

November 12, 2001

Speech for Nov. 10, 2001

I would like to thank all of you for attending our presentation today. I think it is very important that people who believe in democracy, freedom and human rights, should try to understand and educate themselves on what is going on today and what has been happening in the past on the issue of “threats against democracy, freedom and human rights.” These issues affect our lives and the lives of people around the world directly. Today, I feel like we have taken a small step in this direction.

At this point, I would also like to thank the members of TSA and TASK for devoting their precious times to prepare this presentation.

Today we have seen an examples of how the leadership of one man –M.K. Ataturk, his vision and actions could change the fate of entire nation, taking it from dark ages to the new age of modern times through education, arts, knowledge, scientific thinking and advancement of human rights. This Turkish ronesans had many enemies then and have some enemies today. These are the enemies of this positive change, because through this change they lost their power of controlling people through illiteracy and ignorance. Against all these difficulties, this Ronesans endured the test of time. It set Turkey in the direction of progress and enlightenment towards a better life for the peoples of Turkey and the world by setting examples to many nations suffering from similar ills. The values expressed in this change although called “western values,” I believe they are the values of all human beings aspire to if they can get them. Being free, striving for knowledge, to be able to live happily in this world rather than the next world and to the best of one’s abilities are the common needs for all humanity. Under theocracies of middle ages, these values are lost or forbidden.

The aim of Sept. 11 attacks and atrocities against the people of the United States and its institutions are attacks against all free thinking people of the world and are the result of this theocratic teachings. This type of attacks although much smaller in scale have been happening in others parts of the world including Turkey. Therefore, Turkish people understand the pain of terrorism and feel the pain of people here. In a recent letter I received from my sister, she wrote “Gecmis olsun USA.” This is a phrase used by Turks to express their deepest feelings for somebody who lost something dear.

Radical Islam and terrorism try to impose their vision of the world on other Moslems and the free thinking people of the world either by deceit under the guise of democracy or by force as seen in terror acts. The enemies of freedom use democracy and human rights for their ultimate goal of destroying these invaluable institutions. Our duty is to watch out against these attacks by recognizing the deceit by educating ourselves about it and by

thinking with reason and wisdom. After all, we live in an imperfect real world; wise person's chore is to separate the real threat from muddy waters of the world events so that our future generations could live in peace and better world than we do. We have to be in constant watch so that the philosophy of dark ages does not cast its shadow on the world ever again.

Today we have seen how Turkey under the great leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk took a step towards light and enlightenment. Although not perfect, this advance is still continuing and will continue.

I wish all of you peaceful world and a bright future for our children.

Thanks for coming again. Please feel free to have some refreshments and talk with our members about your questions and comments. Also, if you like to be on a mailing list for our future activities do not forget to put down your name on the sign up sheet.

Savas Yavuzkurt