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Spies, Free Trade and Borders

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SPIES

Even before I arrived in Turkey, I had been advised of various social hazards that can come of trying to live as a foreigner among Turks. Students of the country who had experience of immersion here, while noting that Turks' suspicion toward outsiders is balanced by a famous tradition of hospitality, prepared me for one contingency in particular. Therefore, it should elicit no more than a soft chuckle and a knowing smile from an assortment of readers from Princeton to Tulsa and from London to Santa Monica to learn that — if I may appropriate Jane Austen's words — it is a truth universally acknowledged in Trabzon that I am a spy.

I have met other spies uncovered by sharp-eyed Turks. In Sivas, eastern Anatolia, the Seljuk colonnades of the Sifaiye medresesi have been converted into carpet shops, one of which is undergoing restoration. Inside I encountered two (ex-East) Germans wearing overalls and carving wooden beams on workbenches. Andrea and Stefan dropped out of art school in 1992, got married, left Germany, bought a donkey, and (eschewing bus or rail transport) have walked the Alps, the Carpathians and the Rodopi mountains during the eighteen months since they set out.

"Our goal is to walk to India," he said; "we can develop as artists there."

"We don't like the new Germany — we don't care about money," she said. "We've stayed in Sivas two months to decorate our friend's shop as a favor. We sleep here."

Afterwards I drank tea with the rug-sellers in the courtyard. "Have you met Andrea and Stefan?" one asked significantly. Yes, I said, I liked them. "We like them too and invite them over for iftar [Ramadan dinner] sometimes," he said. "But we're on our guard, of course." Why? A sly look among the group. "Why, because they're spies, you know." Murmurs of agreement all round. "In Sivas?" I said, astonished. He looked hurt. "Of course, why not? What's wrong with Sivas?" Nothing I said could shake their conviction that the two itinerant artists were Bonn's operatives.

If souls as unlikely as Andrea and Stefan have been unmasked as agents, certainly I could not go undetected for long. A front page story in *Zaman* newspaper on 6 February, after I had been in Trabzon for three months, put people onto my scent. (*Zaman* is allied to the Islamic Refah Party which controls Trabzon's Town Hall and is a well-read and respected daily here.) Entitled "Is Turkey the CIA's New Target?", it was the first in a small avalanche of articles, television commentaries and radio talk shows focusing on the exciting possibility that the armies of agents made redundant by the end of the Cold

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War had not been retired but redeployed, and were presently converging on Turkey as the new geopolitical focal point.

The snowball that started this was an interview on CNN's "Global View" with Donald Jameson, a ranking ex-CIA official for 23 years until his retirement in 1973. According to Turkish accounts, he was asked, "Now that the Kremlin is no more [sic!] where would you say the most important region in the world is for intelligence organizations today?" He replied, "If I were head of the CIA, I would be directing my attention toward Turkey."

It does not require a profound understanding of Turkey to see why this answer quickened the pulse of both pro- and anti-Westerners here. "Islamicists" saw in it additional proof that the U.S. is out to undermine Turkey. The concurrent Paris-Washington spy scandal fed fuel to that fire. "Westernizers," meanwhile, laboring under the Turkish inferiority complex that longs for the West's attention, seemed actually flattered that the CIA might want to wiretap their country. Washington's sending in a network of agents would confirm that Turkey is central to U.S. interests, after all. No one seemed bothered to notice that Mr. Jameson had not been elaborating CIA policy and was not head of the CIA, but had only said "If I were..." — a distinction worth noting in any assessment of whether Mr. Jameson's opinions are worth a spit in the Bosphorus toward guessing that organization's true intentions toward Turkey.

The popular weekly magazine *Aktüel* re-interviewed Jameson as part of its cover story, "Ajanların gözü Türkiye'de" — "Spies' Eyes on Turkey" (16-22 February). He explained that during the CNN interview he had not had undercover activities in mind, or been suggesting that spies be poured into the country. He felt rather that Turkey should be more thoroughly researched using freely available sources. Ex-CIA chief William Colby also spoke to *Aktüel*. After reeling off a list of points that make Turkey important "from an analytic point of view" ("for example the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the situation with the Kurds, the Cyprus problem, sanctions on Iraq, Turkey's relations with Central Asia, the petrol pipeline carrying Caucasus petrol and certainly the plight of Muslims in the Balkans"), he too averred that studying these topics "did not require covert operations, using open-access material would be sufficient." Graham Fuller at RAND bluntly told the magazine, "To say the U.S. is sending in agents is nonsense."

The *Aktüel* journalist brushes these denials aside — remarking that if that's all it took to gather information, there would be no need for Secret Services — and writes as follows:

Prompted by the heavy traffic of foreigners identifying themselves as businessmen, diplomats, journalists and tourists who have visited east and southeast Anatolia in recent months, the National Security Council has

urged MIT [the Turkish Secret Service] and the Interior and Foreign Ministries to be cautious. Its request that "measures be taken against intelligence-gathering activities" points to the seriousness of the situation.

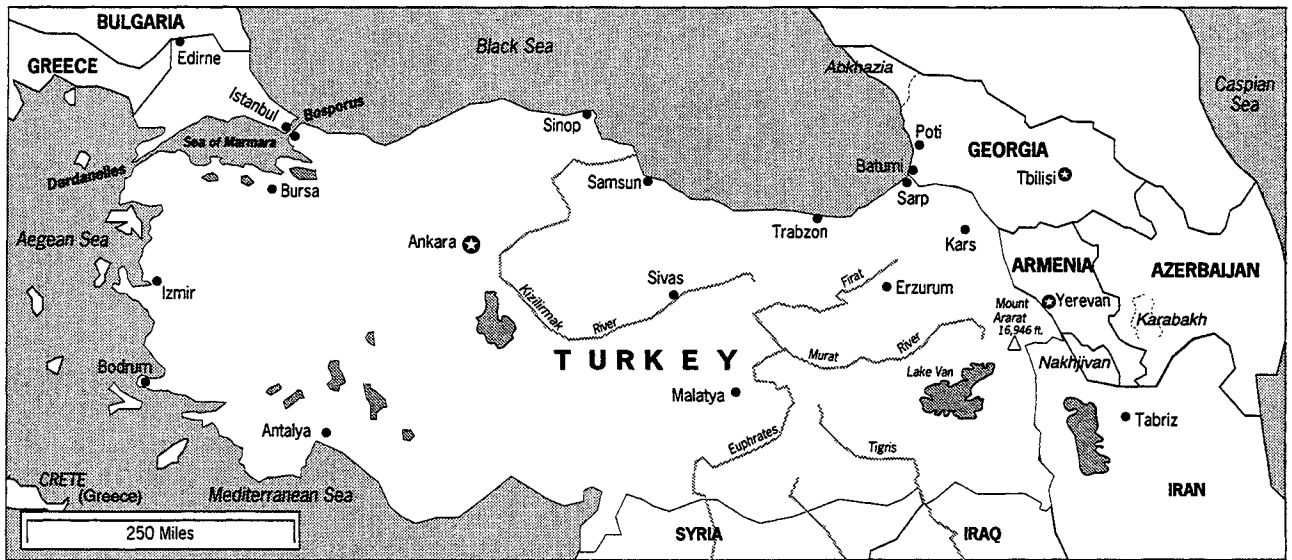
(When I read "foreigners identifying themselves as businessmen, diplomats, journalists and tourists," and imagine the impression the words might make on a Turkish reader, I cannot help thinking of the aircraft-spotting charts distributed to civilians during World War II to help them recognize and report enemy airplanes...)

By the time it became general knowledge that Turkey might be seething with agents, I began feeling as if everyone had been furnished with a home spy-detection kit. My friends at the Town Hall turned theirs on me and watched as the needles on the dials jumped. I could see the machines working, the cogs and wheels turning: "That young man with too much time on his hands, who sits in the corridors watching us, or walks along the docks carrying a pencil, with an improbable background and implausible financial support, must be a spy." My news agent tried to tease me into confessing I worked for — the Pentagon! English teachers at Tomer Language School good-naturedly told me that I was a mysterious person whose story had not been fully told, for sure. Walking the streets in Trabzon, my whistling-song for the month became "The eyes of Texas are upon you/All the live-long day," substituting "Langley" for "Texas"...When my landlord, after much hesitation and embarrassment, turned to me for my opinion about this spy business, which we had just seen discussed on television, his wife hastened to assure me that, whatever the truth of it, nothing would impair our personal friendship. Nor has it. But at iftar dinners, if a new guest asks after my precise occupation — funded to poke around in Turkey by American philanthropy — ho ho! — no links to U.S. government or to federal agencies, of course not — ho ho! — monthly reports, conceived and written without direction — ho ho! — Adam, pray desist, for you are killing us.

One evening, down at the port, I saw piles of crates laid beside a small mountain of tubes 60 meters long, and I tried to get the forklift loaders to tell me the destination of the shipment and what was inside. On a good day they would have told me at once; on a bad day they would have told me after a short period of suspense; but today, "There's not an answer to every question — you're too curious — you must be a CIA spy!" they said, leaving me biting my lip in frustration and at the end of my patience with the spy taunts.

FREE TRADE ZONE — A SUMMING-UP

Trabzon Free Trade Zone is one of five created in Turkey since the Free Zones law was passed in 1985, and is a qualified success. It offers 5,500 square meters of warehousing with crane bays and a contemporary-looking blue-glass office-building positioned between



the Customs Office and the Port Authorities. It is owned, managed and developed privately as a joint venture between Turkish, Japanese and Anglo-Iranian corporations. The operating company they established handles the leasing of offices, the allotment of warehouse space and so on; to set up in the zone you need permission from the Treasury in Ankara. I think of the zone as a modern kind of caravansaray.

Free zones are intended to encourage tax-free trade: there are no customs/import duties, corporate taxes or income taxes, beyond a 0.5% levy on purchases on foreign goods, meant to go into a fund to advertise Turkish free zones. There is no limit on capital and no need for foreigners to find a Turkish partner. Finally, there is a unique provision, not shared with any other free zones around the world to my knowledge, permitting sales out of the zone to domestic markets. To see this provision in action, watch as ten plodding journeymen from the food company Okur descend on one of the storage rooms. There, three or four nights a month, in the poor light they erect their machine like Morlocks. Funnel, conveyor belt and rolls of plastic sheeting are connected. Sacks are torn open — they read "Shaista, Pakistan" — the machine gobbles them, the plastic sheets are puffed open like bladders, an evil guillotine detaches them, and at the end of the conveyor belt a boy indifferently fills a crate with 500g bags of rice, now marked "Bana Rice — Made in Turkey." No customs duty, no excise taxes for repackaging, direct to the supermarket.

According to the official figures, since its opening in June 1992 until November 1994, \$59 million of trade has flowed through the free zone, very evenly divided between imports and exports and steadily rising from year to year. But it is undeniable that for some months now the port has been dead. With a capacity of 2,000 vessels a year, five Dumbor Capple cranes, a modern container terminal and 360 port workers (90 employed in the free zone), the port is shockingly underused.

Now 51% of it might go under the hammer as part of Prime Minister Tansu Çiller's privatization plan, which will not relieve its woes. In the harbor at Batumi and Poti the ships were waiting in line this winter to load and unload. Georgian port fees are much lower and there are rail links into Russia leading to Central Asia. Trabzon, on the other hand, is dependent on road transport and sea links that pass through Georgia anyway, unless goods are headed to Iran. Plans are afoot to create a free zone in Poti: I have seen the draft operating agreements, laws and regulations, and contract intended to be signed between an operating company and the Georgian Economics Ministry. The project awaits Western capital. Furthermore, trade with Armenia must pass through Georgia as long as Turkey effectively boycotts Armenia by sealing the border. This, Ankara has pledged to do until Yerevan disgorges its gains in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Incidentally, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also operate out of the Trabzon Free Zone. Even as I write, a ship is being loaded with 130 tons of food and medicine bound for Abkhazia. One regularly encounters aid packages destined for Georgia about the port: the largest recent shipment read "Humanitarian Aid, European Community. Pasta of Durum Wheat Meal: Penne Mezzanelli."¹ Between 1991 and 1994, \$52 million of aid was distributed to Azerbaijan (population: 7.4 million) and \$7 million to the Azeri enclave of Nakhjivan in Armenia

NOTES

1) I was intrigued to know, What does aid consist of? This is the list of contents from a British Red Cross gift box, destined for Georgia, written in Russian:

Wheat flour	6 kg	Sugar	1.8 kg
Rice	2.7 kg	Canned fish	0.8 kg
French beans	1.8 kg	Dry yeast	0.2 kg
Macaroni foods	2 kg	Detergents	0.8 kg
Vegetable oil	2 litres	Soap	0.6 kg

Are these the proper proportions for a healthy diet (minus soaps)?

(pop.: 306,000). But nothing goes to Yerevan. For two years, Turkey has forbidden humanitarian aid to reach Armenia from its territory.

Trabzon's advantage, for the moment, is that the rule of law prevails and business proceeds normally, neither of which things can be said for Georgia and environs. However, that very lawlessness dissuades people from using Trabzon as a business bridge into the CIS, although the canny ones thrive. One early morning I watched potatoes being loaded onto a 50-meter long ship from Sochi that looked like the world's saddest bust-up tugboat. It was the vehicular equivalent of the workhouse boy in Nicholas Nickleby who is crushed into sullen misery at a dismal schoolhouse in Yorkshire. Supervising the operation was the man Dickens would have chosen for the villain, chain-smoking and applying a toothpick at the same time. His rumpled brown suit and unshaven cheeks bespoke the dawn flight from Istanbul. He was Mr. Avin, regional manager of Akdeniz Trading. How was business? "Süper," he said curtly. I was taken aback: the standard Turkish response is "*Fena degil* — not bad, can't complain, God willing!" I eyed this arrogant man more narrowly while he bad-temperedly scrutinized the workmen.

What was he loading? "1,000 tons of pasta, 70 tons of potatoes." Was there good profit in it? "Listen my lad [*'oglum*]," he said, "pasta costs 20,000TL (50 cents)/kg in Turkey and goes for 50,000TL in Siberia — minus 6,000TL for transportation and customs. Potatoes cost 13,000TL/kg here and go for 20,000TL in Siberia — minus 3,000TL. I send 2,000 tons of pasta and 500 tons of potatoes a month. You work it out."

I did — under his watchful and glittering eye — along the margin of my morning newspaper: it came to \$1.25 million profit per month! Is it possible?

"I also send 40 tons of oranges and 17 tons of lemons each month, which don't do badly," he continued, gratified by my expressions of surprise and jealousy. "And that wood is mine [not 'ours' — '*benim*,' not '*bizim*']." He indicated an enormous pyramid of timber at the end of the dock. He gave me the figures, this time in dollars. "That's 7,000 cubic meters of wood from Siberia, where it costs \$70/m³. After the train to Sochi and the boat to Trabzon, it sells in Turkey for \$180, at a profit to me of \$70/m³."

I asked, if there were such sterling opportunities for money-making, why trade in Trabzon was moribund? He said: "Because the Turks are lazy. They don't look out for the main chance. Of course there are risks involved. You have to learn to face them or circumvent them. Once a shipment worth \$80,000 that I sent to Sochi was simply confiscated by the mafia. I had to negotiate with them. I had to compensate them with an equal value of timber. Only then would they release my goods. Most Turks wouldn't know how to do that." With that he plunged among the Russian loaders — in Victorian times he would have been the

sort to "lay about a bit" with his riding-crop — and we said good day.

BORDERS

Professor Yutaka Akino of Tsukuba University has a claim to being Japan's foremost ex-Sovietologist. Weighing 220lb and still playing country-level rugby in his 40's, he is not your typical academic. A friend from my East West studies days in Prague, turned up without warning in Trabzon this month (thus winning a bet that he wouldn't) driving a rental car. We resolved to spend three days messing about on borders, the way that the Water Rat liked messing about in boats — a favorite game we used to play in Trans-Carpathia where five countries (Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary and Romania) come within a few hundred kilometers of one another. Four countries crowd together on Turkey's northwest edges, too: Georgia, Armenia, Nakhjivan (the Azerbaijan enclave) and Iran.

Georgia. To reach the Georgian border at Sarp from Trabzon takes two to three hours. The drive takes you along the foot of the Pontus mountains with the Black Sea on your left. Small rivulets and impromptu waterfalls skid down the rocks by the road, part of the drainage coming down from the mountains. The road, especially close to the frontier, is appallingly rutted and untended.

Unless and until the Posof gate is opened, Sarp is the only land-route into Georgia. The Sarp crossing was opened in August 1988. Since 1991 and the USSR's collapse the trade volume has grown ten to twenty-fold in both directions, although the Trabzon Chamber of Commerce thinks it may have peaked. In 1994 the Turks exported something like \$8 million of clothes and food, and imported about \$30 million of raw materials such as iron, copper, aluminium, cement, fertilizer, coal, leather and timber. These official figures must be too low, however, given that it is an open secret that Sarp customs officials are cashing in on some vigorous smuggling. I once met a man in Hopa who boasted his brother had channeled Soviet rifles, infrared night-scope equipment, and rocket-grenade launchers to the Bosnian Muslims, bought for a song in Georgia and passed out through Sarp. He was suggesting that AK47's cost \$100, and 7.65mm Kalashnikov bullets cost about 5 cents apiece. It is unimportant whether his claim was true; the point is that it was credible, and even if his brother hadn't done it, somebody else's had.

The Turkish officials declared the papers (triptique) for our rental car out of order and, despite a call to Avis, we were obliged to park it and walk across. There are no Georgians on the Georgian frontier: security is completely in the hands of Russian soldiers and border police. That in itself is not a bad index of how independent Georgia is from Moscow. The Russian presence is a vivid sign of the heavy price Eduard Shevardnadze

had to pay for Russian help in defeating President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and pacifying Abkhazia. They are the tip of the iceberg: Moscow maintains 20,000 soldiers in five bases and three ports in Georgia, not including 3,000 peacekeepers in Abkhazia, which is effectively a Russian province now. The first thing you see upon entering Georgia is Russians: no Georgian is spoken, so Georgians returning home are obliged to speak Russian; no picture of the head of state in Tbilisi; no Georgian flags or seals; Red Army uniforms; Soviet weapons. Your visa, purchased at the Georgian consulate, is written in the cursive Georgian script. But it is stamped by a Russian hand, while the stamp itself is spelt in Cyrillic letters and reads "Sarp, USSR."

Once past border control, a spindly character wearing a windcheater and a bright gold smile scuttled out of nowhere between Yutaka and myself and guided us by the elbows into an abandoned-looking building. He was Georgian. At a dark window, unmarked save for a sign with the single word "Bank," we each had to pay a \$10 "customs fee." We protested that we were not carrying anything, not even a plastic bag. The man with the gold teeth did not stop smiling, but produced a grubby, undecipherable identification, passed it under our eyes, pocketed it, shrugged a few times, recommended the window again as the proper object of our attention, and busied himself with his fingernails. A sticker simply reading "Batumi, \$10" was put into our passports as a receipt and then stamped "The New Georgian Bank." Only then were we free to go.

In Batumi we paid \$3 for bread and blood sausage shot through with garlic in a restaurant that was empty but for us and a party of four drinking beer. The pasteboard menu outside the door must have excited all sorts of hopeless appetites among passers-by, whose average monthly income is just over a dollar. The national interim currency has become worthless (2 million Georgian Coupons = \$1). Georgians can buy nothing with the scrip except bread; all other transactions are conducted in roubles, or dollars. After a stroll along the water and through the market we paid \$5 for the 25-minute taxi-ride back to the border, arriving at sunset. It was 5:30pm.

We began walking across the frontier, only to be brusquely repulsed. We were informed that one may walk into Georgia, but one may not walk out — one must ride. We were momentarily flabbergasted. And no hitching, the official continued, like an umpire dictating the rules of a game. It was like a medieval scholastic's puzzle, whereby he has to write 800 lines of hexameters describing Mars's love for Venus, only severely handicapped by the restriction that he may not use the letter "p." Yutaka and I looked over the gate toward the spot where the car was parked, practically visible 100 meters away. I could see he liked the situation. Challenges like these are Yutaka's happiest moments. For myself, I will be content if I can describe calmly and without rancor how we spent the next eleven hours trying to bridge those 100 meters.

By the time we found Batumi's central bus station it was dark. Driving into Batumi again I noticed how many windows were black or lit by candlelight. Georgia's energy plight is so desperate that Turkey is supposed to have been supplying 30 thousand kilowatts of electricity a day since late last year. Before that, I heard that sometimes all lights in Tbilisi were off except for Shevardnadze's office. The empty bus station was lit by a single bulb in a single window. The clerk refused to sell us a ticket to Sarp. We had to purchase a full-way fare to Trabzon for \$10. I began to understand the prohibition against crossing the frontier on foot.

We mounted the bus — Karadeniz Tur, a Turkish company — and waited an hour. Finally we drove toward Sarp but turned off half-way into a complex of buildings resembling garages. The thirty passengers were herded toward two windows in a tiny shed which everyone was forced to squeeze into. At the first window one bought a customs declaration form for \$1, after arguing with the official which form one needed. At the second window one paid again for a stamp and signature approving the declaration, involving more argument whether certain articles had been justly valued, etc. This laborious process lasted 90 minutes.

The bus now drove into one of the garages, barely longer than the bus itself. It was unlit and empty save for a door leading into a small office. From the inside it looked like a miniature airplane hangar, or, more appropriately, the slaughtering-room for cattle in a factory I visited near Kayseri, where they made pastirma, the Turks' answer to prosciutto. The garage door was slid shut behind us with a clang. There was no food, no drink, no facilities. The time was 21:00.

At 21:20 our passports were collected. The principal official, a Georgian, wore a pea-jacket and Sherlock Holmes cap. He had two factotums. I watched as the three of them opened all the passports to the photograph page and, with Alexandrine pedantry, arranged them neatly on a small table, aligning them to the corners and ensuring the rows were straight. At 21:50 they called the first passenger, shutting the door behind him. He emerged at 22:00, without his passport. The next session also took ten minutes. I wondered what it could be about.

It wasn't long before someone emerged angry and grumbling, and it became clear that I was witnessing extortion. Each interview was a negotiation to determine how much that passenger would pay to be permitted to pass. To get the exit stamp, one had to run the gamut of these three fleeing officials. Blunt refusal to pay would simply land you in the street with the gate slammed behind you. I have witnessed bribery before, but never tallaged so callously. It turned midnight and the procession in and out of the office grimly continued. At times it was interrupted by bursts of activity by the three, who came out of the office carrying flashlights and, in separate sallies, searched first the luggage compartments, then the overhead storage spaces, and

finally pulled back the carpet to unscrew the panels on the floor of the bus and tried to peer underneath, in case something had been hidden in the undercarriage. I ran to the Turkish driver of the bus and began waving my hands at what was going on. "Is this normal?" I cried. "Allah, no," he said, rolling his eyes to the ceiling, "these people are even crazier than most."

Bribes were paid in units of \$10, depending on how many ten-dollar "customs stickers" you were required to have affixed in your passport. These blue-and-yellow stickers were the same as Yutaka and I had bought that afternoon. They were used as a kind of fig-leaf for the bribes. Nobody escaped with only one. A young Georgian who said he exported steel got two. A young Turk who said he imported copper got three. And the three Georgian girls who were exporting themselves to Trabzon were penalized the most heavily, with four each. The bus driver was hauled into the thieves' kitchen as well. On behalf of Karadeniz Tur, in a negotiation that lasted three rounds, each round ending in someone storming out of the office in a huff, he was respectfully dunned for an amercement of \$300. He haggled the figure down to \$200 and paid.

Yutaka by this time had befriended a stunningly handsome 50-year old Armenian woman who called herself Suzanne. She was flirting with the idea of going driving with us and we came within an ace of taking her. She showed me the photograph of herself in uniform from her days as a policewoman in Yerevan. "At least in Armenia we have laws," she said, gesturing toward the office. Nowadays she said she had a fruit concern in Hopa. She commuted once a month. When it was her turn to be summoned to the office, she too was made to buy four stickers. According to her account: She: "Why \$40?" They: "You know why." She: "It's too much!" They: "Come on, you're a beautiful woman, you'll earn it back in no time." She was justly outraged — and injured to patience.

Yutaka and I were left for the end. My interview was an anti-climax. I immediately told the boss in pea-jacket and cap that we had already paid the customs tax upon entering Georgia. He flicked through the pages for a while, pondered, handed me both passports, and dismissed me. Thus, like homeopathic medicine, the small pain of paying \$10 earlier had saved us greater pain later. It was 3:45am. The bus started up. We reached the border and had completed Turkish formalities by 4:45am. We started up our car. I felt woozy with hallucinations of prosciutto ham and the Franco-German border that can be driven without downshifting. We were on the highway to Kars as the darkness began to thin around us.

Armenia. Past Igdir, the last village in Turkey is called Ciftlik köyü. It sits on the Aras (Araxes) river, which is the border with Armenia. There is no crossing there, or even a bridge — in fact, the border between the countries has been closed for most of this century — but there is a military base, so we headed for that. Yutaka

is the living embodiment of St. Just's dictum "*On s'engage et puis, on voit.*" After debating how to approach the base, we forced the car up a steep bank and drove parallel to the river along the wall of barbed wire until a party of Turkish soldiers ran up and started shouting. We offered our passports. I explained that we were journalists (ICWA correspondent card came in handy) and had been hoping to drive into Armenia but were lost. The leader of the party looked at us rather aghast as he tried to decide, doubtless, whether this story was innocent lunacy or wicked imposture. The upshot was that we were taken into the base to see the commander, which had been the goal all along.

The pervading atmosphere at the base was one of suspicion and caution toward Armenia. The two sides do not interact at all. They watch one another through binoculars. A sergeant was ushered into the room to testify that he estimated from his observations there were two Russian soldiers to every one Armenian. There are believed to be 9,000 Russian soldiers patrolling Armenia's frontiers with Turkey and Iran. Russian security ends at Armenia's border, the same way that it extends to Georgia's, but President Levon Ter-Petrosian has not had to compromise with Moscow over Armenia's independence as much as Shevardnadze has over Georgia's, as reflected in the border guard arrangements. By the end, we cheerfully shook hands with the commander, and the sergeant took us to inspect the frontier. We gazed over the river toward the Armenian observation post from a reedy patch, trying not to be conspicuous. The sun lit up an Armenian church, dramatically framed against a mountain hardly three kilometers away.

Driving out we gave a lift to the muhtar, or village headman. Ahmet Gül had bright eyes but was prematurely grey. He wanted the border opened — "We can see the people, but we can't talk to them" — with one reservation, however: "We don't want to make it easier for the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) to enter Turkey from their bases in Armenia." He made us stop the car to show us where his father had been killed by the roadside at night in 1993. "My father was Kurdish, my mother tongue is Kurdish, and they shot him. To hell with the PKK."

Barely 35 kilometers away, at Alican, there is the "protocol" crossing between Armenia and Turkey for diplomats and VIPS. The atmosphere is totally different, so relaxed as to be informal. There was no punctilio. The lad in the pillbox invited us to park inside the gate. A sergeant strolled over to shake our hands. When we asked to see the border, he said "Sure." A bridge stretches across the river, perhaps 70 meters long. We walked to the mid-point, demarcated by a red line. "Do you have any contact with the Armenian and Russian soldiers?" "Sure, sometimes we stand on either side of the line and have a conversation." Yutaka had his picture taken straddling the line while an Armenian looked on, uninterested. Will the

border be opened sometime soon? "It depends on the improvement of relations with Ankara, but we're expecting it, yes. Why not?"

All of which goes to show that the best confidence-building measures in the world are interactions between individuals and freedom of communication.

Nakhjivan, Iran. Turkey meets Nakhjivan along a ten-kilometer border, squeezed between Armenia and Iran like two fingers touching or, if one prefers, like Pyramus and Thisbe who had to kiss through a hole in the wall. Nakhjivan is an enclave of Azerbaijan, separated from its home-state the way Kaliningrad is separated from Russia. The Azeris trust and rely on the Turks for aid, diplomatic backing and moral support, all of which they usually receive. Turkey topped an Azeri poll published this month as the country most trusted when judged on political and economic factors, with 40.4%. (Other results are worth recapitulating: second came *Russia* with 22.5%, joint third *Ukraine* and *USA* with 19.1%. Among countries judged unpredictable in their foreign policies and requiring caution, first came *Iran* with 28.1%, second *USA* with 27%, third *Russia* with 25.8%.)

Just as the Russians in Kaliningrad see themselves as starkly dependent on Russia for survival, the Nakhjivans count on their brother Turks. When we reached the crossing over the Aras, opened in May 1992, there was a steady stream of travelers in both directions. There are no Russians on the border, of course. There are no visa restrictions: Turks must pay \$25 and Nakhjivans come for free, carrying minimal baggage. I asked some men standing in line at customs, and looking as if they were waiting outside an employment office, what might happen if Turkey did not support them. "Armenia would invade — it's as simple as that." "If Armenia did invade, would Turkey attack?" "Definitely." I looked questioningly at a Turkish soldier: what did he think? "Yes." Would he be willing to fight for Nakhjivan? "All Turks would." Everyone's mood was good although it was dirty and hot. When Yutaka and I tried to bluster our way into Nakhjivan without a visa, the Azeri soldiers grinned and sent us on our way with a slap on the back.

Finally we drove the long semi-circular road that skirts Mt. Ararat to reach the Iranian border at Gürbulak via Dogubayazit. A few kilometers from the crossing point we saw two US-made M-48 tanks sitting on the roadside. In stark contrast to Nakhjivan, the border here was practically deserted. There was no motion, no activity. A Belgian truck was parked without a driver. The two cafes were closed for Ramazan. I found a dolmus driver, who was understandably disappointed to learn we had our own car. "Four years ago this place was always busy. Now there's practically nothing." He walked away and it was quiet. As we drove away Mt. Ararat was in front of us. My enduring memory will be Mt. Ararat on that perfect day. Soaring above 5,000 meters, lone and white against an empty azure sky, the most beautiful thing you ever saw. □

CURRENT FELLOWS & THEIR ACTIVITIES

Bacete Bwogo. A Sudanese from the Shilluk tribe of southern Sudan, Bacete is a physician spending two and one-half years studying health-delivery systems in Costa Rica, Cuba, Kerala State (India) and the Bronx, U.S.A. Bacete did his undergraduate work at the University of Juba and received his M.D. from the University of Alexandria in Egypt. He served as a public-health officer in Port Sudan until 1990, when he moved to England to take advantage of scholarships at the London School of Economics and Oxford University. [The AMERICAS]

Cheng Li. An Assistant Professor of Government at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, Cheng Li is studying the growth of technocracy and its impact on the economy of the southeastern coast of China. He began his academic life by winning the equivalent of an M.D. at Jing An Medical School in Shanghai, but then did graduate work in Asian Studies and Political Science, with an M.A. from Berkeley in 1987 and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1992. [EAST ASIA]

Adam Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for East-West Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey's regional role and growing importance as an actor in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Cynthia Caron. With a Masters degree in Forest Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environment, Cynthia is spending two years in South Asia as ICWA's first John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow. She is studying and writing about the impact of forest-preservation projects on the lives (and land-tenure) of indigenous peoples and local farmers who live on their fringes. Her fellowship includes stays in Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. [SOUTH ASIA/Forest & Society]

Hisham Ahmed. Born blind in the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, Hisham finished his A-levels with the fifth highest score out of 13,000 students throughout Israel. He received a B.A. in political science on a scholarship from Illinois State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. Back in East Jerusalem and still blind, Hisham plans to gather oral histories from a broad selection of Palestinians to produce a "Portrait of Palestine" at this crucial point in Middle Eastern history. [MIDEAST/N.AFRICA]

Sharon Griffin. A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the San Diego Union-Tribune, Sharon is spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. She plans to travel and live in Namibia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. [subSAHARA]

Pramila Jayapat. Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for Paine-Webber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a \$7 million developing-country revolving loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

William F. Foote. Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the Buenos Aires Herald from 1990 to 1992. [The AMERICAS]

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