

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Istanbul, 30 October 1994

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Nomadism

October was a month of picaresque adventures in the tradition of Petronius and Lazarillo de Tormes which, almost by definition, had no connecting thread beyond my exploring the lands around me and the people in them. I traveled up the Black Sea to the Danube Delta. I saw Turkey's Mediterranean coast as far south as Kusadasi, thrilled to see Troy, Assos, Pergamon and Ephesus with my own eyes. I tramped the docks of Istanbul. A sheikh in Fatih tried to convert me; a Kurdish socialist at the University of Kütahya blamed me for the world's woes. I spent an afternoon at Istanbul's Topkapi Gate with a shepherd from Diyarbakir, selling sheep to customers who wanted them dismembered *al fresco*. Finally, as a study in contrasts which reminded me of nothing so much as a scene from the *Satyricon* -- when Encolpius passes from staying at a dirty inn to sharing the feast at Trimalchio's table -- I began one day waking up amidst an unsavoury collection of traders and prostitutes, and ended it eating dinner five feet from the President of Bulgaria in his Bojana residence outside Sofia.

Celebrating Atatürk -- Tekkes -- Sheikh El Fakir

Republic Day (Cumhuriyet Bayrami) -- the Turkish Republic's 71st birthday, on October 29 -- was celebrated last night by a swollen, good-tempered crowd packed along Taksim Square and Istiklal Street to hear an outdoor concert that lasted all afternoon and evening. A fine fireworks display followed, only spoiled by bathos when loudspeakers began blaring "O fortuna" from *Carmina Burana*. Afterwards the crowd en masse massaged the cricks in their necks, especially me, who had spent the day gaping at the Byzantine mosaics on the ceilings of the Chora Church and was now in

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agony... The concert was a change from past anniversaries, which apparently had emphasized the republic's prowess at arms rather than at music. The city had been drowning for days in red flags with star and crescent, hung on every lamppost and out of every window. At one point I was walking against the flow on Istiklal, as thousands of souls hurried to catch the end of the concert I was trying to escape. Heads were bobbing in an endless procession as far as I could see. Suddenly the loudspeakers relayed the first bars of the Turkish national anthem -- and the whole street stopped dead. It was as if Madison Avenue had been instantaneously frozen in time. People stood motionless in eerie silence as the music played, or a few sang. The second the music ended, the street began moving again with the usual bustle and din as if a large hand had unlocked a "pause" button. It was a tremendous moment.

Given the media tributes throughout last week to Atatürk and the secular republic, it is interesting that I had recently had my first experience with Islamic fundamentalists. I hesitated to tell the anecdote; in particular, I have no wish to provide grist for the mill of those prone to believe that religious fanaticism hangs above Turkey like a sword of Damocles. But I proceed with the assurance of at least one ex-ICWA fellow that the story has its unique points.

I was walking in the late afternoon from Fener into Fatih, one of Istanbul's most Islamic-traditional areas. Ironically, I had just been on a visit to the nearby Orthodox Patriarchate. Behind the Selimiye mosque I caught sight of a sign saying "Women's Entrance Only." It took a while to find the men's entrance around the block, but when I did I found myself standing in a small courtyard surrounded by half-a-dozen teenage boys between the ages of 14 and 16. It turned out I had wandered into a *tekke*, or lodge. Tekkes were banned by Atatürk as a secularizing measure, especially aimed at exterminating the dervish lodges, although as in a Masonic Lodge the activities offered by a tekke might be primarily social. It is true, however, that a sort of natural selection has ensured that the tekkes that have managed to maintain a shady underground existence until today are those founded on the strength of religious attachment and resistance, often with sufi/mystic overtones. The tekke I saw was the meeting-house of a sect or confraternity of this kind, offering religious instruction on the side to both men and women -- through two different doors. The growing (illegal) revival of tekkes during the last decade and a half -- and of "orders" which meet in them, such as the Naksibendi order to which ex-President Turgut Özal belonged -- is a regular bugbear of the leftist press worried about the erosion of Atatürk's legacy.

Serious religious education or purpose in themselves do not disturb me. Under the arches of Şehit Mehmet Paşa mosque near the Blue Mosque is a government sign labelled "Koran Courses." A group of friendly but serious-minded thirteen-year olds told me that for two consecutive days every two months they came to learn Arabic, memorize suras and be instructed in Islamic ethics. Interestingly, they informally referred to their school as a tekke, which officially of course it isn't. When a bell rang,

they scampered off after their *hoca*, or teacher. Some of them might go on to an Imamhatip, a state high school with a dose of Islamic instruction that might put it, in Christian terms, between a Catholic high school and a seminary.

In comparison, I found the tekke near the Selimiye mosque rather frightening. For one thing, the boys maintained they had stopped attending "secular" school altogether and studied full-time at the tekke, despite my protests that surely that was illegal. When I asked what they were studying to become, the answer was *Evliya* and *Alim*, that is, Muslim saints and scholars. They asked my religion and nationality. My religion provoked a standard run-down of the relative advantages of heaven vs. hell. My conversion to Islam would be "büyük bir kazanç" -- a great gain, since I wouldn't burn. My nationality, to my surprise, evinced a description of the way Westerners allowed their fellows who were poor, unemployed or handicapped to suffer unaided while Muslims supported one another. I was struck that they should emphasize this aspect of their religion, in the light of an Economist special report from the summer entitled "Islam and the West." It had argued that Islamic communitarian-type ideas might fertilize the European Left as it seeks to redefine itself. Here were some young muslims attacking the fruits of individualism.

At this point a *hoca* in his 30's, dressed in a green turban and cloak, came out to investigate. A little later, I was invited inside, for a tour as I imagined. I left my shoes at the door, naturally: all the rooms I saw had wall-to-wall pale blue carpeting. I was conducted up to the first floor of the two-story building. Each floor had two rooms about 18 x 12 ft, instruction rooms on the bottom, sitting rooms on the first floor and I presumed sleeping rooms or an office on the top. On the first floor landing were canaries in cages. I was ushered into one of the rooms and saw, to my astonishment, that I had been invited to dinner.

There was no furniture save for bookshelves high on the wall and no decoration beyond two Arabic medallions on the wall reading "Allah" and "Muhammed." Behind a large picnic-type spread on the floor, "our sheikh," as everyone reverently referred to him, was sitting cross-legged. He was perhaps 45, dressed in white Arabic robes and turban, talking on a cordless telephone. I was placed on his left, the usher retired, and I sat alone with him until he had finished his conversation. Upon hanging up he attacked the food lustily, slapping his bread into chickpeas and eggplant and telling me to "Eat, eat!" At this point the *hoca* with the green turban returned. Standing on the threshold of the room, he read aloud a handwritten poem that lasted about five minutes. The sheikh greeted it extremely enthusiastically, uttering loud joyous whoops between mouthfuls interspersed with shouts of "Allah! Allah!" I was getting edgy. When the sheikh stepped out for a moment, I politely inquired whether it was the *hoca's* own poem which the sheikh had praised so lavishly. Of course not, the man answered beatifically, *the sheikh himself* had written the poem which triggered all the excited ejaculations. I declined to comment on this.

Now we were joined for dinner by two hocas in their thirties and a man my age, all of whom signaled through submissive gestures and expressions that they were the sheikh's acolytes. Dinner dragged on, as all eating and conversation stopped whenever the sheikh took or made a telephone call, which he did frequently. Eventually my cross-examination began. Was I a muslim? Who gave me my eyes, then? Who gave me life? Who brought me to Turkey? Was I prepared to accept him as my sheikh and convert?

It was interesting, from the point of view of the psychology of religion, to note the two approaches he adopted to win my acceptance of his spiritual authority. In essence, as I see it, he gave me one example each of his influence in heaven and on earth. First, he told me about a German from Berlin. At death's door and abandoned by the doctors, the German had been healed in conversations over the telephone with the sheikh. Out of gratitude he had subsequently become the sheikh's student in Istanbul and converted. Thus the sheikh sought to underscore his authority with me by describing a miracle. Second, to demonstrate his power on earth, he did something I did not like at all. He said, "These are my men, loyal to me. I command their respect for my holiness," and barked a command. To my distress, I found I was looking at four mature men standing rigidly like posts at the sheikh's whim for my instruction and amusement. Their discipline and sense of hierarchy, so beloved of military training, shook me. I half-feared they would next have to stand on their heads or turn cartwheels or drink ink, to recall the way Pu-Yi exercised his petty tyranny over his eunuchs in The Last Emperor... To my relief they sat down.

I performed next. I was made to repeat Suras 1 and 96 after the sheikh in Arabic, pointing at the text with his finger. We each kissed and bowed to the Koran three times. Only then was he satisfied and put the book on the shelf. As he turned away, I saw that he had not replaced it properly and watched in horror as the oversized, de luxe edition Koran overbalanced and fell to the floor with a crash, causing a sensation. To indicate an unclean presence in the room this was surely the evillest of all omens, and I was momentarily panicked that I was about to be torn to shreds. Instead the sheikh hurriedly kissed, stroked and talked to the book, glared at the others who cringed sheepishly, and the crisis passed.

The sheikh was just leaving when he noticed I was wearing a jade charm around my neck (I had forgotten). He grimaced and demanded I take it off. I explained it was a semi-precious stone and a valuable gift from my sister in Guangzhou. It was on a chain; had it been on a string I would have been garroted as he ripped it off my neck, scrunched it into a ball and threw it out the window onto an adjacent rooftop. That was the last I saw of it: it was gone before I could react. In compensation, as it were, he handed me a book from the shelves and blessed me with a short incantation. I believe he thought I had accepted his offer of instruction. The men certainly did, who closed

around me when the sheikh had left, pressed tea on me and discussed where I would sleep that night. I shall never forget the look of consternation and disapproval that went around the circle -- prelude to a conspiracy or kidnapping, I thought at the time -- when I held firm that I had other plans for the evening. Allah himself extricated me: at that moment the muezzin's call rose for evening prayer, momentarily distracting my hosts. I jumped up, took my leave, remembered my shoes, and marched out.

Only that evening did I remember to look at the book I had been given. Entitled Islam Ahlaki ("Islamic Morality"), it had been inscribed for me by the sheikh: "*Heddiyemiz [sic -- misspelt] olsun, Rabim [sic] hidayet nasip eylesin*" -- "Let this be our gift to you, May my God make the True Path your lot," signed in Turkish and Arabic *Seyyid Ali El Fakir*, "Mr Ali the Humble," date and place ["*FATİH*"].

Balkan trade lecture -- Babel -- Gypsy girls

The Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) has been especially helpful to me, forthcoming with statistics and contacts, as I have looked into Turkey's links with the Balkans. If the view from the windows of their office building differs from the view "on the ground" in the bazaars and on the borders, it is only to be expected. I had the privilege this month of seeing both sides.

Turkish trade relations with the Balkans since 1989 have been spotty and at present lack "staying power" in comparison with the more lucrative, albeit risky, markets in Central Asia. I have restricted my focus for the moment to Romania and Bulgaria. In 1990 the Turkish export bank Eximbank (Türkiye İhracat Kredi Bankası) extended \$50 million of credits to each country, launching Turkish firms into both arenas. Turks became known particularly for bakeries and bakery machinery; in Romania Turks also invested in beverages and in Romania's stalled petroleum industry (its potential ruined by Ceaucescu -- but in World War II the Germans were keen to secure the Romanian oil fields in Ploiesti). Banco Turco-Romano opened in Bucharest with \$4 million capitalization for investment banking.

But by 1993 Turkey was faring ill against competitors offering higher quality: France in bakeries and food, Italy in textiles, the Far East in coffee and white goods and Germany in manufactured goods. Although Turkish exports were growing in both countries (eg. to Bulgaria -- \$10,366m in 1990, \$72,229m in 1992), so was an unfavourable balance of trade (-\$21,514m in 1990, -\$152,313 in 1992). Turkish businessmen were also complaining that Balkan banking systems were poor, exporting profits to Turkey was difficult, and laws were unclear over the division of profit and property between Turkish and local partners. A further stumbling-block in Romania was that the \$1,000 security Turkish companies had to show after 1989 to work in the country was raised in 1993 to \$5,000, attacking the structure of Turkish business in

Romania, which was essentially a network of small firms (2,431 registered in September 1993).

Finally, a second tranche of Eximbank credits in 1993 (\$75m to Romania, \$50m to Bulgaria) have been held up in both countries by their refusal to meet Eximbank's conditions of state guarantees to underwrite the loans. Since then, the new directors at Eximbank have indicated that a consortium of banks might be acceptable to stand security instead of state guarantees, but as of now the money has not been liberated and Turkish firms' interest in Balkan investment is dwindling accordingly. In comparison, I have heard a number of envious Turks say that the Greeks' penetration of Balkan markets is proving very successful. They have four banks and two filials in Bulgaria, and even cooperate informally with two in Macedonia. As a member of the European Union (which Turkey is not), Greece can draw on the PHARE programme and funds for EU-Eastern European joint ventures. With its network of trade and economic attachés in the Balkans, Greece has its strategy for economic enlargement in the post-communist space worked out, at least according to one Turkish analyst. In comparison, the Turkish Foreign Ministry is stuck with a static, mechanical rotation system (three years abroad, two years at home) which has left Turkey poor in the number and quality of attachés in the field or government bureaucrats at home ready to meet Greece's challenge.

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So much for the dry, slightly pessimistic view culled from boardrooms and the offices of research institutions. A visit to the offices of the architects of Babylon probably gave an equally dry picture of what was happening down at the building-site of the Tower of Babel. For sections of Istanbul -- Beyazit, Laleli, Aksaray -- really are a Babel. They are the centre of "suitcase trade" with the former communist countries which was estimated to be worth \$1-2 billion in 1991 and has risen to \$3-5 billion today. When I have asked why the Turkish government tolerates a situation where paying tax is essentially a matter of personal choice, a common answer has been it was part of ex-President Özal's strategy to encourage Turkish entrepreneurial initiative.

The streets bristle with signs reading "We speak Romanian/ Bulgarian..." and luncheon menus in Russian, while shop windows are painted "Polski sklep, Magyar uzlet, Russkii bazar, Yugotex...." The Polish signs are reported to have gone up first in the mid-1980's, a reflection from afar of a more progressive communist regime and the fact that Poles were always the business-gypsies of Eastern Europe, meeting hardships at home by taking the sort of long-distance entrepreneurial risks that Czechs or Slovaks baulked at.

Today the preponderance of buyers are from the Black Sea countries. Those from the Balkan peninsula buck the standard view of its inhabitants as unable to be practical,

rational or businesslike -- captured in an oft-repeated aphorism which says that the manufacture of martyrs, the commemoration of obscure battles, the constant renaming of villages and streets, and the creation of national symbols are some of the few successful Balkan industries. Suitcase trade should be added to the list. Traders strike me as extremely savvy about exactly what the market at home wants this or that month. A full description of what they buy would read like one of the elaborate inventories from Gargantua and Pantagruel. Without Rabelais' exuberant passion for lists, I restrict myself to noting that I personally saw shoes, boots, watches, toys, leather jackets, jeans and T-shirts, tool-kits, curtaining material and a wealth of household appliances from electric heaters to orange-juicers snapped up and stuffed into trucks or busses in the space of a single morning: the trade has obviously expanded far past suitcases.

Nylon sacks almost a cubic metre in volume are sold on the street at 3 for \$2, in case traders run out of the black plastic garbage bags they bring with them. Russians and Ukrainians tend to come by boat from Odessa or Novorossiysk direct to Istanbul or pick up busses in Trabzon. Or indeed some of them fly from Moscow, where a brutal schedule of one week buying in Istanbul, three weeks selling in Russia might clear as much as \$5,000/month -- a reminder of the profitability of a business which surely has been infiltrated by now by Russian and Chechnian mafias. I met a tough Russian-speaking woman in Aksaray supervising the loading of a truck she had hired for two hours at \$25/hour: she appeared to have simply bought out a shop selling rolls of fabric. She was taking the boat that night to Novorossiysk. And then? "Grozny, the Caucasus," she snarled, and refused to say more.

Romanians and Bulgarians either come on the commercial overnight busses, or hire one from home in a group, sometimes partially gutting it in preparation for a shopping expedition that might last from 1-3 days. I have crossed the borders between Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania by bus maybe ten times. (I've also tried the Balkan Expressz, mainly because of the exotic plates on the carriages reading "Budapest-Subotica-Belgrade-Nis-Sofia-Dimitrovgrad-Istanbul," but as trains are more expensive the passengers are less interesting.) Ten days ago I rode a bus to Sofia so packed to the gills that Bulgarian customs arbitrarily levied a fine of \$2 per person -- in fact a bribe to forestall a laborious customs check of all the bags. (Frankly, I reckoned this was cheap, considering that last year the standard bribe Polish officials demanded of Ukrainian sellers on the L'vov -Przemysl rail route was two bottles of vodka. On that occasion I was the only non-Russian/Ukrainian/Kazakh on the train and was responsible for a thirty-minute delay as surly Polish guards complained that my carriage had coughed up only 78 of the 80 bottles they were expecting. On this bus to Bulgaria also there was a short delay when I refused to pay the \$2.)

A fortnight previously I had seen the border from the other direction, entering Turkey. I had hopped on a bus in Constanta on the Romanian coast and soon got chatting to the group. The whole party save for me was from Galata, on a package trip. They had

paid \$15 for the bus tickets and \$22 for the visa for a day and a half of shopping, arriving in Istanbul at 9 am and leaving the next day at 4pm. The man beside me had taken orders for \$,1,500 worth of trousers, shirts and socks. His friend would be shopping for about 500g of gold rings, chains and brooches. They came to Aksaray once or twice a month. One would be sleeping on the bus, the other in a hotel.

There were also a lot of girls of the bus who had more latitude in choosing where they would be sleeping. While engaged in identical buying during the day, they might do a little selling as well during the night. It became apparent that the dark, attractive woman across the aisle from me did not, as the Turkish expression goes, "love me for my blue eyes." It turned out she was a Dobrogean Turk. At a stop in Varna she was talking to the Turkish driver when I walked past. The driver, who had seen it all before, asked her "How are you doing?" Not realizing I understood her, she looked at me, took a long drag of a cigarette, and said "Buldum" -- loosely translated, "I've found mine"... I switched seats. Now I was beside a girl, about 20, in leggings, asleep by the window. On the border a Turkish guard -- who had also seen it all before -- was ragging the girls and sternly asked my neighbour in leggings the name of the hotel where she would be staying. I thought she showed spirit and sauciness when she pointed at me and said "I'm staying with him!" so I fell into line and nodded happily to the guard when he looked at me quizzically and said "Yes, yes!" Moving to the row behind me, the guard was as startled as I when two more girls, gypsies, told him loudly, "We are staying with him too." He couldn't resist taking another look at me on his way out. When he had gone, the gypsies laughed and said to me "Thank you." As I settled back in my seat, the girl in leggings was looking at me more carefully. "Actually, where do you live?" she said. I said, "No."

Byzas -- On the waterfront

Having experienced some of the land-routes, I wanted to look into sea-trade. One bright morning I decided it was time to discover the docks.

The docks of Istanbul, Haydarpasa/Harem Limani, have been built along the Asian shore of the Bosphorus between the districts of Üsküdar and Kadiköy opposite Seraglio Point. As I looked back towards Topkapi Palace and the Golden Horn from the ferry, it struck me there was a subtle irony to this geography. According to the traditional account of the founding of Byzantium, the Delphic oracle advised Byzas of Megara to situate his colony "opposite the blind." When Byzas came to the Propontis around 660 B.C., he noted that the Golden Horn carved out a magnificent natural harbour on the European side which would be the key to Byzantium's success. At the same time, he noted with surprise (and, we imagine, glee) that earlier settlers had mysteriously overlooked the Horn's advantages and founded their own town of Chalcedon directly across from it, in Asia. Thus the sybil's words were fulfilled and the Chalcedonians went down in history as "the blind" for not knowing a good harbour

when they saw one. The last laugh belongs to the Chalcedonians, however. Bosphorus shipping overwhelmed the Golden Horn's capacity long ago, and today Asian Chalcedon -- now called Kadiköy -- is the hub of Istanbul's maritime traffic after all.

On my first visit to Haydarpasa, I stood on deck to watch as the ferry sailed past the docks. I peered over the breakwater into a small forest of cranes, top-loaders, spanning beams and cargo heaps with all the apprehension of a Marlowe looking into the jungle from his river-steamer in *Heart of Darkness*. I noticed that a Bulgarian cargo vessel, *Stoyko Peev*, had just arrived and was waiting to be unloaded. My plan was to head for that, after dodging the ID check at the dock's front entrance. Therefore, I sheared away from the main gate, cut through Haydarpasa train station, walked along the freight tracks skirting the water, jumped from a train (not moving) onto a small ship tied in close to the pier, and by scampering across its deck reached the docks unchallenged. On my second visit, I changed strategy. I pulled a dark green wool cap over my ears, followed the dock railway to the back gate, observed the ground intently when the sign "Kimlik" (Identification) appeared, and loafed through. It was on this expedition, my second, that I met stevedore Taner disgustedly kicking a fork-lift. We shared tea. "Nothing bloody works here," he said -- that at least would be the bowdlerized essence of his message. "The docks are a mess. Everything's broken. And there's no security at all. Anyone at all can walk in and out." He appeared oblivious to the irony of what he was saying, given his interlocuter. My response was to thank him for the tea and jump up. A shiver had run down my spine. Alarmed that my achievements as infiltrator were under threat, I rushed to the main entrance. There, like a magician who waves his hand through a box to demonstrate that it is empty, I walked up and back through the gate two or three times, unchallenged, unnoticed --to my profound chagrin, exciting no attention at all.

I like docks instinctively; I read too many sea-stories as an adolescent not to, even if a modern dock has little in common with Conrad's or Melville's, a century or a century and a half ago. I didn't see any stevedores on ramps bent double under wheat sacks, for example, and no irascible Stricklands looking to get from Marseilles to Tahiti. Most noticeable were not the men but the brightly-painted, monochrome containers. They were stacked three-four high in long avenues running perpendicular to the water, that made me think of the chasms of New York. The containers were the standard size (20 x 8.6 x 8.6 feet), ie. Twenty-foot Equal Units or TEU's. [I saw one or two Forty-foot Equal Units (FEU's), which have the same cross-section, 8.6 x 8.6, but are twice as long and simply stack 1 FEU on top of 2 TEU's.] Beyond the occasional American logo (eg. Genstar, California) most markings were Mediterranean (unsurprisingly), mainly from Barcelona and Lisbon. The surprise was to see so many containers belonging to Bulcon, the Bulgarian national shipping line (see below). The containers the Russians were using were chocolate-coloured and labelled with the acronym RZhD -- suggesting they were converted freight boxes once belonging to Russian State Railways (Rossijskie Zheleznie Dorogi). Meanwhile, the dock electrician's den

has been cannibalized from an abandoned Soviet container: it still reads "Soyuzchimexport, Moscow, USSR."

Haydarpara looked physically small to me by the standards of London or Liverpool, but there is a decent volume of traffic. Last week at any one time I noted two or three 1000 to 1200-TEU ships waiting to be unloaded. For an accurate picture of what they are transporting, I would need to see the manifests. In gross terms, however, it is clear that since 1989-1991 transformed the political economy of the Black Sea, regional maritime trade has been on the rise. The most evident winner so far has been Bulcon. The company started with five small (540-TEU) ships about a decade ago. In 1989 five ships per month came into Istanbul unloading on average 25 containers per ship, ie. 125 per month in total. Today Bulcon has quadrupled that number, adding two chartered vessels to its fleet and converting three more ships for container work with a 1160-TEU capacity. Bulcon expanded in 1992 to do Mediterranean routes. A straw poll on the docks indicated that the Turks were impressed with Bulcon, not least for its versatility in being able to handle all cargoes, including refrigerated, hazardous, chemical, etc. In comparison, they had a very low opinion of Romanian ships ("pieces of junk"), usually too old and unsafe even to meet potential merchants' LC (Letter of Credit) conditions. A second strike against them was that, due to a cholera scare, crews traveling to Romania had to be vaccinated -- unwelcome news to me, who had recently been in Constanta and heard nothing about it.

When I asked stevedores if they saw many Ukrainians, they claimed Ukraine had "hundreds and hundreds" of ships -- presumably its share of the USSR's non-military Black Sea fleet -- but that they were rare in Haydarpara (maybe one a week) since Ukrainians were "no good at container work" and dealt almost exclusively in break-bulk. But a Ukrainian ship happened to be in that day: I asked the men on the basis of their experience what they reckoned it was carrying. Their guesses were rice, flour, minerals, steel, shoes. I didn't see the manifests. Nor did I see the crew, but the story circulating about them afterwards illustrated how dead poor Ukraine is: the captain demanded of the Turkish shipping company representative 36 ferry tokens, at 37 cents a piece, to take him and his men across the straits for the day. When the tokens showed on the service bill (totaled at \$13.24) he exploded and refused to pay. He made such a desperate resistance that eventually the Turks gave up and voided the sum.

Taner was not alone in complaining about his forklift. Stevedores were well-nigh unanimous that the port was ill-equipped to deal with the traffic that came in. They claimed that their vehicles were old and unreliable, and that the dock's arsenal of lifting machines (gantry-cranes, straddle-cranes, top-loaders, etc.) were dinosaurs which either broke or were not what was needed. For example, I watched a large, German 1750-TEU ship being unloaded, where the containers were stacked on deck six-high. The North wind was apparently making work hard for the men on top. The Turkish gantry-cranes were too low and dockworkers were forced to improvise with a

ship's crane. This, I gathered, made the work slower and much more dangerous for the man whose job was to ride the container as it was lifted, fastening the crane-hooks to the cargo without a gantry-spreader.

If these are the prevailing conditions in Istanbul, I shudder to imagine the docks of Ukraine or Georgia. Ports, like borders, are bottlenecks where poor machinery and delays in unloading will play their part in hobbling regional trade. The importance of shifting goods quickly will be vividly appreciated by anyone who recalls the wagonloads of iced lettuces spoiling on a railway siding in East of Eden... A working group of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization will meet in Athens next month to discuss boosting regional trade. On the agenda are customs regulations, shipping policies, sharing inventories, and the (absurd?) notion of a Black Sea Ring Road. I shall be keen to note whether the besuited experts' horizons encompass fork-lifts that are broken, cranes that are too short, and my man in a high North wind without a gantry-spreader.

P.S.

Finally, my thanks to my old unit, the Institute for EastWest Studies, for inviting me to its conference on security in the Balkans, held in Sofia where President Zhelyu Zhelev was speaker and dinner host. The meeting was a feather in the cap of the organization's security program which, I might add, I did my share to create from 1991-1994. Nevertheless, after only six months away from it, I confess to these pages that I was impatient with polite workshops, academic and diplomatic nuance, set speeches, toasts and rapporteur reports. I suppose I am becoming de-socialized, and that this Mr Savage has already begun looking rather balefully at the researchers' internally ordered, grandly constructed Brave New Worlds -- or, for that matter, Brave New World Orders. My thanks again to ICWA for giving me the chance to go rut in the fields.

