"An Appropriate Commemoration Worth of a Great Leader and Reformer"
ASA MISSION STATEMENT

The Atatürk Society of America (ASA) is an independent non-profit organization founded in Washington DC in 1995 with the objective of promoting Atatürk’s political legacy.

ASA understands Atatürk’s political philosophy to be:
- Sovereignty belongs to the people. People alone administer people. Public sovereignty cannot be shared with any other authority, including a religious authority.
- Rational education ensures absoluteness of public sovereignty rationality in politics.
- Science leads to progress. Doctrines, including religious ideologies, hinder progress.
- The contemporary civilization is the common heritage of mankind. All nations must participate in it through progress. The universality of civilization means peace at home and peace in the world.

Towards this objective the ASA organizes scholarly lectures, provides research fellowships, develops a resource and reference center, and makes representations regarding the importance of Atatürk’s political philosophy for international prosperity and peace.
Blanco Villalta, Vice Consul, and son of Argentina’s Consul-General in Istanbul, became the first biographer of Atatürk in the world. He spent five intense years in Turkey, from 1930-1935, where he met the founder of the country on several occasions. After years of observing the man and his actions, he wrote “Atatürk belongs not only to Turkey but to humanity.”

Even 125 years after Atatürk’s birth, the civilized and democratic world is still talking about the leader, his philosophy, and the applications of his ideas to the Middle East and elsewhere.

We witness leaders of countries around the world discussing Atatürk and his leadership with inspired optimism that secularism and democracy is still applicable today more than ever. This means that Atatürk years ago foresaw the challenges we would be facing today, and prepared his country and its people for these developments. He also provided an example for newly established countries around the world struggling to establish independent states.

How is it that a person who died in 1938 clearly saw the dangers and trappings of mixing religion with government, and established a secular democracy, which was viewed as an impossible challenge since the crumbled Ottoman Empire was a theocracy for six hundred years? He anchored the newly independent country to the West, and changed the lives of millions of people. As Speaker Gingrich said on May 19, the man was a genius.

Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Lloyd George was quoted as saying “The centuries rarely produce a genius. Look at this bad luck of ours that a great genius of our era was granted to the Turkish nation” after the allied forces were resolutely defeated in Gallipoli.

John Kennedy, as President noted Atatürk’s leadership qualities with “The name of Atatürk reminds people of the historical successes of one of the great individuals of this century, the leadership that gave the inspiration to the Turkish nation, farsightedness in the understanding of the modern world and courage and power as a military leader. It is without a doubt that another example can’t be shown indicating greater successes than the birth of the Turkish Republic and ever since then Atatürk’s and Turkey’s broad and deep reforms undertaken as well as the confidence of a nation in itself.”

If we look at the Middle East we can easily see the root of existing problems which Atatürk brilliantly foresaw. Secularism is the key ingredient for countries with majority Muslim populations to provide democracy, human rights, and western values to their people.

Atatürk’s value is appreciated more with each passing day. We established ASA in 1995 to better promote Atatürk’s political legacy and contribute to freedom and peace. The May 19, 2006 event held in the Cannon Caucus room featuring Speaker Newt Gingrich who spoke more like a historian than a politician, made important contributions towards this effort and toward furthering U.S.-Turkish understanding.

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The event was broadcast in Turkey on at least two television stations, CNN Turk and TRT. In addition, it was covered extensively in newspapers.

I want to thank Speaker Gingrich for accepting the invitation to speak and Chairman Bob Livingston for making it happen. Ambassador Ferguson of New Zealand took time out of his busy day to address the audience. Greg and Linda Laughlin donated a flag flown over the capitol, and ATA-DC President Pelin Aylangan and ASA President Timur Edib made excellent presentations.

Congressmen Ed Whitfield and Robert Wexler invited their colleagues to attend the event, saying it is essential to learn the historic lessons of Atatürk’s successful transformation of Turkey and apply the lessons learned to our efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world.

Congressman Tom Lantos submitted a statement for the first time ever in the Congressional Record to commemorate Atatürk’s birthday. He noted that he told Pakistani President Musharraf that if he followed Atatürk’s vision, he would put Pakistan on the road to progress.

Sincere and heartfelt letters were sent for the occasion by President Necdet Sezer, President George Bush, and President Pervez Musharraf, as well as Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand.

We must not forget those that volunteer for ASA, we would not be able to accomplish our goals without them.

I am proud that ASA is a bridge of understanding between the U.S. and Turkey. In the legacy of Atatürk, who believed that all can be overcome with hard work and dedication, we look forward to working together in the future to accomplish those goals.

The uniqueness of U.S. democracy also shined through on that day, where a historic and glamorous room in the U.S. Congress was made available to commemorate a leader who lived and died so far away so many years ago. While we are proud of our Turkish heritage, as founder and Chairman of ASA I am grateful to the American people for creating and nurturing an environment where we were welcomed in the U.S. Congress.

Sincerely,
Hudai Yavalar

* Quote from Blanco Villalta
As I conclude my first year as the President of the Atatürk Society, I can only say that I am enlightened and thankful for your support of our Society and of Atatürk’s ideals. During this last year, I have witnessed a sincere affection, admiration, and respect for the life, work, and vision of Atatürk that words can not begin to describe. This year I have witnessed world leaders, statesman, academics, and our youth, born over one hundred years after Atatürk, perform amazing acts of selfless giving and support for our mission of furthering Atatürk’s principles.

Without a doubt, the highlight of this past year was our commemoration in the Caucus Room of the United States House of Representatives of the 125th anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s birth. There are no words to describe how impressed I was as an American to see that the only Superpower in the world, the protector of Democracy, was willing to have the People’s House graciously offered for our Society to honor Atatürk’s vision of world peace. First, our keynote speaker, Mr. Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, gave us all a history lesson about the genius of Atatürk’s strategic thinking and vision. Then, we listened as Ambassador Ferguson of New Zealand reminded us of the compassion and humility that Atatürk bestowed on humanity. In short, I can only say that thanks to our distinguished speakers and our honored guests, our event can only be described as an extraordinary tribute for an extraordinary man, leader, statesman, and visionary. I sincerely thank Congressman Ed Whitfield and Congressman Robert Wexler and their staff for allowing us the use of the Cannon Caucus Room, and I would like to give a personal thank you to Mr. Robert Livingston, who was the keystone in making our May 19 event happen. While there were many people that gave of themselves without having to be asked, and I thank each and every one of you, I would like to give special recognition to Mr. Cengiz Ozcan, who with a smile on his face took care of all of the forgotten chores and details to make our event run smoothly. I would also like to thank Congressman Tom Lantos for introducing a resolution to the United States Congress in honor of Atatürk.

I am very excited by what we have done so far this year, and I am working with my Board to plan future events. Many of you have asked why is the Society not doing more programs and activities. The simple answer is that it costs money to have activities, and for us to continue furthering our mission we need your help. Next year will be the 80th Anniversary of Atatürk presenting his vision in “Nutuk,” and while we have many programs we would like to organize to honor this event, we are limited by our operating budget. Without your membership dues and donations, we will have neither the moral support nor the finances to continue teaching the world about Atatürk and his vision for world peace as we would hope. Our membership dues amounts to less than one dollar a week. We do not actively seek your donations because many of you give willingly and selflessly without our asking and I thank you.

In closing, I again thank each and everyone of you for your sincere support. I am truly thankful for you allowing me to be the President of this Society, and I hope to be able to continue to work with you to spread Atatürk’s vision and principles for world peace. Please enjoy your magazine, and then share it with as many people as you can, and together we can make a difference in making our world a better place.
August 30, 1922: Further Steps Towards Statehood

August 30 is celebrated nationwide in Turkey to commemorate the victory of a group of Turkish soldiers numbering 60,000 led by General Kemal Atatürk over the 350,000 Greek soldiers led by General Hatzianestis.

The decisive victory in the Battle of Dumlupinar near Afyonkarahisar in Turkey was the last fight in the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922), which is part of the Turkish War of Independence.

On August 25 the Turkish forces were preparing to attack. They reached the summit of Koca Tepe in the middle of the night. At 5:30 the next morning, they began their assault by artillery which maintained its intensity for three hours.

The Greek army scrambled in confusion, hurriedly taking up arms, but no match for the Turkish infantry that poured through the ruins of what was once their fortifications. Although Greeks were better equipped with machine guns, field guns, and transport, their positions north of Afyon near Kutahya were also broken, so they could easily be surrounded.

Mustafa Kemal had split the allies through skillful diplomatic moves, so that the French and Italians supported Turkey, and diplomatically isolated the pro-Greek British.

Greeks were astounded when the front line, which was supposed to be impregnable, fell that same day, while Afyon fell within 24 hours.

The troops marched forward, entering Afyon, while Greek army was forced to retreat towards Asilhanlar, a mountainous region.

On August 30, the six Greek divisions which had been encircled tried to escape through a narrow valley called Kizilca, but instead found themselves trapped, suffering roughly 50,000 casualties.

The armies then split, with the larger group marching towards Izmir, and the rest against Eskişehir.

Kemal Atatürk entered Usak on September 2, where the surrendered Greek Commander Tricupis was brought to him. Atatürk stood up, shook his hand, and invited the General to sit down, later offering them cigarettes and coffee, while discussing the machinations of the conflict. He told his opponent: “War is a game of chance. You have done everything possible for a soldier and man of honor. Fate is to blame. Do not be discouraged.” He also asked the Greek Commander if there was anything he could do for him, to which he responded that his news should be sent to his wife in Istanbul. (1)

From Usak he went to Izmir where he learned that the allied Consuls were willing to negotiate with him. The city was surrendered, and the Greco-Turkish war was over.

These events laid the foundation for the Lausanne Treaty to establish the Turkish Republic on October 29, 1923. This was followed by a series of political, legal, cultural, social and economic reforms undertaken between 1922 and 1938 and transformed the lives of millions of people. The seemingly impossible undertakings which changed the alphabet, promoted human rights and elevated women, Europeanized Turkish law and society, drew praise and admiration from world leaders and served as an example for other countries.

Turkey into the only democratic free market oriented country with a majority Muslim population in the Middle East.

Although Atatürk was known for his victories in battle, on March 16, 1923, he stated “I am not in favor of dragging the nation into war. War should be the last resort. When taking the country into war, I should not have a troubled conscious. We can enter war against those who tell us ‘we will kill’ and answer ‘we will not surrender or die.’ In addition, when people are not faced with danger, war is a crime.”

On the first anniversary of Victory Day in 1924, addressing the crowd in Ankara, Atatürk reminded the nation “There should be no doubt that the new Turkish state’s and young Turkish Republic’s foundation was strengthened here. Its existence was guaranteed here. This memorial will forcefully remind those who want to covet the Turkish nation that they will face the same reaction as that on August 30th; fire, bayonet, strength, and determination”.

Atatürk’s famous command given to the Turkish Army on September 1, 1922 after the Dumlupinar Victory.

To the Turkish Grand National Assembly Armies!

At the great Afyonkarahisar-Dumlupinar field battle you destroyed in an unbelievably short time the actual fighting units of an oppressive and conceited army. You are proving that you are worthy of the self-sacrifices of our great and noble nation. The great Turkish Nation that is our protector is right in being certain for its future. I am following and observing closely your proficiencies and self-sacrifices on the battlefields. I will carry out constantly and without ceasing, my duty to be a vehicle of our Nation’s appreciation concerning you.

I ordered the front command headquarters to make suggestions to the commander-in-chief headquarters.

I request of all my friends, that they advance by taking into account that they will enter other field battles in Anatolia and I request that they continue to demonstrate, as though they are racing with each other, their mental powers, heroism and patriotism.

The Armies!
Your first target is the Mediterranean. Forward!

President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly
Commander-in-Chief Mustafa Kemal
September 1, 1922
ASA Celebrated Atatürk’s 125th Birthday

The event was held in the historic and majestic House Caucus Room with a large audience consisting of diplomats, Members of Congress, congressional staff, U.S. government representatives, ASA members, and others.

On May 19, 2006 Atatürk Society of America (ASA) celebrated Atatürk’s 125th birthday with great fanfare and joy. The event was held in the historic and majestic House Caucus Room with a large audience consisting of diplomats, Members of Congress, congressional staff, U.S. government representatives, ASA members, and others.

The audience participated in one minute of silence to honor the victims of the May 18 attack on the Turkish State Administrative court. The event was inaugurated by ASA President Timur Edib who emphasized the importance of the celebration. Mr. Edib read letters of congratulations sent by Turkish President Necdet Sezer, U.S. President George Bush, and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. He then introduced former Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Bob Livingston. Chairman Livingston recalled the days of building a Republican coalition with the featured speaker, Newt Gingrich, and highlighted Speaker Gingrich’s contributions to the U.S. political system and recognized his accomplishments.

Speaker Gingrich’s sincere and heartfelt remarks regarding Atatürk’s legacy received a standing ovation from the crowd which was mesmerized by his insight and observations. His inspirational presentation was delivered from not only a politician’s point of view, but also through the eyes of an educator and student of history. Listeners remained breathless as he used the power of imagination to take the audience back to 1881, and the world into which Atatürk was born. He then carried them through the changes the world underwent, the First World War, the tragedies, and the suc-
cesses of the time. At the end, everyone shared Speaker Gingrich’s view that Atatürk was indeed a remarkable leader that sought modernity, secularism and democracy for Turkey not for personal gain, but for the benefit of the new country’s citizens.

Linda Laughlin, wife of former Congressman and ASA Advisory Board Member Greg Laughlin, presented a U.S. flag which had been flown over the Capitol in commemoration of Atatürk’s birthday.

ASA Chairman and Founder Hudai Yavalar presented Speaker Newt Gingrich with an award in commemoration of his contributions to publicizing Atatürk’s legacy.

Pelin Aylangan, American Turkish Association of DC President provided an example of the opportunities provided by Atatürk for the country’s youth.

New Zealand Ambassador to the United States Roy Ferguson chronicled the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, recalling Atatürk’s leadership, and read a letter sent by Prime Minister Helen Clark. He ended his remarks with the words etched on the placards in Gallipoli, “Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives...there is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmet in us where they lie side by side in this country of ours...Having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.”

His remarks were so moving, that some of the members of the audience were unable to control their tears.

Bill Ali, President of Turkish American Veterans Association recalled the experiences of Turkish Americans in the Korean War. Turgut Burakreis, ASA Board Member came from Turkey and thanked ASA for the certificate presented to him.

Certificates were presented to long standing ASA members for their outstanding support and contributions to the organization and its mission.

Speaker Gingrich, along with ASA President Timur Edib and ASA Founder and Chairman Hudai Yavalar jointly cut the cake especially prepared for the event in honor of Atatürk’s birthday.

The day culminated with a reception providing an opportunity for members and speakers to interact and analyze the event. A slide show chronicling Atatürk’s life in pictures was shown during this time.

The event, which was covered by television stations as well as print media in Turkey, contributing to the debate regarding secularism, democracy, and civil society.

Let us all work together to build a better and more hopeful future in the footsteps of Atatürk’s vision.
PRESENTATION BY SPEAKER NEWT GINGRICH

“When Bob Livingston told me I had this opportunity to come and to speak about the extraordinary life of Atatürk and his meaning, not just for Turkey, but for the world, I was thrilled to be allowed to do so.”

I want to take you back, and you can use the phrase 125th anniversary, but I want to take you back for just a minute or two since I did teach history, to 1881, because I think sometimes when you deal with these great figures who transform life for millions, it's easy to forget how really big the change was, and for them how lonely it must have been.

The world into which Mustafa Kemal was born was a totally different world. It was a different world in technology. It was a world before electric lights, a world before telephones. I have two grandchildren who are four and six, so I don't try to explain to them that there was pre-television and pre-cell phone, pre-blackberry, because that would be unthinkable, and they couldn't imagine it. But you and I know here is a young man for him to think about the notion that the Ottoman Empire would disappear. There was no natural reason as a young man for him to think about the collapse of European civilization, the disappearance of Czarist Russia, the removal of Kaiser Wilhelm. And yet early in his life, he would begin to have these experiences.

Remember that he is 33 years old when the First World War begins, and it is not at all obvious, everybody expected in August of 1914 that it would be a three month war. It would be over quickly. And yet it drove on for four years. A hundred million people died. It was capped by a world wide epidemic of flu which we called in the U.S. the Spanish flu. It was a worldwide influenza which killed more people than had died in the four years of war. And at that point, as one of the most successful generals, the general I would argue, and I think most historians would agree, was the decisive figure in the Gallipoli campaign. That it was his leadership, and I'm looking forward to the New Zealand Ambassador's comments because in a very real sense, it was Atatürk's leadership, his toughness, his directness, his ingenuity, his energy, and drive which enabled the Ottomans to stop the British, Australians, New Zealand and French, allied landing on the peninsula.

And yet in the very process of successfully defending his country, he was studying the modernity of his opponents, he was learning what was necessary for success in the modern world. And when after the war the Ottoman Empire was disappearing, he was faced with an enormous decision, and I think, again I want you to place yourself in what is still a very young man at that point, someone who at 37 or 38 years of age is suddenly saying, all of the leadership around me is collapsing. All of the old rules are dying. And there are really two choices. There was a choice to create a classic military despotism and to preside over something which I argue you saw happening in Iraq during that period, someone who at 37 or 38 years of age suddenly saying, all of the leadership around me is collapsing. All of the old rules are dying. And there are really two choices. There was a choice to create a classic military despotism and to preside over something which I argue you saw happening in Iraq during that period, something which I argue you saw happen in Egypt, something you saw happen in many places where strong men seized power with a self-perpetuation of their own agenda, something which has plagued much of Latin America for the last century, where we get very strong people, but they don't apply their strength for the good of the country. They apply their strength to the advantage of the elite.

And he looked around and he had two I think key insights which are extraordinary. Many years ago when I first became Speaker I think I shocked the Turkish ambassador because I was such a big fan of Atatürk. I remember at the time I was wonderfully received, and when one of my associates Dr. Stephen Kinzer was able to visit Turkey shortly after I gave the speech about the importance of Atatürk, he has never been better received anywhere in the world. People were just so nice to him. But I was fascinated as a young college teacher and before that as a graduate student because Atatürk has two extraordinary insights that he then allows to guide his heart and his head. And very often people have insight and then they forget them because they are too frightening or too hard, or they mean well, they are words up here but they are not actions down here. And the insights are actually contradictory. Bear with me, and those of you who are Turkish correct me if I get my understanding of history wrong, because they seem to be in the opposite direction.

The first is he is going to modernize the people, not just modernize the government, not just modernize the elite, but he's going to think through and then implement, carrying an entire great people into the modern world in terms of education, the entire effort to turn the whole country into a classroom so that literally in a matter of a year people were writing differently, moving into the modern world. The elimination of the fez.

When you start interfering with the very things people wear, you are in the heart of challenging their entire life.
And yet he is carrying an argument that this is the cost of modernity. If we're going to be a modern people, if we're going to be strong enough to protect ourselves, and I rank him with Deng Chou Ping's (phonetic sp.) great speech across southern China when he said, he didn't say communism was over. He couldn't have said that. He said at one point, "I don't care if it is a black cat or a white cat as long as the cat catches the mouse."

Now what he was saying to the Communist cadres was if free enterprise can build a factory, that's good. If communism can build a factory, that's good. And there's actually a big bridge in southern China where they have these huge statues of black and white cats when you drive across the bridge because all of a sudden Deng Chou Ping was liberating the Chinese from the straitjacket of Maoism saying, if we are going to live in the future, we have to be prepared for change.

The other great moment when this also happens is when the Meijing restoration occurs in Japan and a small group of generals, the people at that time were about Atatürk's age, in their early 30's, would then guide Japan for 40 years. And from 1868 to 1925 was one of the great moments of modernization. And in my mind, you can see a direct parallel. These are people who are saying, for us to survive, our country has to become strong. For our country to become strong, it has to become modern, and for the country to become modern, the people have to live in the modern world, not just the bureaucrats, not just the generals, the people.

So on one level, he is this remarkable example of bringing together and carrying an entire nation into the future at a moment when it was not obvious. Remember, Turkey as it had become at the end of the Ottoman Empire, had lost all of its external provinces, it had lost many of its sources of wealth, it had been through a long and debilitating war. Atatürk recentered the government in Ankara to recenter the heart of the Turkish highlands so that Turkish people would look in at themselves and not be constantly looking at the Mediterranean and constantly looking towards Europe, because he understood that he had to unite these great streams, the populist and national sentiment of being Turkish with the meaning of being Turkish with the meaning of towards self government, towards productivity, and towards modernity. It's very seldom you get both.

Sometimes you have people who, in the effort to grow, people are too weak, and, therefore, the whole thing falls apart. And you could argue in a sense that was the great crisis the Shah faced in Iran late in his career, that he didn't know how to balance these two, how to both modernize and nationize simultaneously.

Now what was the result? The result was first of all something he could not have predicted in 1918, the rise of a coherent modern nation of people who were proud of both their heritage and of their future, of a people who governed themselves, who have elections, who fight over power in precisely the way that we in this country believe God endowed all of us with the right.

And to set a little bit of delicate territory, let me say that when the Turkish Parliament could not give permission for the American Fourth Division to go through Turkey, I wasn't shocked because we had not won the argument in the hearts of the Turkish people, and the newly elected government of Turkey in a democracy had 93 percent disapproval. Like I say to people, in the modern world it's not good enough to have our ambassador talk to their ambassador and our secretary of state talk to their foreign minister. If we can't win the argument in the hearts of the people in a free society, you cannot expect the government of a free society to carry it through.

Just as in Germany, Schroeder won the election in
part because the German people said “no”, we don’t want to go through that. And so you have to have some respect for the very traits that Atatürk was creating, a modern country, but a country that’s a democracy where people do matter, and where people have to wrestle with their own lives, they have to make many decisions about the kind of future they want, the kind of life they want, the kind of opportunity they want for their children and their grandchildren.

And so I think when we gather today for this kind of event, you’re celebrating more than a man, although whether one argues Washington or Lincoln, it’s not a bad league to be in. This is certainly I think a man who ranks with the great modern nation builders of the last 100 years. A man eminently worth of study for the kind of future we want, the kind of life we want, the kind of opportunity they want for their children and their grandchildren.

One of the byproducts of that was that when the Cold War began, Turkey resolutely sided with the West and was a very key player in containing the Soviet empire for 44 years. It’s easy to forget how hard this was, how long a process this was, how much pressure there was sometimes to back down. My father fought in the Korean War, and always felt permanent affection for the Turkish brigade, which was so heroic, and so competent and proved its capabilities so beautifully, standing side by side as part of the Alliance.

Today, despite occasional arguments, the fact is that there is so much more that binds 2.758”er that can push us apart. And the truth is if in the long run we are to win the war on terrorism, and if in the long run we are to help all the Middle East in becoming democracies, the road to a great deal of that will be through Turkey and will be side by side with the Turkish people.

And so I felt when Bob called and offered me this chance that this was a great opportunity and time for the United States. I don’t get many invitations to go to the local Rotary Club and explain the central role of Atatürk. It’s something I’ve studied, I’ve thought about, I’ve tried at times to learn from. I’ve tried to see in what ways we can learn to do things better and more effectively by studying how he did it. And I commend each and every one of you for taking the time out of your life today for two reasons. One because it is good to celebrate who we are and where we came from. It strengthens, those flags matter, people are bound together by memories of history and draw upon the memories of history and draw upon the

“Just as you protected and saved the country in its most critical and difficult moments from tyranny, disaster and misfortune and from enemy occupation, I have no doubts that in the prosperous period of today’s Republic, with military techniques equipped with all the modern weapons and implements, that you will carry out your duties with the same loyalty.”

– Kemal Atatürk
29 October 1938
AMBASSADOR FERGUSON'S SPEECH

“I hope that the message that I am about to read you from our Prime Minister, the Honorable Helen Clark, will make it clear why the great founder of modern Turkey has an important place in the history of my country.” The Prime Minister's statement is as follows.

Mr. Edib, President of Atatürk Society, Mr. Yavalar, Chairman of Atatürk Society, the Honorable Gingrich, the Honorable Livingston, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is an honor for me to be here today at this commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the birth of a great statesman. I guess some of you at least are wondering why the Ambassador of New Zealand is here. I hope that the message that I am about to read you from our Prime Minister, the Honorable Helen Clark, will make it clear why the great founder of modern Turkey has an important place in the history of my country.

The Prime Minister's statement is as follows:

“May I convey greetings to the members of the Atatürk Society of America on the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Kemal Ataturk.

Kemal Ataturk will always have a special place in history as that remarkable soldier who led the defence of his country on the Gallipoli Peninsula and who went on to found the modern Turkish republic. It is not only in Turkey that this great statesman is remembered. For New Zealanders the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, when the Australian and New Zealand Army Codrcps – or the ANZACS - landed on the narrow beach at what is now called ANZAC Cove, evokes memories of the enormous courage against a valiant foe led by a brave and brilliant young patriot named Mustafa Kemal.

For New Zealand and other allied forces, Gallipoli was a military defeat. But it was a time of great personal sacrifice and bravery on both sides. Over the eight grueling months of the Gallipoli campaign, the opposing forces came to know each other - and there evolved respect for the tenacity of the other side, an appreciation of human qualities of the other.

Out of that tragic conflict, a new sense of nationhood was born; for New Zealanders, for Australians, and for Turkey. Between the peoples of New Zealand this ancient land of Turkey there grew a profound respect that has flourished into our warm friendship today.

That spirit of reconciliation with friendship was inspired by Atatürk's famous words:

“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives…you are lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side in this country of ours… You the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now living in our bosom and are in peace. Having lost their lives in this land, they have become our sons as well.”

These words are engraved on the memorial to the ANZAC soldiers that stands today on the Gallipoli Peninsula. They also appear on the Atatürk Memorial at the entrance to the harbor in our capital city, Wellington. They recognize that true greatness as a leader comes not only from courage on the battlefield but also from the ability to forge peace and reconciliation after the conflict.

Rt Hon Helen Clark
Prime Minister
Thank you very much.
Ahmet Necdet Sezer  
President  

Mr. Hüdai Yavalar  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Of the Atatürk Society of America  

May 19, 2006  

History knows few leaders who through their struggles and victories changed the fate of their nation, influenced the course of history and played an important role in the shaping of the world. These leaders are immortal; through their ideals, system of thought, way of life and legacy they live on in the heart of their nation and continue to illuminate the way for future generations.

Atatürk is an enduring leader who by successfully concluding the War of Liberation and establishing the Republic became a source of hope and strength for other nations. He is a leader who has left his mark on history, established himself in the consciousness of humanity and whose achievements are better understood with every passing day.

As the architect of a more illuminated Turkey, the great man that is Atatürk has gained the respect of all nations through his knowledge, caring tolerance and his peace loving and democratic personality. His victories, thoughts and revolutions have had a deep influence on the world.

As President Bush pointed out during his visit to Turkey, “It was with the spirit of a reformer that Atatürk established Turkey which is a shining example of a nation founded on equal rights as well as a secular democracy”. Turkey will continue to travel on the path that Atatürk has illuminated with his universal principles and revolutions and it will remain an honorable member of the modern world with its secular and democratic character.

Our great leader, whose memory we proudly cherish with unabated love and respect on his 125th birthday attributed great importance to peace and later established peaceful relations with all states against which he previously had to conduct war. His principle that foresees peace at home and peace in the world reflects his humanitarian thoughts and also circumscribes the world he dreamed of.

According to Atatürk peace is “the best way leading to international welfare and happiness”. With this, Atatürk pointed out to humanity the importance of peace in making the world a more hospitable place.

We are pleased that a celebration is held on the occasion of 125th birthday of Atatürk on the territory of our friends and ally, the United States. We believe this meaningful event of the Atatürk Society of America to be an indicator of not only the universality of Atatürk but also of the strong relations between the two states.

I remember our great liberator with affection and respect and wish to convey my best wishes to you and all those participating in the celebrations.

(Signed)
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 5, 2006

I send greetings to those gathered to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a visionary leader for Turkey, who took bold steps to advance the cause of freedom and peace. Today, Turkey serves as an example of a successful, secular democracy, and America is proud to call Turkey an ally and a friend. Our nations share a commitment to freedom, individual liberty, and the rule of law. By working together along with others, we can promote freedom and peace in the broader Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

I appreciate the members of the ASA for your efforts to promote mutual understanding between nations and celebrate the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. I also appreciate the many Americans of Turkish descent who contribute so much to our society. The United States looks forward to building on our ties with Turkey to strengthen our friendship and lay the foundation of peace and prosperity for our children and grandchildren.

Laura and I send our best wishes on this special occasion.
18 May 2006

Mr Hudai Yavalar
Chairman
The Atatürk Society of America
4731 Massachusetts Ave NW
WASHINGTON DC 20016

Dear Mr Yavalar

May I convey greetings to members of the Atatürk Society of America on the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Kemal Atatürk.

Kemal Atatürk will always have a special place in history as that remarkable soldier who led the defence of his country on the Gallipoli Peninsula and who went on to found the modern Turkish Republic. It is not only in Turkey that this great statesman is remembered. For New Zealanders, the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, when the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps — or the ANZACs — landed on the narrow beach at what is now called ANZAC Cove, evokes memories of enormous courage against a valiant foe led by a brave and brilliant young patriot called Mustafa Kemal.

For New Zealand and other allied forces, Gallipoli was a military defeat. But it was a time of great personal sacrifice and bravery on both sides. Over the eight gruelling months of the Gallipoli campaign, the opposing forces came to know each other — and there evolved respect for the tenacity of the other side and appreciation of the human qualities of the other.

Out of that tragic conflict, a new sense of nationhood was born: for New Zealanders, for Australians, and for Turkey. Between the peoples of New Zealand and this ancient land of Turkey there grew a profound respect that has flourished into our warm friendship today.

That spirit of reconciliation with friendship was inspired by Ataturk's famous words:

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives...you are lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmetts to us where they lie side by side in this country of ours.... You the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now living in our bosom and are in peace. Having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."

These words are engraved on the memorial to the ANZAC soldiers that stands today on the Gallipoli Peninsula. They also appear on the Atatürk Memorial at the entrance to the harbour in our capital city, Wellington. They recognise that true greatness as a leader comes not only from courage on the battlefield but also from the ability to forge peace and reconciliation after the conflict.

Helen Clark
Rt Hon Helen Clark
Prime Minister of New Zealand
Message from General Pervez Musharraf
President Islamic Republic of Pakistan

It is my proud privilege to greet the Ataturk Society of America on the 125th birthday anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

We in Pakistan admire Mustafa Kemal Ataturk for laying foundation of the modern Turkey from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Mustafa Kemal was indeed a brilliant leader, the likes of whom have very seldom being seen in the history of the world. His reforms were aimed at revitalizing the patriotic spirit of the Turk people and in a period spanning little over ten years he managed to achieve which many had not deemed possible; The emergence of Turkey as dynamic and modern state. He was a statesman par excellence, a highly successful military commander, and also the reformer and educator of the new Turkish State.

I am once again indebted to the Ataturk Society of America for inviting me to share my thoughts on the birth anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Pakistan and Turkey enjoy long standing historical, religious, cultural and political ties and the people of Pakistan hold their Turkish brethren in the highest of esteem.
Mr. Speaker, I rise today, May 19, to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the birth of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a post-World War I revolutionary leader who demonstrated that Islam and modernity are fully compatible. His example provides instruction and hope for our own era.

Atatürk died at the young age of 57 in 1938. Yet, in a short period of time starting with the end of World War I, Atatürk was able to build a nation from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, establish secular rule, and lay the groundwork for democratic development. His vision for his overwhelmingly Muslim nation was dominated by two concepts: secularism and progress. In his words, “In an age when inventions and the wonders of science are bringing change after change in the conditions of life, nations cannot maintain their existence by age-old mentalities and tradition-worshipping.”

Mr. Speaker, Atatürk’s reforms covered virtually every area of public life, political, cultural, legal, educational, and economic, all geared toward bringing the new Turkish nation to the level of what Atatürk called “contemporary civilization.” Some of the changes were monumental, such as abolishing the caliphate, recognizing equal rights for men and women, discarding the Arabic alphabet in favor of Latin letters, and adopting secular law. Others were seemingly minor, such as reforming traditional styles of dress and mandating surnames.

His leadership style was epitomized by the alphabet reform. A language commission he appointed endorsed the reform in 1928 and urged that it be phased in over fifteen years. Atatürk had a different time-frame in mind. He phased it in over six months, punctuating his decision with trips around the country in which he personally gave public instruction in the new alphabet. This reform has wrought a fundamental change in Turkey’s outlook, as millions of Turks, schooled in the Latin alphabet, have turned westward for their second languages and the learning to which those languages are the key.

As a champion of women’s rights, Mr. Speaker, Atatürk encouraged women to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientist, writers and politicians. His credo in this regard was stated as a simple equation in a speech in 1926: “If a society of men and women is content to apply progress and education to one-half of itself, such a society is weakened by half.” It is unfortunate that, to this very day, too many nations in the Middle East cannot grasp that easy math.

When I met Pakistani President Musharraf four years ago, I gave him a copy of Andrew Mango’s authoritative biography of Atatürk. “Follow Atatürk’s vision,” I urged him, “and you will put Pakistan on the path to progress.”

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that this is the right advice for the leaders of every Muslim nation. With forward-looking vision, leadership, and determination in the mold of Atatürk, the entire region could expect a future of secularism, tolerance, democracy, and material progress.
Dear Colleague:

By now you should have received an invitation from the Ataturk Society of America to celebrate the 125th birthday of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic and its first President, with a keynote speech by the former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich and introduction by the Honorable Bob Livingston.

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Study Group on Turkey, we hope you will join us in recognizing Kemal Ataturk, the founder and first President of the modern Republic of Turkey. Kemal Ataturk is one of the most noteworthy democratic reformers of the 20th Century. Ataturk’s vision for Turkey was that of a Western secular democracy and against great odds he was able to dramatically transform his nation and its future direction with dynamism and inspiration of leadership. Ataturk’s vision for his nation is being realized today as a vibrant democratic Turkey is engaged in accession negotiations with the European Union and is seen as a model for democracy by its neighbors in the Middle East, Caucasus region and Central Asia. We hope you are able to attend this important event marking Ataturk’s legacy and achievements.

As America and our allies face the daunting task of promoting democracy and rule of law regionally and internationally, it is essential that we learn the historic lessons of Ataturk’s successful transformation of Turkey and apply it to our efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the globe.

Celebration of the 125th Birthday of
Kemal Ataturk

With a keynote speech by
The Honorable Newt Gingrich

Introduction by
The Honorable Bob Livingston

Friday, May 19, 2006 at 12:30 p.m.

House Cannon Caucus Room, 345 Cannon

Please join us for this celebration with the Ataturk Society of America. To RSVP, contact 202-362-7173 or email ataturksociety@earthlink.net

Sincerely,

Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress

Robert Wexler
Member of Congress
A LOVE STORY LENT A HELPING HAND BY KEMAL ATATÜRK

In Installment I, appearing in Voice of Atatürk (Spring 2006), the author wrote about his recollections of his visit just a year earlier to Mustafa Kemal’s birth-house in Selanik, and the street on which his grandfather, Ismail Hakki, and Mustafa Kemal played as children (these were times before Atatürk introduced a law requiring family’s to generate last names). He also wrote about cruising up the storied Dardanelles, and the Battle of Gallipoli — where in 1915 the two men, both 34, fought for eight months against the ANZACS. The experience of that horrific battle would come to define the new nation at its conception, and make kindred spirits of Turkey, Australia and New Zealand.

While Atatürk would go onto become his nation’s savior and the first President of the republic that he helped found, Ismail Hakki would die in 1916 fighting against the Arabs near Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey. The author’s father, the young Mustafa Kemal, would attend the military college, Kuleli, and at graduation, come face-to-face with his legendary namesake, but now the recipient of the honorific title, Atatürk, “Father Turk.” In this, the second installment, he will meet the school girl who is to become his wife, the author’s mother. And a second meeting with Atatürk will take place, with auspicious consequences for the young couple.

INSTALLMENT II.

By Bülent Atalay, Ph.D.

THE KÖKDEMIR FAMILY
My maternal grandfather, Bahattin Kökdemir, born in Sinop, on the Black Sea, was a young physician who had received his medical degree in Istanbul. Shortly after graduation in 1915, he married my grandmother, Refika. They had three children — the first child, a son named, Ertugrul Pertev, was born in 1916; their second child, my mother, Nigar Esma Atalay, would be born three years later; the third child, Hüsrev, would come almost a generation later, in 1938. (My grandfather had, however, been married once before, but that marriage had ended in divorce. From that marriage he had also a son and a daughter.) The family posed for a portrait in Istanbul (ca 1921), my uncle approximately five, my mother just two. My grandfather is seen wearing the customary fez, my grandmother a scarf over her head. Then in 1926 when my grandfather was awarded a Rockefeller fellowship to undertake postgraduate work in medicine at Harvard, he would journey to the United States with his family, and spend the next three years on the East Coast of America. After a year at Harvard, he was given an extension of his fellowship and allowed to transfer to Johns Hopkins Medical Center, ostensibly to receive additional training at America’s other great medical institution. Accordingly, the family moved to Baltimore for the next two years. In 1929, with my mother and uncle — ten and thirteen years old, respectively — my grandparents returned to Turkey and settled in Ankara. The children had learned to speak flawless English, a skill that would serve them well the rest of their lives. Shortly after they returned to Turkey with some newly acquired western social habits — they found that Turkey was amidst some of Atatürk’s social reforms, launched during their absence. Western style clothing was in, the traditional Middle Eastern garb — fez, turban, veil — was out; the Ottoman-Arabic script, written from right-to-left, was being replaced by the Roman alphabet, written from left-to-right — reforms that my grandparents welcomed, reforms that would make their own adjustment in returning to Turkey so very much easier.

In Ankara my grandfather was to become a successful physician, an internist, as well as a specialist in public hygiene. As a physician he was well known to administer to rich and poor alike, but especially the poor! As a child I remember occasions when patients would pay him with a pot of yogurt, a live chicken from their chicken...
After the three years in the United States, my grandparents were visibly Westernized. Much to their delight, they would find that Turkey had also embarked on a course of westernization, echoing the vision of its founder.

But they would not forget each other.

One day a few months later, my father, uncommonly bashful, made an unusually brazen move. He telephoned my grandfather, the physician, and arranged for a private visit – not seeking any professional service. He was there to ask for my mother’s hand in marriage. He explained to my grandfather that his own father had died in WWI, that he himself was a military officer who received a modest, but dependable salary, but that each month he faithfully gave a portion of his salary to his widowed mother.

My grandfather was impressed by the personal visit — untraditional in that no go-betweens were involved. He had seen during his years in America that intermediaries were not involved in asking for a girl’s hand. But about giving his blessings to the marriage, he admitted his reticence, “I don’t want my only daughter to be married to a soldier who might get killed one of these days, and leave her a widow. I must take this under advisement. I will get back to you.” Then after a pause, he continued, “Please, call us in a month.” He even gave a date for my father to call again.

In discussing the dilemma with my grandmother, there was agreement general. He was very polite, and he was deeply devoted to his mother. And he was handsome — “Eli yüzü düzgün.” But there was that seemingly insurmountable barrier, he was a soldier! And surrounded by hostile neighbors, the country seemed continually on the brink of war. There was also another factor to take into account: a successful and well-heeled engineer had also asked for my mother’s hand, and a man not in constant jeopardy of being inducted into the military. The conundrum was not trivial. My mother expressed privately to my grandmother that it was the young officer that she distinctly preferred.

After my grandparents discussed the issue between themselves, they decided that my grandfather should consult his own mother, then living in Sinop. Accordingly, he wrote a letter to my great grandmother, expressing his own uncertainty. The answer, however, would not come for several weeks.

A SECOND MEETING WITH ATATÜRK

A ball was held in 1937 in Ankara at the Halk Evi with members of my father’s military company assigned to serve as guards and ushers. Among the guests would be Maresal Fevzi Çakmak, five-star general and Secretary of Defense; İsmet İnönü, Vice-President, perennial “Second Man” of Turkey, and future president; and the incomparable Kemal Atatürk himself. My father was standing near an entrance, when Atatürk entered the grand ballroom of the Halk Evi followed by his retinue comprised of İsmet İnönü, Fevzi Çakmak, and other leaders. When he saw my father, Atatürk gestured to him, appearing to have recognized him. After a short pause, he actually started walking over to my father, who immediately ran over to greet him. Atatürk asked, “Weren’t you introduced to me at commencement ceremony at the Kuleli a few years ago?” My father answered nervously that he was. “Then young man, come and sit with us at our table.”

As my father’s friends, the other young officers, all looked on in puzzled silence, my father was shown his seat — between Atatürk and İnönü. His anxiety must have been palpable. Atatürk then asked him, “Do you take raki?” (Raki is the familiar anise-flavored liquor in the Eastern Mediterranean, variously known as “ouzo” to the Greeks and “arak” to the Arabs. The clear liquid turns translucent, milky white,
Atatürk, accompanied by İnönü and in the rear right, Maresal Çakmak.

when water is added. It is believed that over two thousand years ago, the powerful relative of liquor was already known in the area. According to tradition, Aristotle, the legendary philosopher and teacher of Alexander the Great, offered his pupil the drink telling him that it was “lion’s milk.” My father had never tasted raki before, but he nodded that he did, “After all, it was Atatürk asking him.” After he gulped down one glass, a kadeh, he was immediately offered another, and another. And he was in no position to refuse.

Then as dinner was being served, Atatürk asked, “Are you married? Do you have any children?” My father, his tongue now altogether liberated by the raki, mentioned being smitten by a beautiful young woman, but that her father, an eminent physician, was reluctant to let his daughter marry a military man. He also mentioned that he was still hopeful, after all, the father had not said, “No!” The normally unflappable Atatürk became noticeably quiet; then he gestured to his yaver, his aide-de-camp, to approach. He whispered something in the man’s ear, and the man departed. All very baffling!

But just then the musicians started playing Harman Dali, a folk dance of Ankara. The dance is evocative of the Jewish folk dance, the Hava Nagila, where the participants form a chain, but in this instance the dance is performed by a group of men only. Atatürk stood up, and as if on cue, the other members of the high brass all rose. Then Atatürk turned to my father, “Kemal bey, won’t you join us?” By then, my father was entirely overcome with emotion, honored to be sitting next to Atatürk at the high table, imbibing raki with his hero, and now participating in a folk dance with him and the other commanders. His friends, all lined up along the periphery of the room, watched in utter disbelief! Atatürk led the dance, holding a handkerchief in his raised right hand, and my father’s right hand with his left. My father, in turn, held onto İnönü’s right hand with his own left hand, and so on. There appeared to be a hierarchy in the chain, from Atatürk down to the lower commanders, except for my father, who was distinctly out of place, so junior in age and rank to all the rest.

After the Harman dali, the men returned to the table and began to sip their coffee. Afterwards, some of the men reflexively turned their cups over, if or when a fortuneteller appeared and read their fortunes from the ground coffee deposited on the inner wall of the cup.

The foregoing represented my father’s narration during the drive down the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1967, of an incident that took place thirty years earlier, in 1937. In hearing this, I remember asking rhetorically, “Of course, you told him then that you were the son of his old friend, Ismail Hakki, didn’t you?” And, again I heard my father’s familiar refrain, “No, no, I could not bring myself to tell him. I didn’t want even the appearance of favoritism.”

“Favoritism,” I said in frustration, “...it would have made him so happy to hear that you were his childhood friend’s son.”

It has now been approximately forty-years since that memorable drive to Gallipoli (Gelibolu) when my father first narrated the foregoing, and certainly it conformed with my mother’s recollections of subsequent year. But a sequel may exist, unhappily one that I remember hearing just once — again on that trip along the historic peninsula. In this version, right after the men drink up their coffee, Atatürk’s aide-de-camp reappears and whispers something in his boss’ ear. Atatürk acknowledges the message, but takes a few more sips before standing up. Again everyone at the table springs up in deference. But Atatürk turns to my father, and announces, “Buyrun! Come, Kemal Bey, we are going to visit the doctor!”

Atatürk, followed by my father and the aide-de-camp walk outside the Halk Evi, where the Presidential Düsenberg sits, along with two lines of motorcycles prepared to lead the way. With my father sitting next to Atatürk in the car, the motorcade negotiates the five or six miles to Bahcelievler, in the suburbs of Ankara. The roar of the motorcycles brings out everyone in the neighborhood. When my grandfather steps out of his house, he cannot believe his eyes. It is my father, accompanied by his “friend.” With this kind of tacit recommendation my grandfather is not about to refuse his daughter. I hope that his version is not apocryphal — a product of my own fertile imagination, but it is not outside the realm of possibility. Rather it is just that neither my grandparents nor my parents are alive now and I cannot inquire further.

Although, the last incident is one that I was unable to confirm, the following ‘sequel-to-the-sequel’ is entirely verifiable — repeated to me over the years by my mother and grandmother. Just a day before the incident at the Halk Evi, my grandfather had received the much-anticipated letter from his father (it might be remembered that my great-grandmother had been asked to counsel on the choice of suitors — “the engineer or the officer?”). This was in accordance with a traditional, perhaps centuries old practice, calling for a designated person, most likely the matriarch of the family, to go to bed, and “sleep on it,” istiharcıye yatmak. The next morning, it was hoped, she would wake up with the answer. In my great grandfather’s letter to my grandfather there was the report: “Your mother went to bed. And when she woke up she announced that she had seen in her dreams... a man standing at the foot of the bed... he was wearing a uniform!”

This clinched my grandparents’ decision. Atatürk had expressed his pleasure, my great grandparents had expressed theirs.
My grandparents were sanguine with their decision. My mother was happy. And my father was ecstatic! The engineer is never mentioned in family annals again.

The next time my father contacted my grandfather would be to plan the date of the wedding. It was to be in late 1938.

As it turned out, just before the wedding could take place, Atatürk passed away in Istanbul on November 10, 1938. He died in bed in Dolmabahçe Palace on the Bosporus. When one tours the Dolmabahçe now, the guides will point to the alarm clock by his bedside, poetically stopped at 9:05am — as if by divine intervention — at the moment of his death. Although there is an apocryphal element here, there is little doubt that the collective hearts of all the Turks skipped a beat on that day. November 10th has since been recognized as the day of mourning for the 'Father of the Turks,' the 'Father-Turk.' My parents postponed their wedding for two months, finally marrying on January 8th, 1939.

In civil weddings performed in Turkey the protocol calls for the two most senior individuals in the room — sometimes celebrities, often officials or elders — to serve as the witnesses, one witness for the bride, the other for the groom. I would like to think that had Atatürk not died when he did, had my father approached him and told him about his own father, Ismail Hakki, then Atatürk perhaps would personally have been one of those witnesses at the wedding.

**MY FAMILY POST-ATATÜRK**

Before he died Atatürk had foreseen the war that was going to erupt in Europe, and had impressed on Ismet İnönü that Turkey was not to participate, but "to sit this one out!" In 1939 the war broke out, and the countries of Europe started being pulled in one by one. Both the Allies and the Axis Powers began to impress on Turkey to join their respective sides. Churchill reminded Turkey that it had been on the wrong side of the fray during the WWI, and he made it amply clear that this time around it had better stand on the Allied side; and Hitler, for the opposition, argued the converse, "...better to side with the eventual win-

ners." İnönü, Atatürk’s always loyal right-hand man, however, was determined to follow Atatürk’s directive, and Turkey would remain neutral.

Between 1939 and 1942 my father was assigned a post in the Office of Military Intelligence at the Defense Department. And among his tasks was to serve as an domestic currier and convey important messages received by the Minister of Defense to President İnönü, occupying the *Pembe Kösk* (literally the “Pink Palace,” Turkey’s White House).

By far the most memorable message that he personally remembered carrying to President İnönü from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs came from the Americans. Roosevelt urged Turkey to remain neutral in the war. The message read, “After the war ends, Turkey is needed as a bulwark against the drive for expansion anticipated from Stalin and his Communist cohorts. We will transfer to your armed forces some of the most advanced weapons we are sending to the Allied Forces.” Turkey did remain neutral. After the war, the Marshall Plan was launched, as was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), inviting Turkey as a charter member. Both of these developments bolstered Turkey’s western leaning, entirely compatible with Atatürk’s vision.

When I was two or three years old and living with my parents in Ankara, my father would often go off on courier duty to embassies in Europe. He would take the train, frequently the Orient Express, to various capitals – Axis, Allied, occupied and neutral alike. Because of security concerns, he was ordered by his superiors in Ankara to always rent an entire compartment, and to plug the keyholes with candle wax lest enemy agents gassed him to get to the papers that he was transmitting back and forth between Ankara and its embassies. Now, as I peruse his passports from the war years, I can see that his visits included the Turkish Embassies in Lisbon, Paris, London, Bucharest, Berlin, and Moscow. Note: the page for Berlin features a Swastika.

Less than a year after the termination of hostilities, in January of 1946 my father was appointed assistant military attaché to London. Just five years old, I remember well sailing from Istanbul, by way of İzmir to Cairo; then after several weeks in Cairo, flying to London, with a stopover in Malta. The photograph of my father, wearing his uniform, was taken when he assumed the post in London in 1946 (Figure II.6). My sister Gülseren was born in London in 1946, but after just seven months, would be returned by my visiting grandparents to
Turkey, where they would take care of her. Two years later my father was promoted to Lt. Colonel and assigned to a new post, as assistant military attaché to Paris.

After Paris, a pair of domestic assignments would follow — two years in Sivas, then an assignment in Ankara, as an assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chief’s of Staff, Org. Nuri Yamut. These assignments would be followed in 1953, with another foreign assignment — this time to the “sweetest of all plums” among diplomatic posts. He was assigned as the military attaché to Washington, DC.

About the time that my father’s assignment to Washington expired in 1955, I was awarded the Warm Memorial Scholarship, and enrolled at St. Andrew’s School, in Middletown, Delaware. Founded in 1930 by the duPont Family, this is an academically rigorous and unusually beautiful school featured in the 1989 Robin Williams movie, *Dead Poets’ Society*. (Indeed, I was serving as a member of the Board of Trustees of the school when the film was made.)

During the three years I spent at St. Andrew’s, and subsequently the 9-10 years I spent doing undergraduate and graduate work in theoretical physics at a variety of institutions in the United States and England, my parents were living in Turkey. My father had assignments to Malatya (Figure II.7), then Gelibolu (Gallipoli), followed by Izmir, where he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in 1960.

During the decade of the 60s, my father had assignments to the NATO Headquarters in Izmir. Then he was based in Ankara, where he served as Commandant of the Jandarma, Undersecretary of Defense, then in Istanbul as the Commander of the First Army. In 1967, when he was receiving his final promotion, I had the singular honor of pinning a fourth star on each of his epaulets. I had missed all his other promotions through the ranks, and this was my very last chance.

REVISITING ISMAIL HAKKI

My father frequently spoke of his memory of his own father’s visit to Biga in 1916, a memory he always described as being a “dreamlike vision” — formed when he was just five years old. He would retire in 1970, but not before another transformative incident took place. In 1968, fifty-two years after his father had died, my father, now as Commandant of the Jandarma, was on a visit to the southeastern city of Diyarbakı, ostensibly to inspect troops. One day as he drove through the small village of Silvan he was approached by a village elder. The man, after introducing himself, claimed to my father’s astonishment that he had personally known his father, Ismail Hakki. And he said that he had followed my father’s progress from a distance, through his assignments and promotions through the ranks. He added that he knew where Ismail Hakki was buried. My father, stunned by this revelation, accompanied the old man to a nearby graveyard, where he actually saw for the first time his father’s weathered headstone, the site of his grave. The headstone was inscribed in old Turkish, right-to-left, “Major Ismail Hakki, son of Yusuf Ziya, Chief Justice of Thessalonica.” The marker also identified Ismail Hakki’s brigade as being based in Ohri, where my father was born in 1910. Ohri was then part of the Ottoman Empire and is now a town in Macedonia. My father had a local stonemason build a slightly more elaborate memorial, and the inscription in old Turkish replaced by one in modern Turkish (using letters of the Roman Alphabet).

I had always known that my maternal great grandfather (whom I still remember from my childhood and subsequently from a myriad family photographs) had been the chief justice in the City of Sinop on the Black Sea. But from the inscription on Ismail Hakki’s gravestone there was now the revelation of my paternal great grandfather’s name, and that he also had been a chief justice.

EPILOGUE — DISTINGUISHED LIVES

I have long envied the Irish who organize wakes for their dead, celebrating good lives and not just mourning for them. To be sure, we may miss immensely those departed. Leonardo da Vinci’s words, “A life well-lived is long,” resonates with meaning for both of my parents, who left remarkable memories, lived such wonderful lives. My mother died in 1993 just barely into her seventies — somewhat young for our
times. She had lived an astounding life — recognized by everyone who met her for her wisdom and selflessness, her wit and humor, the elegance and astonishing beauty. When General Matthew Ridgway (1895-1993) and his wife, “Penny,” came to visit Turkey in 1952, my mother was assigned as Mrs. Ridgway’s escort during her visit. Indeed, this turned out to be a time of immense ambivalence for my mother – she was with the Ridgways in Ankara, when her beloved father passed away in Istanbul in September 1952. A year or two later, when my father was serving as the military attaché to Washington, the Ridgways came to visit us in our home — Ridgeway at the pinnacle of the armed forces of the United States, my father a colonel in the Turkish Army, and indeed they all maintained a correspondence for years afterwards. Fifteen years later when Charles de Gaulle came to Ankara on a visit, my mother was assigned the seat next to the great man at the official state dinner. She exuded charisma, and she spoke French as well as English.

By any measure, my father had a long and distinguished career. Having graduated from Kuleli in 1930, he retired in Istanbul in 1970. My sister and I gave a surprise 50th wedding anniversary party for our parents on January 8, 1989, and some of their closest and oldest friends were in attendance. We showed slides (some of which have been integrated into this story). My mother died in 1993 after a long and debilitating illness. At the time, I tried getting in touch with her friend, Penny Ridgway, only to find out that General Ridgway had also passed away that year, at age ninety-eight years.

My father lived a longer life than my mother — having been born nine years earlier than she was and surviving nine years past her death — died on February 14, 2003. He lived to see five of his eight great grandchildren, a grandson and a great grandson named after him. His defining virtues had been his kindness and wisdom, his unassailable honesty and his legendary modesty; and above all his graciousness. He would never open a door, without insisting on someone else going through it ahead of him. He would never see guests to the door, and not wait outside until the guests had entered their cars and departed. He never spoke ill of anyone else. Finally, I cannot remember a day that passed when he did not mention Atatürk with deep veneration!

How appropriate it was that such a good and honest man, so full of love, would die on St. Valentine’s Day. Late in the summer of 1993, as I completed the manuscript for a book that I had been writing for several years, I felt the painful ambivalence in penning the dedication, of noting the terminal year of his life.

“To the memory of an extraordinary man — soldier, statesman, father — General Kemal Atalay (1910-2003).”

The author, Bülent Atalay, is a professor of physics and an artist. The article about his family’s connection to Atatürk is excerpted from a book that he is writing as a tribute to his late father, Orgeneral Kemal Atalay. He is the author of the highly acclaimed book *Math and the Mona Lisa*, published by Smithsonian Books (2004), currently in its eighth printing, and translated into numerous foreign languages. The Turkish edition, *Matematik ve Mona Lisa*, was published by Albatros Books in Istanbul in January 2006, and has already had three printings. Bülent Atalay’s website appears at http://www.bulentatalay.com

**MILESTONES**

**JULY**

*July 12, 1932*
Opening Day of Turkish Language Institution

*July 24, 1923*
Signing Lozan Reconciliation Agreement

**AUGUST**

*August 09, 1928*
Atatürk introducing Latin letters to Nation in Istanbul

*August 30, 1922*
Independence Day

*August 05, 1921*
Giving Atatürk; agnomen of Commander-in-chief by Turkish Parliament

*August 23, 1920 - September 23, 1920*
Sakarya War

*August 13, 1920*
Sevr Agreement (Agreement of Captivity before Independence War)

*August 06, 1915*
Victory of 1st Anafartalar War

**SEPTEMBER**

*September 01, 1929*
Abolishing lessons in Arabic and Persian from high schools

*September 02, 1925*
Shutting down Islamic tombs and dervish lodges

*September 09, 1922*
Victory of Izmir
To the Editor

July 4, 2006

Voice of Atatürk, Editor, Atatürk Society of America
4731 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 2006

Dear Editor,

Today, on the 230th Anniversary of American Independence in 1776, I would like to take this opportunity to address to the members and friends of the Atatürk Society of America (ASA) to thank them for founding and supporting it since its first establishment in 1995. During the last eleven years, especially after September 11, 2001, with the tireless and courageous efforts and with the generous contributions of ASA members and friends, “Atatürk Society of America” became a great institution in America like many others which are organized by forward looking immigrants with great visions who built and made America into what it is today. Now Atatürk’s words shall last forever in America along with those of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and other great Americans and citizens of the world.

Thanks to ASA, during these critical times of ‘Clash of Civilizations’ between Western nations and Islamic peoples, Turkish-Americans and other millions of Americans, as well as the majority of 73 million of Turkish people in Turkey; through TV, radio and newspapers heard and remembered again on May 19, 2006 the immortal ‘words’ of Kemal Atatürk who in 1923 created the only secular and democratic nation of Moslem peoples in history.

American General MacArthur, a great strategist and military hero of the Second World War during 1938-1945 and the victor and reformist of Imperial Japan; and general Gazi Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) victor of Gallipoli of the First World War during 1914-1918 and the gifted war leader, reformist and founder of the Republic of Turkey; conceived a liking for each other from the moment they met when MacArthur visited Turkey in 1932. During a long conversation, conducted in the warm atmosphere of sincerity, the two men, in touching on world subjects, expressed some remarkable thoughts regarding the future, which were full of both hopes and fears. Many years have gone by since then, crowded with historical events and the sufferings and misfortunes of war, the end of which cannot be seen even today. Two great soldiers, who in their political prognosis foretold the future with astonishing clarity.

To MacArthur’s question about the situation in Europe, Atatürk answered as follows:

“The Versailles Treaty has not removed a single one of the reasons which caused the First World War. It has deepened the chasm between the main rivals of yesterday. The victors, steeped in hostile feelings, dictated to the vanquished conditions of peace, without taking into account either ethnical, geopolitical, or economic peculiarities of the defeated countries. If you American gentlemen had not withdrawn from European affairs and insisted on the execution of Wilson’s program, we could today have a lasting peace.

If Europe’s statesmen, casting aside national egoism and differences, do not tackle with all sincerity and determination the solution of fundamental political problem in the interests of all, I am afraid that it will be impossible to avert a new catastrophe. Strictly speaking, the European problem has long passed the stage when it was caused by differences between England, France and Germany. Today, there has appeared in the East, a new power, which threatens civilization, and even the whole mankind. This terrible power, besides mobilizing all its moral and material resources for world revolution, employs new political methods as yet unknown to Europeans and Americans and is skilled in making very good use of the slightest mistakes and oversights of its enemies. In the war, which will break in Europe, the first victor will be Bolshevik Russia. The Bolsheviks, who are exploiting the feelings of the awakening peoples of the East and are conniving in their national passions and feelings, and who know how to excite their hatred, have become a power, which threatens not only Europe, but also Asia.”

When Asia came to be discussed, MacArthur said the following: “I agree with you completely. I think that the war which breaks out in Europe, will flare up immediately in Asia, America will, of course, not remain indifferent.”
Franklin D. Roosevelt, only 4-time elected President of the United States of America during 1933-1945, said the following about Atatürk:

“The American people have watched with sympathetic interest the energetic efforts of His Excellency Gazi Mustafa Kemal, President of the Turkish Republic, to accomplish reforms of a significant and varied nature to the end that his country might take its rightful place among the stable, peaceful and forward-looking nations of the world. The outstanding measure of success which he has achieved is a cause for sincere congratulations.”

President Roosevelt who became the Second World War leader of the Allied Nations against Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy after Pearl Harbor Attack by Japanese Navy at Hawaii on December 7, 1941; in his personal letter dated February 28, 1937 and addressed to “Honorable John Van A. Mac Murray, American Embassy, Istanbul, Turkey” wrote the following:

“Dear John: I have not had a chance before this to thank you for that delightful story about Atatürk. It is one of the ambitions of my life to meet him and I would even be willing to stay up all night...” Probably one of the greatest historians in the 21st Century, Arnold Toynbee has summarized Atatürk’s achievements as follows:

“In the 1920s Kemal Atatürk put through what was perhaps as revolutionary a program as has ever been carried out in any country deliberately and systematically in so short a span of time. It was as if in our Western world, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the secularist revolution at the end of 17th century, the French Revolution and the industrial revolution had all been telescoped into a single life time and been made compulsory by law.”

It was most significant that Atatürk’s historical achievements and the meaning of his ‘words’ were explained so eloquently on May 19, 2006 during our celebration of the 125th Birthday of Atatürk in the historical Cannon Caucus Room of the House of Representatives of the American Congress in Washington, D.C.; and by a former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives during 1995-1999, the Honorable Newt Gingrich, also a great historian himself.

“Gingrich’s experiences as the son of a career soldier convinced him at an early age to dedicate his life to his country and to the protection of freedom. He received a Master’s and a Doctorate from Tulane University in Modern European History. Before his election to Congress, he taught History for eight years. He served as a member of Congress for twenty years. He is recognized worldwide as an expert on world history, military issues and international affairs and is a member of the Secretary of Defense’s Defense Policy Board. He is the longest-serving teacher of the Joint War Fighting course for Major Generals. He serves on the Terrorism Task Force for the Council on Foreign Relations, and is an Advisory Board Member of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. He is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. and a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.”

It was indeed a very proud and emotional moment for all present in the celebration ceremony when His Excellency Ambassador Roy Ferguson, in behalf of the Prime Minister of New Zealand, talked about Atatürk’s great humanistic virtues, especially when he quoted Atatürk’s very memorable message to the mothers of ANZAC soldiers who lost thousands of their sons at Gallipoli in the Strait of Dardanelles during 1915 landing campaign where Turkish mothers also lost tens of thousands of their sons. Atatürk summed up the reconciliation in his famous words:

“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives… you are lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmetts to us where they lie side by side in this country of ours… You the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now living in our bosom and are in peace. Having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well”.

I think that 6.5 billion inhabitants on our common fragile home planet Earth, especially 1.3 billion people in 55 Islamic countries, can always find a shining way in Atatürk’s words for a better human fate in the 21st century through freedom, democracy, human responsibilities as well as human rights, and science. They will clearly understand now that their individual faith and political laws must be reinterpreted and re-taught as compatible with the natural laws as proven by scientific theories and discoveries about the 14 billion years old expanding Universe of our common Creator. In the words of Atatürk’s most important dictum:

“The truest guidance in life is science.”

As a believer in Atatürk’s philosophy and as I expressed in my few words during the ceremony, I am sure that sooner or later, all peoples of the world will realize that:

“Peace and better human fate on planet Earth may be possible only when a universal legal system and ethics based on science for the common descent survival of the human race on Earth are taught to all and accepted by all Nations and the population growth rate is stabilized at a level not more than zero by each nation under a system of world governance according to a new United Nations Charter and enforced through the UN Security Council and a UN Force with super power”.

Our celebration of the 125th Birthday of Atatürk in Washington was a great historical event not only for the Turkish people but also for the American people and their leaders who seek and work towards, to express in Atatürk’s words, one other great dictum,

“Peace at home, peace in the world.”

Sincerely,

Turgut Burakreis
ASA member since 1997
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