking Turkey, an

unpleasant reality that apologists for Turkish propaganda such as Mr. Webster conveniently
overlook.

Mustafa Kemal as a political and military leader bears responsibility for the Genocide, ethnic
cleansing,

and mass exterminations of the Greek, Armenian, and Assyrian Christians of Asia Minor and
various

regions in Pontus, Thrace, and Cappadocia. The continued praise of Mustafa Kemal,
mythologized

over many decades, is perpetuated by well paid public relations firms serving the bloody
Turkish military
dictatorship, and by pseudo scholars and historians whose ideology and funding derive from
Ankara. The

Turkish paramilitary state that Mustafa Kemal created, has since systematically destroyed the
Greek

Orthodox minority through decades of state sponsored pogroms and terror campaigns. Final
ly, the ultranationalist ideology of Kemal which the Turkish military adheres to, is in direct

conflict with the United States and the Western alliance. The Turkish military threatens to destroy the new alliance between the United States and the Kurds of Northern Iraq. Turkish hostility to and repression of its own Kurdish population renders Western and Turkish interests in Iraq entirely incompatible. Mr. Webster should familiarize himself with history rather than what the revisionist Turkish propagandists espouse, and should consider the crackdown on political dissidents such as Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk, publisher Ragıp Zarakolu, and exiles such as Taner Akcam before praising the indefensible and notorious legacy of Mustafa Kemal. Theodore G. Karakostas

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CHANGED THE NATION

Mustapha Kemal Ataturk: still worshipped after all these years

Founder of modern Turkey has his influence felt even today

NORMAN

WEBSTER ISTANBUL – “Revered” is too mean a word to describe how Mustapha Kemal Ataturk is regarded by his countrymen. Hero worship is closer to the mark, the way Mao Zedong was seen by Chinese in earlier days, but without the brainless hysteria that used to play such a part in Mao idolatry.

Everywhere, Ataturk gazes down on his people – from portraits in waiting rooms, from snapshots of his life (swimming, declaiming, teaching the alphabet) posted on public walls, or pointing the way dramatically forward, from astride a rearing horse, in the town square of Nevsehir in Cappadocia, deep in Turkey’s Asian heartland.

Although he died in 1938, he remains a guiding force. Founding father of the Turkish republic in 1923, he decreed that this overwhelmingly Muslim nation should be Western-oriented and secular in its public life. The army remains loyal to the vision, periodically overthrowing governments it considers to be straying from the true path.

Ataturk. Take George Washington (father of his nation), add in some Abraham Lincoln (moral force), then a dose of Maggie Thatcher (implacable, often unpleasant) and our own Sir John A. (a visionary with a fondness for the bottle – Ataturk died of cirrhosis of the liver), put them all together and you approach the figure this man still cuts in his world.

Westerners might know him best as the soldier who beat the British (plus Aussies and New

Zealanders) at Gallipoli in 1915. His real contribution to history, though, was to rescue the republic from the ruins of the Ottoman empire and drag it Westward by the scruff of the neck.

His ambition was phenomenal. He abolished the sultanate and the religious caliphate, changed the nation's script from Arabic to a Latin alphabet, adopted the Gregorian calendar, outlawed the fez and the veil, granted suffrage to women and required all Turks to adopt surnames, taking Ataturk ("Father of Turks") for himself.

This was a leader who literally changed the way people dressed, spoke, worshipped, were named and governed, not little things by any measure. And the amazing thing is, he's still on the job. Istanbul was the recent site of the annual assembly of the International Press Institute, a global group which keeps a watch on press freedom.

Nations that wish to stifle freedom of speech find all sorts of ingenious ways to do so. Turkey has a beauty, Article 301 of the Criminal Code, which applies savage penalties for "insulting Turkishness" – such as, for example, indicating the Turks committed genocide against the Armenians during the First World War.

We asked the prime minister what he was going to do to correct this. He said he was working on it. He might be some time. It has been 20 years since I first went to Turkey, and the change is striking. The air is cleaner, the buildings sturdier, the streets in better shape, the taxis no longer battered and polluting, the people better dressed, the prosperity almost palpable.

Returning to Montreal these days feels less like returning from the Third World than the other way round. You really have to go abroad to appreciate how unbelievably badly our streets, roads and public spaces compare – and how pervasive and degrading are our so-called graffiti (a.k.a., mindless scrawls by vandals).

Face it, our town is scruffy, shabby and down at the heels. Less and less do we resemble Paris or Singapore, and more and more Harare, say, or Cairo. Mogadishu? Not yet, although our potholes would do credit to a war zone. The Topkapi Palace remains a wonder, especially its collections of precious stones. We gape at a 68-carat diamond once used, incredibly, as a ring before being retired to a turban ornament.

There are ropes of pearls, gigantic rubies, emeralds seemingly the size of billiard balls. Then the famed Topkapi Dagger, with its three huge emeralds, the one Melina Mercouri and her lads set out to steal in the 1960 film Topkapi.

Those sultans might not be missed by the masses, but they did have a certain style. Finally, a quote that adds to the feeling that Turkey really must succeed, eventually, in winning admittance to the European Union. It comes from Jeffrey Kopstein, director of the Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto.

Kopstein writes that Europe's political elites "fail to consider the broader implications of refusing Turkey altogether. If left out, Turkey will pursue its own security agenda and, in the

context of Iran's nuclear ambitions, that can only mean developing its own nuclear program. Who could blame them?"

I don't know about you, but that made me sit up in my chair. Norman Webster is a former editor of The Gazette.