

## TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu: THE SECRET BEHIND THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE SUBSEQUENT SUCCESS WAS “UNITY”

This year marks the centenary of the creation of our National Anthem and the Constitution of 1921, which is accepted as the first modern-age Turkish constitution. This article will allow us to see just how precisely proper both undertakings were, considering the conditions of the time. Here, we will look back at how the will of a unified nation during and after the War of Independence saved that nation and help found this country.

**2**021 marks the centenary of two particularly important milestones in Turkish history; acceptance of our National Anthem and the Constitution of 1921, which is the first modern-age Turkish constitution. The importance of these two milestones becomes even clearer when we think of the conditions of the day. As our founding leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had said in “The Great Speech”; the group that the Ottoman Empire fought alongside had lost at the World War I, the Ottoman army faced great defeats at every front, and a rather overwhelming truce was drawn up. In the aftermath of many years of fighting in the WWI, the nation was exhausted and poor. The people who had forced the nation and the empire into the war had fled the country for their dear lives.

### **The nation was tired and poor, The state was occupied.**

Vahdettin, who then held the posts of Sultanate and Caliphate in the Ottoman Empire, was looking for flagrant solutions that only benefited his degenerate self and throne. The cabinet that was led by Damat Ferid Pasha, the then Grand Vizier, was subject to the will of the inglorious, coward, lonesome Sultan, and was content to any circumstance that might protect him and his entourage. The army had lost (and still being dispossessed of) its armament. The Entente was not complying with the provisions of the treaty; they exploited any excuse they could find to position the Entente navy and soldiers in İstanbul. The city of Adana was occupied by the French whereas Urfa, Maraş, and Ayıntap were occupied by the British. Italian military was in Antalya and Konya. Merzifon and Samsun were also occupied by the British soldiers.

### **The Treaty of Sevres was the final step in the downfall**

At the end of the WWI, the Ottoman Empire was on the losing side, and it was clear that the Empire was on the verge of dissolution. Four corners of the country were occupied by foreign forces; the army was dissolved, the economy had routed, the production had stopped. Sultan Vahdettin was not able to stop the occupation, including that of İstanbul and of İzmir, and decided to follow a completely submissive policy in the hopes of protecting his throne. The Treaty of Sevres was the final step in this downfall. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire was the only state with an occupied capital among all the states that were on the losing side of the war, which was another historical dishonor.

### **The Legitimacy of the War of Independence originated from a free and elected Parliament.**

Amid this disastrous scenery, Mustafa Kemal Pasha held onto his hopes, travelled to Anatolia, and ignited the War of Independence. As a retaliation, he was removed from his post by the İstanbul Government; his title and badges were cancelled. Sultan Vahdettin then ordered and confirmed his execution; the government even issued fetwas, explaining why his execution would be compliant with Islam. They then tried to have him killed by the military.

However, Mustafa Kemal Pasha focused on consultation and unity while trying to start the national resistance in Anatolia; he sent messages all around the nation and successfully managed to gather small troops in Anatolia, their chiefs, small resistance groups, and nationalistic groups under a single roof of National Resistance led by him. Thus, the National Resistance was a group



act; it stemmed from the nation led by Mustafa Kemal. It was also extremely significant that the legitimacy of the National Resistance came from a free and elected Parliament.

### **The suffering of a nation could not be told any clearer.**

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, our national poet, understood every second of the War of Independence and felt the idea behind it in the deepest way possible, which helped him write our National Anthem. Over 700 poems were submitted for the National Anthem contest in 1921. Mehmet Akif did not submit his poem for the contest because there was a 500 Lira award for the winner, which Akif rejected. When the contest was over, Hamdullah Suphi, the then Minister of Education, announced that “they were not able to find a poem that truly satisfied everyone and that sincerely expressed the excitement of those days.” He then personally wrote to Akif and pleaded him to write the National Anthem, and assured him that they will find a solution for the award issue. Akif’s National Anthem poem was read in front of the Parliament on March 12th, 1921 and was accepted with standing ovation. Although Akif was so poor that he could not afford a coat to wear, he took the 500 Lira award money and donated it to a charity that taught knitting to injured war veterans in Sarıkışla Hospital and poor women in the country to help them have a profession.

### **“May Allah never make this nation need another National Anthem.”**

Mehmet Akif’s last words before he passed were: “That poem was an expression of our nation’s feelings of excitement during the War

of Independence. That Anthem was written in a time in which agonized souls devastated by many disasters were waiting for salvation. It is a valuable memory of those days. It cannot be written again. I cannot write it again. That poem is no longer mine, but our nation's." Great historian Prof. Dr. İlber Ortaylı also expressed that "the Turkish National Anthem is a divine literary text. It has a philosophy behind it. It has depth." Mehmet Âkif is a great poet as much as he is a man of great honor who will be an example for many generations. His nation laid him to rest in a way fitting to his life. Great Âkif's following words are our eternal prayer: "May Allah never make this nation need another National Anthem."

**The Constitution of 1921 was the first time that the nation replaced the sultanate.**

On the other hand, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) was opened on April 23, 1920. It came into power as a new political authority that represented the nation instead of Istanbul Government and that would oppose the occupation. So, they needed a new constitution.

Just a couple of months after the opening of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, they started working on the new constitution. The Constitution of 1921 was accepted on January 20, 1921 with the name of "Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu". The Constitution stripped the Ottoman Sultan and the Government of all the power and empowered TBMM as the sole representative of the nation. For the first time in history, Turkish nation superseded the sultanate. The Constitution of 1921 actually and legally founded the Republic with its first article that read "Sovereignty is vested in the nation without condition. The governmental system is based on the principle of self-determination and government by the people." The Constitution of 1921 was altered on October 29, 1923 to officially recognize the state as a Republic.

On the other hand, the Constitution of 1921 was a rather short and temporary constitution with only 23 articles and 1 additional article. It was more of an "organizational code" instead of a "legal code". It was not a constitution that thoroughly explained civil liberties, the use of

legislative, executive, or judiciary powers, or the governmental organization. It only had one of the chapters that are inherent to constitutions: foundation of the state. Consequently, it was only a short-lived and temporary text that was prepared according to the conditions of the day. So and so, a new and more comprehensive constitution would be prepared in 1924.

Imagine a devastated nation that singlehandedly salvaged a country that was entrusted to foreign powers by its imprudent rulers. Think of a poet who truly and deeply felt the despair his nation, who had felt and articulated these feelings into a poem, only to spend every coin he gained on the veterans and daughters of his country. Again, imagine a leader that although all odds were against him, although the state tried to legitimize his murder, who never gave up and brought victory to his nation. This nation, who previously managed to come out strong from such a hellhole, will manage to overcome every challenge as one. We commemorate every hero of the War of Independence with mercy, gratitude and respect. May they rest in peace.

---

## The new paradigm of change The European Green Deal

Being the output of the EU's sustainability-oriented new business approach following its practice in circular economy within the scope of the fight against climate change, the European Green Deal (EGD) represents an opportunity for companies that use zero emission in production and manufacturing, while meaning substantial additional taxation for the remainder. In other words, our place in the new paradigm of change will play an effective role in the shaping of our prospective exportation goals.

Analysts point out the fact that the European Green Deal has only attracted attention as a theoretical concept, and express that there is a possibility to effectively implement the EGD after the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts note that



Turkey is uniquely exposed to the EGD for several reasons. One of those reasons is that Turkey has close relations with the EU. Also, Turkey's export highly generates carbon, and there is a perception that Turkey's current climate policy is not as ambitious as the EU's. Experts also agree that the EU creates significant opportunities for Turkey while striving for carbon-neutral activities. Analysts emphasize that there will be a great

increase in renewable energy investments due to decarbonization in particular. Analysts refer to Turkey's wealth in terms of renewable resources and express that Turkey may have a great role in meeting the demand regarding renewable energy. Therefore, it is underlined that energy resources will not pose a strategic challenge for Turkey, instead, they will build a future as great sources of power.

## “Sovereignty and independence are our greatest fortune”

The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) President M. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu published a message on the occasion of April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day and expressed that the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) is a milestone not only for the Turkish War of Independence but also for the Republic of Turkey's journey of reaching the level of contemporary civilization. Hisarcıkloğlu: “We celebrate 23rd of April, the birthday of the Turkish Grand National Assembly with great honor and joy. Sovereignty and independence are the greatest fortune of our nation. We will remain grateful for the sacrifices of great Atatürk and our great heroes who lost their lives to bring independence to our land. Our children is the key protector of this fortune. As the Turkish business community, we will endeavor to reinforce our Republic in line with its principles and goals and put a great effort to carry our Republic forward.



We are determined to do our part to realize economical development, which is the basis of prosperity and happiness, at the level of the most advanced countries. With this mindset and sentiment, I delightedly congratulate our children on April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day.”



### Hisarcıkloğlu called D-8 member states to "increase in-group trade"

In his speech at the online D-8 Business Forum, The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) President M. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu highlighted that the Muslim states, with their exportation worth 1.5 trillion

dollars to the global market, have very low trade rates among themselves, and called the D-8 states to increase trade between each other. Hisarcıkloğlu underlined that the welfare of more than 1 billion people living in the D-8 countries depends on the economic power of these states and that D-8 members generate around 4 trillion dollars of GDP. Hisarcıkloğlu expressed that as D-8 member states, they achieved to export 1.5 trillion worth of goods and criticized that the trade between the members themselves remained at only 110 billion dollars. Hisarcıkloğlu referred to this figure as insufficient and drew attention to the need for a better trade and investment environment between member states. Hisarcıkloğlu suggested that the scope of the preferential trade agreement should therefore be expanded: “The full participation of the member states is necessary. For a better connection, we need better physical and legal infrastructure. This should include visa-free travel between our countries. Therefore, in addition to the responsibilities of our governments, D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry have a crucial task. We must fully realize that this is the only umbrella organization of the private sector within the D-8.”



### Erzurum: The Place Where Civilizations Meet

With its rich culture and deep-rooted history, Erzurum has a distinctive cuisine thanks to its location on the Silk Road and

its importance in many civilizations, the Ottoman Empire in particular. Erzurum's cuisine has been inspired by the Caucasus, Russian and Iranian culinary cultures and offers delicious food with a magnificent blend of taste and smell. The use of natural and organic ingredients in the dishes further enhances the taste. Erzurum is one of Turkey's leading cities in terms of animal products, especially meat and dairy products.

Erzurum's Chambers and Commodity Exchanges aim to bring Erzurum's 486 historical dishes to the surface and introduce them primarily in Turkey and then abroad by registering them as geographical indications. Erzurum Commodity Exchange, Erzurum Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Oltu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Pasinler Chamber of Commerce and Industry carry out activities to raise awareness on geographical indications. Within this scope, YOREX Eastern Anatolia Geographical Indications Products Summit was held in Erzurum in October 2019.