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SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE HEAD
OF STATE GENERAL KENAN EVREN IN THE TURKISH
GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE OCCASION OF
“ATATÜRK YEAR”

5 January 1981*

The Great Turkish Nation,

Honourable Guests,

We are deeply proud and exhilarated to have entered the year 1981 which is the centenary of the birth of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He is the supreme leader of the liberation and the founder of the Turkish Republic. He is the distinguished son of mankind, the national hero, and a great statesman who has given a new direction to the course of Turkish and world history through the political, social and cultural reforms he has accomplished.

In order to celebrate the centennial of the birth of its great founder in a commensurate manner and to commemorate his sacred memory throughout the country, the Turkish Republic has, as you would recall, proclaimed the year 1981 as “The Year of Atatürk” by a law promulgated by the National Security Council.

Earlier today, I have visited the Mausoleum of our great leader, standing on the soil of our sacred homeland as a citadel stretching to eternity. There, in the silence of his spiritual presence, I have expressed our heartfelt feelings of respect and gratitude to him. And now, here in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the greatest bequest and award to the Turkish Nation by eternal Atatürk, I address myself to my beloved citizens and to the world of humanity to which he was sincerely devoted through his ideals, services and achievements, and do hereby inaugurate the celebrations marking the beginning of The Year of Atatürk.

* Kindly supplied by General Directorate of Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

I congratulate the whole Turkish Nation on the occasion of this first centenary which, as an expression of the nation's gratitude and obligation, has been dedicated to its great leader.

At this proud and joyful moment in commemorating with feelings of gratitude the centenary of the birth of this greatest Turk who has been able to accomplish the most glorified and magnificent ideas and services to the Turks and to mankind at large, the Turkish Nation is sharing its happiness with other nations as well.

We are happy to notice that the nations of the world are sharing our enthusiasm by expressing their sincere appreciation and admiration of and respect for Atatürk, who is among the greatest leaders known to mankind during the last century.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), by a resolution unanimously adopted at its general conference, has decided to organize a symposium with the purpose of taking up the various aspects of Atatürk's personality and his work on the occasion of the centenary. In that resolution:

- It has been set out that Atatürk was an extraordinary reformist in all the fields falling within the scope of UNESCO,
- It has been stressed that he had the distinction of being the first leader of the wars declared in particular against colonialism and imperialism,
- It has been pointed out with emphasis that he was truly an invaluable leader of mutual understanding and lasting peace among the nations of the world,
- And finally, it has been pointed out that, throughout his life, Atatürk believed that an age of harmony and cooperation would emerge among all nations without discrimination based on colour, religion and race.

There is no doubt that with his philosophy, thinking behaviour and practices Atatürk has attained an unsurpassed place among the commanders, statesmen and reformists mankind has rarely known.

Dear citizens, distinguished guests,

With his matchless genius and unlimited determination, trusting in and relying on his nation alone Atatürk within his short lifetime not only saved our motherland from invasion but also laid the foundation to raise it to the most advanced level of civilization.

The great leader who inaugurated a new era for the Turkish Nation, inscribing his name on it, had observed the then downfall trend of the country, drawn his conclusion from the prevailing situation and begun to search for remedies soon after he joined the army ranks in 1905 as a 24 year-old staff captain. Even during this youthful age, he started to draw attention by his unique personality, culture, hard work and energy. His success in the Battles of Çanakkale (Dardanelles) and his legendary victory of Anafartalar had been the first few sparkles of his military aptitude which attained world-wide reputation.

Following the services in the Caucasus the eastern and the Syrian fronts, he was then recognized as a hero throughout the country and the world.

The legends created by "Commander-in-chief Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha" especially during the War of Independence have provided further proof of his military genius. The Battle of Sakarya and the field battle of "Commander-in-chief" have been the last ones on the series of these legends.

In Atatürk's view, victory alone is not an aim in itself. His definition in his own words is as follows. "No single victory constitutes the final purpose. Victory is only a primary instrument in the achievement of a greater objective. That objective is the idea. Victory deserves merit to the degree it contributes to the realization of an idea. A victory which is not aimed at the realization of an idea cannot be a lasting one. It constitutes a useless effort. Each great field battle and great victory must lead to a new world. Otherwise, the victory alone becomes a futile attempt."

Thus, the victory realized following the great offensive has given birth to the Republic of Turkey.

The military genius of Atatürk is complemented by his qualities as a state founder, a statesman and a reformist. Those qualities are as well known as his qualities as a commander. Contemporary writers and thinkers continue to analyse and evaluate his statesmanship and radical reforms.

If it is borne in mind that Atatürk had chosen the military as a career, his statesmanship and reformism assume greater importance and merit.

The main factors which influence the formation of Atatürk in this field were the prevalent conditions of this period and the reasons which brought about these conditions. During the latter stages of the Ottoman Empire the ominous decline within the society, public institutions and economy had naturally very much weakened the state. Its weakness not only caused imbalances in social life but also eroded the concept of political independence and sovereignty. In these circumstances there were some circles and patriotic personalities who were in search of outlets and remedies. These people were attached to various flows of opinion. The youth of Mustafa Kemal had thus passed along with such events occurring during the critical period of Ottoman Empire and his personality developed as a result of intellectual evaluation of these events.

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire together with its allies in the First World War and the risk of its political disintegration compelled the Turkish people, as the main element of the empire, to initiate a war of independence and, this compulsion, constituted the beginning of a radical reform movement in the Turkish history known as "The Atatürk Revolution." as a result of the national struggle waged against both the foreign invader and the circles and institutions which opted to co-operate with the enemy, security based on legal and lawful criteria has been attained by the founding of a new Turkish State.

The new state set up in the center of Anatolia with its new National Assembly and regular army has been simultaneously the decision-maker, planner and executer of the Turkish War of Independence.

The statesmanship of Mustafa Kemal as the first president of the Republic of Turkey following the successful war of Independence had, in fact, started long before his assumption of this high office. During the national movement he conducted the military operations in conjunction with political leadership and administration.

The statesmanship of Atatürk has gained greater efficiency when he concentrated his attention on the problems of Turkey and started the implementation of decisions for the improvement of the welfare of the Turkish people. His closest companion İnönü says: "The military qualifications of Atatürk are really superb. His political qualifications seem even higher. When the two are combined, Atatürk's personality attains an exceptional level."

The signature of the Lausanne Peace Treaty after protracted and difficult negotiations following the expulsion of the enemy which were

literally driven into the sea and the attainment of the Turkish Nation's full judicial, political and economical independence as a result of the abrogation of the capitulations, are among those virtues of statesmanship which require finesse and subtlety.

Mustafa Kemal furnished the example of a rational and logical statesman with an attitude removed from dubious and adventurous objectives and motivated by his dictum: "We are a nation which cherish life and independence. Solely and entirely for this do we sacrifice our life." One of the most important qualifications a statesman should possess is the planned and orderly conduct of state business. Atatürk was also a man of plan and programme:

In the early years of the Turkish reforms, in 1922 in a speech he delivered in Ankara, Atatürk said: "Unless based on a programme to be implemented and followed through many years, our efforts are bound to fail. As long as any reform attempt is not based on an objective programme designed for meeting the urgent requirements of our nation, it will merely be subjective and arbitrary." By these pronouncements Atatürk emphasised the significance of organising development in accordance with a plan accepted and patronized by the people. He was a statesman who always derived his power from his people.

In orienting the social and political movement universally known as "Kemalism", "Atatürkism" or the "Turkish Reforms", Atatürk has introduced new principles and practices derived from the realities of life. Some of these practices have been brought to fruition in his life-time and certain others have been designated as future aims and objectives. These "Principles of Atatürk" form the foundation of the new Turkish Republic.

At the beginning of the Turkish Revolution, during the days following the liberation of the Turkish Motherland by virtue of the War of Independence, Atatürk had pointed out that from that day on it was essential to strive against internal subversive elements. The enemy then was intrinsic among us, in our way of thinking, in our attitude and practices.

Atatürk strived, as his ultimate objective, to elevate his nation, struggling in poverty and helplessness in a land newly emancipated from the enemy, to the level of nations and to provide to it a happy, prosperous and comfortable lifestyle. A society confined to back-

wardness due to warped and unrealistic religious myths, with virtually no industry and a disastrous economy could be transformed only through dramatic reforms.

Modernisation of the Turkish Nation and the attainment of the objectives prescribed by the principles laid out by Atatürk could be realised only through a reformist spirit and attitude.

Principles enunciated by Atatürk are those derived from living reality, without having been fashioned or molded after certain models and which should be evolved with a revolutionary understanding within their own context as required by the changing times, principles as national independence, national sovereignty, republicanism, nationalism, popularism "etatism", secularism, modernisation and reformism form the foundations of the Turkish Revolution.

Nations identify themselves among other nations of the world by attaining their political sovereignty through the rights and authority emanating from international law. Atatürk has emphasized this point soon after his arrival in Samsun in 1919, when he declared it was essential to "founding a new state of Turkey, unconditionally independent and based on national sovereignty." And he attained this goal through unyielding perseverance after duly mobilizing the nation. Atatürk's principle of republicanism in conjunction with the principles of sovereignty and popularism has been a harbinger of democracy in the Turkish political life. Atatürk's words were: "The form of government permitting the most contemporary and logical implementation of the principle of democracy is the republican one."

Atatürk was a nationalist but his understanding of nationalism was in no way selfish. He is by no means a racist or a divisionist, but rather an integrationist and a unifier. His version is a brand new and realistic Turkish Nationalism brought about by unity in destiny, happiness and common concern.

Atatürk's principle of popularism should also be taken up within this perspective. For he has never thought of the people as comprising separate classes and groups within the nation or as a mass directed by a sovereign power. As described in our liberator's own words, "The people of Turkey who have founded The Republic of Turkey is called the Turkish Nation." The Turkish people or the very nation itself, its very entity is a united society without any classes or discrimination. Thus, the principle of popularism based on the understanding that

all is for the people and with the people, is also oriented towards this unity.

Atatürk's principle of "Etatism" may be considered as an expression of an attitude inspired by the realities of Turkey, in the field of economics, this principle must be paraphrased as appropriate economic policies vis-a-vis the conditions prevailing in Turkey. In adhering to this principle which is fundamentally designed to meet the Turkish People's requirements, Atatürk had a free hand in selecting and adopting suitable principles aimed at leading the nation to prosperity and the country to reconstruction and bringing social justice.

It was Atatürk's intention to base the Turkish reforms on secular foundations. The Turkish society had to make rapid progress in order to achieve contemporary levels of civilization, for this reason, Atatürk carefully included secularism among his basic principles. Adoption of secularism in conscience and attitudes is in conformity both with progressiveness and with the philosophy of democratic living Atatürk in a speech pronounced in 1925, said: "Gentlemen and citizens, please note well that the Republic of Turkey will never be a country of sheiks, dervishes, disciples or fools. The most correct and realistic way is the way of civilization. To fulfill the edicts of civilization will be adequate for being human."

Secularism has nothing to do with atheism. Secularism is tantamount to the freedom of conscience. Secularism is the deliniation separating religion from state affairs. According to Atatürk, the edicts of Islam is in consonance with logic, education and sciences. Atatürk said in 1923, "Our religion is one of utmost logic and naturalism, and it is for this reason that it has been the very last religion. For a religion to be natural, it has to be in conformity with wisdom, science, knowledge and logic. Our religion is in complete conformity with all of these."

Atatürk's principle of secularism deems it illogical and precludes the exploitation of religion as a tool of politics.

By the inclusion of the principle of reformation, Atatürk has avoided a rigid and narrow limitation to his philosophy as often observed in certain religious, political and philosophical theories. In contrast with restrictive regimes like communism, fascism and nazism which reject change and reformation, his philosophy is constructive and always open to all positive novelty in line with social structure.

In spite of the above characteristic of Atatürk's philosophy, it is impossible due to the delicate balance struck between its component principles* in support of extreme left or right thinking. Such an attempt would either represent a complete misunderstanding of Atatürk's principles or it would constitute a deliberate effort towards their deviation and exploitation in pursuit of certain unworthy interests.

Atatürk has treated contemporary modernization as the main objective of Turkish reforms. Rid of any unfounded attitudes, reject mere coincidences and basing the philosophy of life on the application of science and technology, this principle forms the basis and essence of being contemporary. Only by the adoption of such a path can the Turkish Nation find a respectable place among other contemporary nations. Atatürk's yearnings was the adoption of such an attitude. He has assumed science as a guide throughout all his endeavours. The way of emancipation and riddance of underdevelopment for the Turkish Nation can only be through science and technology.

Atatürk is universalized mainly by his love for humanity and his attachment to human ideals. He highly esteemes his nation that he views with pride and confidence. On the other hand, he asserts, "Our nationalism is not an imperious and selfish one" and adds, "We shall manifest interest and pay respect to all nations that are willing to cooperate with us and recognize all the elements of their nationalism."

Atatürk viewing all mankind as a whole endeavoured for the happiness in peace of all the nations of the world as much as the existence and well-being of the Turkish Nation.

Dear citizens,

The Turkish Nation's greatest fortune in its entire history has been the birth of Atatürk, and we owe this to the inequanimity and grace of the almighty who bestowed this great leader to us.

He was the one who succeeded to bring the light which has been longed for during those dark days full of suffering and it was he who has shown the way to development and strenghtening.

His receptive, practical and realistic deeds and his principles which possess the buoyancy for eternal practice to-day still have suf-

* To read interpretations into them

ficient power to take us to victory and to the ideal of Atatürk, by enabling us to overcome any crisis and obstacles on our way.

That is why our nation will never deviate from the way he has designated, will not place its confidence in anyone else and will keep and safeguard his accomplishments and principles, always inspired with this trust and perseverance.

It was with the strength drawn from this understanding that the Turkish Armed Forces realised the 12 September 1980 operation; an operation which has been patronized and supported wholeheartedly by our entire nation with the exception of certain traitors and misguided people who have attempted to sacrifice the integrity and the security of our country for their self-interests.

In full consciousness of the same understanding and without yielding to any possible internal and external pressure, the Turkish Armed Forces will carry on this historical task which has no other purpose than the restoration of the supremacy of the state authority and its laws, to re-establish the functionality of democracy and its institutions which have been rendered ineffective by anarchy and terror, and to be able to render to the nation the security and happiness that she deserves.

Because real democracy does not connote freedom for everyone in doing whatever one wishes. It means the provision of an administration trusted and desired by the people, in the name of the people and for the happiness of the people.

The National Security Council administration is endeavouring to complete the task and to adopt the measures so far neglected despite their indispensability for the existence of the state and the republican administration and it is rapidly putting into action the legal regulations required for this purpose.

Following the removal of the deficiencies and omissions accumulated through the neglect of several years in an impartial manner and without seeking self-interest our country will be entrusted and confined to an administration, faithful to the republic and the principles of Atatürk.

The "Year of Atatürk" will provide an additional impetus and special meaning to the efforts being exerted for this purpose with great enthusiasm and self-confidence; this year will be a bridge of

rapid development extending towards the future of the Republic of Turkey and a harbinger of a brand new and happy epoch.

In this manner, the Turkish Nation will overcome expeditiously any obstacle of whichever origin to be placed on its way and will persevere in its progress on the route Atatürk has designated with the aim of safeguarding its place in the contemporary civilized world.

Dear citizens and distinguished guests,

Our generation which has been privileged to live in the Century of Atatürk, is preparing to celebrate his first centennial, conscious of the pride of this distinction.

Within 1981, extensive activities have been planned in the fields of culture, arts, sports, press and information to propagate this greatest Turk to today's world, to disseminate his principles, reforms, revolutions and work both at home and abroad.

The "Year of Atatürk" is at the same time destined to be a year of movement in which many activities oriented towards Atatürk's appreciation and the country's advancement in the fields of science and knowledge, will be undertaken; it will also provide a new impetus and fresh power for the efforts planned for the future years.

These resolute and far-reaching steps which will be realized particularly on the way to development, will constitute the most valuable commemoration for our beloved Atatürk, whose greatest aspiration for his country has been to achieve a breakthrough to the "level of modern civilization" and who has always maintained in this respect an unwavering confidence in his heart for his nation.

He has always been with us; he will also be with us to share the honour and pride of a developing and advancing Turkey and he will keep our path illuminated with the torch of his profound patriotism,

Our country has the honour of being the homeland of Atatürk and our society is proud to be his nation. Behind every attempt at development lie his principles and every corner of the motherland is abound with his accomplishments. This privilege will be our most powerful weapon against all kinds of menace to our survival and will be our most trustworthy guidance on our way to progress.

This noble and heroic nation on whom he has bestowed renewed life will never forsake or forget him. By making fresh contribu-

tions to his achievements and furthering his principles to their objectives, this nation will cherish until eternity its love for Atatürk with deep feelings for gratitude and respect.

While celebrating Atatürk's Centennial as the whole Turkish Nation along with all mankind, we commemorate him with feelings of pride and gratitude that extend from the past to the future, with the happiness and enthusiasm of the present and finally with the feelings of hope and confidence we harbour for tomorrow. Imbued with resolve and determination, we as the Turkish Nation pledge to render our country and our nation, through the centuries to come, more powerful and more prosperous under conditions in conformity with his ideals and principles and to preserve his deeds until eternity.

I take this opportunity to reiterate once again my wish that the "Year of Atatürk" bring peace and happiness to our country and the world and on this occasion I bow in deep respect in the spiritual presence of our beloved and great leader.

I salute you all cordially.