

## **4<sup>th</sup> July 2008 Speech by Ambassador Ghafari**

On behalf of the American Embassy I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our honored guests to this 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration. In my short time here I have been privileged to attend a number of National Days of Celebration, most recently that of our host country, Slovenia just this past week. Each of these days of celebration marks, at least symbolically, a special event in that nation's history, a beginning or an important turning point.

America's celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is no different; historically it marks the day in 1776 on which John Hancock, the President of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the thirteen original American colonies signed a letter declaring their independence. The act had the irrevocable impact of transforming philosophy into action.

That philosophy is two-fold, the first part being, in the language of its author, Thomas Jefferson, that "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." And the second being "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." This expresses the basis for American Democracy, that all persons are equal in the eyes of the law, that they have rights which the government may not remove, and that the purpose of the government is to serve and protect rather than to rule.

Although the United States, and indeed the world have changed substantially since 1776, this philosophy remains as the basis for the American government and defines the expectations of the American people. I believe that it is fair to say that this philosophy and its successful implementation has also raised the expectations of many of the peoples of the world leading them to believe that they have the right to self-determination, the right to prosperity, and the right to freedom from tyranny. Admittedly, the perfection of a pure philosophy rarely translates immediately or fully into the imperfect real world; present conditions in parts of the world are unpredictable and volatile where the basic human rights of safety, justice and opportunity are denied to many. But the philosophy of this 4<sup>th</sup> of July declaration requires the civilized world to recognize the humanity and dignity of all peoples and motivates us to battle corruption, terrorism, intolerance and injustice where we find it.

America has received many gifts from the nations of the world, their knowledge, their culture, and their peoples, in fact, most Americans had their origins in other parts of the world. And even the basis for American democracy was a gift from other parts of the world. Jefferson studied the Greeks and the Romans, and read the works of Descartes and Voltaire. While I am sure that most Slovenians are familiar with this chapter in their early history, it is interesting for us to note, that among the many writings Thomas Jefferson studied, was a text by sixteenth century French lawyer and philosopher, Jean Bodin, in which he described how Slovene farmers had contracted to be governed by the Dukes of Carinthia for nearly 1000 years. The Duke was an elected official, and before he could take the ceremonial seat of office, he was required to swear that he would respect and defend the rights of his electorate. Very possibly, the account of the practice contributed to Jefferson's view that a contract between the government and the governed was an effective and appropriate way to insure the rights of the people.

John F. Kennedy once said that the American, "...by nature, is optimistic. He is experimental, an inventor and a builder who builds best when called upon to build greatly." This I believe, is our gift back to the world; our bold optimistic belief that the democratic

spirit of tolerance and respect for human rights exemplified by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July should, and can be accessible to all the peoples of the world.

Together with my colleagues at the US Embassy here in Slovenia, I thank you for joining us here this evening, and wish you all a happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July.