
An Ambassador of Peace and Good Will: Andrey Karlov

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On behalf of the Embassy of the Russian Federation, we are grateful to the editorial staff of *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* for the opportunity to once again write about Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov, who passed away before his time as a victim of a vicious terror attack in Ankara on the cold winter evening of 19 December 2016.

Much has been said and written about that ill-fated day, but today we would like to focus our attention on the period of Ambassador Karlov's life that he spent in Turkey.

Actually, it was a surprise for many of us diplomats working in Turkey, to find out that Andrey Karlov had been appointed as the Russian ambassador to the Turkish Republic, as his previous assignments included countries in the Asian Pacific region. However, his high competence, expanded vision of the situation, ability to assess developments

“from the outside” as well as the political wisdom and staunchness he gained during his term of office in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea played a positive role at a time when relations between Russia and Turkey were in crisis.

Our diplomats still remember how accurately he chose his words while publicly addressing a Turkish audience during that difficult period of time, and how wisely he tried to prevent his interlocutors from sharpening the rhetoric, foreseeing that sooner or later our countries would have to mend fences and knowing that accumulated negative experiences would undoubtedly backfire and hinder our future activities.

The initiatives Ambassador Karlov proposed due to his broader outlook were fresh and forward-looking. For example, he advised the Turkish business community not to limit the sphere of their Russian investments to traditional destinations like Moscow, St. Petersburg or Kazan, inviting

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entrepreneurs to pay attention to other regions, including Russia's Far East.

Ambassador Karlov consistently and fearlessly promoted Russian interests. He often explained to his Turkish partners that politics should not impede the development of trade and economic cooperation between Turkey and Crimea, or prevent the Crimean Tatar diaspora of Turkey from communicating with their kin on the peninsula, and developing humanitarian and cultural ties.

Ten years ago Andrey Karlov personally tackled the visa issue- working as Director General of the Consulate Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he held a thorough knowledge of all aspects of the issue, and contributed substantially to the visa liberation process for Turkish citizens.

Karlov's desire to strengthen friendship between the two nations lay behind his active efforts to promote memorial work. During his term of office, the governments of our two countries signed an agreement on the identification and registration of the military burial places located in Turkish territory, and to ensure their arrangement and maintenance. Karlov exerted considerable effort for the establishment of a Joint Commission to coordinate the implementation of this agreement. The embassy intensified its activities in search of both archival

documents and eyewitnesses that could shed the light on the spots where Russian soldiers might have been buried in Turkey. Ambassador Karlov considered it important to pay a final tribute to Russian soldiers in Turkey as well as to Turkish soldiers in Russia, and by this symbolic step to reconcile our two nations and turn over the page of conflicts in our mutual history for good.

Underlining the significance of close cultural cooperation between our two countries, Andrey Karlov gave substantial support to cultural projects. During his term of office, Ankara gained one more place of interest related to Russia- the Square of St. Petersburg that is located in the heart of an old Ankara district- Altındağ- where in the 1920s the first ambassadors appointed to Turkey by the young Soviet state used to work. Delivering a speech during the opening ceremony, Ambassador Karlov expressed hope that the realization of this project would give a new impetus to the development of cultural and humanitarian ties between our countries.

Unfortunately, from now on, the 19th of December will be a mourning day for all those serving in the Russian diplomatic and consular missions in Turkey, in Russian missions all over the world, as well as for the Russian people. Nevertheless, the cause to

which Andrey Karlov remained faithful throughout all his life- being an ambassador of peace and good will, a person who dedicated his life to good undertakings and charity- will live on in the activities of the Andrey Karlov International Charitable Foundation established by Russian

and Turkish diplomats, public figures and representatives of the business community, and headed by Karlov's widow, Marina. The Foundation will focus its activities on promoting bilateral cultural and humanitarian cooperation, and assisting in the rehabilitation of ill children.