

Voice of

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ATATÜRK



ASA
distributes
magazines and
books on Atatürk to
public libraries, high
schools, and
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Washington
DC area.

ATATÜRK'S DREAM WAS TO EDUCATE GIRLS
*Help Us Make it
a Reality:
Building Dorms
for Bright Girls
from Rural
Turkey*



**An Interview With
General Alexander Haig**

—
**LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA:
Turkey in an Arena
of Trials**



The Atatürk Society of America

Voice of

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Hudai Yavalar
Chairman, Founding President

Impressions of my visit to Turkey, end-October-November

News regarding the global economic crisis and political developments in Turkey has been filled with doom and gloom, a dark cloud hanging over Turkey and the region which has been plagued by terrorism, war, unemployment, and malaise.

Surprisingly, my October-November trip to Turkey was an uplifting one, with the spirit and hope of the Turkish people piercing the fog of melancholy hanging over the world.

My visit coincided with two of the most significant dates in the history of the Turkish Republic; October 29, the date the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed in 1923, ending the theocratic rule of the Ottoman Empire; and November 10, the fateful day in 1938 when Kemal Atatürk, the first President and cherished leader of the modern secular republic physically left his beloved people and country, but remained a presence.

Members of Atatürk Society joined me and walked on Bagdad Boulevard (one of Istanbul's main arteries), despite suggestions by the Islamic-based AKP government not to spend money celebrating because of the global economic crisis. Instead of heads hanging low in despair and disappointment, we held our heads held high in pride and hope, which gave me a great sense of satisfaction. Proudly, I held up a sign screaming "WE HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN YOU AND WILL NEVER FORGET YOU."

On November 29 hundreds of thousands of Turks from all walks of life poured into the streets of Istanbul and other cities around the country, young, old, students, parents hoping to teach their children, holding up pictures of Atatürk and slogans in support of his ideals.

On November 10, I visited Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara, and again, carrying ASA's sign with the slogan "WE CAN NEVER GIVE UP ON YOU OR YOUR PHILOSOPHY", I noticed how individual were hopeful. Their ties to Atatürk were stronger, not weakened, and realized that despite the background of the current government in Ankara, Atatürk's principles, basis remained strong. The public was ecstatic. Despite what any government says or does, no one can erase the lasting impact of Atatürk's legacy, and for that I am grateful.

In my many years advocating Atatürk's philosophy, I always participated in October 29 and November 10 events, but this years' crowds, enthusiasm, and energy were far superior to any I witnessed in previous years. I asked myself, "Which world leader is revered and missed more than 70 years after his death?" Which world leader dedicated two nation holidays to children and the youth; Every year April 23, the date in 1920 when Atatürk formed a democratic Parliament is commemorated as Children's Day and May 19 in 1919, when Atatürk landed in Samsun and launched the War of Independence, is known as Youth and Sports day, an indication of the importance Atatürk attached to future generations.

U.S. Congresswoman Virginia Foxx on April 23, 2007 submitted a statement in the Congressional Record titled "National Sovereignty and Children's Day in Turkey," while another Member, Jean Schmidt of Ohio submitted a statement on May 22 which ends with "May 19 is a very important day when it all began. On this day a great leader began his

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journey, a vision became reality and a great nation was born. We should all learn a lesson from this man's life. A leader with a vision coupled with determination can lay the roots for a great future. Turkey's neighbors who today wrestle with their own beginnings should take note."

These two statements created a positive impact on U.S.-Turkish relations.

One of the most surprising aspects of my trip to Turkey was how many Turks in Turkey were aware of a recent event Atatürk Society of America (ASA) event held in Washington on May 19, 2008 with Professor Arnold Ludwig who, after years of study, ranked Atatürk ranks number one among world leaders.

For eighteen years Professor Arnold Ludwig studied 1,941 rulers from 199 countries who led from January 1, 1900 through December 31, 2000 to learn why rulers want to rule and what distinguishes them from other kinds of people. Based on his analysis, he identified Atatürk as excelling in many areas such as liberator, visionary, defiant against traditional religious beliefs, and discarding social customs. At the end, Atatürk emerged as King of the Mountain, the title of his book.

ASA profoundly thanks Dr. Arnold Ludwig, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of Kentucky for his insightful research. He is now known and revered in Turkey for his work.

I didn't earlier realize what an impact this May 19 event in Washington had on the optimism of Turks. Everywhere I went, people with tears in their eyes, from 7 to 70 years old, showered me with hugs and appreciation for raising awareness of this issue which made the front page of every major newspaper, TV, and publication in with headlines such as "ATATÜRK, THE GREATEST LEADER," and "ATATÜRK NUMBER ONE." I am ecstatic for the role ASA played in shining light on a leader which led the way out of the wilderness for a country caught at the crossroads between east and west, agrarianism and modernization.

As ASA Founding Chairman, I visited art exhibitions in several schools. One painting by a ten year old girl at Ulu Gazi middle school in Izmit, Turkey will receive an ASA award for its design and creativity. It depicts a tree with children sitting on it; its roots have the picture of Atatürk.

Unfortunately, our member retired Professor Necdet Haluk Goze has left us, but his memory will remain forever. His books were donated to Kocaeli University, and ASA will undertake that responsibility.



Middle School Student Receives ASA Recognition for her Painting of Atatürk

ASA Founding Chairman, Hudai Yavalar, during his recent trip to Turkey, visited art exhibitions in several schools in conjunction with Republic Day on October 29. One painting by a ten year old girl, Elif Ozge Erkan at Ulu Gazi middle school in Izmit, received ASA recognition for its design and creativity. It cleverly depicts a tree with children sitting on it, waving the Turkish flag; its roots display the picture of Atatürk.





Timur Edib
President

The Starfish Story

Original Story by: Loren Easley

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean.

Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?"

The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die."

"Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!"

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..." I made a difference for that one."

For those of us dedicated to public service the "starfish story" is the standard call to duty, knowing that each life you touch matters, even if it is only one. The Atatürk Society is dedicated to this principle. Over the years the Society has sought out individuals that have been touched by the vision of Atatürk, and has worked to teach others of the principles of Atatürk: that World Peace can only be achieved when everyone is counted and respected as equals. To date, the Society has promoted scholarly research, panel discussions, and other academic venues to further Atatürk's vision of equality, scientific inquiry, and democracy. This Magazine, The Voice of Atatürk, serves not only as our official publication, it serves as a platform for global awareness and discussion of ideas that promote world peace. Every reader is encouraged to share articles, publications, or thoughts that further our mission. It is our firm belief that every voice matters, and every story inspires.

Determining what inspires others is a truly complicated task. To inspire an individual is possible, but yet a daunting task- ask any coach. To inspire an entire nation, is a remarkable task. To inspire individuals to be a nation, requires a miracle or genius. Since my time as President of the Atatürk Society I have heard many facts and stories about Atatürk that makes me believe that he was both, a miracle and a genius. I have also heard the terms "Kemalist" and "Atatürkcü" mentioned many times. I am yet to understand what they mean. Sometimes they are defined as opposite and conflicting thoughts, sometimes they are mentioned as the same ideals, and sometimes they are mentioned as a progression from one thought to the other. While there is a debate on which school of thought carries the ideology of Atatürk, the ultimate question is does it really matter? Is it enough to just talk about the principles of Atatürk?

A member recently asked me why we should bother with organizing discussions and other symbolic acts of carrying flags, or parading pictures of Atatürk. With all that is going on today, is it enough to just talk and walk. I honestly didn't have an answer. Until another member

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shared his thoughts. The answer comes from understanding history. Our mission at the Atatürk Society is not to promote Atatürk, in and of itself. Our mission is to be vigilant about preserving the “truth” about who Atatürk was, and what his principles mean to Turkey and to society. The problem with “history” is implicit to the word choice itself. “History” derives from “his story” or “a subjective retelling of a story from a masculine perspective.” In the last year, I have noticed many



articles being written about Atatürk that are raising questions about his role in “history.” In following the current discourse on Atatürk and his principles, the question to you as a supporter of Atatürk should be “why is the person making their statement?” what is the motivation for the article? What is the political context of the article? Realize that the proffered subject matter of the article is rarely the reason for its publication. It is my opinion that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk cannot and must not be

viewed as something or someone that is distinguishable from the Republic of Turkey. He is the essence of what it is to be a Turk: he is each of us, and he is all of us that say “Ne Mutlu Turkum Diyene!”

We, the Board and membership of the Atatürk Society, will continue to promote scholarly debates to preserve Atatürk’s legacy, we also will continue in our duty as the children of Atatürk in promoting our mission of fostering world peace and secular democracy based on an understanding of Atatürk and his principles. We will talk the talk and walk the walk!

We will continue to be steadfast in promoting his vision, and we will work tirelessly to ensure that his ideology is understood and preserved. In studying Atatürk’s lifework, I have no doubt that he was a believer in the “Starfish Story.” Atatürk, was a transformational leader that was able to create a nation one person, one village at a time. No matter how small or futile one’s actions may appear, actions matter. From Atatürk’s speech in Samsun to Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Talks and walks matter. One person, one life at a time, what we do matters. Not only will we continue to talk and walk, but we will work to make a difference in individual lives. This past year, with the support of our loyal friends and members, the Atatürk Society was able to make a real contribution in touching the lives of our “Me-hmetciks” and their families. With your help we raised over \$34,000.00. Thank you.

In the spirit of the “starfish story” and in partnership with the Cagdas Yasami Destekleme Dernegi, the Atatürk Society is hoping to expand its charitable and educational work by helping in the building of dormitories for girls in villages across Turkey. The simple truth is that many families are forced to give away their daughters as teenage brides out of economic necessity. Our goal, is to change the lives of these young girls! In the spirit of Atatürk’s vision of equality and democracy, we will work to change the life of one girl, one village at a time so that they can realize their potential. We are working on the logistics of organizing a national capital campaign, and in the near future you will be receiving our outreach brochure. When you receive it, I ask that you read it over, and if you believe like I do that it is vitally important to give every child a chance to learn, I ask that you give what you can to help us give these young girls a chance in life. Please ask your friends, your neighbors, your office mates, your children’s schools, your alma maters, and anyone else you can think of to help us in our cause. Every child matters. Every donation matters. Together we can help these young women the opportunity to be a living example of Atatürk’s vision.

Thank you for being a supporter of the Atatürk Society, and in believing in our mission.

With best regards,

Timur Edib

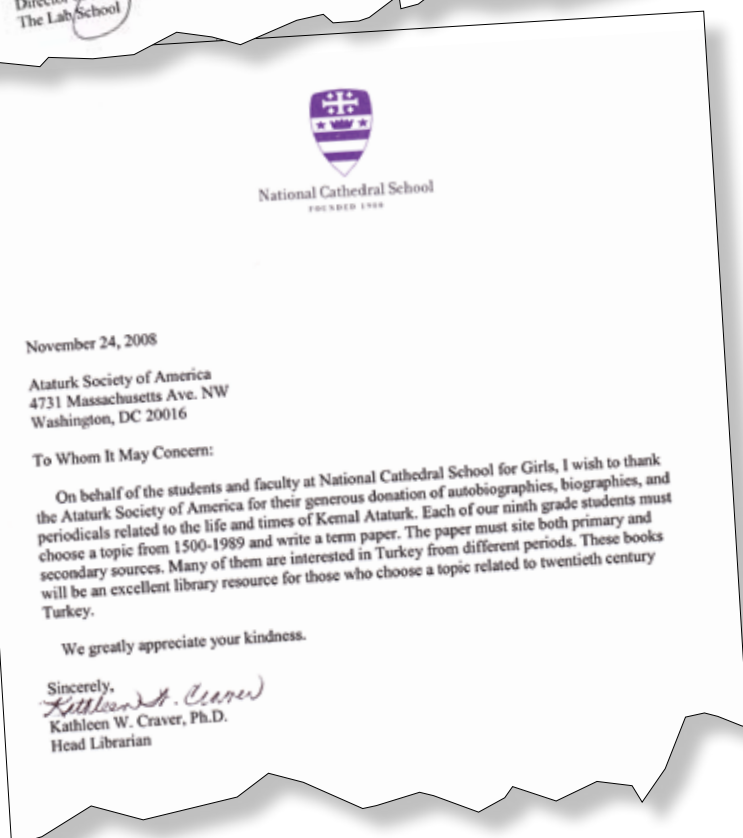
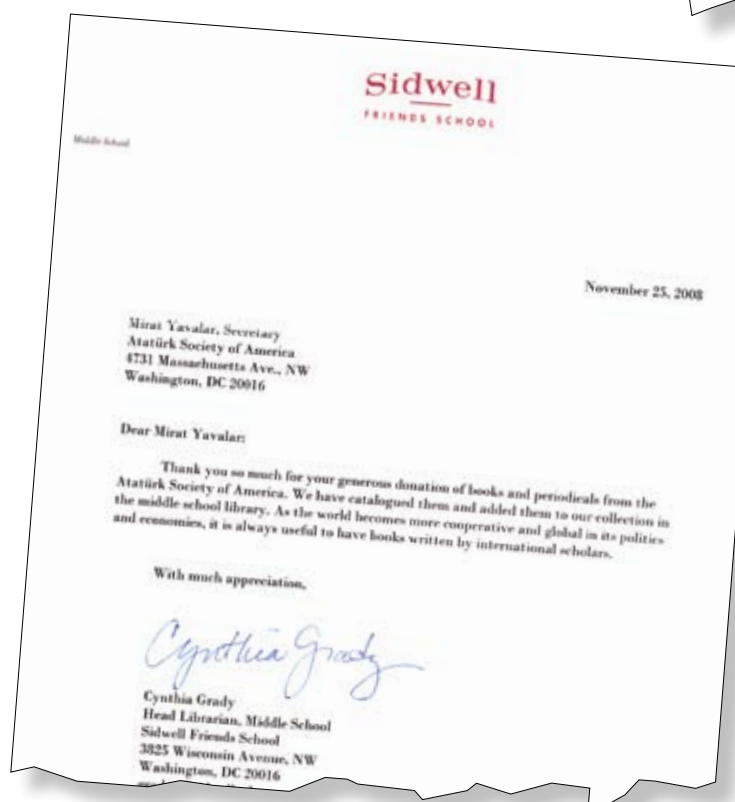
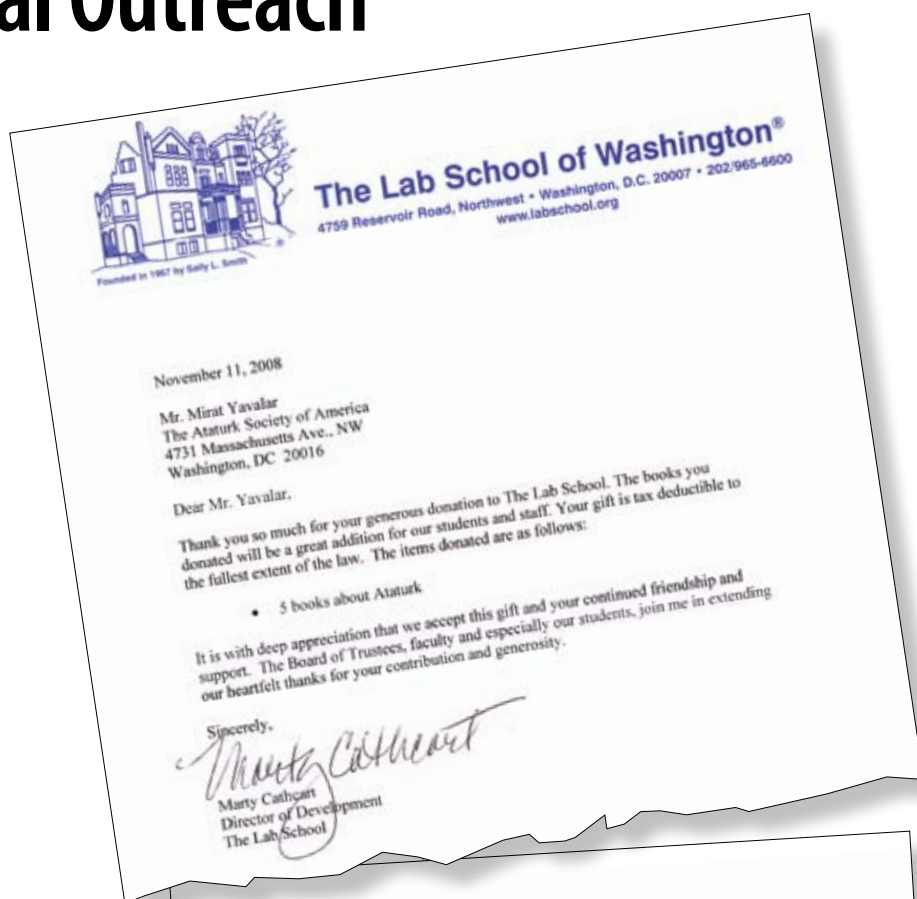
ASA Educational Outreach

In commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, ASA distributed the following books and magazines to libraries, high schools, and universities in the Washington, DC area:

- Atatürk by Prof. Andrew Mango
- The Atatürk Revolution "A Paradigm of Modernization by Prof. Suna Kili
- Turkish Woman by Ayse Cebesoy Sarialp
- Who Are the Turks? By Prof. Justin McCarthy & Carolyn McCarthy
- Voice of Atatürk, Publication of the Atatürk Society of America

If you would like to distribute these publications to schools and libraries in your communities, you can obtain them from ASA.

We have received several letters of appreciation from recipient institutions. Below are copies of their correspondence:



ATATÜRK IN THE WORLD MEDIA

Saakashvili: “Atatürk is the greatest leader of the 20th Century”

*From: Radikal September 21, 2008,
Murat Yetkin*

At forty one, Saakashvili is among the youngest Presidents in the world. For Saakashvili, who starts to talk with his hands and arms when discussing him, Atatürk is “the greatest leader in the 20th Century.”

Remembering his previous statement, I ask him “Along with Winston Churchill?” He says “no” “Churchill, like Atatürk, protected his country under the most difficult circumstances. But Atatürk created a brand new state and protected it. I saw the map of Turkey which was previously presented to the World Community, which is much smaller than today’s Turkey. He helped

his country and his people gain many things. I visited the Mausoleum. While facing my own struggles, I think of Atatürk. I learned many things from Atatürk. It is not an easy thing to change the country, change the mentality, and change the population.

When we look at today’s Turkey we can witness the changes brought about by Turkey. With its economy, military, and democracy, Turkey is a strong and modern country. We see these changes

in foreign policy. While Turkey inherited the culture and problems from the remains of an empire, today Turkey is not a part of the problems of the region. On the contrary, it is trying to be part of the solution.

It is treating us like equals, embracing us, and in cooperation with us. This is change and development. **We must understand; we are undergoing the struggles to exist which Atatürk undertook.”**



Dutch Historian Erik Jan Zürcher

Dutch historian Erik Jan Zürcher is from the International Institute of Social History in the Netherlands. His main research interest is the political and social history of the late Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. His Turkey, A mod-

ern History, is widely used in Universities as a textbook.

With expertise in Turkey’s establishment and modernization, he concluded that “The Turkish Republic was established top-down, but it is the world’s most successful state building project,” because it succeeded in establishing the notion of nationalism among the Turkish public. This fact becomes more remarkable if you consider that this was

true among only a minority of the elite in 1920’s.

Prior to 1924, the national identity was Islam. With a decisive change, Atatürk was successful in transforming the country’s identity to secular Turkish nationalism.

Dr. Zürcher studied Turkish (with Arabic, Persian and Modern History as minors) at the University of Leiden, where he also earned his Ph.D. in 1984.



Turkish Ambassador to Israel Namık Tan (fourth from right) with members of the Turkish and Israeli military.

Atatürk Square named in Israel

On October 31, 2008, the mayor of Ber Şeva, a city in Israel, established a Square in the city called Atatürk Square, and unveiled a bust of Atatürk in the middle of the square.

Turkey's Ambassador to Israel, Namık Tan, Ambassadors from New Zealand, England, South Africa, Israeli Foreign Ministry officials, and military personnel attended the event.

During World War I, 298 Turkish soldiers lost their lives in Ber Şeva, which hosts a memorial in their honor. This square completes the memorial, with Mayor Yaakov Turner stating he was very proud of fulfilling a responsibility towards the lost Turkish soldiers.

The idea for an Atatürk Square was the brainchild of Izak Satil from Ber Seva who said he has admired Atatürk as a hero since childhood.



Turkish Ambassador to Israel Namık Tan observing the Atatürk Statue with Ber Seva mayor Yaakov Turner.

An Interview With General Alexander Haig

Former U.S. Secretary of State and Supreme Allied Commander of Europe (NATO)

"Atatürk recognized that no nation can succeed at home if it fails abroad any more than it can succeed abroad if it fails at home."

O.O: General Haig, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is said to be almost the only leader in the 20th century whose ideas as well as actions still influence his people, inspire them and guide them. If you agree, with this observation, how would you explain the influence of Atatürk?

General Haig: I think Atatürk will go down in history as one of the great leaders of the past century. There is no doubt about that. I first learned of him in school but I also learned of him through General Douglas MacArthur when I worked for him in Tokyo. He was a great admirer of Atatürk's.

Of course I had my first exposure with modern secular Turkey during the Korean War when I served in Korea side by side

with Turkish forces that were fighting against totalitarianism, Pyong Yang and the fine hand of the then Soviet Union -- which was behind that war as it was in subsequent wars that the U.S. fought. But be that as it may, Atatürk to me was not only an individual that brought Turkey into the modern world as an advocate of democracy, ("peace at home, peace in the world,"), economic growth and improvement of the economic stance of his people; but, he also had a strong vision of the important role that Turkey could play from that day forward in the security and success of Europe.

Later I had experiences with Turkey as the NATO Commander, and again I found that Turkey was a strong ally created in

the Atatürk mold of secularism and world commerce, fostering world and domestic peace and stability.

O.O: General Haig, as a military man, how would you assess the personality and leadership style of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk?

General Haig: Many Americans and I remember my experience with former President Jimmy Carter when I was in NATO and the US was again misreading historical reality. The U.S. had applied sanctions against Turkey because of its Cyprus intervention some years earlier. I told President Carter that he had to lift the embargo because it was creating a set of circumstances in which terrorism was running rapid, especially in Istanbul and in the South, I told him that the Turkish military, which is always reluctant to become involved in politics, would in the final analysis do what they felt was right for the country. And if he did not lift the embargo and normalize relations with Turkey, a critical ally to the U.S., he would force the Turkish military to intervene. And that is precisely what happened even though Carter did not believe it. The military stepped in. And then, stepped out; and in so doing, it encouraged the development of fewer parties, making Turkey more stable in the political sense. It was then that the President of Turkey, a military leader, who ultimately appointed Prime Minister Özal to his position following the elections when Özal's party won. So these are all important legacies of Atatürk and the Turkish military. But on the other hand, I want to emphasize that



having fought side by side with Turkish forces, I don't know of any military in the world with greater courage, greater dedication to duty, and greater patriotism than my friends in Turkey.

O.O: May I ask your view about Atatürk's Statesmanship?

General Haig: When one looks back at Atatürk, not only was he a great leader at home, but he was respected and admired in the capitals throughout the world. He reached out to world leaders; he did not create a cocoon of self-interest, but recognized that no nation can succeed at home if it fails abroad any more than it can succeed abroad if it fails at home. American presidents keep learning that in cycles four years. But Atatürk knew that from the outset of his leadership in Turkey.

O.O: From the point of view of strategy, how would you evaluate Atatürk and his Republic?

General Haig: I think he was a visionary in that sense. First, he knew that Turkey's security in the upcoming Cold War (which developed after his death), clearly had to be anchored to Western Europe. So that process began under his leadership. But he also recognized that Turkey sits in a strategic location not only as a vanguard of Western European defenses, but also that it anchored the so-called triangle of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. As I said some years ago during a visit to Turkey, when the Cold War ended, Turkey's importance grew; it did not diminish to Western Europe. It is very important for Western political leaders to understand this circumstance. Sometimes it is too much to ask for, but it is a very important aspect of Turkey's future role to those that believe in democracy, in peace and stability and economic growth. Those who do must see Turkey as leading the path to the future success of Western democracy.

O.O: General Haig, what would you say about the social and political reforms that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk carried out?



General Haig: I don't claim to be an expert on Turkey's internal affairs. Normally, I sought to stay out of them. I think it is a very bad habit in western capitals in Europe, and in my own capital, Washington DC, to try to dictate to our friends in Turkey and elsewhere around the world how they should conduct their affairs. For example, the question of terrorism, the crucial misunderstanding that for Turkish leaders it is a question of survival. Of course they are going to have to take action against international terrorists. Some in my own country still don't understand that. And of course they are usually listening to a lobbying group that does not share the same interests as our friends in Turkey.

O.O: Is there anything else, General Haig, that you would like to add to conclude the interview?

General Haig: I think one thing that has always been an issue which has generated admiration on my part for Turkey's leaders and the Turkish people, is their

patience, and their willingness to take affront after affront from more obedient, but sometimes less than intelligent Western counterparts who maybe don't move properly on Turkey's entry into the European Union, which of course was a great disappointment to me and not only the fact of it, but also the way it was done. Despite that, the Turkish people kept their sense of confidence and self-assurance and have continued to march forward as a democratic success story. I am very optimistic that this will continue. But I would hope that some of our Western friends in Europe and some of our own political leaders here in the U.S. would take the trouble to study the history of modern Turkey, to study the legacy of Atatürk, and to study the performance of Turkey as a viable and incredibly important member of the community of free nations.

O.O: Thank you very much, General Haig
General Haig: Thank you, Professor, it is good to be with you.

Assuring Educational Opportunities for all Young Girls in Turkey

"Turkish women will also become imbued in science and technology and will go through all levels of education which men undergo. Thereafter, in social life, the women will march along with men and will support and help one another."

- Kemal Atatürk (1923)

Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, greatly admired the critical role that women played in the struggle that birthed the new Republic and praised their invaluable contributions. Atatürk's earliest reforms gave Turkish women equal rights and opportunities. In 1926, Atatürk forged a new educational system from the grade school to the university that was coeducational, providing women the same educational opportunities as men.

In Turkey today, education is compulsory for all male and female students only through 8th grade, so many villages do not have schools beyond that level. In order to continue their education, girls are forced to travel to a bigger town to continue their high school education.

Many families in rural villages in Turkey can ill afford to find a boarding school for their daughters. For them, too often, the only option is forced marriage shortly after 8th grade graduation.

While there are many reasons for forced marriages; the consequences are tragic for girls – and ultimately the future of the Turkish Republic. The patriarchal mind set that condones early marriage is based on simple economics. Girls are viewed as burdens to their families; and marriage usually brings money (dowries) to the family. Secondly, parents' fear of unwed pregnancies creates urgency in families to force girls into marriage.

The lack of access to secondary education results in child brides bearing children early and the lost potential of a

young mind.

While the Turkish government struggles with the enormous financial challenges associated with bringing public education into the 21st century through the advancement of its educational system, and the construction of new schools across Anatolia, others have stepped forward to become part of the solution.

Non Governmental Organizations are making a difference...

The Association for the Support of Contemporary Living (ÇYDD) is a non-governmental non-profit organization established in 1989 by volunteers who have joined their knowledge, skills and experience to advance the "level of contemporary civilization". The organization has 93 branches throughout Anatolia; 26 are located in Istanbul.

Thirteen thousand members share ÇYDD's goal to protect and enhance the rights gained through Atatürk's reforms and principles. They are committed to assuring a contemporary society and contemporary citizens through contemporary education in four major areas; Scholarship Programs, Construction of Residential Dormitories and Libraries, Art Projects, and Project for Enrichment of the Children.





ÇYDD has enabled thousands of girls to realize secondary education...escaping early marriages and limited futures. They have constructed 31 residential buildings throughout Turkey that provide affordable and safe housing for girls. As a result, girls have gone on to higher education and economic self-sufficiency. As educated women, they have gained their freedom and the ability to be useful to their families and the Turkish Republic as contributing members of society.

Yet, ÇYDD reports that there is still a great need for dormitories in 81 additional cities and 869 municipalities. For additional information on ÇYDD, visit: www.cydd.org

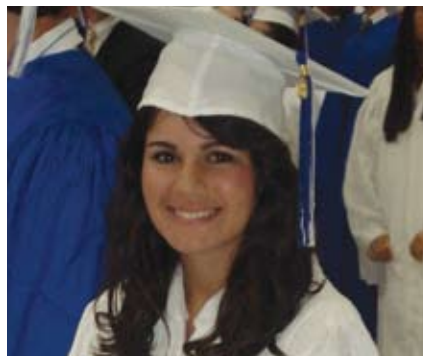
Individuals are making a difference...

Parla Duman is a role model for all civic minded individuals, young and old, who believe in the important contributions individuals can make.

From the moment she was born, she was proud to be Turkish, and loved everything about Turkey – its history, geography, the food, and the music.

But Parla Duman grew up in the United States, and spent a month every summer in Turkey, where she reconnected with her extended family and discovered new aspects of her Turkish culture.

Her senior year of high school was an eye – opener. She realized she has never returned the favor for all of her good fortune – she had never “given back” to the country that created her identity and that she loved so much.



Parla learned about the ÇYDD through her parents who donated to this educational charity for students in Turkey. She organized an event which raised 5,500 YTL for ÇYDD to acquire furnishings for a kindergarten classroom in Turkey. Parla was proud of herself and the Turkish American community: even if it was a small gift, she contributed an infinite amount of help.

A room with a view to a bright future...

In the coming weeks, ASA will be sharing more information on the invaluable work of ÇYDD to construct residential dormitories in cities and municipalities across Anatolia – and ways that each of us can help to assure invaluable educational opportunities for all young girls in Turkey.

“Everything we see in the world is the creative work of women.”

– Kemal Atatürk

DID YOU KNOW?

There is a saying in Norway, “to be like Atatürk.”

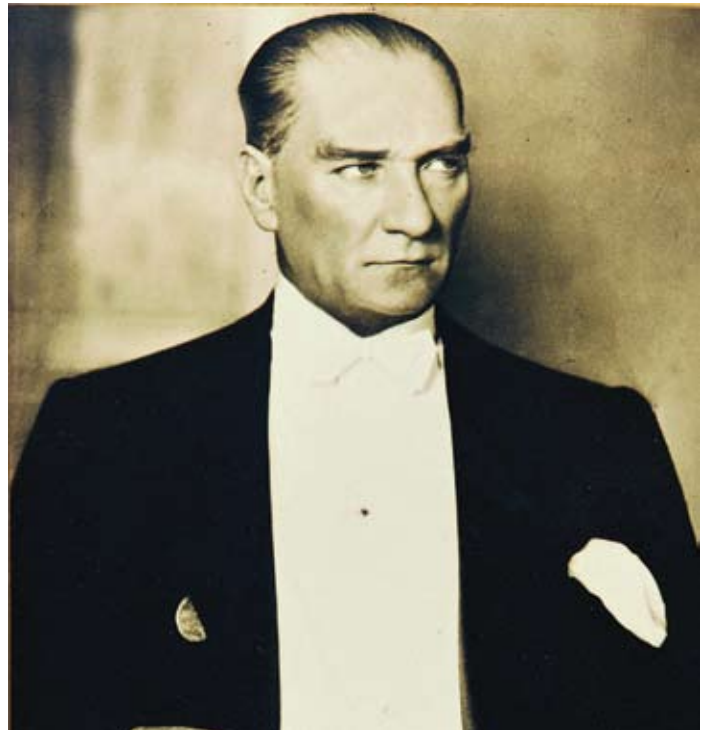
Every year on Republic Day Greek Commander Trikopis goes to the Turkish Embassy in Athens and stands in respect in front of Atatürk’s picture.

In 1996 Haiti’s President said his wish is to have the following written on his gravestone: “I died happy because my entire life I understood and followed Turkey’s leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.”

The U.S. President’s 2000 Millennium message stated: “There is no doubt that the Millennium belongs to one statesman, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk because he is the only leader to become not only the leader of the year, but leader of the century.”

During General McArthur’s most difficult, problematic, and challenging period, when speaking to more than 120 advisors, senators, and ministers, he said “At this moment I would give anything to see Mustafa Kemal, not any of you.”

Atatürk is the only leader in the world with the title of “top educator”.





ROBERT WEXLER
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON
THE JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL SERVICES

October 24, 2008

Dear Turkish American Community Leaders:

I want to congratulate Turkish Americans on the historic occasion of the 85th Anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. This momentous event is not only a day to recognize Turkey's anniversary as a nation -- it is also an opportunity to highlight the invaluable contributions of the Turkish American community to the fabric and success of the United States.

I want to thank the leadership of the Turkish American community as well as all Turkish Americans for playing a critical role in enhancing our nation's democracy, economy and way of life. As Ambassadors of the United States to Turkey and vice-versa, Turkish Americans are the linchpin in our mutual effort to strengthen American-Turkish relations.

As the Chairman of the Caucus on U.S.-Turkish relations and the Congressional Study Group on Turkey, I want to join you in offering my heartfelt support for the American-Turkish partnership that has grown stronger over the past six decades. As a U.S. ally and North Atlantic Treaty Organization Member, Turkey has distinguished itself as an indispensable contributor to both regional and global security, stability and prosperity, with participation in key international institutions, missions and operations.

Turkey's leadership, forward thinking policies and strong democracy have put it on a path towards membership in the European Union. I fully support Turkey's efforts to join the EU and will continue to urge the Bush Administration and the next Administration to firmly support the Turkish people in this endeavor. It is also essential that U.S.-Turkish cooperation grows as Washington and Ankara deal with grave international challenges. Turkey is an indispensable partner of the U.S. and is key to progress in the Middle East, the Southern Caucasus, the Black Sea region and beyond.

Our nations' bilateral relations have evolved into an unbreakable bond of friendship and alliance, with origins tracing back to the Truman Doctrine's commitment to ensuring Turkey's security and independence in 1947. Since that time, American and Turkish soldiers fought alongside each other and international forces in the Korean War, cooperated closely throughout the Cold War, the Persian Gulf War, and today U.S. and Turkish troops stand shoulder to shoulder against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. United States-Turkish cooperation in the global war on terror is at the highest level and the U.S. military is currently using the Turkish airbase at Incirlik to provide U.S. troops stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan with vital logistical and material support.

The United States and Turkey also cooperate closely on the critical issue of combating PKK insurgents and terrorists who ruthlessly threaten and kill Turkish civilians. The United States and Turkey share the common understanding that terrorism is unacceptable and the U.S. is committed to ending the PKK threat and to providing assistance and actionable intelligence with Turkey's armed forces until these vicious attacks end.

Again, it is my honor to join Turkish Americans as they celebrate the 85th Anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. I look forward to working closely with the Turkish American community and its leadership to foster the U.S.-Turkish relationship and build a stronger future for the United States and Turkey.

Member of Congress

With warm regards,


Robert Wexler

Chairman, House Subcommittee on Europe

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BEYOND THE HEAD SCARF:

An American woman's perspective on life and feminism in modern Turkey

In the seventh grade, Abby Bowman wrote a research paper on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk for the National History Day competition. The paper received first at the regional and state levels, and finally was awarded 8th place in the paper division among the 700,000 history projects at the national level. While Abby was visiting Washington, D.C., to present her paper, the ASA invited her to give a speech at the Turkish Embassy and meet the Turkish ambassador. Later, as a freshman in high school, the ASA sent her to Turkey for a week to live with a family there and experience Atatürk's reforms firsthand. These events had a profound impact on her life, establishing a strong connection with Turkey and sparking a growing interest in international relations. Now a sophomore at Princeton University six years later, Abby is majoring in Near Eastern Studies with a focus on Turkish language and culture. She cannot thank the ASA enough for helping to transform one middle school paper into a lifelong passion.

By Abby Bowman

Take an Ivy League school like Princeton—all its Gothic architecture, sprawling green lawns, and academic reputation—and move it to the side of a hill in Istanbul overlooking the glittering waters of the Bosphorus. Add a hundred or so adorable stray cats that pad around like they own the place. Welcome to Boğaziçi University, one of Turkey's most respected and selective colleges. The school offers a top-notch intensive Turkish language program that I attended for eight weeks this summer.

Every morning I walked the twenty minutes from my dorm to the main campus, narrowly avoiding death by Turkish traffic. Entering through the gates of the university on my first day, I noticed that many of the Turkish female students going to summer class were wearing head scarves.

This surprised me, since I had been reading in the news for months about Turkey's ban on wearing head scarves on public property. Religious head coverings are common in Turkey, whose population is 99% Muslim. The restriction of such religious clothing has a long history in Turkey, reaching back to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reforms in the early 1900's. Atatürk believed

that Turkey could not be modernized if the people held onto religious traditions that discouraged equality, especially between genders. How could the Turkish people succeed in the modern world if half of them were, in his words, chained to the ground? Atatürk was the first leader to ban the veil and the fez in Turkey, but not the last.

I was in for an even greater surprise when no one seemed to notice or care about the head scarves, not my professors nor even the guards at the gate. These women were literally breaking the law by veiling themselves on campus. Based on my knowledge from the American media, I expected the guards to swoop down and arrest the women on the spot. My first lesson that day was realizing how much I still had to learn about the head scarf issue, and about Turkish women in general.

Bans on head scarves are not the only challenge facing women in Turkey today. Domestic violence is an issue that is virtually ignored when compared to the interest surrounding the head scarves, and honor killings still happen every day in the rural eastern regions of the country. Women have come a long way since the dawn of the Turkish Republic, when the vast majority lived out their days as uneducated house-

wives. The Civil Code of 1926 took the first step in granting women equal rights in inheritance, custody, and divorce, as well as creating educational opportunities for women of every age and class. But there is still quite a distance to go.

Equal job opportunities and wages are also extremely important issues for the average working woman in Istanbul, yet the news media both in Turkey and abroad are fixated on the head scarf issue. There's much more to these women—both those who cover their heads in piety, and those who oppose head scarves as a symbol of female subservience. In such a politically charged atmosphere, so delicately balanced between Muslim faith and secular government, how does the average Turkish woman go about her life: at work or at leisure, traveling through the country or protesting on the streets? As an average American exchange student who went about her life in the midst of Istanbul, I'd like to share my observations about the often bizarre and complicated situation of Turkish women.

This summer was my first time living in Istanbul, or any big city for that matter—I've lived in Des Moines, Iowa my whole life. About 3 million people call the state

of Iowa home; in contrast, more than 11 million live within Istanbul's boundaries. Founded around 600 BCE, Istanbul is the third largest city in the world. It's also the only metropolis to span two continents; the Bosphorus Strait splits the city straight down the middle, with Europe on the eastern bank and Asia/Anatolia on the western.

Istanbul is a complex city in a complex country. I lived there for two months and was utterly unable to pin down the "average" Turkish woman, or even the average Istanbul woman for that matter. She seemed to shift from district to district, defying the expectations I'd developed based on my Turkish-American friends and the women shown in the media.

For example, in the Fatih district within the ancient Roman walls, women cover themselves from head to toe in the traditional black veil with only a slit for their eyes. I have never felt so naked as I did walking through that district, checking out Byzantine mosques in my t-shirt and jeans. A month afterwards, during a weekend trip to Bursa with one of my roommates, we were standing in line behind a similarly veiled woman with her husband and young son. I didn't want to stare, so I looked at the ground. To my surprise, I saw jeans, trendy flip flops, and a toe ring peaking out of the bottom of the black fabric.

Over the summer I spent a lot of time in the crowded Taksim commercial district. There I saw many young women also wearing black, but in a quite different way. Black tank tops crisscrossed with black ribbons, black baggy pants with chains and studs, even black Metallica t-shirts. These girls were fully embracing the punk/goth style, complete with piercings and purple hair and skater boyfriends.

They contrasted sharply with the *çitir* women who go to Taksim to shop at Levi Jeans and Diesel. The word *çitir* literally means "crispy" in Turkish, but it's also a slang term meaning something like "chick." It refers to beautiful and sexy young women, usually in their 20's, stereotyped as a bit naive and shallow for all their knowledge of



fashionable clothes.

For the most part though, the clothing worn by women I saw daily on the bus or street seemed unremarkable, although perhaps on the modest side. Many wear a brightly colored head scarf with a stylish khaki overcoat or a long sleeved shirt and white pants. Others go uncovered and show off their red-dyed hair, quite a popular style. Another popular fashion is to wear t-shirts under tank tops or low-cut dresses, and skirts or shorts rarely rise higher than just above the knee.

This tendency towards modesty is exaggerated by Turkish society's sometimes fierce protection of women's honor. Four of my female (foreign) friends and I were heading off to Kapadokya one weekend. We didn't have any bus reservations, but after pleading in our rapidly improving Turkish we were finally squeezed onto an overnight bus. The bus driver made a fuss over our fifth member who was sitting by herself next to a male stranger. We couldn't understand at first, but it turns out that bus drivers will not allow a single female and a single male to sit next to each other when they aren't married or family. It's a 13 hour bus ride, everyone is sleeping, and the woman's honor could be compromised. For a while it looked like all five of us would not be able to go, but finally we convinced him that we would switch seats and he let

us stay.

The unique position of the Turkish woman, balancing modesty with independence under the pressure of a society that demands religious honor and secular nationalism, gives rise to some other bizarre circumstances. In my first week I noticed something out of place as I ate at the *kepapçı* restaurants near my dorm and shopped for a desk fan (a necessity in hot and humid Istanbul). In all the restaurants and stores that I entered, almost every single waiter and salesperson was male.

This seemed so bizarre to me, especially with a college campus just next door. Isn't working as a waitress or grocery store clerk a common part-time job for female college students? As it turns out, attending a Turkish university is such a time-consuming venture that most students need all the study time they can get and take no part-time employment. The other women who would potentially fill those jobs from the poorer working class are more likely to be religiously conservative and thus usually required by their religious beliefs and/or their families to remain in the home.

The same society that makes it difficult for many women to work outside the home for reasons of religion and honor can also make life easier in other ways. For working mothers, no child care is necessary—their

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parents consider it their duty to watch their grandchildren while the mother is at work. Even single women receive an incredible amount of support from their parents that's unheard of in most parts of the United States I've talked to 30 year old single women who still receive money from their parents.

To women like them, working at private companies, the head scarf issue has no direct relevance to their lives. They want to hear and discuss more pressing issues like unequal pay and glass ceilings. And as more and more women are motivated to vote for candidates who support women's rights, they are gaining more control over which issues the politicians talk about.

Turkish women have a long history with political participation. As part of Atatürk's reforms, they gained the right to vote in municipal elections in 1931, only ten years after American women did. Three years later, they could vote in national elections and run for office in the National Assembly. Their sisters in France weren't able to vote until ten years later; the Italians and Canadians had to wait much longer.

This summer I ran into a group of female protestors, some covered and some uncovered, marching through Taksim Square. I asked them what they were protesting, expecting something related to the head scarf issue. Instead, they informed me that the government had recently censored a controversial TV station for working class viewers. Yes, the ban on head scarves is an important one in the greater political debate over just how secular Turkey's democracy should be. But as far as Turkish women's rights go, it's not the only problem on the table.

As I came to learn over the summer, a veiled female college student presents one of the most controversial and politically loaded images in the Turkish media. She symbolizes the intensifying struggle between two factions fighting to determine the future of the country. To the rising religious popular movement, a head scarf

is only a harmless demonstration of an individual's sincere religious beliefs. To the secularists of the old establishment, the same head scarf is not only a roadblock in the pursuit of gender equality but an active threat to Turkish free society and secular democracy.

Let me give a little background on the issue. The veil has been officially illegal to wear on public property since the 1990's. Just this February the majority party, Justice and Development (AKP), passed a law allowing women to wear veils on college campuses. This sparked a fierce debate over the Islamist nature of the AKP, and whether the secularism of Turkey is in danger from its heads of state.

In June, the Court declared the law to be anti-secular, reinstituting the ban on head scarves. The local Turks all predicted that the AKP would be disbanded by August for unconstitutional actions. Over coffee I asked one of my conservative Turkish college friends whether he thought that dissolution of the AKP was the best solution. My friend replied rather gloomily that the AKP would just return under a different name with different leaders; a court decision against the party would only help to rally support for the Islamist movement.

Back in June on my first day of class, I asked one of my professors how students on the Bogacizi campus could safely wear head scarves when the court had just banned them. She laughed at my concern and explained that most of the time, no one really cares if female students cover their heads or not. Enforcement of the law depends on the preferences of individual professors and college administrators. It only seems to matter during final exams, when the government sends a representative to check ID's outside exam rooms. Female students wearing head scarves are not allowed to enter the room and thus could fail their finals and courses. In situations like this, conservative women usually just wear a wig over their real hair. No problem for the student, no problem for the university and government.

On another hot Istanbul night, I was eating out with a couple I knew and some of their Turkish friends. I asked two of the women—heads uncovered, working at banks, unmarried with boyfriends, about 30 years old—how they felt about the head scarves. One said she thought the government should be more flexible and allow women more freedom to wear what they wished. The other was more uncomfortable with the idea. She saw the head scarves as deliberate Islamist political statements, implying that since they weren't really religious accessories the government had ample room to ban them. This seems to be the crux of the issue: the Turkish democracy has always had some trouble allowing opposing viewpoints to be heard, especially if those viewpoints run against the secularist tradition defended since Atatürk's time. The issue is more about the degree of permissible political freedom than that of religious freedom.

In late July, the Court made an extremely close decision to allow the AKP to get off with just a large fine and a serious warning against further Islamicization of the government. There won't be any military coups this time—Turks are going to have to compromise and work out the exact nature of their government, respecting both their public secular tradition and their personal religious identity. As we move through a time of uncertainty in the area of women's rights, it is more important than ever to pay heed to both Atatürk's vision and his legacy. His vision: that every Turk, male or female, Muslim or agnostic, rich or poor, would stand as equals before the Turkish government and together represent Turkey to the world. His legacy: reforms in women's rights that rivaled or exceeded those in Europe, and a system of governance both secularist and successful that set an example for its neighbors. As in today's America, secularism in modern Turkey seems to be wavering and undergoing redefinition as cultural and religious forces tug against our hallowed traditions. The Turks are not alone in their struggle to find the balance.

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2008

The Turkish American Community
United States of America

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are honored to join Turkish Americans all across the country in commemorating the 85th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey.

Like America's Founding Fathers, Ataturk set Turkey on a free and democratic course. Since that historic day, Turkey has been one of the United States' most important allies as we have pursued our many joint strategic interests, particularly in the Middle East. This bond has become even stronger since the terrorists attacks of September 11th, when Turkey's soldiers stood shoulder-to-shoulder with American troops in Afghanistan to help rid the world of al Qaeda and other extremists.

We stand united with you as Turkey celebrates this momentous occasion, and we look forward to many more years of the important friendship our nations enjoy.

Sincerely,



Ed Whitfield
Co-Chair
Congressional Turkish Caucus



Kay Granger
Co-Chair
Congressional Turkish Caucus

LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA: Turkey in an Arena of Trials

INAUGURATION DAY | 20 January 2009



By James (Cem) Ryan

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
USA

Dear Mr. President:

I write this letter to you, Mr. President, with my highest and warmest regards, best wishes, and my hope for a better, more just world. I have fond memories of this particular day, 20 January, your day of inauguration as president. Forty-eight years ago—six months before you were born—I, along with my fellow West Point cadets, marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to salute the newly sworn president, John F. Kennedy. Next to graduating from West Point, it was the highlight of my life. January 20, 1961—it had snowed heavily the night before and the day dawned windy with arctic temperatures. It was perfect, a memory crystal buried deep. How young we were, so enthusiastic about confronting a dangerous world with our young president. But while euphoria is grand, it is also dangerous, Mr. President. It didn't take long for reality to take

hold. And so time goes. I have now lived in Istanbul, Turkey for nine years. Over these years a “reality” has set in regarding our beloved country, America. And so I write to you today, Mr. President, to warn you about conditions in Turkey. “The world,” wrote Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, “is an arena of trials.” And the Bush policy of making Turkey a “moderate Islamic republic” has been, and continues to be, an arena of disasters. Mr. President, time is of the essence to correct this. And you need to know more about Turkey to do so.

Accordingly, I have enclosed two books: one a biography, *Atatürk*, by Andrew Mango, the other, a copy of *The Great Speech* by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Nutuk in Turkish). The latter epic work flowed from the pen of Atatürk, a 36-hour speech delivered over six days in October 1927. Therein, he recounts the Turkish War of Independence and the founding of the Turkish Republic. It is an astounding document.

“I have tried to show, in these accounts, how a great people, whose national course was considered as finished, reconquered its independence; how it created a national and modern state founded on the latest results of science. The result we have today is the fruit of teachings which arose from centuries of suffering, and the price of streams of blood which have drenched every foot of the ground of our beloved homeland. This holy treasure I lay in the hands of the youth of

Turkey. Turkish youth! Your primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the national independence of the Turkish Republic.” (*Atatürk, The Great Speech*, 715)

By reading this book, Mr. President, you will immediately understand the enormous genius of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. You will see how the forces of religious fundamentalism didn't magically vanish after Atatürk ended the sultanate and abolished the caliphate. Instead, they continued to subvert his revolutionary reforms from the very beginning. This is the nature of religious fundamentalism here in Turkey. It never stops. It is vital that you understand this, Mr. President. Turkey has always been a target for these dark-minded forces. And now these ignorant minds run the country. Reading the words of Mustafa Kemal will also help you marshal your own significant resources and talents, for you seem to be blessed with a capacious mind much like Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's. Decisive, informed leadership is needed today by the president of the United States. These were defining characteristics of Atatürk, along with his great personal integrity. May you learn well from him, Mr. President, a man who fought a war against religious terrorists for his entire life.

Now the democratic, secular, social state of the Republic of Turkey, governed under the rule of law, is under siege, both from without and within. I know this, Mr. President, I live here, and what I know is not sanitized by political niceties and outright propaganda. The undo-

ing of this nation, created in Atatürk's mind as a young army officer, has been long underway. But now the day is here. The black-minded ignorance of religious fundamentalism becomes more apparent every minute. Alcohol bans, women shoved under politically symbolic headscarves at the behest of duplicitous politicians, a compliant, subverted media. Here, so-called "liberals" work in compliance with outside forces (your CIA, for example, Mr. President). And the corruption of the religious ruling party is stunning and stinks to the high heavens from theft, rampant bribery, and election fraud. Currently, a scam called Ergenekon purges the left-wing opposition rivals (all adherents of the enlightened principles of Atatürk). To further contaminate his work, a smattering of outright criminals is added to the list of detainees. All this and more has brought democratic Turkey near its knees. And Mustafa Kemal Atatürk never knelt for anyone, ever. As a child he even refused to play leapfrog.

European Union members, who never read him, wonder why so much fuss is made about Atatürk. Of similar traitorous stripe as the "entente liberals" of Atatürk's day who conspired with the British occupiers for a mandate over Turkey, today's "liberal" Turks (*liboş*) fall over themselves subverting secular Turkey and the principles of Atatürk, in the name of democracy. The ruling party works its religious agenda demeaning the integrity of women at every turn, debasing the liberation of women by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. And the United States of America, our country Mr. President, directly aids and abets these subversive forces. This is shameful.

Mr. President, most Americans remain ignorant about Turkey and, amazingly, even more so about Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Without knowing this man one knows nothing about this country. The enclosed books are my attempt to prevent you learning about Turkey solely by read-



ing sterile briefing books, self-serving CIA studies, State Department policy papers, memoranda from your national security advisors, and, most particularly, reports from the western press. Most of the Turkish press, and, in particular, the current Turkish government are similarly ever-willing purveyors of self-interested propaganda. Beware, Mr. President, for you will receive regurgitations of superficial, stale, and even incorrect information, like the Bushian nonsense that Turkey is a "moderate Islamic nation." Via the headscarf issue—the "ocular proof" of piety for western consumption—this ill-conceived initiative, without any Koranic justification, has created a gigantic, violent, societal schism in Turkey. Mr. President, is America a moderate Christian nation? I mean, should Americans wear visible crucifixes? Please reconsider this nonsensical policy, Mr. President. (Again, read *The Great Speech* to see how religious subversions beset Atatürk at every turn.)

"One will be able to imagine how necessary the carrying through of

these measures was, in order to prove that our nation as a whole was no primitive nation, filled with superstitions and prejudices. Could a civilized nation tolerate a mass of people who let themselves be led by the nose by a herd of Şeyhs, Dedes, Seyyits, Çelebis, Babas, and Emirs, who entrusted their destiny and their lives to palm readers, magicians, dice-throwers and amulet sellers? Ought one to preserve in the Turkish State, in the Turkish Republic, elements and institutions such as those which had for centuries given the nation the appearance of being other than it really was?"

(Atatürk, *The Great Speech*, 714)

Mr. President, even worse than misinformation, you will be regaled with assertions and protestations that the current religious-rooted government is representative and similar to the majority of Turkish people. Mr. President, it is extremely dangerous for you, and for the United States, to be deceived in this

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manner. Indeed this must sound strange to you, Mr. President, but it is true. There is a great muffling happening in Turkey today. So I caution you, to become truly aware of the situation in Turkey, you must first meet Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in depth. You must come to enlightenment about Turkey on your own recognizance, Mr. President, and not rely on the misinformed, the flatterers, and the deceivers, of whom there are legion.

While you may think you are different, Mr. President, be forewarned that, despite your access to the bright minds of the CIA, the State Department, and your White House staff, you will not get a true idea of the essence of Turkey, the nation. You may learn about this Turkish government, but that's not learning about the Turkish nation. And you will certainly not learn anything from members of the present Turkish government about the nation's soul.

The essence of the modern Turkish soul reposes in the materials I have sent, in a word, Atatürk. His accomplishments—military, political, social, educational, creative—represent a quest for justice for the collective life of his people, and in no small regard, for the world. “Peace at home, peace in the world,” he famously said. He possessed, as I suspect you do as well, Mr. President, what Reinhold Niebuhr called the “sublime madness in the soul,” saved from excessiveness by unusually astute powers of reason. So armed, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk battled against the powers of darkness and spiritual corruption in high places. So armed, he rescued his people from the debris of the Ottoman Empire. Today, his thoughts and deeds define the existential principles of the Turkish nation. But, Mr. President, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is now under attack from outside Turkey and within.

Nevertheless, his principles still inspire tens of millions of proudly secular Turks

who long for the truly democratic nation he established. Believe me Mr. President, the “secular elite” described by the disgracefully biased and ill-informed writings of Sabrina Tavernise of The New York Times as “an immensely powerful coterie of generals and judges” is nonsense. Millions of us—yes, Mr. President, I too am a citizen of Turkey—took to the streets in the spring of 2007 against the policies of the U.S.-backed Erdoğan government. And matters have become even more dire since. Mr. President, perhaps you don't know what's going on with this government.

In the name of democracy, the ruling party, the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party) has made a shambles of Turkey's founding principles. In the name of democracy there is vast bribing of the AKP electorate, predominantly poor and uneducated, with coal and appliances. Higher court deliberations on suits against the ruling party are regularly attacked by the ruling party, particularly by the prime minister, and literal targets (complete with crosshairs) are made of individual judges in the religious press.

In the name of democracy and social justice and legal egalitarianism, an enormous purge of hundreds of alleged opponents of the ruling party is taking place in a “fishing expedition” called Ergenekon. A literal witch hunt, so-called suspect members of a military-coup conspiracy ring are held without benefit of writs of habeas corpus; they have been held in jail—some for over 18 months—without being charged and later prejudicially tried in jail. Writers, journalists, university presidents, labor union leaders, lawyers, retired army officers, leftists all, are caught up in this disgrace of a dragnet. (As mentioned earlier, some ordinary criminals are mixed in for pollution purposes.) Mr. President, I write to you on their behalf, the educated, western-thinking intel-



ligentia, now imprisoned in a Turkish gulag called Silivri, the largest prison in Turkey, and in Europe. And that's where they are tried! In the prison! So you, Mr. President, as an attorney, undoubtedly instantly understand the extremely prejudicial nature of this trumped-up case.

Mass arrests typically happen immediately after the ruling party suffers a legal or corruption setback. For example, consider its trial in early 2008 where the AKP was found guilty of being the center of anti-secular activity in Turkey. A second roundup occurred as a result of a German charitable foundation called Deniz Feneri, "lighthouse" in English. Organized by Turks in both Germany and Turkey, Deniz Feneri stole 41 million euros from pious Turks in Germany and transferred 17 million of it to Turkey, some to media companies friendly to the ruling party. The AKP manager, Zahid Akman, of the Turkish government's television and radio system (RTÜK), was identified by the court as the bagman. He remains in his position, dutifully protecting the nation's morals by blurring televised images of smoking and the consumption of alcohol. The German prosecutor stated that links of the Deniz Feneri embezzlement were traced to the office of the prime ministry.

The movement of Turkey toward sharia continues. Vast areas of the nation have been made alcohol-free. Swimsuit advertisements are banned in Istanbul. The Atatürk Cultural Center, located in prime space in downtown Istanbul, has been closed. No details are given regarding its status. Consequently, the Istanbul symphony, opera, and ballet, all state sponsored, have been sent packing. They are rumored to perform occasionally, somewhere. So much for cultural enlightenment. Oddly enough, Istanbul has been selected to be the European Capital of Culture in 2010; this is known as political lip service.

Mr. President, for too long a time America has attempted to efface the Turkish soul, to reshape this country, to include it in the American hegemony. All this subversion has been to, in effect, lobotomize the Turkish brain, ridding it of the noble thoughts of Atatürk, making it a congenial dolt, bowing and scraping to America's wishes. Internally, this has been the primary responsibility of the ruling party. And it has done its job very well, almost bringing the once proud nation of Atatürk to its knees. Once, after a waiter dropped a heavily laden tray at a state dinner, Mustafa Kemal turned to his foreign guests and said, "As you can see I have taught my people to do everything but serve." How ironic, how angering to the followers of Atatürk is the current servile, US-installed government. Consider this, Mr. President. Banned from running from office, without any legal credentials whatsoever, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was welcomed to the White House by George W. Bush as de facto head of the Turkish government. How outrageous! No wonder Erdoğan, habitually a dour, scowling man, beamed broadly whenever he visited Bush. Do not be deceived Mr. President, this government neither serves you, nor the Turkish people. In the name of so-called democracy, it serves itself.

It has long been at its destructive work, this imperialism. You know this personally, Mr. President. Why your very roots—one foot in Hawaii, the other in Kenya, your days of youth in Indonesia—all these highly personal experiences have surely informed your persona. Surely they speak to you of the same issue that so afflicts

Turkey. Imperialism. Internal subversion. Corruption.

When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk rescued Turkey from the ruins of the Ottoman five hundred year reign, he established a new way for the Turkish people to live their lives. It was the way of enlightenment, the western way. I hope that you can now begin to see how the west, for its own ill-reasoned self-interest, has encouraged the sabotaging of the enlightened principles of Atatürk. Most importantly, I hope that this whets your reading appetite to learn more about this incomparable man.

Mr. President, I am confident that you will adopt your policies, both within America, and without, in the spirit of those stirring words you wrote in *Dreams from My Father* about a different kind of politics:

"That politics will need to reflect our lives as they are actually lived."

The majority of Turkish people want the very same thing. And if the United States can get out of their way, they can have it.

Sincerely yours,

James (Cem) Ryan

Enclosures:

Atatürk. Andrew Mango. John Murray Publishers, London, 2004.

The Great Speech (Nutuk). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk Research Center, Ankara, 2005.

AUTHORS BIO:

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Celebrating the Birth of the Republic . . . and Mourning the Death of Its Father: A Recollection

Turkey's supreme national holiday could have been called Independence Day, Liberation Day or Victory Day because it celebrates elements of each.

By **Bension Varon**¹

By far the most important Turkish national holiday is Cumhuriyet Bayramı, or Republic Day, marking the establishment of the Turkish Republic on October 29, 1923. No holiday, religious or secular, comes close to it in terms of the breadth and intensity of the celebration. This holiday, more than any other, is the great unifier of Turkey: everyone--man and woman, young and old, rich and poor, secular or religious--participates in it; there are no dissenters about the event celebrated or the celebrations themselves. Everyone shares in the love of country and speaks with one voice on that day!

Turkey's supreme national holiday could have been called Independence Day, Liberation Day or Victory Day because it celebrates elements of each. After World War I, Turkey was divided among the victors--England, France and Italy, which ceded a part of the country to Greece. Turkey liberated some of the occupied lands by force; and the occupiers withdrew from the other territories voluntarily or by mutual agreement. Turkey re-established its independence and secured international recognition of its sovereignty and new borders through the peace treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The architects of modern Turkey could have designated a day marking any of these events as a national holiday. They chose instead October 29, the day Turkey proclaimed itself a "republic," because they considered the change in the system of governance that this represented as the turning point...the break with the Otto-

man past, the day when the new Turkey was born. Republic Day has since been celebrated as the nation's birthday.

My recollections of Republic Day revolve around two things: flags and parades, which are associated with holidays almost everywhere but in a special way in this case. The display of the national flag is taken very seriously and regulated by ordinance in Turkey. Flying the flag on ordinary days is restricted to government buildings, the army and other security forces, ships, and a few public or semi-public institutions. On holidays, especially Republic Day, all restrictions are lifted and the country becomes engulfed in a sea of red and white, as if it were gift-wrapped. In cities, big or small, every building, commercial or residential, almost every balcony on every floor, displays the flag. Flags are hung on lamp posts, municipal vehicles such as buses, and temporary arches built for that occasion. Store windows have special displays incorporating the flag. Paper flags are sold for the equivalent of a quarter on the street for adults and children to wave. Older children are taught to construct garlands in art class, and parents are encouraged to decorate their balconies with them. The flag--white crescent and star on a red background--is replicated in flower wreaths and flower beds in parks, but not in clothing. No one wears caps, tee-shirts, scarves or any other clothing item with the flag on it—at least, nobody did then.

I took part in the Republic Day celebration at every phase of my youth. I remember graduating from waving the flag to

drawing and coloring it, to constructing it out of paper, making garlands and banners with the help of my elder sisters, decorating our balcony with them with the help of my grandmother, and at a later age, participating in the official parade.

The parade was a combination civic-and-military parade. The center of the parade--the specially-constructed reviewing stand--was at Taksim Square in the modern part of Istanbul. The highest government dignitary was normally the Governor of Istanbul. On the large reviewing stand were also members of the General Assembly, other senior government officials, military commanders, and the diplomatic corps. All dignitaries, other than the military, were in white tie and tails, following the tradition established by Atatürk himself for this happy but serious occasion. The speeches were patriotic and recalled the birth of the Republic and the debt of the nation to Atatürk.

The parade included the following groups: boy scouts and girl scouts, who led the parade; the various branches of the armed forces; schools and sports teams; various civic organizations, such as the Red Crescent (Turkish equivalent of the Red Cross) and the firefighters; and various floats. The crowds' favorites were the armed forces, partly because each service had its own band. Children loved most the cavalry, which participated with its own horse-drawn cannons. When the parade started including a corps dressed as Janissaries and marching to their historic beat, those became the top crowd pleasers. All major high schools took part in the

parade, flying their school colors. The floats that concluded the parade were very popular, too. They depicted a variety of things such as the arts and crafts of the country and stylized scenes from Turkey's modern history. All was in good taste. There were no exaggerated representations such as those of a Mummers' Parade, no funny costumes, no Shriners, no school marching bands. The parade on Republic Day generated pride and joy rather than entertainment and levity.

This was after all the nation's birthday. The symbol most replicated on each Republic Day was, in fact, the number indicating the age of the Republic. It was everywhere: on the hundreds of wreaths, on neon signs, on every celebratory props such as temporary triumphal arches--and not just on pivotal anniversaries such as the tenth, twentieth, etc. It was as if the only thing missing from the birthday frenzy was marking on the wall the height of the young Republic to see how much it had grown since the year before.

I participated in the Republic Day parade as part of the Robert College contingent in 1948. Up to that year, I had seen only bits and pieces of the parade. There was no television then, and Taksim Square allowed only partial views, assuming one could get there. What one saw depended on where one lived or had friends and relatives. Until 1950, we lived near the Tower of Galata, on the fourth floor of an apartment building overlooking the Golden Horn, where navy barracks and ship repair facilities were located. We had, therefore, the best view of the navy contingent, which originated there, and could observe the sailors marching both to and from the site of the parade. From our balcony, we could also watch some of the other troops returning to their base, and the contingent of the Jewish Lycée, which was nearby. In 1948, I was not just observing whatever part of the parade I could, I was in it myself. This came about because of the way Robert College was traditionally represented in the parade. Whereas

most schools were represented by their older, and taller, upper classmen, Robert College assigned the task each year exclusively to its freshmen class. We marched in blue blazers and gray slacks behind the school flag, which I believe was burgundy and blue. It was quite an ordeal; the whole thing--from assembly to dismissal--took about five hours, but it was worth it, judging by the memories alone.

The parade was the big event during the day. At night, one could see an occasional fire rocket shooting up, but there were no centralized, municipal fireworks. The big attraction at night was, rather, the waterworks display at Taksim Square. There, behind a 100-foot long wall flanking a flower bed, the municipal water authority operated water jets shooting up into the air and illuminated by colored lights. The overall effect was that of dancing jets of multicolored water in a Walt Disney-like fantasy. The display stayed on for several days, and people, young and old, came from all corners of the city to admire it.

There were no family activities on Republic Day--no family visits or dinner, no picnic, no exchange of candy or flowers... or greetings. This was a truly public holiday, everyone's holiday. Large parts of the city were not passable until early or mid afternoon because of the parade. When my friends and I were old enough to go out alone, we would venture to Taksim Square to watch the parade. Getting there was no problem, if one left early enough. Returning home was different. The main street leading away from Taksim Square was blocked for hours, and the only alternative route ran through the city's red-light district. I remember the temporarily idle ladies, overly made-up and wearing red and white carnations--the colors of the Turkish flag--as if doing their bit for the nation. As the crowds dispersed, people began strolling leisurely in the streets, with many of the children carrying red and white balloons. And open-air cafés began playing happy tunes.

Incidentally, I do not remember it ever

raining on Republic Day, although this may well be a trick of my imagination.

Turkey has three additional national holidays. May 19 is celebrated as Youth and Sports Day. It marks the day when, in 1919, Atatürk--a general then and hero of the legendary defense of Gallipoli--arrived by ship in Samsun, a Black Sea port, on a mission from the Sultan as Inspector of the Ninth Army. On arrival, instead of carrying out his mission, he broke with the Ottoman government in Istanbul and started the arduous task of building grassroots political and military resistance to it. These activities culminated in the convening of a Grand National Assembly on April 23, 1920 in Ankara, which established itself as an alternative government. That date is commemorated yearly as Children's and National Sovereignty Day. Over the next two years, Turkey fought a War of Independence mostly against Greece, which had occupied Izmir, Turkey's second largest city. Turkish forces drove the Greeks back and out of Turkey in two major counter-offensives, with the decisive battle fought on August 30, 1922. That date became designated as Turkey's Victory Day, the nation's fourth national holiday. In addition to the national holidays, several Turkish cities celebrate "Liberation Day," marking the date of their liberation. The most prominent of these is Izmir's Liberation Day on September 9 (1922) because no liberation was as hard fought, as decisive and as welcome as this one, despite the fire that burned down almost the entire city.

I do not have too many recollections of the above holidays largely because they were celebrated more formally and colorfully in Ankara and elsewhere than in Istanbul. Because of their close link to specific historical events and their being aimed at specific audiences--youth, children, armed forces--these holidays were occasions more for targeted speeches than for celebrations. An exception was Youth and Sports Day on May 19 which was cel-

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ANNUAL FEE (Check One) <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY (\$50) <input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL (\$50) <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT (\$10)		
DONATIONS FOR: <input type="checkbox"/> DONATION FOR VOICE OF ATATÜRK		
<input type="checkbox"/> DONATION FOR OTHER		
TOTAL		

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	price	quantity	total
Atatürk, by Andrew Mango	\$35		
The Atatürk Revolution, by Suna Kili	\$25		
Turkish Woman, by Ayşe Çebesoy Sarialp	\$20		
Donation			
		grant total	

Last name: First Name:
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The ASA Executive Board has launched a campaign to donate to local libraries books on modern Turkey. The Board was motivated by the oft observed fact that local libraries and school or university libraries are very poor on up-to-date books on Turkey. ASA members are expected to respond enthusiastically to this campaign.

Members are invited to order the three books currently available to ASA for a donation of \$80, including shipping and handling, and donate them in turn to the libraries in their neighborhood. They will, of course, benefit from tax deduction.

The books are Atatürk, by Andrew Mango, The Atatürk Revolution, by Suna Kili, Turkish Woman, by Ayşe Çebesoy Sarialp.

You may also wish to donate to your community library books on modern Turkey you may have in your own library and may not need any longer. By taking part in this campaign you would be supporting the better understanding of Turkey by the public.



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celebrated with group gymnastics in the city's main stadium. I cannot help but think that what made those celebrations special was the beauty of a typical, sun-drenched May day in Istanbul.

Each of the above holidays celebrates an event in Turkey's modern history, forged by Atatürk. All of them, in a way, celebrate Atatürk himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that the anniversary of Atatürk's death on November 10, 1938 has been ever since a national day of mourning. The event has no parallel in terms of the national shock it produced.

Atatürk died on November 10, 1938, at 9:05 a.m., in his bedroom at Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. He was fifty-seven years old. Moments after his death, Salih Bozok, a long-time friend and distant relative of Atatürk burst into the bedroom and upon seeing the body, stepped outside and shot himself in the chest. Although Islam requires burial within twenty-four hours after death, Atatürk's body lay in state for a week in the throne room of Dolmabahçe Palace. The crowd of mourners was so huge that on November 17, despite police control, seven people were trampled to death.

The day after Atatürk's death, my father returned from work at around eight as usual. We ate quickly and quietly, and we proceeded to Dolmabahçe Palace. I was six. My grandmother, who was Atatürk's age, wouldn't hear of staying home. She came along, carrying a clay pitcher (*testi* in Turkish) of water all the way. My father carried me on his shoulders throughout the evening. There were incredibly long lines. After what seemed to be an interminably wait, at close to midnight, we

walked by the flag-draped casket. Everything seemed red, accentuated by the black background. The redness of the flag and of the torches—there was no other light—combined to create, as I remember the event now, the impression of a red sunset. And a sunset it was for the nation.

Atatürk remained in my family's consciousness thereafter. We planted a reminder of him in our home ourselves, as many other families did. In our summer home, which we shared with my uncle's family, halfway up the staircase leading to the second floor, was a pedestal built into the wall. On it stood a bronze, almost life-size head of Atatürk. My uncle, whose bedroom was upstairs, saluted the head or touched it as if for good luck whenever he went up or down the stairs. My grandmothers also touched it often and, afterwards, kissed their own fingertips as if they had touched a holy scroll like the Torah. I have wondered if our collective admiration of Atatürk might not be related to the fact that my parents, their parents and their parents' parents were from Çanakkale, or Çanakkaleli (in Turkish) to the core.

As far back as I can remember, every November 10, at precisely 9:05, sirens would sound for a minute during which the nation would come to a standstill. All movie and theater screens would go dark on that day. Cinemas would show only documentaries about Atatürk's life. The state radio would halt all music broadcasts. Only funeral marches would be played and only extracts from his speeches, and new commemorative speeches or poetry heard. No music would emanate from cafés or car radios. Store windows would display Atatürk portraits and quotations

draped in black. And schools would have special classes and ceremonies recalling his life and mourning his death. I will always associate two things with the death of Atatürk: the first is Chopin's Funeral March--third movement of his Piano Sonata Opus 35. The dirge-like music accompanied his remains on their slow journey to Ankara, and has been immortalized in motion pictures of the event, shown every anniversary. The second thing is perhaps a trick played by my memory: very much like my not remembering that it ever rained on Republic Day. I do not remember that the sun ever shone on the day of national mourning.

To return to the holiday theme with which I started, as I said earlier, Turkey's four national holidays celebrate events all made possible by Atatürk and, in a way, Atatürk himself. All four were decreed holidays during his lifetime and assigned their character--Youth and Sports Day, Children's Day, etc.--by him. They represent his legacy and, one might argue, pre-ordain the future. I am convinced that there is no likely scenario under which, for example, the events which the four holidays celebrate will be disavowed some day; they are content-laden, the pride and shapers of modern Turkey's history. There is no scenario under which mullahs will stand on the reviewing stand as the Army marches in front of it on Republic Day. And I strongly believe that there is no scenario under which women will not participate in the gymnastics demonstrations on Youth and Sports Day with their faces, arms and legs uncovered. The four holidays are stand-ins for the soul and spirit of Turkey, and of Atatürk himself. October 22, 2008 | Fairfax, VA.

REFERENCE

1. Bension Varon, economist, was born and grew up in Istanbul, Turkey. He has been living in the Washington, DC metropolitan area since 1965, and has worked for the World Bank for more than thirty years. This article is extracted from his memoir, entitled *Random Recollections...of A Journey That Started in Istanbul*, which is under preparation.
2. Greece entered the war late, on the side of the Allies. At the end of the war, she laid claim on the Aegean coast of the Turkish mainland and was allowed to occupy Izmir and its hinterland, which had a large ethnic Greek population.
3. The bullet missed his heart and Bozok survived until 1941. The event is told movingly and authoritatively in Andrew Mango, *Atatürk, The Overlook Press, New York, 2000, p.525.*



2009

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