

# Buralarda

*Newsletter of Arkadaslar, Friends of Turkey*  
Number 12, September 1997



## IF ITS SEPTEMBER, CAN CUMHURRIYET BAYRAM BE FAR BEHIND?

**By Dave Weinman, Amca**

### **TO ALL MEMBERS:**

If my aging memory is still operative, this represents the fifteenth year that Arkadaşlar and its informal predecessors will celebrate a late-October Cumhuriyet bayram dinner in the Washington D.C. area. Since the first meal at Jerri Mayer's in 1982, we have institutionalized, had an all-Turkey toplantı, and generally improved the ties that bind us through Central Anatolia. We have also been fortunate to have groups of members sponsor their own annual repasts in various locations around the USA.

I am writing to all of you in and out of Washington to encourage you to continue and even expand this happy tradition. Over the last several years, there has been much discussion concerning the purposes of

Arkadaşlar. There are many different views, but most certainly there remains a strong preference for social interaction in addition to our more charitable goals. I have always endorsed this priority, since in my own life I have found getting together with Peace Corps members and especially Turkey's, to represent many of the most pleasant experiences I have had.

On that note I hope everyone, whether from T-1 or T-17, will make an effort to arrange or participate in Cumhuriyet bayram get-togethers this year and in the future. ( Please see a list of contact people on page 2.) Time is passing quickly, but there is much left to re-tell, discuss, and ponder, as we celebrate, **THIS YEAR, PEACE CORPS/TURKEY'S 35th ANNIVERSARY!**

# Arkadaşlar Contribution Presented in Person

**Jerry and Marianne Leach (T-4) visited the Sevinç Abla School for the Disabled in August and presented an Arkadaşlar contribution of \$1500.**

The school has about 100 students from the ages of two to twenty-two. Their disabilities range from motor skills to paralysis to retardation. The school provides a year-round curriculum in reading, writing, mathematics, art, shop, music, motor development, and physical training.

This is the only school of its sort in Adana, a city of two million which has experienced enormous growth and rising prosperity in recent years. It is the inspiration of Sevinç Eraslan, a Turkish educator who is married to a former student of T-13's Albert Nekimken, who originally established the connection between Arkadaşlar and the school. It is now eleven years old and has ten full-time staff members.

The school has just acquired its own building, which is its pride and joy. It is attractive and clean inside with many

photographs, awards, and artwork on the wall, including an article from the September 1996 issue of *Buralarda* by Sandy Andersen based on her visit there in 1996.

Previous Arkadaşlar donations have been used for general operating expenses and to buy equipment for the school, which is evident in the toys, art supplies, desks, shop, kitchen, and exercise rooms.

The school shows all the earmarks of success. Letters of commendation; city, provincial, and national awards; and photographs and VIP letters are found throughout the corridors and in the principal's office. The school has two external relationships which it highly prizes, our own and a sister school relationship with a counterpart school in Germany.

There is still very little support for the disabled in Turkey though the cause is recognized. Everyone - including all Arkadaşlar members - who have made a contribution to the building of Sevinç Abla can be proud.

PICTURED BELOW ARE JERRY LEACH, SEVINÇ ERASLAN, MARIANNE LEACH, AND PERIHAN, A STAFF MEMBER AT THE SCHOOL.



# GREAT OPPORTUNITY !

## WHAT ABOUT TEACHING AT THE KYRGYZ-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY?

by Jerry Leach (T-4)

**One of our members, John Clark (T-4), is slated to become President of the Kyrgyz-American University soon. He has served three of his last four years in Kyrgyzstan, as a Fulbright Fellow and an IREX representative. He has learned Kyrgyz and loves the country.**

John says: "Being here is a lot like being in Turkey in our time. The country needs everything. The shift it is undergoing is enormous. The Kyrgyz are a very attractive and appealing people. They really appreciate and welcome the foreigners who work amongst them as it is so novel. Some of our students are amongst the best and brightest I have ever taught. We welcome and need all the help we can get."

What about teaching there? For a term, a school-year, or a even a short-course period? If you need some adventure in your life, this could be it!

### **The University**

The university is currently an

autonomous faculty of the National University of Kyrgyzstan and is called The Kyrgyz-American School. It is in Bishkek, the national capital of Kyrgyzstan, which is on the western border of China and south of Kazakhstan and Russia.

The school opened in 1993 and is now in its fifth year. Its first class of 30 graduated in June, 1997. It is housed in one building just off the central downtown square. It runs on tuition and small grants and is already independent of government financing. George Soros has agreed in principle to back the school. He has already created a scholarship fund, and larger commitments are expected in the future.

The school specializes in subjects not formerly taught in the Soviet system or subjects that need to be taught entirely differently. It currently teaches business administration, journalism, and international relations, and will start into law soon. Plans exist for a humanities and an international affairs faculty. Preparatory English is taught for students not ready for English coursework.

There are about 300+ Kyrgyz, Russian, Kazakh, Korean, and Uzbek

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students and about 60 faculty members,  
30 full-time and 30 part-time. About ten  
of the teachers are foreigners, including  
several Americans.

The school is on its way to  
becoming the Central Asian equivalent of  
Robert College or the American  
University in Beirut - though it is early  
days yet and a great deal of institution-  
building still needs to be done.

### **Your Role**

Foreign faculty are rare and  
important to the standing of the school.  
Foreign faculty, English instruction, and  
business courses have already given the  
school a pre-eminent reputation within  
the country. The languages of  
instruction are both English and Russian.  
You would teach in English and use a  
translator if needed. Foreign faculty  
have generally not needed one. The  
school year starts September 1 and ends  
about June 30, with no teaching during  
the summer. The school is very flexible  
and can tailor course content and length.  
There are about 10-20 students per class.

Business administration and  
journalism are broadly defined. A lot of  
things that you might not expect -  
American history, geography, economic  
development, sociology, culture,  
literature - are taught. Don't assume you  
are "unqualified". Propose what you  
might be able to teach and see what the  
response is. The reorientation of thought  
and of society is the essence of what is  
happening.

Many of the students are the best  
in the country. Several have already  
gone on to undergraduate and graduate

programs in the US. The school is  
unusual in that it only accepts about one  
out every three students who apply.

There is a Kyrgyz salary scale of  
about \$100-\$150 per month which would  
cover expenses adequately while there.  
The school has not to this point been  
able to cover travel costs. Routes are  
through Moscow, Frankfurt, and  
Istanbul.

The school would provide you  
with a furnished apartment while there.  
Apartments generally have 3-5 rooms,  
bathroom, hot and cold water, kitchen  
with stove and refrigerator, central  
heating, and a phone. They feel much  
like Turkish apartments used to. Spouses  
would be welcome and might even find a  
role at the school too.

Kyrgyz is a Turkic language but  
not identical to Turkish. It takes about  
three months to go from Turkish to  
Kyrgyz. You can get by immediately  
with Turkish and English.

### **Interested?**

**For more information on  
Kyrgyzstan and the school, get in touch  
with KAU board member Jerry W.  
Leach (T-4) in Washington, on home  
phone \_\_\_\_\_ home fax**

**\_\_\_\_\_ or by e-mail at  
\_\_\_\_\_. Or, get in touch  
with John Clark, or with the founder  
of the school, Camilla Sharshekeeva  
directly in Bishkek. Phone connections  
are excellent. Bishkek is nine hours  
ahead. The school phone is 011-3312-  
262342; the fax number is 011-3312-  
262374; and the e-mail address is  
camilla@kas.bishkek.su.**

**THIS ARTICLE IS RE-PRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR FROM THE SEPTEMBER EDITION OF "ATA NEWS", THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN-TURKISH ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON D.C. -ed.**

By Engin Inel Holmstrom

### Impressions from Turkey

No change on the surface. On June 3rd I arrived in Istanbul and expected to see a country in disarray. After all, I have been reading in newspapers for months that the government was not working, the judiciary was in shambles, and the police force corrupt and unreliable.

It was quite a surprise, therefore, to observe no change in the every day life of this great metropolis. Busses were running, all painted in delightful psychedelic colors. Boats were on time. Telephones were more-or-less working. Shops were filled with most recent fashions or most-advanced electronic equipment. Streets and restaurants were full of well-dressed smiling people. The whole tempo of the city was as hectic as before.

Of course, my observations were limited to the areas I stayed and visited. Other parts of the city might have displayed a very different face, like back streets of Fatih where uncovered women, I was told, tended to be harassed. In my familiar part of town, however, women, young or old, were dressed in usual summer clothes, some in shorts, others in jeans, and most with skimpy tops. Young teenage lovers went arm-in-arm or even kissed openly, and no one turned and looked.

So things looked normal. What was the fuss then? I asked

my friends. I grilled my relatives. I questioned the taxi drivers. Some sort of a consensus developed. Yes, it was true that the government was not working, that the judiciary was in shambles, and that the police were corrupt. But what kept the country going was its growing economy, partially due to the "underground" trade which pumped billions of untaxed dollars into it. On paper, economic statistics predicted doom. In reality, money gushed into the city.

Moreover, they told me, Prime Minister Erbakan's programs have not affected their daily lives, at least not yet. Still everyone worried about the growing religious intolerance of the Islamic fundamentalists. They did not like their bad-mouthing of non-Muslim minorities. They did not like their public statements about the establishment of the "shariat" (religious law). They worried about the long-term consequences of the systematic replacement of secular-minded bureaucrats, teachers, police chiefs, etc. by Welfare Party followers. Worse still were rumors about the existence of well-armed youth groups—a la Iran—fanatically dedicated to "Islamizing" the whole country. No one wanted a military intervention. But most feared a bloody conflict between the "political Islamists"—a term preferred by social scientists who differentiate between devout Muslims and those who use Islam for political purposes—and the secular-minded majority.

So Istanbul displayed a manic-depressive personality. On

one hand, crowded, busy, dynamic, and healthy-looking. On the other hand, down and out. Brooding, fearful, and slightly paranoid!

Boom towns everywhere. It was easier to see the economic strength of the country than the insidious harm done by the Welfare Party. Istanbul was like a boom town. Things were undeniably expensive. Dollar was pushing 150,000 liras! Yet shops were full of people who obviously had money.

New shopping malls had sprouted up all over the place. I was totally surprised, for instance, to see a Potomac-Mills-like "Outlet Center" (that's the name, in keeping with the fad to name everything in English) in, of all places, Izmit! With nearly hundred discount shops carrying famous Turkish—like Beymen and Vakkö—and European labels, restaurants and other amenities, the Outlet Center is a delightful and convenient place to shop, only about an hour's drive on the toll highway from Erenköy.

Economic wealth was also evident in touristic places like Antalya and Alanya. Hotels were full. Shops were full. Restaurants were full. Spirits seemed to be soaring.

In the evenings in Antalya, the whole population seemed to promenade up and down the wide avenues by the sea. Families had picnics on the beaches. Young girls and boys walked together. Music poured out from everywhere. There was no religious garb in sight! Apparently there was more

pressure from the Islamic right in Istanbul than in places like Antalya.

As a consequence, most people in Istanbul kept on worrying and pondering what was rotten in the state of Ankara! So what was going on in Ankara?

**Soap opera.** Both written and visual media covered the scene in Ankara relentlessly, mostly because it was like a bad soap opera! Listening to the daily statements of government and party leaders was a nerve-shattering experience. After a few days of it, one became numbed—a state, I was told, that kept most Istanbulians sane!

Some of the things they were saying were totally bizarre. Welfare Party parliamentarian Sevki Yilmaz's foul-mouthed demagoguery was unbelievable and frightening. But there were a lot of humorous events as well.

For instance, in early June, the military establishment sent an invitation to all judges to attend a briefing on the threat of fundamentalism in Turkey. The Minister of Justice promptly went on TV to declare that he was not going to give permission to judges to attend this briefing. He said: "I am not a 'bostan korkulugu' (scarecrow). Anyone who attends this briefing will be fired."

Well over 500 judges, including all of the supreme court members, attended the meeting and gave the military presentation a seven-minute standing ovation. Because of the high demand, the briefing had to be repeated the next day. Of course all the newspaper headlines the morning after the briefing read "Minister of Justice, Bostan Korkulugu or not?"

Those in power in Ankara

seemed oblivious to how the rest of the nation perceived them. During mid-June, reality seemed to sink in. Since last winter, Erbakan had been receiving not-so-subtle hints from President Demirel and military leaders to cease his anti-secular programs. In mid-June, he seemed to wake up to the fact that the country was on the brink of a disaster. He had no option but to resign. And who convinced him to resign? His coalition partner Tansu Ciller herself!

Ciller told Erbakan to submit his resignation to President Demirel and once herself was named prime minister, she would form another coalition government with his party, and everything would be honky dory as before! Of course the whole country knew the scheme would not work.

So Erbakan goes to Cankaya and hands in his resignation and tells Demirel that the new government would be formed by Ciller. Demirel, more or less, tells him to hold his horses and that it is up to him to name the new prime minister, and meanwhile, thank you for your resignation, and better luck next time!

Ciller goes into shock and declares a state of war! She forces all True Path and Welfare party members to sign a declaration stating that they will not give their vote of confidence to any other government except the one formed by Ciller.

Ciller then goes to Cankaya. She tells Demirel that no one can form a coalition government but her. She tries to give him the list of signatures. Demirel dismisses her with a lecture on Turkish Constitution. A vote of confidence is taken in the

parliament only after a government is formed, ministers named, and policy announced, not before, he points out. And any deal between her and Erbakan regarding rotation of the office of prime minister is unconstitutional.

Ciller goes home sulking but is not through fighting. She gives speeches. She tries to stir support for herself but, one by one, deputies from her True Path party, including her "A-team" consisting of her close supporters, submit their resignations. Some Welfare Party members resign as well.

Shortly after Mesut Yilmaz's new government receives the vote of confidence, leaving Erbakan and Ciller out in the cold. The country sighs a big sigh of relief. Democratic processes shift into gear. The threat of military intervention is avoided, for the time being. So is the threat of a bloody Islamic takeover, again for the time being.

**Ambitious agenda.** Mesut Yilmaz has promised to bring the government firmly back into the secular mold. Among the new government's programs are plans to increase the obligatory 5-year primary education to 8 years to dampen the influence of clerical (religious imam-hatip) schools. Yilmaz says he is not against religious training but he certainly does not want any school which produces students who are against the basic tenets of the secular Turkish Republic.

Will Mesut Yilmaz succeed? Can the coalition members rise to the challenge of serving the country without succumbing to partisanship? Stay tuned!