

The Young and the Restless:
Serbian youth, EU visas and the consequences
of conditionality

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May 8, 2009
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Honors Thesis

... organizations for the protection of animals began a campaign for the permanent protection of the striped-neck swan. These until-recently little-known birds have their habitat in... Well, after all, it is not important where their habitat is – the average resident of the civilized world cannot pronounce the name of that country. The most important things are principles and the determination to sacrifice oneself completely for the sake of an idea.

These are just a few additional reasons why we, East Europeans, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the arrival of perfect democracy to our small and lost-in-East-European-space homelands, even when it is now possible to buy at our kiosks condoms in thousands of shapes, colors, flavors and fragrances, and not just the Czechoslovakian “Tigar” brand like in the time of the single-party dictatorship, still try to emigrate to one of those states where so much attention is paid not just to the rights of people but also various types of animals, to one of those countries where order, peace and mutual respect reign, where even in times of senseless racial violence one can sense an unusually high degree of political correctness.

The governments of the great democracies of the West, of course, would be faced with insurmountable problems if they tried to cram masses of morally, materially, and mentally neglected people from Eastern Europe into their clean cities, into cities with well-maintained facades and rows of well-watered flowers, if they let these lazybugs into the hives where every worker bee knows its place. To prevent this undesirable migration, invisible barriers have been placed in the form of visas. People of the East, it is known, fear two things – drafts and bureaucratic procedures. About the East European fear of drafts, those murderous currents of air in rooms, about the awful diseases one can get by exposure to drafts, entire tracts have been written – the fear of bureaucratic procedure is less well-researched, but no smaller. This fear is well-known to great and small strategists in the West, and so in order to receive a visa, aside from the rigid conditions, barriers have been established in the form of numerous questionnaires, which people, who wish to feel the enchantment of orderly countries or even to settle in those countries, must fill out in the unpleasant waiting rooms of embassies and consulates, after long waits in line.

- Mileta Prodanović, Ovo bi mogao biti Vaš srećan dan

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Introduction

Ulica Kneza Mihailova, Prince Mihailo's Street, is long and broad, lined with lovely, pastel-colored Baroque buildings and closed to automotive traffic.¹ It is the heart of Belgrade, where smartly dressed city-dwellers stroll away a Saturday afternoon, eating ice cream, seeing and being seen. It is also the main shopping street - between the cafes, bookstores, curiously omnipresent currency exchange booths, and Serbian boutiques are all the standard European shops: Zara, Mango, Camper, even a Hugo Boss. But on the laden arms of young shoppers, one bag – on the rare occasions when it is present – is inevitably placed outermost, casually displayed, yet smudged from repeated use: the iconic white-and-red H&M bag.

The nearest H&M is in Vienna, over three hundred miles and a successful visa application away.

This is consumption at its most conspicuous in Belgrade – not just the means to buy foreign goods, but the ability to travel abroad to do so. It is common to disparage the state of shopping in Belgrade: the poor selection! the obscene markup! Vienna, on the other hand, is the shopping destination of choice, the closest outpost of “real” Europe, and - as if with this in mind - the Austrian embassy is located conveniently just off Kneza Mihailova. Every morning there is a line outside the main door: mostly young people, holding a thick stack of paperwork, their expressions a mixture of exasperation and

¹ I spent June-September 2008 interning with the Public Diplomacy section at the US Embassy in Belgrade, and traveling around Serbia on the weekends. All personal anecdotes, unless otherwise marked, are from this period.

anticipation. If one can manage to obtain a visa, it only remains to buy a round-trip ticket with one of the many bus companies which make the 8-hour journey to Vienna daily. The ride back is usually twice as crowded – not because there are more passengers, but because each passenger is accompanied by two enormous armloads of shopping bags, containing clothing, shoes, housewares, toys, imported foods...

Everywhere I looked in Serbia, I saw the rest of the world – the prestigious, crucial role that travel, jobs abroad, and foreign education played in society. This may seem self-evident. Certainly, in any small country, the world beyond the borders seems closer, more present in everyday affairs. But in Serbia, more is at play: a complex social, economic, and political history of transborder mobility. The most recent chapter in this history concluded with Milošević's dramatic fall from power in 2000, which brought an end to a decade of wars, shrinking horizons, and international sanctions. Since then, Serbia has been hesitantly following the path from isolation to integration, from pariah state to EU member state, re-joining global(ized) flows of goods, capital and especially people.

Yet as I discovered as I looked closer, the apparent ubiquity of international experience is just that – a superficial appearance only. For younger generations born in Serbia, or those not fortunate enough to have close relatives abroad, shopping trips to Vienna and language programs in London remain very much the province of the very privileged, or the very lucky; the cachet of the H&M bag, and the experience of international travel it represented, was based on its rarity – I saw it only three or four

times over the course of a summer.² Though many older Serbians were able to travel in Europe and the wider world before the wars of the 1990s, due to Yugoslavia's general economic prosperity and the liberal visa regime it enjoyed with both West and East, they have found their ability to do so since then sharply curtailed. And in contradiction to worldwide trends, younger generations in Serbia are even less well-traveled than their parents. A recent (2005) survey found that only 7% of young Serbs have ever actually left the country – even for short-term travel, and even to the neighboring former Yugoslav republics. Yet because they have heard their parents' stories of international travel, and witness the effortlessly cosmopolitan lifestyles of the “normal” world via television and the internet, their own, rather immobile lifestyle seems especially unsatisfying: 75% of them would like to work and live abroad.³ The role played by international work, education, and travel in Serbian history and society is huge. Why, then, is the number of young people who venture beyond Serbia's borders so small?

In my thesis, I will first investigate the historical roots of why the ability to travel, especially to Europe, has such great meaning in Serbian society. Specifically, I will first examine the role of freedom to travel as a means to personal success, an indicator of political normalcy and a source of national pride and exceptionalism in 19th-century Serbia and the SFR Yugoslavia. Then, I will show how both propagandic discourses of isolation and the reality of isolation during Serbia's decade under Milošević added new

² Interestingly enough, I have witnessed a similar “H&M bag phenomenon” here in Seattle – a few years ago, before branches of the Swedish chain opened on the west coast, possession and (oh-so-casual) reuse of an H&M bag was nearly as potent a proof of worldliness as it still is in Serbia. Once an H&M opened in San Francisco, the bags were no longer so prestigious – and now that several branches have opened in Seattle, they are nothing special at all.

³ Djelić, p. 195.

layers of painful meaning to the notion of travel – and how the protests which overthrew him in 2000 were in some ways a triumph of internationalism. Given this historical background of the exceptional symbolic importance of travel in Serbian society, I will then analyze the current political factors which prevent Serbians from traveling. Focusing in particular on the relationship between Serbia and the EU, I will investigate the origins of the EU's strict visa regime towards Serbia in the wars of the 1990s, and explore how, due to the creation and expansion of the Schengen passport-free zone, this restrictive visa regime came to long outlive its original purpose – transforming from a means of controlling the wave of Yugoslav refugees which entered Europe during the nineties into both the basis of a buffer zone at the periphery of the EU and a tool of conditionality in the EU-Serbia bilateral relationship. Most importantly, I will demonstrate the impact that the EU's closed-door policy has had on the political climate in Serbia, particularly among young people and students. Through original research consisting of interviews of Serbian youth, analysis of comments to online news articles, and an in-depth survey, I will explore the significance not just of actual international experience, but also the impact of the *denial* of international experience on the political attitudes of young Serbs. In other words, I will use a two-pronged approach to encompass the entire range of travel experience among Serbian youth. The first prong deals with those individuals with extensive travel experience in the EU – those who have repeatedly been granted visas, and furthermore, can afford to travel in the first place. Of this small number of young Serbs, many find their attitudes towards the EU, and towards the wider world, transformed by the experience. Though their numbers are small, their impact is not to be discounted. The young people who travel extensively are also more

likely to be highly educated, politically engaged, and competitive in the job market – in short, they are the future leaders of Serbia. The second prong, however, deals with the majority – those who lack the financial means as well as the consular documentation needed to travel. For these individuals, the EU’s maintenance of a strict visa regime is not primarily a concrete hurdle to be overcome but an abstract indicator of European attitudes towards Serbia. Stories of visa applications rejected without a word of explanation; the ever-lengthening list of conditions for visa regime relaxation; the fact that many of these conditions are explicitly linked to the wars of the nineties; and the nearly-audible gritting of teeth that seems to emanate from Brussels whenever it becomes politically necessary to allow Serbia a step further along the path to integration – all of these, in the perceptions of young Serbians, are proof that the EU views them as barbarians, gangsters and war criminals – though they were only children during the wars of the nineties. Thus, the so-called “lost generation” of young Serbians feels as though they have been dealt two great injustices by the EU– they are held responsible for their parents’ war, while being denied the freedom to travel that their parents enjoyed.

This desire for Schengen-Zone style freedom of personal movement is the major factor in popular support for EU membership among young Serbs – who are, in turn, the segment of Serbian society with the highest percentage of support for EU membership. The reason for this societal segment’s support of EU membership is straightforward: as things currently stand, their ability to travel abroad, study at foreign universities, and find employment in their field of choice (the latter a near-impossibility for many, due to Serbia’s weak economy and depressed job market) – in other words, to participate fully in a globalized world – is bound inexorably to the prospect of EU membership. Yet as

years go by, and seemingly little progress is made towards either Serbian accession or an easing of the humiliatingly strict Schengen visa regime towards Serbia, credence is lent to the perception of the EU as distant, forbidding, and biased against Serbs – which in turn fuels ambivalence or even hostility towards the EU and the idea of Serbian membership in the EU. These attitudes are currently most pronounced among the youth population - but it goes without saying that the twentysomethings of today are the political and cultural leaders of the very near future.

Chapter 1

The meaning of mobility

Bilo je seoba i biće ih večno, kao i porođaja, koji će se nastaviti.
Ima seoba. Smrti nema!
- Miloš Crnjanski, Seobe⁴

The current interplay between cosmopolitanism and isolationism, internationalism and nationalism in Serbia cannot be examined in a vacuum, looking only at the nine years since the 2000 uprising which removed Milošević from power. In any country, the past echoes in the present – but in Serbia in particular, it has long been remarked (by both folk and academic wisdom) that the past is especially *present* – that modern policy decisions are explicitly informed by national myths, memories and grudges stretching back to the 9th century.⁵ And just as modern Serbia, in the broadest sense, is unusually determined by its history, so is the idea of mobility in modern Serbia unusually determined by the history of this mobility.

It is something of an understatement to describe the long history of the Serbian people as peripatetic. Nearly every era is defined or demarcated by a mass migration. This point is uniformly agreed upon by prominent scholars of the history of the Serbs, such as Radovan Samardžić, the director of the Institute for Balkan Studies at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts:

⁴ “There have always been migrations, and there will always be migrations – just like births, which will continue on. Migrations exist. Death does not!” The last lines of the Crnjanski’s classic 1929 novel Seobe (Migrations).

⁵ The best encapsulation of this national tendency I have ever heard comes from Aleksandar Maćašev, an artist I met in Belgrade in April 2007. His words: “Serbia produces more history than it can consume.”

The history of the Serbian people, since its appearance on the world stage, has been marked by migrations from beginning to end. Ever since their arrival from the ancient homeland⁶, to the Danube Basin and the Balkan Peninsula, the Serbs almost never properly settled down.⁷

Vladimir Grečić, the vice-director of the Institute for International Politics and Business at the University of Belgrade (and perhaps the most thorough historian of the migrations of the Serbs) concurs:

Migrations of Serbian people to other countries are one of the essential features of their history.... What were the causes that made Serbs migrate? [The] reasons were social, historical, economic, political and even cultural. However, some people wonder if Serbs might have inclined to migrations, or in other words, were they not indisposed [sic] to them?⁸

But perhaps the most telling summary belongs to Slobodan Rakitić, who in 1990 wrote:

Last year we [i.e. the Serbs] celebrated the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Yet the Battle of Kosovo is still going on. This year we celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Great Migration of the Serbs under Arsenije III Čarnojević. Yet the migrations are still going on.⁹

In this historical context, the few short periods in which the mobility of the Serbs was limited by a state are the exception, and not the rule. Furthermore, these periods of limited mobility – or, in some cases, forced mobility - tended to coincide with periods of political crisis and societal difficulties. Free travel, on the other hand, was linked with personal excellence.

For example, during the 19th century, the ability of the Serbian intellectuals of that era to move freely between Serbia and the universities of central Europe was what made their accomplishments possible. The University of Vienna in particular attracted

⁶ i.e. the proto-Slavic homeland.

⁷ Samardžić, “Migrations in Serbian History: The Era of Foreign Rule” in Tasić and Stošić, p. 83.

⁸ Grečić in Grečić, *Сеобе Срба некад и сад*, p. 345-346.

⁹ Quoted in Rakić, “Миграције и национално конституисање Срба” (“Migration and the national constitution of the Serbs”) in Grečić, *Сеобе Срба некад и сад*, p. 38. My translation.

numerous Serbian students of medicine, beginning in the first decade of the 1800s. Many of these Serbian doctors also distinguished themselves as writers during their time in Vienna; for example, Svetislav Stefanović, who studied medicine and English, was the first to translate Shakespeare's plays into Serbian.¹⁰ Beginning later in the 19th century, more and more Serbs came to the Habsburg capital to take up other courses of study, including history, law, and the sciences; most would, after some years in Vienna, return to Serbia, where they exerted considerable influence on the founding of the universities in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Niš, and the subsequent expansion of higher education within Serbia. Perhaps the quintessential – and certainly the most famous – of these Serbs in Vienna was Vuk Karadžić Stefanović. Vuk was one of the most prominent philologists in Europe at the time, and is regarded as the father of the modern Serbian language; during his fifty-some years in Vienna, he reformed the Serbian literary language and standardized the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet according to strict phonemic principles¹¹, wrote the first grammar and dictionary of the Serbian language, and translated the New Testament into Serbian. Inspired by the writings of Herder, he also gathered and catalogued the numerous Serbian folk songs, bringing them to the attention of the European intellectual elite – including, among many others, Goethe. Even with these accomplishments in mind, his most lasting contribution was his work towards and signature, as the representative for the Serbian language, to the Vienna Literary Agreement of 1850, which agreed to the creation of a common Serbian and Croatian literary language. Yet even with his deep involvement in the affairs of his homeland, he

¹⁰ Medaković, p. 191.

¹¹ One short quote from Vuk summarizing the guiding orthographic principle of the standardized Serbian language can be recited from memory by just about every Serb, inside and outside of Serbia: “Piši kao što govoriš, i čitaj kako je napisano” – “Write as you speak, and read as it is written.”

was also an important, well-integrated figure in Viennese social circles: “It would not be an overstatement to say that of all the Serbs who lived in the imperial city for any period of time, Vuk was the only one to become truly Viennese.”¹²

Vienna was not the only destination for bright Serbs in search of cultivation – beginning in the 1860s, many traveled outside the Austro-Hungarian Empire to study at the university or the Polytechnikum in Zürich.¹³ Switzerland was an attractive destination for young Serbs who chafed at the tight social constrictions of Habsburg society:

Numerous South Slavs, in particular Serbs, published reports of their student years and travels in Switzerland after returning to their homeland. In these they put particular emphasis on the linguistic and religious tolerance of Switzerland, the achievements of the democratic states, and the freedom of unions and of the press, which had been of particular interest to them while in Switzerland. When one imagines how backward the governance and administration methods of the various southern European countries were at the time, the political eagerness of intellectual youth from that region is not surprising. It is also apparent why, especially for enlightened youths, a period of study in Vienna or Budapest was so much less attractive than one in then-revolutionary Zürich.¹⁴

For this most influential segment of Serbian society during the 19th century, the ability to travel and study at foreign universities was the key to personal success and intellectual freedom. Yet with the beginning of the First World War, emigration came to an almost complete stop. In fact, many Serbs who had recently emigrated actually returned to Serbia and Montenegro to defend it in the war – and after the end of the war, to devote their skills to the construction of the newly-created independent Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Yet this trend of return migration, too, came to a halt in 1929 with the global economic crisis and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes’ –

¹² Medaković, p. 146. My translation.

¹³ Mikić, “Vom beliebten Gastarbeitervolk zur verfeimten Migrationsgruppe” (“From a beloved Gastarbeiter-people to an alienated migrant group”), in Mikić and Sommer, p. 159.

¹⁴ Mikić, in Mikić and Sommer, p. 170. My translation.

renamed Yugoslavia in that same year - corresponding turn towards restrictive authoritarianism. To escape this sudden crackdown, Serbs emigrated to Western Europe and North America in huge numbers. The outbreak of World War II, like the First World War, restricted migration both within the Balkans and between Serbia, Western Europe, and North America. As Grečić pointedly notes, the only mobility occurring among Serbs at that time took the form of forcible relocation into Nazi concentration camps.¹⁵

Mobility in Yugoslavia: A Defining Characteristic

Out of the chaos and destruction of WWII was born a socialist, multinational state, the brainchild of Tito's victorious Partizans. This young country's most important foreign relation was, without doubt, to the USSR; though the Soviets had had virtually nothing to do with the Partizan victory, they were (initially, at least) close ideological cousins and potential military allies. Tito hailed the signing of the 1945 Treaty of Mutual Aid, Friendship, Economic and Cultural Mutual Cooperation:

[O]nly after the peoples of Yugoslavia in the liberation struggle had taken their destinies into their own hands and removed anything that hindered the rapprochement with the brotherly Soviet nation – it is only after all this that finally the centuries-long aspirations of our peoples have been realized and an indestructible link established with the peoples of the Soviet Union, which will be the guarantee of our security and a great benefit for the development of our country.¹⁶

This “brotherly” relationship corresponded to extreme similarity in policies: in votes in the UN General Assembly, Yugoslavia voted in line with the USSR 95%, 97%, and 96% of the time in 1946, 1947 and 1948, respectively.¹⁷ Furthermore, Yugoslavia

¹⁵ Grečić, “Eine grenzüberschreitende Liebe zur Heimat”, in Mikić and Sommer, p. 176-177.

¹⁶ Tito, 1959, pp 16-17

¹⁷ Zimmerman, p. 14.

took this position voluntarily, out of genuine faith in the Stalinist system, and not out of fear of Soviet reprisal. Yet by the late 1940s, the Soviet Union was no longer willing to accept any form of political independence from any Cominform member – it submitted a series of increasingly strict demands for political submission to Yugoslavia, and was met with increasingly indignant refusals – until finally, at a Cominform meeting on June 28, 1948, the Yugoslav Communist Party was declared “outside the family of the fraternal Communist Parties, outside the united Communist front and consequently outside the ranks of the Information Bureau as a result of its leadership’s anti-Party and anti-Soviet views, incompatible with Marxism-Leninism....”¹⁸

A brief but vicious power struggle erupted in Yugoslavia between those who supported Tito and those who supported Stalin – and the Titoists came out on top. Though Tito held out hope for a full year for a reconciliation, by 1949 (and with the mostly-symbolic canceling of the Soviet-Yugoslav Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance), it was apparent that there was no going back. Yugoslav policy in all areas reacted accordingly, though with widely varying speeds: trade relations were among the fastest to change, with Italy, Great Britain, France, Austria, and the US utterly replacing the USSR as major trading partners within the span of a year; more slowly, the idea of political nonalignment – balancing relations between the West and the USSR, the First World and the Second World – gained currency. The idea that, as one columnist in the *Borba* newspaper put it, “[t]here is no justification at all for the view that small nations must jump into the mouth of this shark or that shark. If that were a social law, there would not today be any small states,”¹⁹ began to have real effects on policy decisions: a

¹⁸ Bass and Marbury in Zimmerman, 17

¹⁹ Mose Pijade in *Borba*, July 9, 1949, quoted in Zimmerman, p. 21.

diplomatic preference for the Global South, instead of the Global East or West, a gradual improvement in relations with the United States, and, most fatefully, a slow, but sweeping change in attitudes towards citizens' international mobility.

During the short period of close Soviet-Yugoslav relations, Yugoslav migration and travel policies closely mirrored the Stalinist "closed political system". As William Zimmerman (1987) describes it:

Like other communist elites, Yugoslav leaders proceeded to insulate their citizenry from the world outside their country's borders. The leadership revealed its low trust in its citizenry and its concern for control and fear of spontaneity: both the inflow of ideas from outside the territorial boundaries of Yugoslavia and the foreign travel of Yugoslav citizens were strictly regulated. Just as the imposition of a one-party Leninist system with its attendant regime monopoly of the key public agents of political socialization and the absence of competitive parties implied regime-society relations in which the citizenry were denied an effective voice, the rigid demarcation of boundaries bespoke the regime's hostility to exit as well [Hirschman, 1970, and World Politics, 1978, pp. 90-108].²⁰

There were also economic grounds for the Yugoslav government's reluctance to allow emigration. The Yugoslav economy, especially infrastructure such as factories, bridges and railways, had been decimated during the Second World War, and as the land attempted to rebuild in the years following the war, workers, especially skilled ones, were in great demand. As such, any worker who expressed an interest in taking his or her skills abroad was viewed with suspicion, even hostility.²¹

This attempt to clamp down on migration represented something of a shock to a people accustomed to freedom of motion.

One result, consequently, of the communist seizure of power in Yugoslavia was a profound reorientation in attitudes toward migration. For centuries, South Slavs

²⁰ Zimmerman, p. 74.

²¹ Mikić, Sommer, p. 161.

had viewed population migration as a natural response to economic conditions [Grečić, 1975, p. 193].²²

Though it was technically possible to leave Yugoslavia, would-be travelers and migrants faced significant real and symbolic barriers: visitors to foreign countries required letters of invitation from friends or relatives abroad; passports were hard to come by, and required extensive personal references (Belgrade's *Politika* newspaper later described this period as one "when the obtaining of passports depended on janitors' statements")²³; and those who chose to live for longer periods abroad were met with suspicion from government officials and social peers alike: "Going to work in a foreign country was treated as well nigh a betrayal... [doing so,] in practical language, meant also political emigration."²⁴ An English-language brochure published by the Jugoslavija Information Service in 1961, which reproduced a question-and-answer session with Aleksandar Ranković, vice president of the Federal Executive Council (and Stalinist sympathizer), perfectly summed up the official party position on emigration. After discussing the official stance towards Yugoslavs who had emigrated before and during WWII, Ranković turned his attention to

... those who emigrated from Yugoslavia during the Cominform campaign²⁵, that is, persons who were traitors to their country to the Party and to the revolutionary struggle of their peoples in those most arduous days of crude pressure on the new socialist Yugoslavia, and who actively waged a struggle from abroad against our national independence and our construction of socialism.... Since 1955, however, many emigrants of this category have realized their error and returned to Yugoslavia, where with the assistance of the appropriate offices they have settled their family and property affairs. However, there are also some who have remained abroad and accepted the citizenship of those countries, and who even today continue to work against socialist Yugoslavia. Some of them do so because they are ignorant of the actual state of affairs here. They too are given

²² Zimmerman, p. 74.

²³ In Zimmerman, p 74.

²⁴ *Ekonomska politika*, 1969, in Zimmerman, p. 74.

²⁵ i.e. during the ideological conflict between Stalin and Tito, 1948-1955.

facilities to put their citizenship status in order and regulate their relations to the new Yugoslavia.²⁶

When asked about the “certain number of persons [who] go abroad illegally even today”,

Ranković continued:

It is quite true, there are rare instances of naïve people, though less and less of them, as a rule persons out for an easy life by their wits, crossing the frontier without proper papers. These are in the main young people, foolish enough to think that somewhere else in the world they will find it possible to earn easy money and live comfortably. But very soon, in their first efforts to find their way about in the other country, they come up against reality and understandably are terribly disappointed. Often enough they are pressed to make statements which really have no connection with the real promptings of their irregular trip or with their convictions [i.e. to claim political refugee status]. And once they are in such a plight they are easy prey for certain known war criminals and other enemies of Yugoslavia. These make use of them for simple prostitution, smuggling and other criminal activities. In place of the easy, comfortable life they expected, many become wanderers on the face of the earth, without any protection, forced to come down to manual labour and be cheap labour power in mines, forestry and suchlike work.... Here I feel I should point to the attitude of certain countries, which accord such persons the status of political refugees, although they know very well that the promptings which lead such young people to leave their country have nothing whatever to do with politics. Yugoslavia's representatives abroad do all they can under the principles of international law and offer emigrants of this sort all the aid and protection they can, especially when, disillusioned and without any means of livelihood, they want to come home. In such cases our offices abroad take the most urgent steps possible.²⁷

In just a few minutes of speechmaking, Ranković gives the gist of early Yugoslav political attitude towards migrants – namely, it states that all emigrants are either fascist traitors or foolish, greedy youths; registers its irritation with “certain countries” who accept Yugoslav emigrants as political refugees, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the new Yugoslav government; paints the outside world as a nightmarish wasteland, filled with war criminals, smugglers, forced prostitution and heavy labor, in order to scare off any Yugoslav youths considering a similar trip; and reaffirms the Yugoslav

²⁶ The Attitude of Yugoslavia towards Yugoslav Emigrants, p. 10.

²⁷ The Attitude of Yugoslavia towards Yugoslav Emigrants, p. 10-11.

government's paternal, forgiving attitude towards those who have gone astray – in short, a wide array of efforts with the one overarching goal of preventing emigration.

Yet after the break with the Cominform, Yugoslav officials began to explore alternatives to this closed-borders system. After several party purges (including that of Aleksandar Ranković in 1966), restrictive Stalinism lost its popularity among policymakers; meanwhile, allowing the international migration of labor represented a tantalizing possible solution to several major economic problems: extensive underemployment resulting from the economic reform of the early 1960s; a general lack of expertise and training in the technical fields; and an increasingly pressing need for an influx of foreign cash, in the form of remittances. At first, officials merely tolerated the emigration of labor, but

[b]y the late 1960s, the Yugoslavs had raised the notion of open borders to the level of state policy. Rather than a stance of tolerance or resignation, the open borders policy had come to be identified in official utterances as one of the key defining features, along with market socialism and self-management, of what was distinct and positive in the Yugoslav socialist variant and an element that set off Yugoslavia from the Soviet model.²⁸

This embrace of free mobility was taken by many as an indication of a return to political and societal normalcy after the shock of Stalinism. Yugoslavs went abroad in droves – roughly a million, or one-fifth of the total work force, had gone abroad by the early 1970s – and stayed abroad for long periods of time – three-quarters for longer than three years, and one-fifth for over eight years.²⁹ The size of this traveling population

²⁸ Zimmerman, p. 76.

²⁹ Zimmerman, p. 106

demanded that it be treated as a political factor – to be governed as a sort of “seventh republic”, with a population twice that of Montenegro.³⁰

The form that this governance took was overwhelmingly positive. After the passport reform of 1966, the Yugoslav authorities actively encouraged employment abroad: the Yugoslav Employment Bureaus aided in finding foreign employment; numerous new Yugoslav consulates were opened in Western Europe in order to provide support for workers abroad (including thirteen in West Germany between 1964 and 1973 alone); and through the negotiation of bilateral treaties with almost all the Western states which were receiving migrants.. Eight such treaties were signed during the second half of the 1960s, with France, Austria, Sweden, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Australia. The 1969 bilateral recruitment agreement with West Germany was perhaps most significant given the wealth of job openings in Germany (which, at the time, was in the midst of its postwar *Wirtschaftswunder*, and suffering from acute labor shortages). Austria and Switzerland also absorbed huge numbers of Yugoslav workers. Yugoslav pupils and students abandoned the study of the Russian language overnight, switching to the suddenly-much-more-useful German language.

Travel for pleasure, too, became much easier and more widely accepted – indeed, it became a point of pride and a marker of the exceptional Yugoslav system. Slavenka Drakulić recalls the special meaning of travel for Yugoslavs:

From the late fifties onward, with each year it became easier to travel and virtually everyone in Yugoslavia possessed a passport and could go to Western Europe without a visa. This gradually became a special reason for all Yugoslavs to feel superior to the rest of the communist countries, whose citizens were forced to stay at home.³¹

³⁰ i.e. in addition to Yugoslavia’s six republics: Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Slovenia. Zimmerman, p. 106.

³¹ Drakulić, p. 16.

Travel to Western countries became associated with being able to afford and acquire highly-desired Western goods:

At that time, Yugoslavia was well off and people could afford to travel both as tourists and as what we called ‘shopping tourists’, to buy what we could not get in our own country. Millions of the Yugoslavs who went abroad in the seventies, eighties and nineties were not economic or political emigrants. Quite the contrary: they went abroad in order to *spend* their money.³²

as well as with exposure to other political ideas:

Travelling was important to people from Yugoslavia, because we could do it, while the others in Eastern Europe could not. It was also a kind of rebellion against the communist state, making ourselves vulnerable to the ‘contamination’ of Western ideas and lifestyles.³³

- both luxuries undreamt of in the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Travel to neighboring communist states, on the other hand, was a sobering reminder of how good life was in

Yugoslavia:

Having a Yugoslav passport meant you could travel both to the West and to the East... [but] why would I visit somewhere that was the same as home, only much, much worse? In fact, I know that this was precisely the reason why some people from my country did visit the USSR. Besides the strong feeling of sympathy they had for suffering people there, they also had a rare chance to feel superior.... We were not free, we were not rich, but the consolation of our comparative comfort was reassuring. It was enough to make a short trip and to convince yourself that others were living in even more desperate conditions – not enough milk, no detergent, no sanitary towels (not to mention a pair of jeans, a very important status symbol all over Eastern Europe at that time). It gave us a cheap thrill, but it worked. People told me how they had kissed the soil at the airport, when they returned from a visit to Moscow, and I had no reason to think that they were lying.³⁴

Thus the decision to open the borders worked, on several levels, to appease the Yugoslav population and reinforce the political status quo. Paychecks and blue jeans from the West

³² Drakulić, p. 16.

³³ Drakulić, p. 18.

³⁴ Drakulić, p. 28-30.

made life in a communist country more pleasant – and quick jaunts to the East reminded Yugoslavs of just how much they owed to Tito and his policy of nonalignment.

The Nineties: Fleeing friends, shrinking horizons, and life in “the ghetto”

The positive associations attached to internationality were irrevocably altered by the wars of the nineties which would tear apart Yugoslavia. In fact, following an initial trauma in the form of an enormous exodus of Serbia’s best and brightest in the face of war, the punitive or just plain oblivious behavior of the international community actually reinforced Milošević’s propaganda of Serbian isolation and victimization. Thus those who remained in Serbia but rejected the dominant culture of xenophobia found themselves rejected in turn by the very outside world they sought to embrace.

For many, a sharp increase in emigration – consisting almost entirely of young men fleeing the draft – was the first sign that something was seriously wrong. This draft was announced in the summer of 1991, first by the Yugoslav Army (JNA) and then by the Serbian Army, before war was ever actually declared in Slovenia or Croatia – leading to, in the words of Jadranka Andjelić: “...a very schizophrenic situation. It was kind of forbidden to say, “yes, we are in the war,” and on the other hand some young people were going somewhere. People were very confused.”³⁵ The quantity of people leaving was significant; though numbers vary, most historians estimate that between 100,000 and 200,000 young men left Serbia alone during 1991 and 1992, the years of the first draft –

³⁵ Interview with Isakson, in *A Decade of Anti-War Activism under Milošević: From Start to Finish*, p. 8. Andjelić is one of the directors of Dah Theater, an anti-war street-theater troupe active through the nineties and up to today.

some estimates run as high as 380,000.³⁶ The exodus continued as even those not subject to the draft - the young, urban, and educated in particular - began to leave in droves.

In response to the enormous numbers of refugees arriving from all over the former Yugoslavia, countries in western and central Europe with which Yugoslavia had previously enjoyed a visa-free relationship began, one by one, to slam the door shut. By November 1992, EC member states Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the UK had implemented a visa requirement for holders of Yugoslav passports –as had non-EC members Finland, Austria, Hungary, and Switzerland, among others. And as it was nearly impossible to receive one of these visas, the number of refugees arriving in the countries which required them plummeted almost overnight. Though politicians and journalists from across Europe condemned the introduction of these visa regimes, saying that they were in effect a death sentence for thousands fleeing war zones, the vast majority referred only to Bosnians as “innocents”, refugees worthy of saving. Serbians seeking refugee status, on the other hand, were treated with suspicion – as can be seen in an article in London’s Daily Mail written after the UK introduced visa requirements for Yugoslav refugees:

Tough curbs on people *claiming to be* refugees from the Yugoslavian civil war will come into force at midnight. Visas will be needed by *self-styled refugees* from all parts of the former Communist country, except Croatia and Slovenia. They will have to be obtained from British embassies before travelling. Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke told MPs yesterday the measure was necessary to stop the 'uncontrolled flow' of former federation citizens. Britain had already admitted about 40,000 and many recent arrivals were from areas well away from the war zone. *One third of the 4,424 who had applied for asylum were from Serbia where many sought to escape the effects of economic sanctions. But Britain was ready to receive from Bosnia and other areas those with special humanitarian needs -*

³⁶ Paunović, “Ten Years of NGOs in the FR of Yugoslavia: From Illegals and Enemies to Important Actors of Social Change,” in Kazimir, p. 57.

the wounded, orphans and men freed from detention camps who had lost touch with their families.³⁷

In the international court of public opinion, Serbs had already been found guilty by 1992 – and ordinary Serbians found themselves sentenced to imprisonment in their once-free land. The feeling of bitter hopelessness that this induced was captured in a popular song of the time by Đorđe Balašević, one of Serbia’s best known singer-songwriters. The song, called “Krivi smo mi” (“We’re the guilty ones”), lists in its verses all the people who ordinary Serbians were most likely to blame for the war – the rednecks, generals, and paranoid maniacs – but then says that this minority is not at fault, but rather the whole of society for allowing it to happen. The chorus addresses the consequences:

Hit the road, Europe, don’t wait for us anymore,
Don’t ask for us, you’ll just get a bad reputation too.
Hit the road, planet, it’s been nice knowing you –
We’re doing fine – got just what we deserved.³⁸

Serbia’s academic community was particularly hard-hit by Serbia’s increasing isolation – not only had funding for research dried up overnight, and salaries for scholars were spiraling downwards³⁹, but the international sanctions against Serbia extended to the universities and scientific institutions. Subscriptions to academic journals were summarily canceled, and the papers of Serbian academics submitted to these same journals, or international academic conferences, were returned unread, with a note attached, explaining that “[i]n view of the sanctions imposed by the United Nations... we are unable to consider your paper for publication.” One professor fumed, “We have been

³⁷ Doran, Anthony. "Yugoslavia's bogus war refugees face visa struggle." *The Daily Mail* [London] 6 Nov. 1992. Italics mine.

³⁸ “Hit the road” is my rather free translation of “putuj”, which literally means “travel!” – as in, a command. Hence, the link to the lost possibility of travel is more explicit in the original: “Putuj, Evropo” – “Travel, Europe, [because we can’t.]

³⁹ For an average scientist, from the equivalent of 1,300 Deutschmarks a month before the war to 100 DM a month during the war. Judah, 277.

placed in a ghetto!” – even former Yugoslav colleagues who had emigrated did not protest against this treatment.⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly in light of these conditions, the number of émigré academics, like that of draft dodgers, was enormous. Canada in particular was eager to vacuum up any willing, well-educated Serbs – by 1995 it was issuing 7,000 visas a year, at least one-third of which went to the highly skilled and highly educated. One scholar at Belgrade’s esteemed Mihajlo Pupin Research Institute described the drain: 1,000 of Serbia’s top young scientists, out of a pool of about 6,000, left in 1992 alone; 70 of the 350 researchers at the Institute had already left by 1993, mostly to Canada.⁴¹ And the rate of emigration snowballed as time went on, since those who emigrated first could ease the path (through writing recommendations and letters of guarantee) of those who followed them. Sizable populations of recently-emigrated academics formed in Canadian cities – there were so many ex-Pupin researchers in Toronto that they formed two soccer teams and met weekly to play against each other.⁴² The overall effect was devastating. Bojana Šušak, writing in 1996, estimates that 500,000 young graduates and professionals had left Serbia since 1991; furthermore, she links the decimation of this population through emigration to the weakness of the anti-war, anti- Milošević movement in the first half of the decade: “... at least 500 of [the 500,000 who emigrated] were those who actively participated in the organization of anti-war protests, and at least five thousand were those who regularly attended lectures.”⁴³

The consequences of this exodus, not just for the anti-war movement but for urban life in general, were grim. Those remaining in Serbia’s cities, especially Belgrade,

⁴⁰ Judah, 277-78.

⁴¹ Judah 277.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Šušak, “An Alternative to War”, in Popov, p. 132.

were confronted by the total death of the society they once knew. The once-vibrant city had become a wasteland, especially for young people, and more and more packed up to leave every day. And as the regime-hostile city dwellers left, they were replaced by Serb refugees from the rural, war-torn Krajina region – refugees who, due to the traumatic experience of expulsion from their homeland at the hands of militant Croats and Bosniaks, were all too willing to support extreme nationalist policies and politicians. Uroš Djurić, a rock musician and conceptual artist living in Belgrade, described the feeling: “During these months, society changed a lot. These people who left were the critical mass. They had the quality which would have helped us to keep things together here.”⁴⁴ And the choice to stay, as Djurić went on, “was no grand, romantic gesture. It didn’t make you feel good. It was harsh and very real.”

I can understand [the émigrés’] way of seeing things. But my identity is here and I want to struggle for the right kind of society here. I know it would be much easier to go and live somewhere else, but it’s high time that we started to live here properly. *Why should I always have to go abroad to find what I need? I want to get it here.* I want to emancipate myself in my own surroundings. I don’t want to go to the US to wash dishes. Here I’m an artist, but when I go *outside*, I’m nobody. Most of our friends who have left are living like peasants, they are fighting to survive every day and they always feel like they are guests in these countries.⁴⁵

Referring to Serbia as “inside” and the rest of the world as “outside” – a revealing quirk of the language which emerged during the early nineties – Djurić explained that his decision to stay surprised even himself:

I always wanted to live outside. I used to go to Berlin for two or three months each year. But when the war started, most of the people who never thought about living somewhere else were emigrating. And myself, who always wanted to live outside the country, came back home.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Quoted in Collin, 58-59.

⁴⁵ Paraphrased, then quoted in Collin, p. 59.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Collin, p. 60.

Djurić reveals that not all those who left were necessarily inherent cosmopolitans – nor were all those who stayed supporters of Milošević, or even people stuck in a rut of local living. Thus the emotional divide between those who left and those who stayed was all the more bitter, since it divided groups of friends with similar ideals and worldviews.

Veran Matić, the founder of the underground, youth-run radio station B92, explains:

Sooner or later, the émigrés would turn around and ask those who remained: what are you still doing in that sorry country? Are you insane? And those who remained would think: am I? ‘Then you feel that something has seriously changed, that your friend of yesterday has begun to see you as an insect.... And then you become angry and sad because of that.’⁴⁷

Not only was the gap between “inside” and “outside” getting wider and more emotionally fraught, but the “inside” itself was shrinking.

The walls were closing in. Within two short years, Yugoslavia, once a country of twenty-two million people, relatively wealthy, its people free to travel abroad, had become Serbia, internationally renowned criminal renegade, with little opportunity for fun, work, or travel. The world had shrunk to the local, the provincial.⁴⁸

Young Serbs, who had grown up in Yugoslavia and were, naturally, were accustomed to having freedom of movement within it (it was, after all, their own country), were shocked when this proved to no longer be true. Belgrade DJ Slobodan Brkić relates his anger at the shrinking horizons:

Those miserable bastards, they took away so much of my life! Ljubljana was a part of my life, Dubrovnik was a part of my life, Sarajevo was a part of my life. What do I have in common with some guy from rural Serbia?⁴⁹

Not only was the outside world rapidly receding, but the best parts of the domestic sphere were being redefined as “foreign,” and moving quickly, and irrevocably, out of reach.

⁴⁷ Paraphrased, then quoted in Collin, p. 59.

⁴⁸ Collin, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Collin, p. 64.

The collapse of urban, educated society was matched by more concrete troubles. International sanctions cemented Serbia's isolation from the rest of the world; inflation spiraled out of control, peaking at 363 quadrillion percent; the basic necessities for everyday life, including food and toiletries, were either absent entirely or absurdly overpriced (at one point, a bunch of carrots cost the equivalent of a year's salary⁵⁰); gangsters and war profiteers flourished, bringing with them cheap drugs and a murder rate that doubled during the early nineties.⁵¹

Even the Dayton Peace Accords, which brought an end to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia in 1995, did not bring relief to urban, internationally-minded Serbs. On the contrary, by solidifying Milošević's reputation as a peacemaker in the international community, they reinforced his power at home – and strengthened the isolating feeling among members of the opposition that the outside world neither understood nor cared about their plight.⁵²

This feeling of isolation was no accident. In fact, the ability to reliably produce a feeling of difference and separateness – that is, of Serbian exceptionalism – was the genius of Milošević's rise to, and firm grasp on power. Sabrina P. Ramet, in her essay "Under the Holy Lime Tree: The Inculcation of Neurotic and Psychotic Syndromes as a Serbian Wartime Strategy, 1986-95," examines the techniques and effects of Serbian wartime propaganda on the collective Serbian psyche. Ramet proposes the idea of a libidinal state, in which a charismatic leader taps into the collective libidinal values of a society, maintaining power by "producing sensations of pleasure (triumph, expansion, defiance of stronger powers, the infliction of suffering on "enemy" nations and groups,

⁵⁰ Judah, 259.

⁵¹ Judah, 267-268.

⁵² Kazimir, "From Islands to the Mainland" in Kazimir, p. 20

etc.)”⁵³ For this triumph of the collective libido to be possible, the superego must be stilled, and the national ego – “the way a nation views itself and its role in the world” – must be redesigned.⁵⁴ Hence, the reshaping of the Serbian collective ego into one defined by difference, isolation and exceptionalism made possible the fulfillment of the Serbian collective libido, in the form of jingoism and destruction. If Serbia was special, a lone resister to the international forces of evil, anything it did to “defend” itself was acceptable.

Many of Serbia’s foremost literary figures, as well as a horde of everyday propagandists, were all too happy to devote themselves to depicting Serbia’s exceptionalism. Their techniques in creating a corresponding national myth are thoroughly catalogued in Ivan Čolović’s Politika simbola: ogledi o političkoj antropologiji. Čolović, too, emphasizes the remaking of a national ego – in his estimation, accomplished primarily through myth. As he begins his book:

Today in Serbia, discussion of politics, of the nation, of war and borders, of Europe and the “Serbian question”, of the church and the state, largely come down to myth.... This can be explained with the primacy which myth has, relative to other forms of political discussion, in a time when a need appears to quickly reconstruct and consolidate on new foundations the image of the nation as an imagined community, as well as the mastery of images of political power, both of which are unbalanced by the fall of a communist regime, the collapse of a state, and war.⁵⁵

According to this new national myth, which was constantly employed by propaganda during the nineties, the Serbian nation - that is, “Serbdom” (*srpstvo*) - is of epic significance, not least for its separateness from and opposition to the corrupt outside world:

⁵³ Ramet 127.

⁵⁴ Ramet 131.

⁵⁵ Čolović 11. My translation.

It is the oldest nation (*narod*) on earth, from which all other nations have sprung, just as all other languages have flowed out from the Serbian language. But at the same time, it is the youngest and most vital nation, it offers the seed of human, or at least European rebirth. This is possible because this nation stands on the periphery of historical time, of the irrecoverable waste of history. It lives in the time of the eternal present, at once old and young, in an eternal communion of the dead, the living, and the yet to be born.... Serbs have to this very day remained as they have always been, though other nations more numerous, more materially wealthy and militarily powerful than them have always tried to biologically defile or spiritually destroy them. In this, Serbia's enemies have always been aided by the ungrateful and false brothers and neighbors, the various traitors and degenerates of the Serbian nation. Today Serbia is a bone in the throat of the extortionist-aesthetic and satanic international community, which coerces nations into a New World Order, simply because Serbs are a proud nation which wishes to build a state on healthy and natural foundations, a state in which all will be together, on Serbian soil, all will be one nation, one state and have one leader, where all will observe one Serbian faith, speak one Serbian tongue, write one Serbian script, and think one Serbian thought.⁵⁶

This separateness from the world, in particular conceptions, even manifested itself in a desire for the '...total removal of the Serbian world from the entire rest of the world'⁵⁷:

The development of the idea of national identity as a centripetal force moving the Serbian nation away from the company of other nations inspired Matija Bećković to conceive of Serbia as a separate heavenly body, with Kosovo as its equator: 'Kosovo is the equator of the Serbian planet.'⁵⁸

According to Čolović, "Europe" itself is an important figure in the Serbian mythological pantheon – one that takes an antagonistic role towards Serbia.

Among the characters in the current Serbian myth, an important place has once again been taken by an evil deity, a sort of fallen angel known by the name 'Decayed West' or 'Grandma Europe.' [...] Serbs have nothing to do with this Europe. The Serb, as Vladimir Velmar-Janković wrote in his time, is a 'Noneuropean'. 'Of all the regions in Europe,' according to [Velmar-Janković], 'the Balkans are least Europe.' [...] Similarly, at the end of the nineties, Vladimir Vujić asserted, 'No, we are not Europe.'⁵⁹

Hence, in the new fundamental national myth, themes of separateness, removal and antagonism with Europe were all-encompassing. Yet as Eric Gordy argues in 1999 book The Culture of Power in Serbia, those few in Serbia who rejected this new national myth

⁵⁶ Čolović 13-14. My translation.

⁵⁷ Čolović 66. My translation.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Čolović 41. My translation.

of isolation found themselves doubly isolated – turned away not only by Western visa officers, but by the xenophobic society around them.

According to Gordy, despite the utter failure, by any measure, of Milošević's regime in both domestic and international affairs, he was able to maintain his hold on power because he excelled at what Gordy calls "the destruction of alternatives": not only political alternatives, but informational, social, and even musical alternatives as well. Support for Milošević's regime was not only a political position, it was a lifestyle. A supporter would get his or her (heavily biased) news from RTS, the state-owned broadcaster; socialize in the (mob-owned, overpriced) cafes along Strahinjića Bana Street; and listen to (regime-supported, jingoistic or simply mindless) turbofolk music. Consequently, to separate oneself from any of these facets of the regime's authority – to get the news from independent broadcasters like B92, or socialize in underground clubs or private apartments, or listen to international rock, punk, or house music – was to separate oneself from Serbian society as a whole. Hence, to reject the regime-propagated societal myth of isolation, exceptionalism and xenophobia was to find oneself rejected by that very society – trapped in a ghetto inside a ghetto.

This subculture, and the sentiment of resistance and internationality it embraced, went underground for its own survival, finding expression almost exclusively in culture and art – as in Belgrade's small but passionate punk music scene, or in the creation of cultural centers like the Cinema Rex or the Center for Cultural Decontamination. The creation of such underground cultural centers, even as they provided a crucial social space for those who opposed the war and all that had changed in Yugoslavia,

strengthened the sense of divide from, or enclosure within, the larger society; once they were created:

The impression of life in a ghetto was even more intensified. Never before have the people so resolutely and passionately spoken of “us” and “them”, nor has this ever looked so irreversible and final.⁶⁰

Yet even – perhaps especially - the most artistic, abstract expressions of “otherness” and rejection of the dominant social mores were nonetheless crucial to the resistance. Even as the wider world failed to recognize that political opposition to Milošević existed in Serbia at all, the underground continued to broadcast their unilateral declaration of internationality.

Symbols of this very internationality – to spite the national myth of isolation, and in spite of the international community’s disinterest in the Serbian opposition – were at the forefront of the 1996/97 winter protests. For over a year, ever since the 1995 Dayton Accords had put the international community’s stamp of approval on the Milošević regime, the Serbian resistance had nearly despaired of ever effecting political change. For those in “the ghetto”, the situation seemed hopeless. Then, to the surprise of all, the unexpected victory of the disorganized political opposition coalition Zajedno (“Together”) proved to be the catalyst for anti-regime protest on a major scale. The Zajedno coalition had won a majority of seats in most large Serbian cities – but when these clear results were promptly and ham-handedly annulled by Milošević, shock at the government’s blatant disregard for the will of the people quickly turned into outrage. In Niš, 20,000 people – 20% of the city’s population – spontaneously took to the streets before the annulment was even official; in Belgrade, crowds as large as 400,000 demonstrated against the theft of the election for over four months. Pensioners,

⁶⁰ Kazimir, "From Islands to the Mainland" in Kazimir, p. 10

housewives, and middle-class workers demonstrated side-by-side with the students and intellectuals who once again, after months or years in the underground, were channeling their outrage into political action.

But these public demonstrations were more than political protests – they were a jubilant reclamation of the streets and the airwaves after years trapped in the ghetto of opposition. As Ivica Dolenc, one of the protesters, relates:

It seemed that everything had been turned upside down, by some magic, and that everything would now develop in the best possible way, that the misery of all the years gone by would vanish, and that everyone who had left would come back. Of course I knew that that was impossible, but I was happy to know that some of the good people here were still around, that some good new people had emerged and that the destruction was not complete.⁶¹

Even the literal form of the protests – *šetnje* (strolls) through Belgrade's streets, lasting for hours and consisting of thousands upon thousands of people – was a direct antidote to the feeling of entrapment and claustrophobia produced by the Milošević regime. Dolenc continues:

I am walking in self-defense. I think I can avoid the filth, human and otherwise, which have been the main features of my life so far. As I walk, the fears, anxiety, bans and reproving glances are slowly peeling away from me.... I see everyone around me smiling. The whole time there is only one thought on my mind – that the triumph of evil is only possible if enough good people do nothing about it.

I'm meeting people I haven't seen since the last demonstrations. These are a special kind of acquaintances, who can't be seen in other places. We are walking in the strong conviction that we will walk all the way, although those who know what the end will look like are few [and] far between.... [W]e're already learning from our experience... we've chosen the best shoes for walking.... If necessary we will walk just to oppose them. After all these years of apathy, stuck inside our homes, we are again discovering the street and socializing. The walk becomes the main event of our days, all business activity is subject to the walk, we can hardly wait for the walk to begin. We've almost forgotten why we went out in the streets in the first place.⁶²

⁶¹ Dolenc, "Šetnja u mestu", in *Šetnja u Mestu: Građanski Protest u Srbiji*, p. 105.

⁶² Dolenc, p. 106.

What's more, the content of the demonstrations – the jokes and pictures drawn on signs, the slogans being chanted – was international in tone, beginning with the banner which headed the column of “strollers” every day:

...a banner reading '*Beograd je svet*' – '*Belgrade is the world*' – its slogan reaching out, like hands through the bars of a cell, to a global society that Milošević had shut out. There were placards decorated with cartoon characters, Smurfs and Bugs Bunny, pennants with the logos of CND, Jack Daniels and Ferrari, and quotations from Shakespeare, Kafka and Orwell. There were images of Bob Marley and lyrics from bands like The Prodigy and Rage Against The Machine... Serbian flags were flown, but many carried the flags of other countries – Germany, Japan, France – intended as a symbolic break with the spell of isolation cast by Milošević (yet inevitably cited by regime loyalists as evidence of hostility to Serbian interests).⁶³

For the first time, the Internet also began to be used as a link to the outside world which bypassed censored state media – in effect, the (temporary) replacement of freedom of personal movement with freedom of the movement of information. Out of a basement room in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, a small group of dedicated students worked round the clock collating news, writing English-language reports on the rallies, attaching photographs, coding and uploading them to a bare-bones website – all to make sure the outside world took notice of the Belgrade demonstrations. One student, Igor, explained the reasoning behind their efforts:

The Internet is the only free media in this country, the only way to communicate with the international public. We are making connections with young people all over the world. We are saying: “Look at us, we are the same age, we think the same, we like the same music, we are also Europeans and we want to be part of Europe.”⁶⁴

B92, the main opposition news radio station, was one of the first organizations in Serbia to embrace the Internet and create a net presence. Consequently, when the station was abruptly shut down by the government a few weeks into the 1996/97 protests, they were

⁶³ Collin 106.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Collin p. 102.

able to publish news bulletins and audio files on the web, where they were picked up by the BBC and Voice of America and broadcast back into Serbia – effectively circumventing the government ban. The use of the Internet to transmit news was much more significant in the international realm than within Serbia:

Although only around 10,000 people had Internet access in Serbia, the use of the new technology gave the protests worldwide impact, opening new lines of communication. *Virtually, at least, Serbia was part of the global community again.*⁶⁵

After this enormous expression of public will for change, it was a crushing disappointment when little actually did. Even though Milošević finally acknowledged the results of the election after four months of protests, the ‘Zajedno’ opposition fell apart after only a few months, effectively returning control of Serbia’s cities to Milošević’s Socialist Party, and confirming for many their darkest fear: that Milošević would never be forced out of power. As for the president himself, what had failed to kill him had only made him stronger. Absent any political opposition, he tightened his grip on the independent media and the universities – two important bases for resistance.⁶⁶ Worse still, none of the opposition parties had the wherewithal to mount any kind of resistance to Milošević’s bloody war in Kosovo – and the 1999 NATO bombing campaign meant to stop the war merely united the public behind Milošević and cemented the feeling of “Serbia versus the world” – undoing the broad-based sense of engagement in a global society which the 1996/97 protests had worked so hard to achieve. Furthermore, that same “global society” seemed to be turning its back on Serbia, as numerous countries, including the US and the member states of the EU, reimposed sanctions – including a ban on flights and shipments of oil – on Yugoslav citizens in the wake of the war in

⁶⁵ Collin p. 114.

⁶⁶ Lazić, 21.

Kosovo.⁶⁷ In these dark times, protesters rarely took to the streets. Yet even in this hopeless environment, a new group was growing. Meeting quietly in cafes, clubs and private apartments, ever-larger numbers of students were joining a new, decentralized organization called Otpor (“Resistance”), which had been founded in response to legislation limiting the freedom of Serbia’s universities but was rapidly expanding to broader goals. The streets would not stay quiet for long.

In January 2000, the many parties of the opposition, due largely to pressure from Otpor, had once again solidified into a single coalition (the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, or DOS) and agreed on Vojislav Koštunica as the single presidential candidate to run against the incumbent Slobodan Milošević in the upcoming September elections.⁶⁸ But Otpor members, most of them veterans of the 1996/97 protests, had learned from the strengths and weaknesses of the earlier demonstrations – as before, they maintained their distance from the opposition parties, hoping that the appearance of nonpartisanship would strengthen their appeal. And as before, the tone of the *šetnje* needed to be humorous, charming, and engaging, in order to draw larger numbers of people to join them and to make the police crackdowns against them seem all the more unjust. But there was one crucial difference in the content of the signs and slogans of these new protests: a conspicuous lack of internationality. In the wake of the 1999 NATO bombings, Otpor could not rely on the universal appeal of the outside world to draw their fellow citizens to their banner. References to any other country, especially NATO member states, would be seen as traitorous, or even as proof of foreign meddling in Serbian affairs, and therefore were avoided. This revolution, in appearance at least, needed to be utterly,

⁶⁷ Bates, Stephen. “EU to cut off Belgrade’s oil.” The Guardian 27 Apr. 1999. The reimposed sanctions also included a visa ban on Milošević’s immediate family and friends, as well as all government ministers.

⁶⁸ Bringing Down a Dictator.

unquestionably Serbian. Yet Otpor was not, and could not be, purely homegrown – it needed the support of the outside world to overthrow a president more entrenched than ever. This support, therefore, had to be conducted in secret: funds from the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the Open Society Institute, and numerous other NGOs, as well as from USAID and other government-affiliated funds, were funneled to Otpor through bank accounts in Europe. These organizations also held covert training sessions for central members of Otpor across the border in Hungary, teaching them to create and brand political identities, campaign door-to-door, engage in nonviolent resistance, and spot and blow the whistle on election fraud – since international election observers would not be allowed into the country.⁶⁹

In the lead-up to the September presidential elections, Otpor went into high gear, holding rallies and blanketing the streets with their highly-recognizable symbols: a black, stylized fist and the phrase “Gotov je!” – “He’s finished!” During the summer before the elections, they organized their most internationally-oriented event yet: the Exit Festival in Novi Sad. The festival brought together popular bands from across Serbia, in addition to presenting numerous art and dramatic performances; but though it masqueraded as a simple summer cultural festival in order to avoid repression from the ruling regime, Exit’s purpose was understood by the thousands who attended to be deeply political. The artists who performed were widely known for their anti-regime political leanings; and the festival’s full name was “Exit out of Ten Years of Madness”, an explicit reference to Serbia’s decade under Milošević’s rule.⁷⁰ Exit Festival was a perfect example of the razor’s edge Otpor walked, appealing to people’s – particularly young people’s - desire

⁶⁹ [Bringing Down a Dictator](#).

⁷⁰ Exit Istorija - Exit 00." [Exit Festival Official Website](#). 29 May 2008
<http://www.exitfest.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=139&Itemid=309>.

for re-engagement in the global community, without explicitly naming that global community and thereby alienating those still angry over the NATO bombings. The name of the festival, tellingly, spoke of an “exit from”, and not an “exit to”.

On September 22, the last night of the festival, some 20,000 people gathered for one final party: one which had been titled “Izborna mesto br. 1” – “Voting Station No. 1”. A huge banner hung over the revelers read “Gotovo je!” (“It’s finished!”) – a play on Otpor’s slogan, “Gotov je!” Two days later, Serbia went to the polls for the federal presidential elections.⁷¹ Though election observers – the same young Serbs who had been trained in Hungary – reported immediately after the election that Koštunica had won a clear victory, the Milošević government declared that neither candidate had won a majority and demanded a runoff. In response, the opposition called for a countrywide strike.⁷² Instead of working, anyone who was able made their way to Belgrade, defying police barricades set up on the major roads, to join the enormous crowd – larger even than the crowds seen during the protests of 1996-97 – outside the national parliament. The protest reached its peak on October 5, when the crowds attempted to break through the police barricade surrounding the building. The police, ignoring the orders being broadcast over their radios, refused to fire into the crowd, and instead stepped aside. Milošević and his government were long gone. The crowd claimed the parliament building, a symbol of his power, as their own. The next day, Milošević conceded, and Koštunica was sworn into office.⁷³

Milošević is gone. Now what?

⁷¹ "Exit Istorija - Exit 00."

⁷² Bringing Down a Dictator.

⁷³ Bringing Down a Dictator.

Governments and journalists around the globe hailed Milošević's fall from power, and expressed their confidence that Serbia, exorcised of its demons of nationalism, victimhood, and isolation would quickly and confidently re-integrate into the international community.⁷⁴

Nine years later, full reintegration has yet to occur. Yes, Serbia has rejoined international institutions like the UN and the OSCE, and is currently engaged in the Stabilization and Association process – the first step towards joining the EU. Perhaps more importantly, due to the stabilization of the dinar and the end of sanctions, everyday life has by and large returned to normal. An enormous wave of emigration is no longer a threat – yet despite this, the strict visa regimes implemented by most Western European countries towards Serbia in the early nineties remains in place. In fact, due to reasons which will be examined in the next chapter, these visa regimes are more entrenched than ever – and the promise of EXIT remains, for most, unfulfilled.

⁷⁴ e.g. Gee, Marcus. "Three Cheers for the Brave Serbs." The Globe and Mail 10 Oct. 2000.; "Nobles and Knaves." Washington Times 7 Oct. 2000.; Milich, Emily, et al. "Free At Last." Sunday Times 8 Oct. 2000.

Chapter 2

Schengen, Security, and the “Wild, Wild Southeast”

“Put all your eggs in one basket, and – WATCH THAT BASKET.”
- Mark Twain, The Tragedy of Pudd’nhead Wilson

The wider world into which Serbia emerged, blinking, on October 6 was one already in the throes of its own debate on mobility and globalization. Numerous new global phenomena were inextricably bound up with personal mobility, for example: an ever-faster and -broader transnational world economy; the development of “global cities”; the increasing ubiquity of forms of short-term international migration, such as contract work, family visits, intermittent stays abroad, and sojourning; the creation of cosmopolitan and local cultures which embrace or reject global culture, respectively; and a deterritorialization of social identity, in which a single nation-state is no longer the most important determinant of identity, nor the sole recipient of allegiance.⁷⁵

The naïvely positive view of globalization which prevailed during the early part of the nineties was soon deflated both by skepticism of its economic benefits and an increasing awareness of its dark, violent side. The world was left attempting to answer “the question about why the 1990s, the period of what we may now call “high globalization,” should also be the period of large-scale violence in a wide range of

⁷⁵ See Robin Cohen’s *Global diasporas: an introduction* for a landmark discussion of the connections between globalization and migration.

societies and political regions.;”⁷⁶ and the conclusion arrived at by many (including many in positions of power) was uncontrolled migration and insecure borders.

This ambiguity about mobility, and whether it represented a danger or an opportunity (and how that was mostly determined by who was doing the moving) had a particularly interesting manifestation in the European Union – namely, in the creation and expansion of the Schengen zone.

What is the Schengen Agreement?

Though the idea of the “Four Freedoms” – the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people – has been a watchword of European integration since the Treaty of Rome, it is only within the last few decades that EU law has applied itself to making the latter freedom practicable through the creation of a passport-free travel area.

The first step in this direction was in fact not even directly associated with the European Union – or the European Economic Community (EEC), as it was called at the time. In 1985, five of the then-ten EEC member states, namely Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, expressed the desire⁷⁷ to “gradually abolish checks at their common borders” in order to “strengthen the solidarity between their peoples by removing the obstacles to free movement at the common borders.”⁷⁸ The remaining five member states balked at this idea, so France, Germany and Benelux agreed in Schengen, Luxembourg in 1985, to create their own free travel area outside of

⁷⁶ This question was phrased in this particular way in Arjun Appadurai’s *Fear of Small Numbers: Essays on the Geography of Fear*. (2006) But we were all thinking it.

⁷⁷ Though Geddes (2008) points out that 1984 protests by long-haul truck drivers over delays at the border between France and Germany may also have added to the impetus for the creation of the Schengen zone.

⁷⁸ “The Schengen acquis - Agreement between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders.” 1985. <[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922(01):EN:HTML)>

the context of the EEC. This first iteration of the Schengen Acquis, known as Schengen I, was relatively small in scope, at least in the measures it designated for the short term. These measures were only intended to accelerate and facilitate the process of border controls, for example by harmonizing the opening and closing hours of customs posts at borders and creating a system wherein citizens of the signatories of the Schengen Acquis could affix “a green disc measuring at least eight centimeters in diameter” to their windshield, allowing them to pass border controls within the Schengen zone without stopping. Yet even at this very early stage, a trade-off between relaxing interior borders and strengthening exterior borders was explicitly mentioned; Article 7 of the Acquis stated that:

The Parties shall endeavour to approximate their visa policies as soon as possible in order to avoid the adverse consequences in the field of immigration and security that may result from easing checks at the common borders. They shall take, if possible by 1 January 1986, the necessary steps in order to apply their procedures for the issue of visas and admission to their territories, taking into account the need to ensure the protection of the entire territory of the five States against illegal immigration and activities which could jeopardise security.⁷⁹

However, at this stage, the Schengen Acquis was more of an agreement and statement of intent – it was not until 1990 that a convention (Schengen II) to implement the agreement was signed. This 1990 convention further raised the stakes, changing the short-term goals from a general relaxation and acceleration of border checks to a total abolition thereof. This abolition came into effect in the six Schengen signatory states in March 1995.

⁷⁹ “The Schengen acquis - Agreement between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders.” 1985. <[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922(01):EN:HTML)>

Shortly thereafter, negotiations began on what would eventually become the Treaty of Amsterdam. This treaty, which was signed just over two years later in June 1997, was intended to update and clarify certain areas of the Treaty on European Union which had been signed in Maastricht in 1992. Most significantly, it determined that:

The Union shall set itself the objective to maintain and develop an area of *freedom, justice and security* in which the free movement of persons is assured in conjunction with *appropriate measures with respect to external borders*, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.

In practice, this amounted to the adoption of the Schengen Acquis into the European Union framework,⁸⁰ and the harmonization of all the EU member states' policies in this area.⁸¹ In other words, only after the Treaty of Amsterdam entered into force on May 1, 1999 was it appropriate to speak of common EU migration, asylum and visa policies.

The Impact of Schengen

Andrew Geddes, in his book Immigration and European integration: beyond Fortress Europe?, argues that “Schengen’s importance to the development of EU immigration and asylum policy should not be underestimated.... [Furthermore], it is emblematic of the ways in which freedom and security were conjoined within the new

⁸⁰ Specifically, into the so-called third pillar of Justice and Home Affairs. The three pillar structure, which was created with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, divides EU policy into three areas: the European Community, Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Justice and Home Affairs. The latter deals with asylum, borders, immigration policies, policies towards the citizens of third countries, as well as police and judiciary cooperation and combating illegal drugs.

⁸¹ Though flexibility/opt-out protocols were included for certain member states – including the UK and Ireland. In fact, the overlap between the Schengen zone and the EU was not perfect. Between 1997 and 2004, Schengen members consisted of “the EU, minus two, plus two” – i.e. the 15 member states, minus the UK and Ireland who had opted out, and plus Iceland and Norway who had opted in despite not being member states in order to maintain the Nordic passport-free zone. The accession of 10 eastern European states to the EU in 2004 did not bring their immediate addition to the Schengen zone – instead, they have had to demonstrate their improved their security measures post –accession before being allowed to join in December 2007. “Burning bridges” The Economist, October 11, 2007.

economic space that was being constructed at the European level.”⁸² In other words, the development of the Schengen zone was one of the earliest projects which expanded the work of the EEC/EC from simple economic cooperation to cooperation in the areas of personal freedoms, security, and policies towards third countries. Geddes also points out two critical trends which are visible in the Schengen project:

[Schengen] is illustrative, too, of ‘boundary build-up’, whereby liberalization of certain types of flows of goods, capital and services also *generates concerns about security* and promotes new forms of build-up designed to *reinforce borders against those population flows deemed most threatening* (Nevins, 2002). Schengen is also linked to ‘*boundary shift*’ to new migration countries and new member states.⁸³

The first phenomenon, that of amplified exterior security concerns and protections as an effect of interior liberalization, is an interesting psychological quirk which deserves some attention. For the signatory states, the Schengen Agreement was a tremendous leap of faith. The decision to willingly give up sovereignty on their national borders was seen as qualitatively different from giving up sovereignty in economic issues, and as such produced national anxiety that was quantitatively different from anything caused by European integration before that point. In effect, the signatories’ anxiety about relaxing the controls at the internal borders was transferred to the Schengen zone’s external border; implicit in the Schengen agreement was not just an assumption that fellow Schengen members are not a threat, but also an assumption that non-Schengen members *are* a threat – furthermore, that they are somehow an even *greater* threat than they had been before the creation of the Schengen zone.

⁸² Geddes, 82, 85.

⁸³ Geddes 85.

This increased perception of an imminent external threat has had a measurable effect on national politics of EU member states. Over the last few decades, there has been an astonishing resurgence of far-right, xenophobic parties in Europe:

Advances made by France's far-right National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, through the 1980s and 1990s have caused the conservative right in a number of countries to adopt some aspects of the far-right agenda, particularly with regards to immigration. [...] In Austria political upheaval in January 2000 saw the formation of coalition government between the People's Party (ÖVP) and the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) of Jorg Häider [sic], which produced widespread condemnation and sanctions from the rest of Europe. Nationalist, anti-immigration policies are echoed by far-right parties across the continent: Belgium's Vlaams Blok (now Vlaams Belang), the Northern League in Italy, the Danish People's Party, the British National Party and the Sverigedemokraterna (Swedish Democrats) all share Häider and Le Pen's rhetoric of nationalism and aggressive resentment towards economic immigrants.⁸⁴

Paradoxically, even as the borders between the Schengen zone and immigrant-producing countries have grown stronger, perceptions of "a collective ethnic threat from immigration" have increased.⁸⁵

Schengen external borders, therefore, became proportionately stronger. In fact, they were no longer thought of as borders but frontiers or buffer zones, which might stretch 200 kilometers into the territory of a country on the external border;⁸⁶ or, conversely, hundreds or thousands of kilometers in the opposite direction. This is the essence of Geddes's second phenomenon, the 'boundary shift' to new migration countries and new member states. The accession of ten new member states in 2004, eight of which are in Eastern Europe, put the issue of border security in the spotlight - especially as those countries began to prepare to join the Schengen zone. The imminent expansion of

⁸⁴ "EU Visas and the Western Balkans." *International Crisis Group*, November 29, 2005.

⁸⁵ "Attitudes toward Migrants and Minorities in Europe", European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, 15 March 2005.

⁸⁶ Grabbe, H. (2000) "The Sharp Edges of Europe: Extending Schengen Eastwards." *International Affairs* 76:519-527.

the Schengen zone placed the new external border adjacent to countries which, as many EU politicians and security experts saw it, had much higher levels of trafficking and uncontrolled migration. Many of these countries also aspired to EU membership. Thus, the EU saw a way to kill two birds with one stone. As the old buffer became new EU and Schengen members, the EU created a new external buffer by exporting a certain amount of border control mechanisms to the countries now on the Schengen zone's periphery – and making adoption and faithful fulfillment of these security mechanisms a requirement for eventual membership.

This meant that Southeastern Europe, which was envisioned as one of these buffer zones, became the recipient of expert assistance, training packages and funding through the so-called external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs. Moreover, the eventual accession of the western Balkan states to the EU was made contingent on cooperation and sufficient success in border controls. However, the casting of the western Balkan states in this role of “buffer” has had unintended consequences – namely, that those states are now primarily seen as by both EU politicians and the EU public at large as at best a lawless frontier – a “Wild, Wild Southeast” – and at worst a source of security threats, whether human, drug or weapon trafficking; terrorism; or economic threats in the form of uncontrolled migration.⁸⁷

Outside the Gates of Fortress Europe

The process of harmonizing the border security mechanisms of Schengen member states has had a somewhat ironic effect in the area of visa regimes; that is, even as Schengen increased freedom of movement for some, it restricted it for many, many more.

⁸⁷ Hills, 18-20.

These negative side effects of Schengen expansion are not necessarily clearly visible from the perspective of the EU – but for those left outside, they represent a dramatic limitation to their options in life.

By far, the most potent and furthest-reaching side effect of the creation of the Schengen zone has been its impact on third-country visa procedures. Namely, the “boundary build up” effect which Geddes describes has had a proportional effect on the visa procedures of Schengen member states, making them progressively harder and harder to get as more countries joined the Schengen zone. This effect was cemented with European Council Regulation No 539, which was passed on March 15, 2001 and came into effect the following month, and created two lists: one consisting of the countries for whose citizens no visa was necessary enter the Schengen zone, and the other consisting of everyone else.⁸⁸ These two lists, which came to be known as White Schengen and Black Schengen, respectively, finally standardized the visa procedures of all Schengen member states – in theory, at least, there was no longer an Italian, Belgian or Austrian visa regime, only a Schengen visa regime. Inclusion on the visa-free White Schengen list, according to the text of the regulation:

...is governed by a considered, case-by-case assessment of a variety of criteria relating inter alia to illegal immigration, public policy and security, and to the European Union's external relations with third countries, consideration also being given to the implications of regional coherence and reciprocity.⁸⁹

The countries on the White Schengen list are primarily OECD member states and EU candidate countries – countries, in other words, whose nationals are assumed to be

⁸⁸ For a map of White Schengen and Black Schengen countries, see Appendix A.

⁸⁹ “Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement.” < <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32001R0539:EN:HTML>>

trustworthy, and not likely to immigrate illegally. Meanwhile, the nationals of countries on the Black Schengen list are presumed to be a threat to the security of the Schengen zone. This, in effect, produces a Catch-22: the only people applying for Schengen visas are those whose guilt is already assumed.⁹⁰

Another negative side effect of Schengen expansion, as pointed out by Joanna Apap and Angelina Tchorbadjiyska, is not necessarily visible from the perspective of the EU. In much of Eastern Europe, following the fall of the Berlin Wall,

a unique area of liberalized movement of persons was [created] in Central Europe. It was not a full free movement of persons as the expression ‘liberalized movement of persons’ may imply: individuals were still required a special voucher in addition to their passport and preferably a letter of invitation to present at the border, or a simplified pass in the case of the residents of the border regions. Yet these documents were relatively easy to obtain, which facilitated a substantial movement of persons in the region.⁹¹

However, as some of these Eastern European countries acceded to the European Union and began the process of joining the Schengen zone, they were obligated to impose visa regimes on the citizens of their non-EU neighboring states. Though the people most directly affected are those living in border regions, who may depend on trans-border mobility for their livelihood, Apap and Tchorbadjiyska point out a second, broader-reaching downside.

This policy stance [of open borders in Eastern Europe] is generally seen to have played a significant role in preventing destabilization in the region [after the fall of the Berlin Wall]. The open-borders policy has affected thousands of ordinary citizens on both sides of the border and has significantly contributed to efforts to overcome the historical legacy of prejudice, stereotypes, and resentment. [...] The strict application of the Schengen border regime in general and visa policy in particular will directly affect and reinforce the growing socio-economic and psychological gap between the two parts of Europe. [...] For the first time since the end of the cold war, the EU will border an area that has essentially different

⁹⁰ “EU Visas and the Western Balkans.” International Crisis Group, November 29, 2005.

⁹¹ Apap and Tchorbadjiyska, 2.

political, economic and social systems. The imposition of restrictive principles for crossing the borders will contribute to widening these gaps, which will be detrimental to the European Union as a whole.⁹²

Not only does Schengen create nearly insurmountable visa barriers between citizens of non-member states and the prosperous centers of business, culture and education they need to achieve their goals – the fact that it is constantly expanding means that those citizens have an ever-decreasing number of available destinations, and hence ever-shrinking horizons in life. In this scenario, a state has only two options: utter isolation as a diplomatic black hole, or joining the Schengen zone – with all the requirements that that entails.

The sum of these two effects, for a country on the periphery of the Schengen zone, is predictable; with travel an extreme difficulty for average citizens, popular pressure forces the government to work towards achieving the conditions necessary to have their country added to the Schengen white list. The EU is more than aware of the powerful appeal of Schengen, as well as the ability of an offer of Schengen membership to get results. As such, cancellation of the Schengen visa regime has become a very commonly used “carrot” in the EU’s relations with countries on its periphery – including with Serbia, as will be shown in the next chapter. Yet due to the historically fraught meaning of travel in Serbia, the use of conditionality with regards to Serbia’s addition to the White Schengen list has produced mixed results over the last nine years – and has provoked a great deal of resentment and bitterness along the way.

⁹² Apap and Tchorbadjiyska, 2-3.

Chapter 3

Serbia after 2000

Since the time of the democratic changes in October of 2000, Serbia's path towards rejoining the international community has proved to be longer and more troubled than expected – particularly in the area of bilateral relations with the European Union. Following the honeymoon of euphoria and relief that characterized the first few months after Milošević's removal from power, the relationship between Serbia and the EU has vacillated wildly, fraught with uncertainty, mistrust and stubbornness on both sides. Discussions relating to Serbia's accession to the EU are constantly delayed by domestic political disputes – the ongoing political fallout from the nineties – and though relaxation of the EU's strict visa regime towards Serbia has been an extremely frequent topic in the political dialogue since the early 2000s, a constant stream of missed deadlines and empty rhetoric from both Serbian and EU politicians have given Serbian youth the strong impression that their ability to travel abroad - and hence their ability to shape their future - is being used as a bargaining chip in an ongoing political game.

Even before Milošević's removal from power, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was being specifically mentioned in EU documents as a potential future participant in the Stabilization and Association process, the first step towards EU membership. For example, at a June 2000 meeting of the European Council in Santa Maria da Feira, which was intended to deal with a number of pressing issues facing the EU – including that of further enlargement – the Council affirmed that

A democratic, cooperative FRY living in peace with its neighbours will be a welcome member of the European family of democratic nations. The European Council supports the civil society initiatives as well as the democratic forces in Serbia in their struggle to achieve this goal and urges them to stay united and reinforce their cooperation. The Union looks forward to the time when the FRY will be able to participate fully in the Stabilisation and Association process.⁹³

Four days after Milošević's removal from power, the European Council met in Luxembourg, where discussion of the democratic changes in Serbia was first on the agenda. The council welcomed Koštunica's election as President of the FRY, and acknowledged that "in voting for him, the people have chosen democracy and Europe. As a result, in accordance with its message to them on the eve of the elections, the Council has radically reviewed the EU's policy towards the FRY."⁹⁴ Specifically, the Council agreed to lift sanctions against the FRY, including its year-old ban on flights to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as its oil embargo, as it had promised to do in the lead-up to the election; furthermore, it pledged billions of euros in reconstruction aid (through the CARDS program, a precursor to the Stabilization and Association process) to shore up the new government, and resolved "to propose to the FRY that it participate in the stabilization and association process."⁹⁵ Practical concerns prevented the EU from lifting the last of the sanctions – namely, the visa ban on senior-level government officials, as well as immediate family and close friends of Milošević; EU officials were, unsurprisingly, very concerned that those who had supported Milošević's regime might attempt to flee to the EU.⁹⁶ Yet an early scandal, occurring just over a month after

⁹³ European Council. "Presidency conclusions: Santa Maria da Feira European Council" 19-20 June 2000. < http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00200-r1.en0.htm> In "EU Visas and the Western Balkans", International Crisis Group.

⁹⁴ European Council. "2294th Council meeting- GENERAL AFFAIRS." Press release. [Europa.eu](http://europa.eu). 9 Oct. 2000. European Union. <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=PRES/00/364&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "EU lifts oil embargo on Yugoslavia." [Deutsche Presse-Agentur](http://www.deutsche-press-agentur.de) 9 October 2000.

Milošević's removal from power, demonstrated how porous the border the border with the EU was for the well connected. On November 16, it was discovered that numerous high-ranking government ministers who had served under Milošević, along with associates of the Milošević family, had been removed from the EU travel blacklist – in fact, they had been granted the right to visa-free travel. Furthermore, the individuals in question had been far from idle bystanders during the nineties; one, Rade Marković, had been state security chief and head of the secret police; another, Nebojša Ravković, was the Yugoslav Army General who had led the 1999 campaign in Kosovo; and a third, Tatjana Lenard, had been editor of the jingoistic RTS news program, and a close friend of Milošević's wife. EU officials clarified that they had consulted with Koštunica before amending the list, yet when other members of the DOS coalition were asked after the fact about the list, they claimed to have never been consulted about it at all. As PM Zoran Đinđić darkly commented: "It looks like the suggestions on lifting the visa ban were given by someone sympathetic to the former regime of Slobodan Milošević."⁹⁷ Powerful criminals also had easy access to free travel, whether through their political connections or through more direct means. For example, Milorad "Legija" Ulemek, the leader of the notorious criminal organization called the Zemun Clan (and the one responsible for the assassination of Zoran Đinđić in 2003⁹⁸), held a fraudulent passport stolen from a

⁹⁷ Zimonjić and Castle. "Anger as EU lifts travel bans on Milošević allies." *The Independent* [London] 16 November 2000. Marković, in particular, was suspected by many of being involved in numerous politically motivated killings and kidnappings, including the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija during the 1999 NATO bombings and the car crash which killed four aides of Vuk Drašković, an opposition politician.

⁹⁸ Though Đinđić's assassination was a major event in the history of postwar Serbia – he was considered one of the few intelligent, uncorrupted politicians in Serbia, and for many he represented Serbia's future in Europe – it cannot be in any way linked to Schengen visa policy, and as such I will not be going into it in this thesis. For similar reasons, I'll also not be discussing the extradition and death of Milošević in the Hague – similarly important events.

Croatian consulate in Bosnia in 1999 for years, using it to travel to Austria, Switzerland, Greece, and Singapore, among other destinations.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, ordinary Serbians were driven to desperation by the ongoing difficulty of obtaining a visa. On October 9, 2001, Lazar Tomić, a RTV employee from Pančevo, took several staff members hostage at the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade after his visa application was rejected. At at least one point during the standoff, Tomić threatened to commit suicide, but a negotiating team including the Yugoslav foreign minister, Goran Svilanović, persuaded him to peacefully release the hostages after about an hour. After the standoff, the Canadian Ambassador commented that “The individual appeared to have no grievance or issue with Canada, but rather was looking to the embassy as sanctuary.”¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, even at this very early date, joining the White Schengen list was considered a reasonable possibility for Yugoslavia; in fact, Foreign Minister Svilanović considered that the process would be completed within two years.¹⁰¹ Yet when those two years had passed, little political progress had been made, due chiefly to the ongoing conflict within and eventual breakup of the DOS coalition due to major disagreements on Serbia’s future between Koštunica, who as time passed showed greater and greater nationalistic and pro-Russian tendencies, and Prime Minister Đinđić, who strongly advocated a European path for Serbia. An uneasy coalition between (misleadingly similarly-named) Koštunica’s Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska Stranka Srbije* or *DSS*) and Đinđić’s Democratic Party (*Demokratska Stranka; DS*) had replaced the

⁹⁹ Smith, Craig. “Concern rises over theft of passports; Interpol says a lack of border vigilance hurts antiterror bid.” *New York Times* 24 August 2004.

¹⁰⁰ Nadler, John. “Hostages freed at Canadian Embassy: Belgrade incident ends peacefully.” *Ottawa Citizen* 9 October 2001.

¹⁰¹ “Yugoslavia to join Schengen Agreement within two years – foreign minister.” *B92* 15 April 2001.

DOS coalition. However, each successive election brought further increases in the power of the nationalistic, pro-Russian Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska Radikalna Stranka; SRS*) – which was populated largely by right-wing politicians who had abandoned Milošević’s Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) after his defeat in 2000. Due to ongoing conflicts between these three forces in other areas of Serbian politics, only in May 2003 did Yugoslavia (now called Serbia-Montenegro) lift visa requirements for travelers from the EU¹⁰² – an early requirement for consideration for the White Schengen list.¹⁰³ At that point, Svilanović’s new estimate for entry to the White Schengen list was 2005.¹⁰⁴

Hopes for EU membership were encouraged at the June 2003 EU- Western Balkans Thessaloniki Summit, at which the EU’s Commissioner for External Relations promised the countries of the Western Balkans that “we will not regard the map of the Union as complete until you have joined us.”¹⁰⁵ Funding for the Stabilization and Association process was increased, and more importantly, the topic of visa liberalization was central to the discussions – the conclusion of which was the intention to initiate a dialogue to set the conditions for visa relaxation. Finally, for the occasion, Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari published a public statement in the *International Herald-Tribune*, arguing that a clear “signal of Europe’s commitment to the region would be if the EU would ease and then lift the visa regime, as it did with Croatia. At present, visas

¹⁰² “Serbian premier proposes unilateral lifting of tourist visas for EU nationals.” *Tanjug* 15 May 2003.

Just a few months later, Lonely Planet included Belgrade as one of their top 30 recommended destinations for the following year (between Halifax and Rwanda), describing it as “a fast-paced modern European capital, successfully banishing the shadows of war.” Hall, Tom. “The 2004 hot spots: where will switched-on travellers be heading in 2004?” *The Observer* 28 December 2003.

¹⁰³ The Schengen countries operate by a rule of reverse reciprocity in this area – that is, if a country on the Schengen white list introduces a visa requirement for EU citizens, they are moved to the black list; but if a country on the black list removes the visa requirement for visiting EU citizens, they are not necessarily moved to the white list. Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001, Article 1.4.

¹⁰⁴ “Serbia-Montenegro minister sees failure to join PFP as greatest failure in 2003.” *Tanjug* 25 December 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in *EU Visas and the Western Balkans*.

make travel from the region to the European Union difficult.”¹⁰⁶ Such a high-level recognition of the problem was taken by many Serbians as a sign of progress to come.

These signs, however, did not come to much – once again, months passed with no attention from Brussels paid to the Western Balkans. In the spring of 2004, the Student Union of Serbia presented the results of an in-depth study of Serbian students. Among the most significant results of this survey was the discovery that 70% of students surveyed had never left the country. This figure was sufficiently shocking to be widely repeated in Serbian newspapers for a few days afterwards - but beyond that, no governmental action, whether on the part of the EU or of Serbia, was taken.

The white paper written by the SUS summarizing their results nonetheless marks a turning point in discussions of the EU-Serbia visa regime. Though the survey covered an enormous range of questions on student life, from sources of income to satisfaction with cafeteria food, the English-language white paper which was written for international audiences focused exclusively on Serbian students’ lack of travel experience, and the SUS’s conclusion that “the majority of the student population has little contact with foreign nationals and no experience of cultures other than their own.” As the document continues:

One of the reasons why people in Serbia stood up against [the] Milošević regime was the isolation that his politics brought to our country. Ironically, after the fall of Milošević in 2000, the European visa regime for Serbian citizens became even stricter. [...] This prolonged international isolation creates a number of consequences. Students have no opportunity to travel and experience life outside Serbia, they feel not welcomed. This further creates the feeling that the EU is not supporting Serbia in its efforts to become more democratic and instead is building barriers to our interaction with Europe.... Excluded from the academic and cultural life outside of Serbia, [students] build prejudices and dissatisfaction

¹⁰⁶ Ahtisaari, Martti. "Give Balkan nations their proper place in Europe." International Herald Tribune 21 June 2003.

which lead to intolerance and radical nationalism. [...] Considering the growing isolation of Serbian students... the Student Union of Serbia strongly supports [an] initiative... to liberalize the student visa regime for Serbia.¹⁰⁷

Following the media attention surrounding the publication of the SUS's survey and their conclusions, media and political attention in Serbia to the issue of visas rarely failed to mention the negative effect of the Schengen visa regime on Serbian youth.¹⁰⁸ This was a marked contrast to coverage of the visa issue before, which spoke only very generally of the difficulties of Serbian citizens.

However, it would be some time before the particular susceptibility of young people to the consequences of limited international mobility would come to the attention of EU politicians. Virtually no progress of any kind was made towards European integration until April of 2005, when an EU feasibility study gave Serbia-Montenegro a positive grade – the very first step towards eventual membership. In October of that same year, the EU approved beginning the Stabilization and Association process with Serbia-Montenegro. Negotiations began a few days later, and proceeded without difficulty for several months.

However, on May 3, 2006, Olli Rehn, the EU's enlargement commissioner, formally called off SAA negotiations with Serbia-Montenegro on the recommendation of Carla del Ponte, the chief prosecutor of the ICTY. The cited reason for the cancellation of negotiations was lack of cooperation with the ICTY – which had been a condition for the beginning of SAA negotiations. Specifically, the problem was that Ratko Mladić, the

¹⁰⁷ Studentska Unija Srbije, Isolation of Serbia's Next Generation from European Values and Culture. 2004.

¹⁰⁸ Since the publication of the SUS's survey, this figure of 70% has become the most frequently quoted in newspaper articles, speeches, etc. in Serbia on the issue of visa difficulties for youth –however the source is rarely cited.

most-wanted war criminal from the 1990s, had still not been surrendered to The Hague.¹⁰⁹

Yet even while negotiations were officially off, high-ranking government officials like Vuk Drašković and Mlađan Dinkić – the ministers of foreign affairs and finance, respectively – frequently traveled to Brussels to agitate for visa liberalization. This was an important precedent, as it showed that Serbian politicians were not willing to hold back progress on visa liberalization due to difficulties with the Stabilization and Association process. In effect, this split the timeline of Serbian integration into Europe in two – one for joining the White Schengen list, and the other for joining the European Union. Though the requirements for each goal often overlapped, certain Serbian politicians like Drašković, Dinkić, and especially Božidar Djelić – all consistent champions of a liberalized visa regime – insisted that they be treated as separate goals, so that White Schengen could be pursued even when EU-Serbian relations in other areas were on hold.

In response to the efforts of these politicians, Rehn agreed to attend a roundtable at the 2006 EXIT Festival¹¹⁰ and discuss the EU's visa regime before an audience of young Serbians. The roundtable, entitled “Myths and legends about the White Schengen list: When are we going to travel like the rest of the ‘normal’ world?”¹¹¹, was hosted Goran Svitanović and included Vuk Drašković and the current Bosnian Foreign Minister,

¹⁰⁹ Wood, Nicholas. "Europeans Punish Serbia Over Fugitive Still At Large." NYT 4 May 2006.

¹¹⁰ Since 2000, EXIT Festival has become an annually recurring summer music festival, held in the fortress in Novi Sad. Attendance of the Festival had grown dramatically as well, to between 150,000 and 200,000 attendees; and since 2005, foreign attendance of the festival has grown dramatically – from around 1000 Britons in 2005 due to coverage of the festival in British music magazines, to 27% of total attendance in 2006, and over 50% of attendees in 2007 – in which year EXIT also won the UK Festival Award for Best European Festival. It is safe to say that the vast majority of foreign attendees of Exit festival have no idea of the festival's political roots – it nonetheless remains an extremely important venue for contact between young Serbians and people from other countries.

¹¹¹ Note the association between free travel and normalcy.

Mladen Ivanić. Rehn began by expressing his concern over a survey showing that over 70% of Serbian students had never left the country – showing that the SUS’s study had finally come to his and other EU politicians’ attention – as well as his sympathy for the difficulty and high cost of obtaining an EU visa. He also reaffirmed the EU’s commitment to completing a visa facilitation agreement in the future, which would create certain categories of people for whom visas would be free (e.g. students), keeping the price of a visa application for the rest of the population at EUR 35, and speeding up the processing of visa applications – yet he maintained that the onus of responsibility for achieving a more relaxed visa regime was on the Balkan countries themselves, spending much of his allotted time discussing what remained for Serbia and Bosnia to do.¹¹²

Ivanić and Drašković nevertheless maintained that the EU’s requirements for a relaxation of the visa regime, let alone for entry onto the white Schengen list, were too strict; and, as Ivanić declared, even Bosnia’s total cooperation did not result in much progress:

The EU asked [BiH] for a unique passport for Bosnian citizens, we did that. Then they asked for readmission deals to be signed with each EU country, we did that. Afterwards, they wanted a single deal to be signed with EU as a whole. Then, we had to issue new personal documents, on which we spent 40m euros. Now, it is all about biometric data, which will cost us another 100m euros and two years of work.

Ivanić concluded his comment by asking the EU to “open up towards the Balkans and *see that we’re not such bad guys*.[...]” Svilanović, for his part, acknowledged the role of the EU’s security concerns in their maintenance of a strict visa regime, but countered that that visa regime posed no obstacle for legitimate criminals, recalling that the suspects held for the assassination of Zoran Đinđić, for example,

¹¹² European Union. “Visa facilitation for Serbia.” Press release. [Europa.eu](http://europa.eu). European Union. <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/441&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>.

all had Schengen visas in their passports. And they got them legally. Visas will not stop the criminals, but they are causing problems for nice people who just want to take their ladies to Paris.¹¹³

On Sept 30, 2006, a new constitution – which, among other things, formally separated Serbia and Montenegro – passed by referendum, and came into effect. Included in the text of the document was a stipulation that parliamentary elections be held between sixty and 120 days after its passage. These elections were scheduled to be held January 21, 2007. Three weeks before the elections were to occur, on January 1, 2007, the European Union was joined by two more of Serbia’s neighboring states: Romania and Bulgaria. The article reporting this on B92 got straight to the point:

Bucharest, Sofia, Belgrade, Berlin – On the first day of 2007, the European Union got two new members, Bulgaria and Romania. Germany, which has taken over the presidency of the Union from Finland, will now be responsible for 27 countries. For the citizens of Serbia this means that now there are two fewer states to which they may travel without a visa, even though the visas, at least in the beginning, will be gratis.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, readers’ comments on that article struck a similar note of disappointment, disbelief, and slight bitterness; comments included: “Well, would you look at that. The Bulgarians and Romanians before us.”; “And when I remember how my family used to take chocolate to our friends there...”; “Let this be a lesson to us on where all that talk about “heavenly Serbia” has led us.... straight into the ground.”¹¹⁵

The election results on January 21 were a further shock to pro-Europeans in Serbia, and supporters of Serbia’s membership in the EU. Shocking many, the nationalistic Serbian Radical Party received 28.6% of the votes - the highest percentage

¹¹³ Tusup, Jelena. “Rehn visits EXIT festival to discuss visa regime.” [SETimes.com](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2006/07/11/feature-01) 11 July 2006.
<http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2006/07/11/feature-01>

¹¹⁴ “Evropska Unija s 27 članica.” [B92](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=01&dd=01&nav_category=167&nav_id=225643) 1 January 2007.
<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=01&dd=01&nav_category=167&nav_id=225643>

¹¹⁵ Ibid, my translations.

of votes out of all the parties. Next in percentage of the vote, with 22.71%, was Democratic Party (DS), which had been led by Boris Tadić since the assassination of Zoran Đinđić in 2003. The third-largest chunk of the vote - 16.55% - went to the Koštunica-Ilić list, consisting of the Democratic Party of Serbia and New Serbia (DSS-NS). The sudden popularity of the SRS alarmed many EU leaders, as did the equally sudden possibility that Koštunica would break his convenient political relationship with Tadić – with whom he had long since ceased to share a political viewpoint - and create a far-right DSS-NS-SRS coalition. Months passed in negotiations over how the new government would be formed; and on May 8, 2007, the EU’s worries seemed to be confirmed when Tomislav Nikolić , the extremely conservative and anti-West vice president of the SRS¹¹⁶ , was selected to be the assembly’s speaker – the third-most powerful position in the Serbian government. Following five days of outraged reactions, both from within the Serbian parliament and from abroad, Nikolić stepped down, but explained to reporters that he did so only at Koštunica’s request – Koštunica, apparently, had wished to test the West’s reaction to the potential DSS-NS-SRS coalition.¹¹⁷ Finding the opposition from abroad too high, he instead formed a coalition with Tadić’s party late on May 15 – thirty minutes before the constitutionally-mandated deadline for forming a government would have run out.

While these high-level political machinations dominated the news, lower levels of the government continued the bureaucratic struggle to meet the EU’s standards for visa relaxation. On March 20, the head of the Serbian EU integration office, Tanja Mišćević,

¹¹⁶ The president of the SRS, Vojislav Šešelj, was at the time, and is still on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity in The Hague. He continues to run the party from his cell.

¹¹⁷ “Nikolić podneo odstavku.” B92 13 May 2007.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=05&dd=13&nav_id=246352&nav_category=418>

announced that an agreement on visa relaxation for certain categories of people had been reached in Brussels. By to this agreement, the visa fee of EUR 35 would be eliminated for students, postgraduates, university professors, journalists and science workers, as well as several other categories. Additionally, the number of documents required for a visa would be reduced sharply. According to Mišćević, the Serbian delegation had been “pleasantly surprised” by the degree to which the European Commission had been willing to accept their propositions¹¹⁸; yet when the Serbian delegation returned to Brussels on April 11 to sign the agreement, a last minute disagreement over a part of the document not dealing with visa relaxation sent them home empty-handed.¹¹⁹ On April 27, the Skupština adopted a set of measures addressing that disagreement and harmonizing their position towards that of the EU; and the agreement, which was due to come into force on January 1 of the next year, was finally initialed on May 16, 2007 – the day after the Tadić-Koštunica coalition was formed, keeping the Radicals out of power.¹²⁰

The very same day as the initialing of the agreement on visa relaxation, Olli Rehn arrived in Belgrade to discuss with Tadić the possibility of resuming SAA negotiations. In an interview, Rehn said that he had been pleased with Serbia’s progress and cooperation with the Hague tribunal, and would have been willing to reopen negotiations months earlier but for lack of an interlocutor, caused, as he explained it, by Serbia’s delay in forming a government – and certainly, reluctance to reopen negotiations with a

¹¹⁸ “Dogovor o besplatnim vizama” B92 21 March 2007

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=03&dd=21&nav_id=237501>

¹¹⁹ “Serbia, EU fail to sign visa relaxation, readmission agreement.” RTS 12 April 2007. The disagreement was over readmission procedures – that is, the conditions under which a citizen of a third country who had entered the EU through Serbia would be returned to Serbia.

¹²⁰ “8. maja sporazum o vizama.” B92 27 April 2007.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=04&dd=27&nav_id=244041>; “Serbia, EU initial visa relaxation, readmission agreement.” FoNet 16 May 2007.

government teetering on the brink of radicalism had played a role as well.¹²¹ The pro-European zeitgeist of the time was only fueled by the victory of Marija Šerifović, the Serbian contestant, at the 2007 Eurovision Song Contest in Helsinki. This victory was a crucial symbol for Serbians, especially since it came the first year in which Serbia competed as a separate, independent state – it seemed to contradict the perceptions of alienation and belittlement which many Serbians felt in Europe’s attitude towards them. Šerifović herself characterized her victory as a win for “a new Serbia”; Gorčin Stojanović, her coach, explained further:

This is a huge success for Serbia. While politicians squabble in parliament, this young singer has accomplished what they never could: taking us to Europe and bringing Europe to us.¹²²

Even Olli Rehn commented on the events, calling “this a European vote for a European Serbia.”¹²³

Continuing the string of pro-European events, on May 31, Zdravko Tolimir, the ICTY’s third-most wanted war criminal and a Bosnian Serb, was captured in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia by Bosnian police. His capture, however, was recognized on all sides as Serbia’s gesture of resumed cooperation with the ICTY; according to a DS spokesperson, the arrest had come after a week of talks between Bosnia and Hercegovina and Serbia on increased cooperation with one another.¹²⁴ Two weeks later, on June 13,

¹²¹ “Rehn sets out conditions for Serbia resuming EU talks.” FoNet 16 May 2007.; Dombey, Daniel, Neil Macdonald, and George Parker. “Brussels Offers to Reopen Talks with Serbia.” The Financial Times 30 May 2007.

¹²² “From pariah state to kitsch victory: how a Balkan ballad showed Europe a new Serbia.” The Guardian 14 May 2007.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ “Serbian president’s party welcomes Tolimir arrest.” Beta 1 June 2007. In the wake of the arrest, more and more rumors, in the form of anonymous statements to newspapers by members of Serbia’s intelligence service, came out indicating that Tolimir had actually been arrested (or, according to other accounts, had surrendered) in his Belgrade apartment and then secretly transferred across the border to the Republika Srpska where an “official” arrest by the Bosnian police was staged. This was planned and orchestrated by Koštunica and the Republika Srpska’s PM Milorad Dodik; Dodik was glad to be able to show the ICTY

the EU reopened SAA negotiations with Serbia – in the EU’s official press release on the matter, Olli Rehn particularly cited the new potential for cooperation due to the formation of a new government, as well as Serbia’s increased cooperation with the ICTY – as evidenced not only by the Tolimir’s arrest, but also by a May 15 raid by Serbian police of a Belgrade street which was “linked to the search for General Mladić”¹²⁵.

These advances in cooperation with the EU in the areas of cooperation with the ICTY and the SAA negotiations were matched by new promises in other areas. On June 19, Deputy Prime Minister Božidar Djelić announced that EU officials had told him that “with effort and under certain conditions,” Serbia could be on the White Schengen list by the end of 2008 or the beginning of 2009.¹²⁶ On September 18, 2007, representatives of the EU and Serbia signed the agreement on visa facilitation and readmission which had been initialed in May, stating that it would enter into force on January 1, 2008.¹²⁷

The very same day, similar agreements were signed between the EU and Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. The fact that the EU insisted on signing the visa relaxation agreement with all of the southern Balkan countries at the

evidence of Bosnia’s cooperation, as was Koštunica, but Koštunica did not want to contradict his public stance of opposing arrests of Serb war criminals on Serbian territory (he proposes that they turn themselves in). Carla del Ponte presented information of this deception during a meeting with Koštunica and Tadić - Koštunica remained calm and denied everything, while Tadić was quite surprised and angry – he, and the people close to him, had evidently been completely unaware that such an operation was being conducted. The head of Serbia’s intelligence agency, the Serbian war crimes prosecutor, and the head of the Serbian national council all resigned in protest over being deceived – though Tadić persuaded them to stay, and apologized to del Ponte for the scandal, del Ponte told them she now trusted the Serbian authorities less than ever, and intimated that this deception called into question the previously announced reopening of the SAA negotiations. “Serbian president asks officials not to resign over Tolimir arrest.” Dnevni Avaz 6 June 2007.¹²⁵ European Union. “Statement by Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn on Serbia.” Press release. www.europa.eu. 1 June 2007.

<<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/742&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>>

¹²⁶ “Serbia “essentially closer” to EU than most of ex-Yugoslav republics.” B92 20 June 2007.

¹²⁷ “Potpis na sporazume sa EU.” B92 18 September 2007.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=09&dd=18&nav_category=11&nav_id=263981> The first comment responding to this article reads, “Oh, what a lovely carrot! Will we ever get a nibble?”

same time cast a pall over the event, confirming, in the minds of many Serbians, the suspicion that the EU was scarcely bothering to differentiate between the various problems and strengths of each of these countries. Despite its many problems, Serbia has an unquestionably higher standard of living and stronger, better-developed business and industrial sectors than the other countries in the so-called “Ottoman group”¹²⁸ – the EU’s persistence in treating all these countries as equally backward, however, fed a frustrating sense that the EU is discriminating against Serbia – slowing its progress towards the EU – due simply to a sort of geographical laziness and adherence to Balkan stereotypes. Serbians, in the wake of what they viewed to be a great deal of progress towards EU integration – from the (temporary) defeat of the Radicals to the capture of Tolimir to the reopening of SAA negotiations – had hoped for some sort of special reward for their efforts, or at least recognition that they were somehow further along the path towards European integration than other, more troubled Balkan states like Albania. When this did not happen, it was something of a disappointment.

Franco Frattini, the EU’s Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security at the time, seemed to deny these concerns at the signing ceremony, stating that the cancellation of the visa regime between the EU and any country in the region depended exclusively on what that one particular country did to introduce and enforce European statutes and standards. The same week, while visiting the UK, the Serbian foreign minister Vuk Jeremić made a few very revealing comments on a similar topic:

In London this week, Mr Jeremic asked Britain, "as a strong supporter of EU enlargement in the Balkans", to loosen visa restrictions, which are lengthy "and at times humiliating". Only a quarter of Serbs who had voted for pro-European parties had been able to travel to EU countries, he said. Serbia "has a lot of

¹²⁸ With the exception, perhaps, of Montenegro, which benefits both due to income from tourism along its coastline and from extensive Russian investment.

people with means who would like to travel", he said. "For a long time, we were the most advanced, sophisticated", and Serbs find it humiliating to see "Croats and Romanians travelling without visas" when they cannot.¹²⁹

As Jeremić continued, there would be consequences for the EU's lax handling of the Serbian situation:

[Serbia] is suffering a cooling of public support for the idea of Europe... I am afraid that if things go wrong, if it is not handled well regarding the future status of Kosovo, then there will be a dominant majority within Serbia that will say, 'This is not fair, it is humiliating, they (the EU) don't want us. To hell with it'.¹³⁰

Meanwhile, Božidar Djelić was similarly occupied in another European capital, pleading Serbia's case for a free visa regime in Paris. His efforts bore fruit: on October 15, Djelić and French Immigration, Integration and National Identity Minister Brice Hortefeux made a joint announcement that Serbia's visa regime (and only Serbia's) would be totally liberalized by the end of 2008, during France's EU presidency.¹³¹ This, significantly, was the first time a concrete date had been set for Serbia's entry to the White Schengen list.

Just three weeks later, on November 7, 2007 the Stabilization and Association agreement between Serbia and the EU was initialed in Brussels. Djelić, who initialed the agreement on behalf of Serbia, also announced that signature of the agreement would be

¹²⁹ Maddox, Bronwen. "Pride and prejudice as Serbs look to Europe." *The Times* [London] 20 September 2007. Jeremić's implication that Croatia is less sophisticated than Serbia is a bit perplexing. During Yugoslavia, both Croatians and Serbians had the exact same freedom to travel – if anything, higher average incomes in Croatia made travel more common there. Even in the pantheon of national stereotypes in the former Yugoslavia, Croats were more sophisticated and worldly by virtue of their proximity to central Europe; Serbs, on the other hand, were stereotypically simpler, and charmingly rough around the edges. The reference to Romania makes more sense – as one could see in the text quoted from Slavenka Drakulić in chapter 1, Yugoslavians had felt rather superior to their "poor cousins" in other Eastern European countries, and the fact that many of these countries had gone on to beat them to EU membership stung their pride.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Djelić: Beli šengen" B92 15 October 2007

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=10&dd=15&nav_category=11&nav_id=26790
3>

possible by the end of January 2008.¹³² The ceremony was also attended by Tadić, who took the opportunity to reaffirm that Ratko Mladić would be captured if he were indeed anywhere on Serbian territory.

On December 21, Slovenia and Hungary – along with seven other new EU member states in Eastern Europe – joined the Schengen zone.¹³³ The fact that both a former Yugoslav state and a state directly bordering Serbia – not to mention numerous former members of the Soviet bloc – had achieved this, while Serbia still lacked even a Stabilization and Association agreement, was met with renewed expressions of frustration and fatalism; comments on the B92 website included “Lucky them. While we go on about Russian roots and salvation through removal from the world... I think I’m going crazy” and “My only regret is not moving [to Slovenia] at the end of the eighties.”¹³⁴ The addition of these neighboring states, to whom Serbians had previously been able to travel without a visa, to the Schengen list realized the predictions made by Apap and Tchorbadjiyska (and described in chapter 2) – namely, narrowed horizons and reduced opportunities for understanding between states with troubled histories. Furthermore, the memory of a time when Yugoslavians considered themselves more worldly and free than the inhabitants of these countries only added insult to injury.

Less than two weeks later, on January 1, 2008, the visa relaxation accord between Serbia and EU came into effect. Following so quickly after the expansion of the Schengen zone, this accomplishment suddenly seemed meager – and comments on the

¹³² “Od danas lakše do viza.” B92 3 January 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=03&nav_id=279068&nav_category=11>; “Serbia, EU initial SAA deal, deputy PM presents action plan for EU candidacy.” RTS 7 November 2007.

¹³³ “Slovenia joins Schengen, checks remain on border with Croatia.” STA 21 December 2007.;

“Srbija na granici sa zonom Šengena.” B92 21 Dec. 2007.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=12&dd=21&nav_id=277459>

¹³⁴ “Srbija na granici sa zonom Šengena”

B92 article consisted almost uniformly of reports from people who had recently been to EU embassies and found that the terms of the relaxation were not being followed.¹³⁵

Later that same month, in Serbia's first round of presidential elections, the SRS's candidate, Tomislav Nikolić, beat Boris Tadić by 5%. The EU, deeply concerned about what this could mean for Serbia's political future, rapidly put together and sent a trade and travel package to Belgrade that was even more liberal than the one which came into effect on the first of the year, in hopes of encouraging voters in a European direction before the runoff between Nikolić and Tadić. In fact, several member states' representatives had supported actually signing the SAA with Serbia in order to send a stronger signal, but the Dutch representatives, as usual, maintained their stance against signing the SAA unless Mladić were turned into The Hague. This agreement, alternately referred to as either simply an "interim document" or, with stronger connotations, an "interim Stabilization and Association agreement," was offered to Serbia on January 28, with a potential signing date set on February 7- that is, four days after the elections on February 3, as EU officials – particularly those from Belgium and the Netherlands, the two countries which had always most strongly opposed any acceleration of Serbian accession¹³⁶ – did not want to run the risk of giving Serbia all the privileges and funding associated with a signed SAA, then watching all those benefits being handed over to Nikolić.¹³⁷ The corresponding stick to this proffered carrot was, as EU officials made clear, an absolute and irreversible end to any hopes of Serbian EU membership should

¹³⁵ "Od danas vizne olakšice" B92 Jan 1 2008 <
http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=01&nav_id=278854&nav_category=11
>

¹³⁶ That is, these two countries – especially the Netherlands – always were the most vocal opponent of any attempt to relax the condition that Ratko Mladić be captured and extradited to the Hague before Serbia could sign the SAA. The reason for the Dutch fixation on Mladić in particular is that Dutch UN peacekeepers were present, but did not act during the massacre of 8000 Bosniaks in Srebrenica in 1995.

¹³⁷ "EU wants Serbia to be full member, deputy premier says" FoNet Jan 29 2008

Nikolić be elected.¹³⁸ Politicians within Serbia had similarly serious takes on the significance of this election – Oliver Dulić, the speaker of the Serbian assembly, went so far as to frame it in the terms of the battle for Serbia’s future that had been fought during the nineties:

The citizens of Serbia are at a crossroads and they know it - they will either go on to Europe or back to the dark nineties. The leaders of the parties are not important, what is important is the citizens of Serbia, who should realize that the policy of Boris Tadić's opponent would take us back to the times that we would all like to forget... all citizens and parties that brought about the 5th of October and the democratic changes will, I am certain, back up the Serbian president in the second round of the presidential election.¹³⁹

Yet even before election, rumors circulated that Koštunica would oppose the signing of the interim SAA since, in his view, it implied an acknowledgment of Kosovo’s imminent independence:

The EU mission to Kosovo renders the [Stabilization and Association] agreement null and void, and its eventual signing turns it into something that it originally was not meant to be, namely a recognition of Kosovo's independence.¹⁴⁰

Just as the EU offered the interim SAA to Serbia in order to influence the election in favor of the pro-European candidate, Russia made its own attempt to turn the election in favor of the pro-Russian candidate by signing an energy agreement with Serbia on January 25. This agreement entailed both the sale of a controlling stake in NIS, the Serbian government-owned oil and gas monopoly, to Gazprom, and the construction of a branch of the South Stream oil pipeline in Serbia. This deal was phrased by pro-Russian Serbian politicians as highly beneficial for Serbia, since, according to them, hosting the pipeline would both guarantee Serbia’s energy supply and be a source of income. Pro-European politicians, in response, cited the comments of numerous economists and

¹³⁸ Traynor. “EU offers Serbs trade and travel deal before poll.” The Guardian, Jan 29 2008

¹³⁹ “Speaker says 2008 will be the year of Serbia’s EU integration.” Danas 23 Jan 2008

¹⁴⁰ “EU’s handling of SAA with Serbia seen as adding to election uncertainty” Blic Jan 29, 2008.

energy experts which pointed out that the agreement undervalued NIS by several hundred million euros. Mlađan Dinkić, now the minister for the economy and regional development, expressed his dissatisfaction with the agreement, saying that he had suggested that Serbia maintain a controlling stake in either NIS or the pipeline, instead of giving control of both to Gazprom. He added that, though the sale of NIS was a part of the ongoing privatization of all publicly-held industries in Serbia, the particularly political nature of this sale should have demanded that it be treated more as an “international agreement”, with equal control on both sides.¹⁴¹ As it became increasingly apparent that the deal was unfavorable to Serbia, many began to question whether a discount price had been offered to Russia in exchange for their continued support for Serbia’s opposition to Kosovo’s independence, especially due to the political overtones expressed by those involved in the negotiations. Vladimir Putin, for example, had commented upon the signing of the agreement that “the people of Serbia ought to know that they have a secure friend and partner in Russia.”¹⁴² Koštunica contradicted these rumors in a statement:

If a country, especially a big country, advocates the stance that law should be respected, and not violated, that is a principled attitude. I do not think we should discuss motifs or consider whether there is room for getting something out of it in a way. Neither Russian officials nor we have thought about it in such a way, nor could it occur to anyone to think about it that way.¹⁴³

Despite this, many economists continued to point out the apparent political tit-for-tat in the agreement, particularly expressing their concern that this sale was made just before the presidential election. One economist, Stojan Stamenković, declared that “the sale of a majority stake in NIS for EUR 400 million is only a good business move if the Serbian

¹⁴¹ “Potpisan sporazum sa Rusijom” B92 January 25, 2008
<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=25&nav_id=282048>

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ “Serbian PM says energy deal with Russians is still being negotiated” BBC B92 TV Jan 22 2008

Radical Party's candidate wins the presidential elections, and Serbia becomes isolated from the European Union.”¹⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the EU, in order to compensate for any advantage pro-Russian politicians had gained with the signing of the energy agreement, first reminded Serbian reporters of a 2006 energy agreement between the EU and Serbia¹⁴⁵, then sweetened the pot for EU integration further. On January 30, just four days before the election, Franco Frattini returned to Belgrade to open a dialogue about Serbia's addition to the White Schengen list with representatives of the Serbian government – furthermore, in the documents associated with this dialogue, the potential for Serbian membership in the EU was officially mentioned for the first time. Speaking to the Serbian media about the possibility of White Schengen for Serbia, Frattini made particular mention of the value and desirability of travel in Europe for the young.¹⁴⁶

The ultimate difference between the positions on visas, youth and travel of the two candidates themselves came out in the presidential debate on January 30. Tadić, after listing “plans and projects for creating conditions for young Serbs to get a better education and professional prospects, [pointed] out that under the democratic authorities Serbian universities got back their autonomy, and only through foreign investment will the state be able to increase funds for young people and only through cooperation with

¹⁴⁴ “Potpisan sporazum sa Rusijom.” B92 25 January 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=25&nav_id=282048>

¹⁴⁵ Actually, as the deal was between the EU and Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, and UNMIK representing Kosovo, reminding Serbians of this deal was probably not as effective in counterbalancing the Russia-Serbia deal as the EU might have hoped. The EU's deal was yet another indicator of their tendency to consider all the western Balkan states as more or less the same – while Russia's strongest advantage in Serbia has always been that they have such a close relationship with Serbia, and Serbia *only* – flattering, perhaps, Serbia's ongoing perception of itself as the most important country in the region.

¹⁴⁶ “EU's Frattini visits Serbian capital, opens negotiations about no visa policy.” RTS 30 January 2008.; “EU opened all its doors and windows to Serbia, EC's Frattini says in Belgrade.” B92 30 January 2008.

the EU will they be able to travel visa-free.” Nikolić, countering this, welcomed “scholarships for studying abroad, but [pointed] out that it is in Serbia's best interest to enable young people just to study in Serbia.”¹⁴⁷

The EU’s redoubled efforts turned out to be just enough; on the February 3rd elections, Tadić scraped a win with 50.5% of the vote, compared to Nikolić’s 47.9% - a difference of about 100,000 votes. Numerous EU politicians publicly stated their relief with the results of the elections, including European Commission Deputy Chairman Franco Frattini, who linked the results of the election to the possibility of White Schengen for Serbia in an interview:

[Interviewer] What is going to happen in the EU's relationship with Serbia now?

[Frattini] First of all, Belgrade has a duty to work on security, in other words on the protection of its outside borders and on biometric passports. Then, with goodwill on everyone's part, it is possible to envisage the elimination of visas before this Commission's mandate runs out in 2009. [...] If Nikolic had won, everything would have been different. Tadic's victory places a burden of responsibility on our shoulders. After supporting him, we cannot now turn around and slap him in the face. That is why I hope that an agreement can be thrashed out among all the member states allowing Europe to speak out with one voice.¹⁴⁸

Yet on February 7, when the interim SAA was due to be signed, it was instead indefinitely postponed. Olli Rehn, though expressing his "regret [that] we have to postpone the signing of the political agreement," cited “the obstruction by certain politicians in Belgrade [who had] really failed to hear the choice of the Serbian people.”¹⁴⁹ The reference was to Koštunica, who had, as expected, blocked the signing of the interim SAA. Though the document contains no reference to Kosovo whatsoever,

¹⁴⁷ “Serbian presidential candidates lay out policies in TV debate.” 31 January 2008.

¹⁴⁸ “EU official says Tadić win in Serbia to moot visa change.” *La Repubblica* 5 February 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Zimonjic, Vesna Peric. “Serbia plunged back into crisis as PM rejects EU deal.” *The Independent* 7 February 2008.

Koštunica and his political allies maintained that signing this “deception” would amount to “treason”¹⁵⁰, and implied there was a connection between the timing of the offer of the interim SAA and the EU’s decision a few days before to approve EULEX, a police and justice mission for Kosovo:

The political agreement that the EU has proposed while it deploys a mission to dismember our country is a deception.... By signing, Serbia would indirectly recognize the independence of Kosovo.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, in Brussels, talks between Serbia and the European Commission regarding the addition of Serbia to the White Schengen list were being held. Upon their conclusion on February 8, the European Commission’s chief negotiator Jean-Louis de Brouwer announced that Serbia had fulfilled most of the criteria for abolishing the visa regime, and that in light of this the European Commission would set a precise timetable for fulfilling the remaining criteria by the end of the month – whereupon the European Council would finalize the agreement at its March session.¹⁵²

However, both the discussion of White Schengen and the debate in the Skupština over the interim SAA were suddenly interrupted by Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence on February 17. Tadić, Nikolić and Koštunica all condemned Kosovo’s declaration as illegal and pledged to do everything possible to prevent international recognition of Kosovo’s independence, as well as Kosovo’s membership in various international institutions. Tadić and Oliver Dulić’s made pleas to the public to remain

¹⁵⁰ Zimonjic, Vesna Peric. “Serbia plunged back into crisis as PM rejects EU deal.” The Independent 7 February 2008.

¹⁵¹ The original plan was for the final decision on the EULEX mission to be taken on January 28, but, again, due to concerns within the EU over how that would affect the Serbian presidential elections, the decision to approve the mission was postponed until the day after the elections. “Odluka o misiji 12. Februara.” B92 1 February 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=01&nav_id=283176&nav_category=640>

¹⁵² “Serbia has fulfilled most criteria for white Schengen list, deputy PM says.” Studio B 8 February 2008.

calm and refrain from violent protest¹⁵³; yet a February 20th rally under the title “*Kosovo je Srbija*” (“Kosovo is Serbia”) drew more than 100,000 protesters – and centered around fiery speeches by Koštunica, Nikolić and several other members of the Serbian government.¹⁵⁴ By the end of the night, the rally had descended into an orgy of drunken violence. Vandals smashed windows and looted in the city center, while the US embassy was set afire, leading to one protestor’s death; the British, German, Croatian, Bosnian and Turkish embassies were also attacked.¹⁵⁵ In response, the EU officially froze integration talks with Serbia, and issued an extremely strongly-worded warning to the country’s authorities – the harshest, in fact, of any EU warning to Serbia since Milošević’s removal from power in 2000 – citing in particular the role of certain ministers (i.e. those who had spoken at the rally) in inciting the public to violence.¹⁵⁶

Even with Belgrade in chaos, and international relations more than tense, Deputy Prime Minister Djelić continued to publicly press for visa relaxation. Just days after the “*Kosovo je Srbija*” rally, he announced that a Serbian delegation would be traveling to Brussels to continue discussions of the cancellation of the visa regime.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, he publicly expressed frustration with the EU’s unwillingness to be flexible on their demands; speaking to the Economist, he commented, with some bitterness, that “since the

¹⁵³ “Kosovo proglasilo nezavisnost.” B92 17 February 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=17&nav_id=285184>

¹⁵⁴ As well as the internationally renowned Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica.

¹⁵⁵ “Održan miting ‘Kosovo je Srbija.’” B92 21 February 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=21&nav_id=285780>; “Jedna žrtva nasilja u Beogradu.” B92 22 February 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=21&nav_id=285912>

¹⁵⁶ Charter, David. “EU freezes talks with Serbia in protest at embassy attacks” The Times [London], 23 February 2008.; “Serbian adviser comments on EU’s ‘harsh warning’ over Belgrade riots.” B92 1 March 2008.

¹⁵⁷ “Serbian Democrats insist Kosovo, EU both priorities.” B92 26 February 2008.

fall of Milošević in 2000 Serbia ‘has got nothing’ ... But... now is not the time to retreat into a hole saying ‘we hate you.’”¹⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the serious ongoing ideological conflict between Koštunica – who was now demanding that the interim SAA be abandoned unless all the EU member states which had recognized Kosovo rescinded their decision – soon led to a more serious political crisis. On March 10, Koštunica, citing irreconcilable differences, dissolved government and asked Tadić to call snap elections for May 11, clearly hoping to use the surge of popular nationalist sentiment in the wake of Kosovo’s independence to boost his party’s number of seats in the Skupština.

The pro-European politicians in Tadić’s camp realized that they would need to demonstrate clear progress and even clearer benefits on the EU front if they wanted to turn the election in their direction. On March 29, Vuk Jeremić attended a meeting of EU foreign ministers¹⁵⁹ and foreign ministers of other Western Balkan states in Brdo pri Kranju, in Slovenia. The meeting, according to its organizers, and was intended to both be a follow-up to and give “fresh impetus” to the mandate that had been established at the summit in Thessaloniki in 2003; Jeremić himself announced to the press that he had come to the meeting with the intent to “seek re-commitment of the EU to our part of the world.”¹⁶⁰ At the meeting, it was reiterated that both the interim SAA and Serbia’s addition to the White Schengen list were still on the table; Jeremić countered by saying that he needed a signed full Stabilization and Association agreement – i.e. including the sections missing in the interim SAA – immediately, in order to counteract the

¹⁵⁸ “The road of discontent.” *The Economist* 1 March 2008.

¹⁵⁹ The meeting was hosted by the Slovenian foreign minister – as Slovenia held the EU presidency at the time. The irony was lost on no one.

¹⁶⁰ “Serbia ‘committed’ to EU integration, foreign minister says in Slovenia.” *STA* 29 March 2008.

nationalizing effect of Kosovo's declaration of independence on the Serbian population. However, the Dutch and Belgian foreign ministers continued to resist allowing Serbia to sign a full SAA before Mladić was surrendered to The Hague. Moreover, it was questionable whether the current Skupština would even be entitled to sign an SAA; the parliament, after all, had been dissolved by Koštunica a few weeks before, and it had already been announced that legislative decisions, e.g. the conclusion of the NIS-Gazprom deal, would be postponed until a new government was formed.¹⁶¹ Jeremić also met opposition in his desire for an immediate cancellation of the visa regime, as the assembled foreign ministers maintained that Serbia must first fulfill the security requirements on the so-called "roadmap" to White Schengen membership – among which were secure biometric passports and strengthened border controls.¹⁶² Jeremić was sent home empty-handed, but for the EU's assurances that both the SAA and White Schengen were still (distant) possibilities.

Nonetheless, upon Jeremić's return, Serbian authorities promptly got to work on completing the White Schengen "road map"; within weeks, an announcement was made that the new biometric passports¹⁶³ would begin to be issued in June. In order to reach out to voters which might be leaning towards the nationalists' side, Jeremić gave an interview on TV Pink, the somewhat-sensationalist, somewhat-nationalist, most-watched network in Serbia, in which he made his case for the benefits which a pro-EU government would bring:

¹⁶¹ "Opinions differ on Serbian president Tadic's, government's authority to sign SAA." *Dnevnik* 11 April 2008.

¹⁶² "Serbia 'committed' to EU integration, foreign minister says in Slovenia." *STA* 29 March 2008.

¹⁶³ Passports which, for the first time, would be issued in the name of "Serbia" alone – and not "Serbia and Montenegro" or "Yugoslavia".

Young people living in the EU have the right to free-of-charge education within the EU. So, when you enter the club, when you are given the opportunity to make an important institutional step by signing the SAA, that means that every Serbian citizen can get free-of-charge education anywhere in the EU. When it comes to finding a job - every Serbian citizen could work anywhere in the EU, without visas, without permits, he or she could just take a plane.... This does not mean we are encouraging people to leave Serbia.¹⁶⁴

Yet a pleasant surprise for pro-EU forces in Serbia was yet to come. At a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg on April 29, both the Dutch and Belgian ministers withdrew their opposition to signing the SAA with Serbia, allowing Božidar Djelić to sign the agreement the very same day. Though the signature of the SAA was mostly symbolic – the agreement would not come into force before Mladić was turned into the Hague – it was a powerful symbol, showing Serbians that the EU was finally willing to prove its dedication to Serbia with more than just words. Debates in both the Belgian and Dutch parliaments in the days leading up to this meeting showed that attitudes towards Serbia’s relationship with the EU were changing; Maxime Verhagen, the Dutch foreign minister, made a special appeal to his country’s parliament to not send him to Luxembourg “with his hands tied”; Karel de Gucht, his Belgian counterpart, got his parliament’s support by assuring them that, because the SAA would not come into effect until Mladić was in the Hague, “not a single Serbian tomato will enter the EU as long as Serbia does not lend its full cooperation”¹⁶⁵ to the Hague tribunal – showing that, in a fundamental change from previous attitudes, Belgian politicians were more concerned

¹⁶⁴ “Signing SAA does not imply our stance on Kosovo, Serbia says.” TV Pink 23 April 2008. Jeremić’s final comment could be interpreted as either a leftover from attitudes towards emigration formed during the catastrophic exodus of the young and talented during the nineties, or a repudiation of conservative and nationalist politicians’ maintenance of this same attitude; c.f. Nikolić’s comments in the January 31, 2008 presidential debate.

¹⁶⁵ “Netherlands, Belgium expected to sign EU association accord with Serbia.” De Standaard (Belgium) 29 April 2008.

about the impact of Serbian produce on their internal market than the impact of Serbian migrants on their internal security.¹⁶⁶

A B92 poll completed the day after the signature of the SAA showed the demographic and political specifics of support for the agreement. According to the poll, 66% of the overall population supported the document, while 21% were opposed; unsurprisingly, support for the document was extremely high among LDP supporters (a full 100%) and supporters of the Boris Tadić-led list, “For a European Serbia” (*Za Evropsku Srbiju, ZES; 94%*) Yet even among DSS-NS and, incredibly, SRS voters, support was surprisingly high, with 56% and 41%, respectively¹⁶⁷. Pollsters remarked that support was generally higher among younger voters, and, crucially, noted that:

The White Schengen list, or the potential cancellation of the visa regime for Serbian citizens traveling in EU countries, *is seen by a large majority of the population – 84% – as extremely important*, while only 12% of citizens do not consider such a possibility for travel meaningful – mostly the oldest and least-educated people.¹⁶⁸

Finally, on May 6 – five days before the elections – the EU added one more enticement to the pile; namely, 17 member states, which together accounted for 80% of travel destinations among Serbians, would begin to issue visas to Serbia gratis. Djelić commented on this development:

We are exactly seven months away from the abolition of visas, because we have a plan and we have taken steps for meeting the conditions that will be presented tomorrow. I expect our people to begin receiving visas free of charge before the summer and for visas to be abolished altogether by the end of the year, so that we will start the year 2009 by being able to travel all over Europe without visas, *like all normal people*.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Mock, Vanessa. “Serbia signs EU deal in bid to defeat nationalists.” *The Independent* 30 April 2008.

¹⁶⁷ Among SRS voters, opponents of the SAA outnumbered supporters by only one percentage point – that is, 42% to 41%.

¹⁶⁸ “66 odsto građana za SSP.” *B92* 30 April 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=04&dd=30&nav_category=11&nav_id=296423

¹⁶⁹ “Serbian deputy premier praises 17 EU states’ decision to issue free visas.” *RTS* 6 May 2008.

In spite of all these efforts, polls and electoral experts continued to predict major electoral gains for DSS-NS and SRS. But when May 11 came, the numbers showed a stunning upset. *Za Evropsku Srbiju* had won 38.42% of the vote – a 16% increase since the last parliamentary election one year before – while the SRS had grown by only 1% to 29.46% and DSS-NS had lost 5%, winning only 11.62% of the vote. Despite ZES's major success, however, they had not won a majority – and even the formation of a coalition with the numerous minority and national parties¹⁷⁰ would not provide a majority in the Skupština. The SRS and DSS-NS quickly announced that they would form a coalition; ZES, however, could not join forces with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) – the minor party with positions most similar to theirs – in order to gain their 5.24 percentage points, because several of the LDP's policies – including, but not limited to, recognition of Kosovo's independence – would be utterly unpalatable to most Serbian voters. In the end, the Tadić-led coalition and the Koštunica-led coalition found themselves competing for the 7.58% of the SPS-PUPS-JS list in order to win control of the government – a list whose latter two members, the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia and United Serbia, were unremarkable, somewhat conservative small parties, but which was led by the Socialist Party of Serbia – that is, the erstwhile party of Slobodan Milošević, which had never officially broken with its dark past. Thus, Serbia found itself in the bizarre scenario of having a party many had considered dead on October 6, 2000, in a position of kingmaker at a crucial juncture of postwar Serbian history. And the SPS's president, Ivica Dačić, a hitherto largely unregarded politician, quickly showed

¹⁷⁰ e.g. the Bosniac List for a European Sanjak, the Serbian Strength movement, the Albanian Coalition from the Preševo Valley, the Roma party – each of which had won less than 1% of the vote.

himself more than capable of playing the two coalitions off each other in order to gain the most advantageous position for his own party.

While the politicians in Skupština vied for control of Serbia's political future, a contest for a different sort of prize was taking place in the Belgrade Arena – namely, the 2008 Eurovision Song Contest, which Serbia had won the right to host through its victory the previous year. And again, Eurovision showed it had tremendous symbolic power – this time not just for Serbians, but for observers from across Europe, not to mention the 15,000 tourists and 3,000 journalists who visited Belgrade for the contest. As one individual – a director of the International Republican Institute and self-proclaimed fan of Eurovision – described it:

As a social scientist, I'm fascinated by what on the surface seems so frivolous...and what it means for the future of Serbia.... I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that all of Europe coming here, all of Europe watching Belgrade, means something to the Serbs and makes them think a little bit differently about themselves. They might think: Maybe Europe doesn't hate us. Maybe we want to be a part of Europe.¹⁷¹

A development on the political scene mirrored this coup of pro-European cultural sentiment. On July 7, after a great deal of vacillation on the part of the SPS, and a great deal of coverage of this vacillation on the part of the Serbian media,¹⁷² a ZES-SPS-PUPS-JS government was formed – forcing the Koštunica-Nikolić coalition into the minority.

¹⁷¹ Booth, William. “‘Idol’s’ Distant Cousin: At the Eurovision Song Contest, Schmaltz and Nationalism Storm the Stage” Washington Post 26 May 2008. Especially with the backdrop of the ongoing elections, the general pro-Europe tone of the discourse surrounding Eurovision may have been contradicted by the victory of the Russian contestant, Dima Bilan; however, as Booth points out, Bilan sang in English, and his song was produced by the American hip-hop artist Timbaland.

¹⁷² The public's fascination with the numbers game of coalition formation was such that one enterprising soul created a popular Flash game called “Sastavi svoju vladu!” – “Form your own government!” In the game, one creates various combinations of politicians in order to reach the needed 126 seats in the Skupština, all the while trying to spend as little as possible of the allotted EUR 1,000,000 to bribe ideologically misaligned politicians into cooperating. Educational AND fun! <<http://www.igrice.rs/razne-igrice/sastavi-svoju-vladu/>>

On July 21, just three weeks after the formation of the new, pro-European government¹⁷³, Radovan Karadžić – the ICTY’s second-most-wanted war criminal – was captured by Serbian police in Belgrade and extradited, a few days later, to The Hague. The SRS, hoping to produce another show of nationalist opposition as strong as the enormous protests after Kosovo’s secession, announced that it would be organizing another protest. Yet this time, the protest was a clear failure; it drew only 10,000-15,000 protesters, and the protest walk through the city, which had been planned for after the speeches, had to be canceled after clashes between the protesters and the police intensified to the point that police were forced to disperse the entire crowd (including the speechifying politicians) with tear gas.

Several newspapers also predicted Mladić’s arrest during that summer, reporting that the team of operatives in charge of locating and arresting Mladić had postponed their summer vacations until further notice, and that the visit of the new ICTY chief prosecutor Serge Brammertz, which had originally been scheduled for immediately after Karadžić’s arrest, had been postponed until September – i.e., until after Mladić would be captured. According to the newspapers’ speculations, Tadić et al favored arresting both of the major Serbian war criminals during the summer in order to minimize backlash – during the summer, the Skupština is adjourned, preventing immediate political reactions from the SRS; furthermore, during the late summer, the city of Belgrade more or less empties out as everyone goes to spend the hottest month at the beaches in Montenegro – thereby

¹⁷³ And just four days after Tadić replaced the head and top deputies in the Serbian intelligence service (BIA) with his own selections. (The outgoing BIA head was Rade Marković, of the November 2000 visa blacklist scandal.) In September of 2008, it was confirmed that the BIA had known of Karadžić’s whereabouts for months before his arrest, but had not taken action until the agency’s leadership had been changed at the time of the incoming pro-European government. “Saša Vukadinović, direktor BIA ili državni sekretar.” *Blic* 7 March 2008. <<http://www.blic.rs/temadana.php?id=47849>>; “BIA znala gde je Karadžić” *B92* 27 September 2008. <http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=09&dd=27&nav_category=64>

draining the city of potentially radical protesters. The government also believed that it made sense to follow Karadžić's arrest as quickly as possible with Mladić's, since the former would desensitize the population to the shock of the latter. But when the end of summer came, and Mladić had still not been captured, senior politicians began to publicly express irritation with the fact that Mladić's capture was a condition towards joining the EU at all. When the new Prime Minister - Koštunica's replacement - was asked in a September interview why Mladić had not yet been caught, he responded:

I cannot speculate about timing. However, nobody can now say that there is a lack of political will to resolve this issue. You can be accused of not wanting to do something that ought to be done. But if you want to do something and cannot, nobody can make you jump two meters up in the air if you can only do half a meter. I personally think it would be best for this to be done through voluntary surrender. And I also think that those who make Mladić a condition for EU integration are not being fair to Yugoslavia [sic!], because by handing over Karadžić we clearly demonstrated our good will."¹⁷⁴

Meanwhile, in the Skupština, Koštunica's and Nikolić's parties began soon after the formation of a government to block the passage of any and all legislation, regardless of its political tenor; that is, in addition to blocking Serbia's ratification of the SAA, they also prevented the passage of reforms needed for the abolition of the visa regime, the finalization of the energy deal with Russia, and the construction of a bridge and overpass in Belgrade. Božidar Djelić commented to the media that "they are now starting to block key freedoms, freedom of movement and the abolishment of the visa regime for our citizens. Further blockage [in passing measures on border security] will jeopardize getting on the White Schengen list."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Nikolić Djaković, Tanja and Katarina Preradović. "Paper says Serbian government plans to arrest Mladić by end of August" *Blic* 7 August 2008.; "Serbian premier sums up first 50 days in office, says progress not as expected." *Blic* 25 August 2008.

¹⁷⁵ "Djelić: Ugrožena bela šengen lista" *B92* 7 Aug 2008.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?nav_category=11&dd=7&mm=8&yyyy=2008>

Yet even as they filibustered the Skupština to a standstill, DSS and SRS politicians called the ruling coalition out when by mid-August, the biometric passports which had been promised by early summer had still not been distributed. According to a DSS spokesperson, promises of inclusion on the White Schengen list had all been “an election deception.”¹⁷⁶ This lashing out at the majority coalition disguised an internal crisis, particularly in SRS, after their losses in the election. In fact, it is from this quarter that the second major surprise from this election cycle came: early in September, Nikolić announced that he was leaving the Radical party and starting his own, pro-European party – and several other senior members of SRS announced they would join him.

Taking advantage of the widespread political confusion following this announcement,¹⁷⁷ the majority coalition in the Skupština put the Stabilization and Association Agreement to a vote on September 9 – and as no one from the SRS was there to vote on it, it passed by a wide margin.

Progress in the Stabilization and Association process, however, did not translate to advances towards joining White Schengen. On the contrary – though the French Immigration, Integration and National Identity Minister Brice Hortefeux had promised that Serbia would be added to the White Schengen list by the end of 2008 – during the French presidency of the European Council – as the end of the year approached it became clear that this promise would be broken. The following interview with Bernard Kouchner, the French Foreign Minister, ran in a widely-read Belgrade paper on December 29:

¹⁷⁶ The spokesperson’s quote continues, “... and to make the whole thing more ironic, there were reports that horses in Serbia have been issued passports under EU standards...it seems that the Veterinary Administration was the only part of the new Serbian government that had proved a true pro-European orientation.” Ouch. “Serbian opposition slams government’s promises on EU visas.” [B92](#) 18 August 2008.

¹⁷⁷ ... and managing to pick their jaws up off the floor faster than any other party...

[Novosti] What timetable do you expect for the Serbian path towards the EU? When can Serbia become a full member?

[Kouchner] Serbia's place is in the EU of course, as an EU member, and we have repeatedly and decisively said so during our presidency. Let me say however, that EU membership is something that is mostly in your own hands. Of course, *we regret that you have not progressed faster during our presidency. You know the conditions that need to be fulfilled before the Stabilization and Association Agreement becomes effective.* We have done everything we can to bring other EU members on board. I believe that the next phase will be carried out as well. But it depends on the government in Belgrade. I have confidence in the current team and its pro-European orientation and I believe that it will make the necessary efforts *especially with regards to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia [ICTY] in The Hague.*

[Novosti] When will the citizens of Serbia finally be able to travel to Europe without visas?

[Kouchner] When it comes to visas, I have instructed our embassy in Belgrade to do everything it can to speed up the process of granting visas. As you know, France began issuing free visas in April. Soon eighty per cent of the visas will be issued for free!¹⁷⁸ *The visa regime will be fully liberalized only when Serbia implements the measures required by the European Commission. The procedure is the same for all the countries of the Western Balkans.*¹⁷⁹

What Kouchner does not mention is that Serbia already has fulfilled all of the technical requirements for White Schengen, including the improvement and harmonization of border security techniques with those of the EU and the issuing of biometric passports. The condition of which Kouchner speaks is exclusively that of “cooperation” with the ICTY – in other words, the capture and extradition of Mladić. This is the current state of visa affairs in Serbia – free travel in the EU is and will remain out of reach for Serbians until one man, a last remnant of the nightmare of the nineties, is submitted to The Hague. It is increasingly hard to believe, now that solidly pro-European parties are in power in Belgrade, the SRS and DSS are in shambles, and even

¹⁷⁸ i.e. France was one of the 17 countries which promised free visas to Serbians in the run-up to the second round of the 2008 presidential elections, hoping to effect a win for Boris Tadić. Kouchner is putting a bit of a positive spin on the fact that, despite Tadić's win, that policy had not yet begun to be fully implemented.

¹⁷⁹ “French FM Kouchner says Serbia's place in EU.” *Vecernje novosti* 23 December 2008.

Tomislav Nikolić is supporting Serbia's EU integration, that Mladić's whereabouts are being concealed by the government; there is nothing to indicate that he is in Serbia at all.

According to Kouchner, the visa regime will be dismantled when all "the measures required by the European Commission" are fulfilled; the problem, from the perspective of many Serbians, is that these conditions seem to constantly change. As soon as one is fulfilled, a new, harder one is announced; or the definition of the condition itself changes, as is the case with the oft-repeated requirement of "cooperation with the Hague Tribunal". Serbia, by the reckoning of none other than the chief prosecutor of the ICTY, has been fully cooperative since SAA negotiations were resumed in 2006; yet for EU politicians, Serbian "cooperation" means nothing less than the prompt apprehension of every single *ethnically* Serb war criminal – though Mladić could just as easily be described as the responsibility of the current Bosnian government, as he was born in Bosnia and was a general in the army of the Republika Srpska – the ethnically Serb territory in the Bosnian state – at the time of his crimes. In fact, even the UN International Court of Justice has ruled that the Serbian *state* is not guilty of genocide in the case of Srebrenica – yet the Serbian state, and its citizens, is being held responsible for finding those who did commit genocide in Srebrenica.¹⁸⁰

There is an increasing perception among young Serbians, which I heard over and over again during my time there last summer, that the EU does not want Serbia as a member state because Europeans hate, or fear, or will never forgive Serbs for the atrocities of the nineties. This impression does not come from the fact that the EU has

¹⁸⁰ Byers, David. "Court clears Serbia of Srebrenica genocide" The Times Online 26 February 2007. <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article1441632.ece>>

demanded certain things from Serbia in exchange for progress towards EU membership, or even the fact that the surrender of war criminals is one of these conditions – Croatia, too, was halted for some time on the path to EU membership because of their refusal to surrender General Ante Gotovina, and the vast majority of Serbians supported extraditing Milošević and other war criminals with Serbian citizenship to the Hague.

Instead, the impression of bias comes from the EU's handling of White Schengen negotiations with Serbia. The EU's Schengen zone mentality demands that it conceive of the Balkans as a dangerous frontier – and EU politicians are forced to take the same stance because of the high and unchecked prejudices of their constituencies against the nationals of Balkan countries. Those in the EU who are concerned with the security of the Schengen Zone are well aware that as soon as Serbia is incorporated into the free-travel area, the buffer zone will have to be moved outwards again – but this time, to countries with very little likelihood of ever joining the European Union. EU foreign policy is such that it has little control over countries who are not engaged in, or at least interested in the accession process – without that carrot, the EU would have no way to control border security measures in its new buffer zone, leaving it exposed to smuggling, illegal immigration, and terrorism. Furthermore, the knowledge that any action taken towards relaxing visa regulations with the Balkan states will be extremely unpopular at home does not encourage EU politicians to push this agenda.

This reluctance, as well as this tendency to think of the Balkans as a single unit – “the buffer” – comes across clearly in the EU's relations with Serbia. Promises of visa relaxation and eventual White Schengen membership are frequent, but occur almost exclusively in the context of the Balkans at large. On the rare occasions when they have

made in particular reference to Serbia, it has been in the run-up to contested elections which might tip the balance of power in Serbia towards those who are not interested in the EU's carrots. Yet when these promised deadline arrives, the visa relaxations are implemented partially, or not at all (despite announcements to the contrary), and the possibility of White Schengen is delayed for another year due to Mladić's ongoing evasion of Serbian security forces.

A few highly-placed European politicians are beginning to show greater awareness of the way their actions are being interpreted in Serbia. Franco Frattini – the former EU Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security who said that all western Balkan states were being judged on their own merits, and not according to a common Balkan standard – recently gave an interview to the Viennese newspaper *Der Standard* in which he contradicts his earlier stance:

Der Standard: You recently proposed an eight-point program to accelerate the EU integration of the Balkans. Why do the clocks seem to run so slow there?

Frattini: For two reasons. Many people operate on the assumption that all the Balkan states are the same. That is not the case. Serbia, for example, we have treated very poorly overall. And in addition to that, there is a great deal of ignorance in certain European states about the Balkans. That is, unfortunately, the truth.¹⁸¹

But Frattini is very much in the minority among his European colleagues. Given the EU's "very poor" treatment of Serbia, it is unsurprising that a study conducted in January of this year by the Serbian government's Office for European Integration showed that support for EU membership had actually dropped by six percent, to 61%, over the last year.

¹⁸¹ "Freistaat Südtirol? Das ist völlig absurd." Interview with Christoph Prantner. *Der Standard* [Vienna] 17 Apr. 2009. My translation. The gratification felt by many Serbians upon seeing Frattini confirm their suspicions (the interview was translated and commented upon in numerous Serbian papers) can be seen in the way in which I first became aware of this interview – a 21-year-old Serbian friend of mine sent me the link with the comment (roughly translated): "Ohooo! Look what Señor Italy is saying now!"

49 percent of respondents said that the “constant political conditioning and blackmail that the EU is applying to Serbia” was the greatest impediment to Serbian EU entry, while 20 percent blamed the “incompetence of the domestic government.” 86 percent of people identified cooperation with the Hague Tribunal as the key condition for further integration, a condition viewed as acceptable by 47 percent of respondents. “The goal best articulated by our citizens is getting Serbia on to the Schengen white list, even though 83 percent of respondents did not travel to a country with a visa regime last year,” stressed Delević [the director of the OEI]. She said that for Serbian citizens the Schengen white list represented a “proof of acceptance and enhancing self-esteem.” Nevertheless, 62 percent believe that the EU is constantly imposing new conditions on Serbia.¹⁸²

The language used in this survey is telling: it is not conditionality but “conditioning and blackmail” which interfere with Serbia’s accession process; White Schengen is not just a means to the end of easier travel but “proof of acceptance and enhance[ed] self-esteem.” Without context, it would seem strange, even borderline hysterical to describe a dry political procedure in such emotional terms.

But context, of course, is everything. The issue is not the visa itself but the way visas are given out – or not. The visa procedure itself gives the impression that the EU believes themselves to be working with a highly unreliable, perhaps even dangerous population. Embassies in Belgrade, particularly those belonging to EU member states, are frequently ringed with barbed wire and have metal plates or bars over the windows. The waiting rooms for consular services are grim, concrete and windowless, with plastic and metal benches bolted to the floor. The entire place looks as though it could be hosed down at the end of the day. Applicants are required to bring stacks of documents covering every area of their life to a visa officer in order to demonstrate, quite literally,

¹⁸² “Poll: 61% support EU entry.” B92 21 January 2009. <http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2009&mm=01&dd=21&nav_id=56583>

that they “pose no danger to the public order and safety of the EU member states.”¹⁸³

Given this sort of treatment, it is no wonder that more seems to be at stake here than the ability to travel.

¹⁸³ “Studenti i profesori lakše do viza.” B92 10 January 2005.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2005&mm=01&dd=10&nav_category=12&nav_id=159657>
> Meanwhile, Russia treats Serbians like potential tourists, not potential threats; as of February 20 of this year, Serbian citizens no longer need visas to go to Russia – though even before the cancellation of the regime, the visa process was purely a formality that could be bypassed with a voucher from a travel agency. Again, the comments on B92 are telling: “As it should be. The Russians aren’t for the kind of inhumane apartheid towards us practiced by the West.” “What, you don’t want us to give you Mladić????”; but also “This is only the beginning when it comes to visa-free travel for Serbians. Much more significant visa regimes will probably be cancelled soon!” “Bezvizni režim Srbije i Rusije.” B92 20 February 2009.
<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=02&dd=20&nav_category=11&nav_id=346009>
>

Chapter 4

Original Research

The intent of my original research was to find out whether the most common conception of the impact of international travel on Serbian youths was in fact accurate – that is, whether there was a positive correlation between experience traveling or living in the EU and pro-EU attitudes. This assumption is very commonly expressed in discussions of pro- or anti-EU sentiment in Serbia, as well as of the difficulties young Serbians have with the visa process – whether in news articles, opinion pieces, speeches or everyday conversation – and whenever it is brought up, the implication is clear: the EU’s visa policy towards Serbia is a major cause of nationalistic sentiment, general pessimism and ignorance among Serbian youth. Furthermore, the thinking goes, it is likely to cause the further political distancing of Serbia from the EU in the future, when this generation enters adulthood and takes positions of power. An opinion piece by Vladimir Pavićević, a professor of political science at the University of Belgrade, sums this position up neatly:

With Milosevic’s fall, an important precondition for Serbia’s “dequarantinization” was attained. However, it is not the only one... [T]here is a whole new generation coming up, whose formative experiences are lacking international travel, if we leave out graduation excursions to Budapest or Athens. The consequences of this can be seen in the crime pages in newspapers and I fear that its full impact will be seen in years to come.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Pavićević, Vladimir. “White Schengen for Serbia.” [Peščanik.net](http://www.pescanik.net) 10 February 2009. <<http://www.pescanik.net/content/view/2673/158/>>

Given the frequency of the appearance of this concept, I was surprised that, apparently, no one had yet investigated these claims – this was before I was aware of the existence of the Student Union of Serbia’s 2004 investigation of this same topic. But it was my own experiences in Serbia, during which I encountered many young Serbians whose experiences and beliefs could not be explained by such a simple causal relationship, that ultimately convinced me that this was an area meriting investigation.

Methodology

The primary source of original data for this thesis was an anonymous internet survey¹⁸⁵, which was created using the University of Washington’s Catalyst WebQ tool.¹⁸⁶ The survey, which was written in Serbian, was conducted between February 26 and April 11, 2009. A link to the survey was distributed to approximately 10,500 people via Facebook – more specifically, by sending messages to the members of five large Serbian-themed Facebook groups with a link to the survey. Both due to the language – Serbian – and the subject matter of the five groups¹⁸⁷, the vast majority of recipients of the link were likely to be Serbians; furthermore, the message accompanying the link

¹⁸⁵ I received a certificate of exemption for this research from the Human Subjects Division on February 23, 2009. The research was exempted from the approval process due to the fact that it was conducted entirely anonymously.

¹⁸⁶ I have attached an English translation of the survey questions to this thesis as Appendix C.

¹⁸⁷ Of which two were student groups for Serbia’s two largest universities, a third was a very general, non-nationalistic pro-Serbia group, a fourth was a fan group for Kopaonik, a mountainous area popular for hiking, skiing, etc., and the last, and smallest, was a fan group for Dragutin Gavrilović, a Serbian major who led a last-ditch charge to defend Belgrade from the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War.

instructed that only recipients currently living in Serbia, and older than 18 years of age¹⁸⁸, complete the survey.¹⁸⁹

The total number of participants in the survey was 1,740. Participants were provided with the means to contact the researcher with questions and comments (which a large number of them did, providing the pool for the interview section of my original research); additionally, a Facebook group¹⁹⁰ was created where participants in the survey could discuss it both with the researcher and amongst themselves.

The questions in the survey were grouped into three sections.¹⁹¹ The first section established certain basic biographical details of the respondent's life, including their gender, age, the size of the city in which they currently reside, the size and location (i.e. either in Serbia, or elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia) of the city in which they were born, their parents' level of education, and whether or not they themselves were a student. Another question originally included in this section, which asked for the respondent's parents' approximate combined income, was almost immediately identified by discussants on the survey's Facebook group as flawed (due to ambiguous phrasing) and had to be deleted after the survey was distributed.¹⁹²

The second section was intended to determine the respondent's level of experience abroad. First, respondents were asked whether they had ever applied for a visa, and whether they considered the requirements and paperwork required to be reasonable; then, they were asked whether they had ever had a visa request denied, and

¹⁸⁸ The latter stipulation being a condition of my HSR approval.

¹⁸⁹ In distributing the survey, the researcher made no effort to limit recipients to ethnic Serbs – nor were the survey participants asked to reveal their ethnicity in the course of the survey. Rather, the intent was to survey Serbian citizens – or, more to the point, holders of Serbian passports – regardless of their ethnicity.

¹⁹⁰ Entitled “уПИТНИК”, meaning “survey”.

¹⁹¹ For a complete translation of the survey, see the appendix.

¹⁹² The confusion arose because the values listed for income were based on average *annual* income – though not labeled as such – and it is more customary in Serbia(n) to speak of one's monthly income.

whether they thought the denial of their application had been unfair. Then, respondents were asked whether they had ever lived abroad for a period of longer than three months. Those who had were asked where, why, and for how long they had lived abroad, and whether they would be interested in living abroad again; those who had not were first asked if they would like to live abroad, then questioned on their experiences with travel abroad – whether or not they had ever left the country; where and for how long they had traveled; and whether they wanted to travel more.

The third section was focused on gauging the respondent's ideological orientation, particularly regarding Serbia's foreign relations, as well as their engagement in and attitude towards politics in their own country. The first group of questions required respondents to identify how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement, ranging from "Serbia's future is in the EU" to "The majority of politicians are not interested in the problems of the average person" to "It is the responsibility of the state to make international travel possible for its citizens". Further questions asked which country should be Serbia's closest ally, how long it would be until Serbia joined the EU, and what would be the greatest benefit of EU membership; then, respondents were asked to grade the relative importance of various future goals for themselves, including living abroad and active involvement in politics. Finally, respondents were quizzed on their past political involvement: whether they had voted in the most recent election, whether they had ever taken part in a protest, whether they were a member of a political organization, and so on. Approximately a quarter of the questions from the last category were adapted from preexisting surveys¹⁹³; the rest were created by the researcher.

¹⁹³ Namely: Beck, Weissman, Lester and Trexler. "The Measurement of Pessimism: The Hopelessness Scale."; Dean, D. "Alienation: its Meaning and Measurement."; Neal, A. and Groat, H.T. "Social class

The most obvious flaw with using a survey for this type of question is one of causality – namely, it is impossible to tell by looking at the data whether a preexisting (for whatever reason) pro-European or cosmopolitan viewpoint induced an individual to travel extensively in the EU, or whether those travels were the cause of the pro-European viewpoint. Hence, I supplemented the results of the survey with interviews with seven individuals who had completed the survey, then contacted me via the email address provided at the end of the survey to offer their help, should I need it.¹⁹⁴

Interviews

Respondents were initially prompted with two questions: what were their previous experiences abroad, and what influence had those experiences had on their worldview?

A common note struck in many of the responses, regardless of whether the respondent was an experienced traveler or not, was a feeling of restriction within the narrow boundaries of Serbia. As one respondent, Vuk¹⁹⁵, pointed out:

Serbia has a population of 8 million – quite a bit less than, say, Hong Kong, which one can drive across in one hour. It's sad enough that we are limited to just this planet, let alone to just one country or, even worse, to just one city.

Milica, a student, made particular reference to the difficulties caused by the need for a visa, as well as a sense of feeling unwelcome in certain countries.

correlates of stability and change in levels of alienation.”; and Adnanes, Marian. “Exit and/or Voice? Youth and Post-Communist Citizenship in Bulgaria.”

¹⁹⁴ These seven were only a very small fraction of the total number of respondents who contacted me personally – in fact I was absolutely blown away by the enormity of the response to my survey. I received dozens of emails expressing surprise and delight that an American (“from so far away!” “Do you have family here? No? So you have a Serbian boyfriend, right?”) was learning their language and history and was interested in their troubles – and nearly every single one concluded with a sincere offer of help and an invitation to coffee the next time I was in Serbia. These responses are truly what convinced me that the subject of this thesis is a story that needed to be explored and told – if only in the context of an undergraduate thesis.

¹⁹⁵ None of the names used in this section are the respondent's real names. All texts have been translated from Serbian by me, except for Miloš's, which was originally written in English.

I'm the type that loves to travel, but because of visas I haven't been to many EU states. We're only welcome as tourists in Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia, and Cyprus.

Velimir, another student, made a similar observation; he, like a large number of young Serbians, has had only very limited experiences abroad.

My experiences abroad have been really, really short. I've been to Italy and Greece, and that's it! And I was only there in Greece and Italy for a few days, since they were excursions. The situation in our country and the whole torturous ordeal [*mučenje*] with the EU and visas have made it impossible for young Serbians to get to know the EU better.

A third student, Miloš framed the situation more bluntly, saying, "My whole generation, unlike the generation of my parents, grew up in a cage." Particularly after the ethnic cleansing and mass relocations of the 1990s, Serbian society is utterly homogenous; this, in combination with the inability of most to travel abroad, means that few young Serbians have ever been confronted with a way of life very different from their own:

My theory is that because of this, my generation cannot compare Serbian society and nation to others – my friends who could not travel abroad do not have the notion that parties are crazier in Serbia than in America, but that it's possible for a system to work with much less corruption (for example), or that it's possible to have a life without all this nationalistic shit that hit the Balkans, etc. Because of this, as I like to say, they either think that Serbs/Serbia is the best nation in the world and they join the Radical party, or they think we are the worst so they become fans of Peščanik.¹⁹⁶

In Miloš's experience, a lack of contact with other societies and points of view leads to radicalization of political attitudes; travel, on the other hand, brings perspective. Here,

¹⁹⁶ Peščanik ("The Hourglass") is a weekly, 90-minute long radio show broadcast by Radio B92, consisting of interviews with and reports by Serbian intellectuals and civil society figures. As can be seen from Miloš's comment, it is known for its rather pessimistic take on current events in Serbia.

Miloš draws on his own experiences, both during the wars of the nineties and during his extensive travels in the EU afterwards:

[As a child during the nineties,] I traveled to Greece several times for a vacation with my family - we were one of the families that miraculously stayed middle-class, which was virtually non-existent in Serbia in the nineties. Those vacations... did not have much influence on my views, since I was with family, they usually didn't last longer than two weeks, and also I was too young. However, compared to my school friends for example, *I think they kinda gave me this liberating feeling, this notion that it's possible to get out of Serbia, and that there is a world out there, where, surprisingly, there are no shocking breaking news, people killing each other, banks going bankrupt, etc.* Sorry, but that's as close as I can describe this.

Then came the NATO aggression [i.e. the bombings in 1999], after which we got in touch with my relatives from the USA. This led to my first three-week long visit to USA in 2001. Imagine a 16-year-old Serb, traveling alone across half the globe, and seeing Chicago and the Grand Canyon. This was an experience which truly boosted my self-confidence, and also changed my views a bit, since I saw that people in America on average know very little of what was going on in the Balkans – when Milošević tells you that America is your biggest enemy, you would think that people there would care enough at least to dislike you, not to mix [up] Serbia and Siberia, right? :)

My travels have also helped me test and fine-tune my views in practice. Without the travels, maybe I would have went down the road more often traveled and have a more negative attitude towards Muslims, Croats etc. Or I would not think about it at all, and when such a discussion arises, I would just use the general arguments present in Serbian public opinion. For the sake of this it's important to say that prior to my studies [in Belgrade], I've lived with my family in the town of Arandelovac, 80km south of Belgrade, and like everywhere in the world, non-urban areas are more conservative.

A great example: my younger brother, who is a civil engineering student in Belgrade, always votes for Koštunica! He's not an evil Serb or anything; he just has an attitude which includes more Serbian pride. I am sure if he had the experiences which I had, and he actually met people from all these countries, his positions would be a bit more liberal. I think that people like my brother are in great danger to be manipulated when the shit hits the fan. I hope this doesn't happen, or I'll have to (counter)brainwash him. :)

As Miloš points out (and as was discussed in chapter 1), politicians during the nineties took advantage of Serbia's isolation to paint a distorted picture of the world and

Serbia's role in it. Simply being able to travel allowed Miloš to see those distortions for what they were. However, he himself states that the short trips his family took to neighboring countries – what could be better described as tourism than travel – did not have much of an effect on his beliefs, but rather simply gave him a sense of perspective; this is significant because it is this very sort of short term travel that is most common among the Serbians who are able to travel. On the other hand, the long-term travel which he describes as having a deeper impact on his views is quite rare. In this, he draws a distinction between himself and many of those around him – including immediate family members.

Milica, on the other hand, was skeptical of the ability of short-term travel to change someone who has already formed his or her political positions.

There's a grain of truth in that – that our politicians want the youth to visit the EU so that they might afterwards have adopted... or rather, changed their political way of thinking, which they had had up to that point. But unfortunately it's not really like that. Once a radical, always a radical. Once a Democrat, always a Democrat. I belong to the second group, and it's not absolutely necessary for me to [travel to the EU] to convince myself of what I already know – that the EU is OK.

Yet Milica was in the minority among respondents in her skepticism of the power of travel. Other respondents, especially those with extensive travel experience, spoke much enthusiastically about the deep changes that travel had wrought upon their lives. As Vuk reflected:

The most important things aren't buildings and landscapes but the people I met while traveling, and their cultures, ways of thinking, religions and so on – all of which had a meaningful impact on the formation of my personality.

I realized the difference between what's subjective and what's objective, and I learned that you shouldn't trust the media (TV, radio, internet) all too much, because they always transmit their own vision of reality – which really depends on where they're based, but also on who's funding them. [...] I've also "caught"

myself in my own prejudices about certain nations and events, which I have for the same reason (media), and which I was only able to overcome when I met people from that nation, or traveled to the place where the event actually happened. [So] when it comes to my beliefs, of course they have changed.

Like Miloš, Vuk found his encounters with foreign – that is, non-Serbian – cultures, ways of thinking and religion to be the most significant part of his travels; and hence, again like Miloš, he emphasized the ability of travel to overcome the power of prejudice. His mention of the media in Serbia is particularly significant. As mentioned in chapter 1, the state-controlled media was one of the most powerful tools of public opinion formation under Milošević's regime. Everything from morning pop-and-gossip shows to the evening news was systematically sown with ominous references to and stereotyped images of Serbia's enemies in the outside world. As Vuk admits, even for him it was nearly impossible to escape their power; and as he posits, the only way to root out their insidious influence was to travel to the places mentioned and to meet, face-to-face, the people behind the stereotypes.

But too rosy a picture of the effects of travel should not be painted. Numerous respondents reported that their experiences abroad had opened their eyes to certain negative traits of foreign lands with which they had previously not been acquainted. One student, Nikola, reflected in particular on the social injustices he had witnessed in several European cities:

... the French are just as cool, and I love them a lot, since I studied French for six years. But they have such a developed system of prostitution, and the managers of those clubs for prostitution are literally preying on their own people [*narod*]. What I saw in Paris and Amsterdam was truly awful and inhuman, but for that reason their history and culture fascinates me. [...] Traveling mostly helped me to see the better side of politics in European countries, even though there are a lot of beggars in Europe, as well as people who sleep in the streets... That, for example, I did not expect. It's interesting to me that so many people in France sleep in the street or in the metro. I have never seen that in Serbia or Croatia. I

was really surprised to see people just going into a metro station carrying a blanket and laying down to sleep. When I was in Cologne, I saw a whole family sleeping in the street in the middle of winter. That image is still with me today.

Another student, Srđan, related a tale of a 2005 group excursion to Paris, during which the group had stayed at a hotel in the banlieues of that city – producing, for him, a very different picture of European life than the one EU and Serbian politicians might have hoped for.

Paris, somehow, I didn't like... a dirty, chaotic city, with a lot of immigrants. We spent three nights in a hotel [in a] neighborhood [that] was totally crammed with immigrants. As soon as we'd unpacked, we were heading towards the grocery store to buy beer and the first thing we saw was some black guys who were robbing a little market just for some ice cream. :D But ok. [...] At night the situation in the city is totally different, the place is crawling with dealers, asking you all the time if you smoke or swallow and so on... In our neighborhood several cars got smashed up, you heard police sirens often. [...] In the morning in front of our hotel there was a black market which the police forcefully shut down 15 minutes after it was opened – then they crammed all the people in a police van and took them away. Encounters with the police in the city were pretty much constant, but what was interesting was that they were all wearing armor, like riot gear. We visited most of the sights in Paris, but somehow, again, it wasn't really enough to give me a picture of a city I'd like to live in.

As Serbs in the banlieues, Srđan found himself and his fellow travelers not welcomed as tourists, but viewed with the kind of suspicion often directed towards immigrants from outside the EU.

One of the lame things was the bad way the hotel staff treated us. Some of the people from the other group (we were a group of about 100 people in two buses, and each bus was one group) were playing music in the evening, and somebody in the hotel complained, which is OK, but then because of that the police came and entered the hotel, with dogs and everything, and threatened that if that ever happened again they would kick us out of the hotel. So the next night the man in charge of the hotel went around at midnight knocking on everyone's doors to see who wasn't sleeping, and the next day he tried to get those people to pay a fine of EUR 50 for that one night, even if those people hadn't been there.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the young people in Srđan's group found themselves getting along better with the immigrants in their neighborhood than with the native French.

Something that really bothered me is that people there don't want to speak English with you even if they understand it¹⁹⁷, with the immigrants being the main exception – so it was with them that we had the best communication.

[...] But in spite of all that we got along best with the immigrants – we even played basketball with them – but when we asked them why, their answer was that Serbs and Poles are the biggest mafiosos in Paris – so since we were Serbs they didn't want to offend us!

Finally, when Srđan's group traveled on to Venice, he felt similarly discriminated against, and similarly put off by the social inequalities he saw.

[...] I didn't particularly like Venice, and I liked the way the Italians behaved even less – how when they're with you they belittle you, and behave as though you're a member of a lower race. During the entire trip you could see that the gap in the living standard [i.e. between the upper and lower classes] that was drastically larger than ours.

Several respondents presented a more ambiguous picture of their experience of life in the EU. Velimir, the student who had spent only a few days in Greece and Italy, was brief in his summary of European life:

I've noticed that they live better in the EU, prices are higher, but also... the people are colder! Yes, yes, in the EU!

Nikola, on the other hand, went into slightly more detail:

[While traveling,] I realized that people from other countries don't really live all that much better than or different from people in my country. Maybe the difference is that people in America or the EU work more, and therefore have more money. In Serbia, people don't particularly like to work too much – instead people spend time with family and friends during the week, sit in restaurants... and of course, when someone works less, they have less money. And someone

¹⁹⁷ English being the only language of communication, as the Serbians in Srđan's group mostly do not speak French.

who works more has more money. I think that's the difference between life in Serbia or Greece on one hand, and in the US or the EU on the other hand.

In comparing work and leisure habits in the EU and Serbia, Nikola makes no value judgments – the two ways of life are simply different. It is interesting to see, though, that Nikola distinguishes between “the EU” and “Greece” in this comparison, though Greece is of course an EU member state. These two lifestyles, therefore, are not irrevocably separated. The *idea* of the Greek leisure-oriented lifestyle is possible within the technical boundaries of the European Union – and so, conceivably, is the *idea* of the Serbian leisure-oriented lifestyle.

In other areas, however, Nikola clearly identified what he perceived to be the EU way as better than the Serbian way:

I also think that policies in the EU are better, since the state takes care of some things that the citizens shouldn't have to take care of – e.g. infrastructure, cleaning the streets, the facades of buildings.... Here, the people have to take care of that kind of thing, and to pay for and organize repairs themselves, while the government just steals and raises taxes.

And unlike Srđan, he never felt as if he had been particularly discriminated against during his travels – but this, as he explained it, was due to his affiliation with other categories:

I've had the opportunity to travel as a tourist, but I've also gone to a few conferences as an activist. As a tourist I've had a good time everywhere I've gone, since when you're paying everyone's nice to you. As an activist, I've also had a good time, since everyone respects intellectuals.

When asked specifically about their troubles with visas, the respondents invariably had a great deal to say – sharing either their own or their friends' stories of “consular sadism.”¹⁹⁸ As Vuk relates:

¹⁹⁸ As it is evocatively referred to in “EU Visas and the Western Balkans.”

The biggest problem with visas is that you can't freely plan your trip – instead, you have to know by May the exact date you want to travel and how long you want to stay before you buy a plane ticket for August. Not to mention how demeaning [*ponižavajuće*] is to collect all the documents you need – proof of income for both of your parents, student ID, proof that you have passed all the tests at your faculty, proof that you are a regular student at your faculty, an abstract of your bank account, proof of health insurance, traveler's insurance, two photographs, a letter of invitation, proof that you have paid for your hotel, plane tickets, and so on and so on... Just to get all the papers together that they need in order to decide whether to grant you a visa takes three whole days – and that's with you and your parents working together. And what's worst – even after you've got all your papers collected, the visa officer can still just say, “Oh, well, you'll have to bring me these three other documents as well.”

And what's really the worst is that you have to do the whole process all over again every time you travel! I, for example, have gotten a Schengen visa several times, and each time I had to start over from scratch – as if I had become a terrorist in the meantime!

When asked specifically about the effect that the visa relaxations (which were intended to reduce the number of documents necessary for a visa application) had actually had, Vuk was unenthusiastic; the changes had been “minimal... but every improvement is welcome :)”. Nikola came to a similar conclusion – and, like Vuk, he emphasized the belittling effect of the visa process:

My impression is that some things have changed, and some things haven't changed [since the introduction of the visa relaxations]. In effect, to get a visa you need a certain number of documents, which are pretty complicated to get together. This is really demeaning [*ponižavajuće*, again], because if I, as a student and citizen of good standing, have to hand over a complete representation of my entire personality [in order to get a visa], and some other person can just come to my country with just a passport, something's not right.

Miloš, too, made particular reference to this:

It is hard, and most of all, it's humiliating. You wouldn't believe all the papers we have to present for getting just a tourist visa! I will just say that I had to let them look at the registration papers of my family's cars as a proof that we're rich enough so I won't become an illegal immigrant. Here it's important to understand that the ex-Yugoslavs felt like an equal part of Europe regarding the earnings and the travelling. This is what makes this even more humiliating.

Interestingly, according to several respondents, there are dramatic differences among the various embassies of EU member states when it comes to the requirements and methods of the visa application process.¹⁹⁹ Vuk explained that this was why long lines of visa applicants were commonly seen in front of some embassies, but not in front of others:

You have to schedule your interview at the embassy months in advance, or wait outside all night in front of the embassy in order to get a good spot in line, depending on the system that that particular embassy uses. Since they open at, let's say, 9AM, people start arriving at 3 or 4 in the morning and wait all night.

Nikola brought up the issue of bribery, or other problems with the visa officers themselves, which are more prevalent at some embassies than others:

When you go to the German or French embassies, they tell you what you absolutely need to bring, and usually things all work out relatively quickly.... Unfortunately, there exist some very poor countries like Croatia or Bulgaria. In their embassies, the employees are extremely uneducated and uncivil (*neprištojni*) – they expect you to bribe them to make the whole process go easier. Bulgaria was a very poor country of the Soviet bloc, and today it's a member of the European Union, and applies certain criteria [for a visa] to our citizens which didn't exist earlier. Simply in terms of sociology, I think that this is a situation of an inferiority complex.

Milica, too, discussed how the conditions for a visa vary from embassy to embassy – which also leads to variations in cost.

When it comes to visas, Serbs mostly try to get visas for countries with a lot of tourism. It's hardest to get a visa for Spain, because they want you to translate every single one of your documents into Spanish. So that's just one more

¹⁹⁹ In 2007, the Austrian foreign minister Ursula Plassnik suggested at a meeting of central European foreign ministers that the states of the Schengen zone open a single Schengen consular office, which would handle all visa requests for Schengen member states. Though her reasons for suggesting this are not clear, this would be an effective way of actually, finally harmonizing Schengen visa procedures. The focus on such a single consular office would also prevent the failure to apply the terms of visa relaxations which the respondents described encountering at numerous embassies. The response to this suggestion on B92 points out a possible problem, though: "Imagine, one consular office for all 27 countries! Only if they're planning on putting it in the Sava Center [Belgrade's main stadium]". "And how long would the line in front of *that* counter be?" "Jedinstven šalter za EU vize." B92 31March 2007.

<http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2007&mm=03&dd=31&nav_category=11&nav_id=239500>

expense, since you have to have a translator do that, and you have to pay them separately. And even when you've gathered all your documents, it doesn't mean you have a visa – they can just up and deny you a visa a few days before you're set to leave, which is terrible.

Miloš pointed out that one of the most frustrating aspects is the sheer, apparent randomness of who gets a visa and who doesn't:

For example, I got the US visa 3 times with no problem, I've got 2 or 3 Schengen visas, etc. BUT I was refused for a Slovakian (?!?!?) visa in 2007 when I was supposed to go to a summer camp. Also, when I travelled to Turkey last summer (by train) I got the Bulgarian transit visa in 3 days instead of 7 (in which case I would've had to travel by plane) JUST because I'm a member of Rotaract²⁰⁰ (?!?!?). The boyfriend of one of the Serbian Erasmus girls here in Rome was refused a Slovenian Schengen, but 2 days later he got a Hungarian Schengen (with no connections) so he could come to Italy to visit her. He didn't even dare to ask an Italian Schengen visa because there was no one to send him an invitation letter.

The unevenness in requirements from embassy to embassy, on the one hand, allows the highly motivated to “game” the system – going to an embassy with more lax requirements, since a Schengen visa can be used to visit any country in the Schengen zone. On the other hand, it increases the perception of the Schengen visa regime as absurd and illogical – a senseless inconvenience instead of a well-thought out, well-attended security measure.

But visas aren't the only problem. Igor, who is married and in his early thirties, emphatically identified another hurdle in addition to visas, namely: “MONEY!!!!” In fact, according to Vuk, money was, for most Serbians, actually the greater problem of the two:

Young people can't travel for multiple reasons. First, there are a fair number of people, like anywhere in the world, who aren't interested in [travel]. The biggest problem isn't visas but money – *then* the difficulty of getting a visa.

²⁰⁰ A service-oriented youth group organized by the Rotary Club, which has branches in Serbia.

Igor's assessment of the situation corresponded to Vuk's:

People who have traveled before will continue to travel even after we get on the White Schengen list. People who haven't traveled will continue to not travel, because the key factor here is money and not visas. The vast majority of people of people now aren't thinking about travel, especially people in the villages. How could they when they have on average two kids, and only have enough income for food. If they have another job on the side, it's so that they have enough money for new pants and shirts.... Fifteen years ago, there were a lot more people who traveled – twenty years ago, everyone traveled! M O N E Y!

Yet as Igor elaborated on his comments, it became clearer that while money was in his view an actual, concrete problem, his problem with visas was more abstract, having more to do with pride and sensibilities than practicalities.

I don't like to travel by bus, and planes are too expensive. Though it wouldn't bother me if I could bicycle to, say, Egypt – where you don't need a visa – or to Peru – but I can't. I don't want to travel to the EU because of visas, and because of the behavior at the airports. I would love to see the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, Baghdad, to go on a safari in Africa (the only hard thing would be surviving the vaccines before going to Africa, hahaha)... Europe is such a boring place.

My wife was recently in Greece, and even though getting a Greek visa is just a formality... I can imagine what it's like [getting a visa] for other countries. Besides that, it might sound a little paranoid, but if somebody wants information about my income, my employment, my goals in life... and so on, they should ask me nicely over Facebook (haha), and not evaluate me with all these forms and questionnaires!

The thing is that I HATE BUREAUCRACY²⁰¹ of all types, and therefore I really don't want any close encounters with embassy clerks... that's all. It irritates me when I have to pay bills, hand over all the paperwork for a visa,... And the money.... see above.

He explained his comment about behavior at the airports:

As for airports... isn't it true that the passport and security controls for people from Serbia are off at a separate window, since we're coming from outside the EU? For me, that kind of labeling is enough to make me not want to fly to the EU...

²⁰¹ Upon reading this, I was immediately reminded of the text that serves as this thesis's epigraph.

Finally, when asked whether he thought the EU's approach to visas could be explained by an anti-Serb bias, he responded:

This is the third year they've said that "by the end of the year Serbia will get White Schengen"... Need I comment further? ["Yes please!"] The EU has been promising visas for three years now, and they constantly change their mind about when the Serbs will fulfill the preexisting requirements, or add nearly-impossible new requirements. What do you think about the chips they put in ID cards, and the chips they implant underneath people's skin? Will that be one of the conditions before we get the right to travel abroad?

The respondents were asked whether they thought Serbia ought to join the European Union – and whether their travels had played a role in their arrival at that decision. Srđan, who had been unimpressed by what he saw in Paris and Venice, found the pull of the EU in another European town:

In 2008, I traveled to La Rochelle, in France.... I think I spent the 10 best days of my life there. I would just really like to live there – the people and the interpersonal relationships are perfect (probably because of tourism). In my opinion, that's where you can best see the good that would come of Serbia joining the EU.

Nikola, too, found a compelling reason for Serbian EU membership during his travels – namely, evidence that Serbia, as well as he himself, *belonged* in Europe.

Something else – traveling through Europe, I realized that there is a place for my country in the EU. When I observe the architecture, the mentality, the culture, I understand that Serbia *is* a European country, and ought to join with her European allies, who could financially support her so that she would be able to preserve and hold on to her centuries-old traditions and culture. Because of that very similarity, everywhere I went [in Europe] I felt fantastic, as though I were exactly where I needed to be.

Only Milica, who mostly had been unable to travel in the EU, remained unconvinced of the benefits of EU membership – especially in light of the difficult conditions which Serbia would have to fulfill in order to join.

Why not, I don't have anything against it [i.e. Serbia joining the EU], but it doesn't matter if we don't join either. For me, the EU means an orderly political situation in our country, a stable society which has enough work and which can see things in their country with perspective. When Serbia becomes exactly that kind of country, joining the EU will just be a formality. Now, enduring this whole situation of candidacy [for EU membership] and all that mess about adopting European laws is just because of comparisons between one country and other countries in Europe. When it comes down to it, as far as I'm concerned – we don't have to become a member state because we will live OK, even without that. Not all the countries in Europe are in the EU, but that doesn't stop them from being among the most developed in Europe.

When asked whether free travel was not a powerful draw for membership, she drew a distinction between the process of joining the White Schengen list and the process of joining the European Union. Between the two, only White Schengen really seemed achievable – EU membership, on the other hand, seemed to be years away. And why should she wait? The EU had nothing to offer beyond free travel and a stable society – both of which, in her view, could be achieved much less painfully if one were unconcerned with the label of “member state.”

We'll get the visa-free regime before we fulfill all the conditions for joining the EU, which is excellent in and of itself. Of course it would be easier for the citizens of Serbia to travel if Serbia were a member – but while we're waiting to join, my youth is passing me by... :)

Miloš echoed this, saying that people were beginning to become frustrated with the slow pace towards EU membership, and considered White Schengen a more achievable goal.

Well, the visa thing was being observed together with the whole EU-membership package, and I think it was smart by both our foreign policy people and the pro-Serbian EU people to separate that issue from the [membership] package and work on it. I think that they all finally saw how absurd it was becoming to have such a visa regime still in place. I also believe they will have to give us [a visa-free regime], because Croatia is most probably becoming a member soon, so that we won't cry so hard.

What would the consequences be otherwise? Miloš's answer was blunt:

You can examine how the West behaved towards Germany after the end of the WWI, and after the end of WWII, and what were the consequences (hint: 1st time Hitler, 2nd time country which is a regional leader). These are extreme examples, but I hope you see my point.

Vuk's assessment of the politicians on both sides of the negotiations was not so complimentary, but neither was his prediction of the consequences so extreme.

It's perfectly clear [what's going on]. Political conditionality...

This is one of the things they use to blackmail us into following the "European" path. The carrot and the stick. We do something that they would like, but isn't in our short term interest, and then they give us something, like visa cancellation, trade agreements...

I think Europe is pulling back a bit when it comes to expansion, they've had a lot of negative side effects... so it's no surprise that they're slowing down now. Anyways, I'm nearly sure that they'll cancel the visa regime with Serbia before the end of the year, or else this government will fall apart, and other parties which Europe won't like at all will come into power.

Looking at these interviews, no conclusive evidence presents itself of the kind of causal relationship described so widely by the Serbian media and by Serbian politicians. That is, for every Miloš extolling the role travel played in creating his cosmopolitan viewpoint, there is a Milica expressing extreme skepticism about the political effect of travel and countering that her own political views had nothing to do with where and for how long she had traveled. Though the individual interviews bring up quite a few interesting ideas and themes, it is necessary to look at the survey results to get an idea of the broader scope of positions among young Serbians.

Survey – Biases and Results

Great effort was made to choose Facebook groups which were politically neutral; however, a certain amount of bias is inherent in the fact that this survey was distributed via the internet. Internet access, especially in-home internet access, is still largely limited to the upper classes and city dwellers in Serbia.²⁰² Because the question regarding income had to be removed from the survey, it is impossible to tell whether the wage distribution in the survey sample matches that of Serbia at large. However, the overrepresentation of city-dwellers is clear; 78.3% of survey respondents listed one of Serbia's five largest cities – Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica, Niš, and Kragujevac – as their current place of residence, though the population of these cities makes up only 29.7% of Serbia's total population.²⁰³ In addition, university students are disproportionately represented in the survey – only 14.4% of respondents answered that they were not students²⁰⁴ – due both to the fact that two of the five Facebook groups (comprising about 3,400 of the total 10,500 people contacted) used to distribute the survey were associated with universities, as well as the fact that students make up a larger percentage of the young people of the middle and upper classes, who would have the readily available internet access necessary to complete the survey. The use of Facebook groups related to the two largest universities probably also inflated the number of city dwellers, as these two universities (*Beogradski univerzitet* and *Univerzitet u Novom Sadu*) are located in the two largest cities – Belgrade and Novi Sad, respectively. It also appears to have dragged

²⁰² Republički Zavod za Statistiku (*Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia*). Upotreba informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija u Republici Srbije, 2008. By Dragan Vukmirović, Kristina Pavlaković, and Vladimir Šutić. Belgrade, 2008.

²⁰³ Republički Zavod za Statistiku (*Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia*). Popis 2002 (Census 2002). Feb. 2003. <<http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/axd/Zip/NEP1.pdf>>.

²⁰⁴ The remainder is composed of both current students (65.6%) and former students (20%).

the average age down, as nearly 77% of respondents were under 26, and 40.6% were under 22.

Of the respondents, 77.5% had applied for a visa at least once; of those, a slight majority (53%) believed that the “conditions”²⁰⁵ for getting a visa had not been reasonable. Surprisingly, only 16.64% of respondents said that they had ever had a visa request denied. Of those, 82% reported that it had been a EU visa which had been refused – and unsurprisingly, 91.5% of those who had had a visa refused believed that that refusal had been unfair. It is somewhat difficult to account for the widespread perception of refusal-happy consular employees given the fact that over four out of five respondents had never personally had any trouble with getting a visa – but perhaps the fact that these problems are so limited to EU embassies, and the applicants who are refused visas so uniformly feel wronged, can explain this situation. Namely, though not many people may have personally had a visa refused, nearly everyone may have friend who has an unbelievable story about the Spanish embassy... etc. This corresponds to the findings to the interviews, in which all the respondents had, if not their own, their friends’ visa “nightmare stories” to share.

A surprisingly high number of people reported having living abroad – namely 21% - and an equally surprising percentage of those had lived in an EU member state – 59%. The reason for this may be in the answer to the next question, in which respondents reported the reason for their time abroad: 39.6% of those who had spent time abroad said that their reason for doing so was “neither work nor education.”²⁰⁶ Furthermore, a high percentage of the people in this category – 77% - replied that the time they had spent

²⁰⁵ Intentionally vaguely phrased, also in Serbian.

²⁰⁶ Beating out “education” (25%) and “work” (17%).

abroad amounted to less than a year. During the 1990s in Serbia – particularly during the 1999 NATO bombings – it became common for parents to send their children to stay with relatives in other countries, as was the case with Miloš.

Of the respondents who had lived abroad, 42% responded that they would like to live abroad again, while 57% said that they would prefer only to travel short-term from then on. The most popular choice by far for where they would like to live was “an EU member state”, with 67.5%. 30% were interested in living abroad for a period of 1-5 years, while 24% envisioned themselves living abroad multiple times for varying periods of time.

Of the respondents who had never lived abroad, 57% said that they would like to live abroad one day – a higher percentage than among those who had lived abroad before, but not by much. The most popular destination was again the EU, but it was ahead of the options “the United States” and “Canada, Australia or New Zealand” by a much narrower margin. As for the envisioned length of stay abroad, results were similar to those for those who had lived abroad: 28% imagined themselves living abroad for 1-5 years, while 24% preferred the idea of living abroad on several separate occasions.

By far the most surprising response came to the question “Have you ever traveled outside of Serbia/the former Yugoslavia?” – a full 95% reported that they *had* traveled outside of Serbia, and 92% of the total said that they had traveled outside of the former Yugoslavia. This stands in shocking contrast to the usual figures on the rarity of international travel among young Serbs – however it may be explained by the fact that this survey’s sample was so skewed in favor of urban, middle and upper class students. This demographic is much more likely to have the time and resources needed to travel

than, say, young people living in the villages; regardless, the only way to get a better idea of the actual percentage of young Serbs who have traveled would be to conduct this survey in person in Serbia, ameliorating the problem of limited internet access.

The EU was, once again, the most popular destination, with 86% of respondents saying they had spent time there. Less than 5% reported having gone to the US, Russia, Australia, Canada or New Zealand, but 37% said they had spent time in “some other country”.

Just over half of the respondents had spent a total of less than 6 weeks abroad in their life; only 13% reckoned they had spent more than 6 months abroad. The demand for more travel experience was overwhelming – less than one percent expressed no interest in traveling again.

Of the small number of respondents who had not traveled, 66% identified lack of money as the cause; while only 5% - 4 people – said that their inability to get a visa was the main reason they had never traveled. Interest in traveling in the future was also high in this group – namely, 94%.

All in all, the section examining young Serbians’ experience with travel presented a picture very different from what is usually portrayed by Serbian and EU politicians, the media, and indeed even by Serbians themselves. Inasmuch as the sample is reliable – which it may not be, due to the previously-discussed skew towards middle or upper-class city-dwelling students – it shows that travel experience is much, much more common than is commonly thought, and that, in reality, most people do not have difficulty with getting the visa they need. In other areas, it confirmed the most commonly held

opinions: that travel is very desirable to young Serbians, that the EU is the most popular destination for both travel and living abroad, and that most Serbians who have traveled have not spent more than a few weeks abroad – as well as the fact, mentioned in several of the interviews but never in the political/media discourse, that cost, and not visa restrictions, is the reason why some Serbians have never left the country.

The third section of the survey, as discussed, dealt with political positions and engagement. I intentionally cast a rather wide net in terms of question topics, and as such not all results need be discussed. Instead, I will focus on the ones that dealt with the relationship between Serbia and the EU.

Respondents agreed overwhelmingly with the statement that “Serbia is a part of Europe” – 40% “strongly agreed”, and another 40% “agreed”. Despite, or perhaps in spite of the propagandic rhetoric of the nineties, this generation has definitively rejected the idea of Serbia being, for better or for worse, different or separate from Europe. A related question got nearly as strong of a positive response – namely, the statement “Serbia’s future is in the European Union,” with which 61% either agreed or strongly agreed. A combined 20% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and another 20% said they did not know.

Despite this, a perception of mistreatment from the EU was strong: nearly 78% agreed with the statement that “the EU’s treatment of Serbia isn’t fair”, while less than 10% disagreed. Almost identical numbers – 78% agree, 8% disagree – came up for the statement “the European Union is biased against Serbs”. However, there was no clear picture in the response to the statement that “the EU, and not Serbia, is guilty for the

slowness of Serbia's accession process"; only 6% strongly disagreed, and only 16% strongly agreed. The larger numbers were clustered around the center: 27.5% agreed, 22.5% disagreed, and a full 28% said they didn't know.

The respondents were cautiously optimistic about life in the EU – just over 50% agreed with the statement that “it is easier to earn enough and live comfortably in the EU than in Serbia”, while only 25% disagreed. Yet the appeal of living in the EU was largely related to financial security: 46% of respondents strongly agreed, and another 27% agreed, that they would rather live in Serbia than in the EU, provided they did not have to worry about money.

Of those who agreed with the statement that Serbia's future is in the EU, 40% believed it would be better for Serbia to give up Kosovo than the possibility of EU membership, while slightly more – 43% - believed it would be better to give up the EU. 45% of the total believed that it would be necessary to make that very decision one day, while only 20% disagreed with the statement that the EU would not allow Serbia to join without recognizing Kosovo's independence.

Responses were evenly split to the statement that “not much has changed in Serbia since October 5, 2000,” with 48% agreeing and 44% disagreeing. Respondents agreed, however, that life had changed for the worse since the time their parents had been young. 51% agreed with the statement that “the standard of living of my generation will be worse than that of my parents' generation”, while only 19% disagreed – 30% said they did not know. 57% agreed with the statement – 26% strongly – that “my parents' generation had more freedoms in their youth than my generation does now”, while 27% disagreed. 40% of respondents agreed that they frequently discussed politics with their

friends, while a further 16% strongly agreed – 36.5%, on the other hand, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Finally, respondents felt strongly about the importance of free travel: 75% agreed with the statement that “considering the way the world works today, free travel is more a necessity than a privilege”, and fully 91% agreed with the statement – 49% agreeing strongly – that “the state is obligated to make free travel a necessity for its citizens.” Yet not as many felt so strongly about the current condition for free travel: while 30% strongly agreed that Ratko Mladić should turn himself in, and another 15.5% agreed, 12% disagreed and 22% strongly disagreed with this statement.

A particularly interesting quality of the results for many of the questions is what could be called their elasticity – that is, the proportions of people who answered that they agree, disagree, etc. to each question stayed largely the same whether one was looking at the sample overall or at particular subgroups. For example, the respective percentages for “strongly agree”, “agree”, “don’t know”, etc. stayed nearly identical regardless of whether the subgroup being examined was all under 22 or over 30, all from Serbia’s largest cities or all from villages, extremely experienced travelers or not. Similarly inflexible were the results for the statements “Serbia’s future is in the EU”, “The EU is prejudiced against Serbs”, and “The EU’s treatment of Serbia isn’t fair” – the proportions of those who agreed and disagreed with these statements were nearly identical whether one looked at those who had lived in the EU, those who had been unfairly refused for an EU visa, or those who had traveled for less than 6 weeks in the EU.

This has serious consequences for the popular paradigm that young Serbian's reduced ability to travel is causing them to turn away from the EU. The survey results show that, first of all, difficulties with visas are not nearly so common as they are regarded to be. Instead, though many young Serbians have had difficulties with visas, these difficulties did not prove to be an obstacle to travel – or even, for the vast majority of respondents, result in a visa refusal. Furthermore, the survey results show that travel experience, or lack thereof, had little impact on the respondent's basic positions on the relationship between Serbia and the EU. This, then, poses the question – is this a phantom phenomenon? Is all the rhetoric, all the concern ultimately based on nothing at all?

Chapter 5

Conclusions

On February 6, 2009, Slavenka Drakulić – the Croatian author whose comments on Yugoslav identity and travel were cited in chapter 1 – published an essay in a Vienna-based cultural magazine, entitled “Why I have not returned to Belgrade.”²⁰⁷ In it, she relates how hearing a group of young Serbians chatting in the street in Vienna, the city where she now lives, prompted her to reflect on the fact that she had not been to Belgrade in over seventeen years – not since the beginning of the war. With a shock, she realizes that an entire generation has grown up since she has been there last.

What do I know about them? The fact that they can't travel abroad without a visa, can't see London or Paris, not even Trieste. They can't even travel to Bucharest or Sofia any more.

How sad and absurd, and how humiliating their situation, I thought as I remembered how, with the old red Yugoslav passport, my generation used to travel through Europe without visas. This was a source of pride, a *differentia specifica*, compared with the other countries belonging to the Soviet bloc. They envied us as we, in the 1970s, travelled to Italy and France, to Great Britain and Sweden, to pick strawberries and make money over the summer. As a student I worked in Sweden in a warehouse for three months and came back with money for a whole year. Most of all, we were envied because we could buy a pair of blue jeans, fine Italian shoes, foreign books and records. The other side of that freedom to travel, however, was that it became one of the reasons for accepting the political system, functioning as a bribe of a kind. We were bribed into believing that "socialism with a human face" made sense and could work. We did not question it.

At the conference in Vienna, it occurred to me that these kids speaking Serbian on Mariahilferstrasse were most likely not young Serbs from Serbia; if they were indeed from there, then they were among the few lucky ones who had managed to get visas. Recently I have been listening to discussions about the visa problem for young Europeans outside the EU. Visas are hard to obtain, especially for Serbians, and in this way young people are isolated and prevented from seeing the world – so the argument goes. Why punish youngsters for something they haven't done? They were not even born when the Yugoslav wars broke out. They are not responsible for what their fathers did, one speaker said during the conference, with anger in his voice.

While his speech clearly aimed at evoking sympathy from the audience, I must confess that I did not feel any sympathy at all. I was *angry at his anger*. Speaking on their behalf

²⁰⁷ Drakulić, Slavenka. “Why I have not returned to Belgrade.” *Eurozine*. 6 February 2009. <<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-02-06-drakulic-en.html>>

he somehow suggested that the new generation *does not deserve* such a treatment from "Europe". The implication of his argument was that because they are young they must also be innocent. It was exactly this *presumed* innocence of the Serbian youth that irritated me. [...]

If I do not know much about the new generation in Serbia, I ponder a more important question: how much do they know about their *own* past? Listening to the angry young Serbian man speaking about visas at the conference, I thought he was wrong. Like us, his generation back home is responsible too: for its silence, for not asking what happened before they were born, for not caring about what their fathers did during the wars, for believing that they have the right to visas just because they are young and their hands are clean and their arrogance just. Most of all, for not asking *their* parents why they are deprived of visas. True, the young generation of Serbs cannot be held responsible for the past. *But all of them are responsible for their present attitude to the past because it is important for their future.* That was the lesson that we, their parents' generation, should have learned. As we did not learn it in time, we had to learn it the hard way. [...]

We cannot be silent. We cannot repeat our own mistakes or those of our parents. We all have to confront the past. This is the task of all people who witnessed the war. But the young post-war generation has its own responsibility in finding out the truth as well. It is not the EU but their own parents who are punishing them: they are not deprived of visas because of *who* they are, but because of *what* their parents did or did not do. The young generation of today's Serbia is suffering isolation because of the only thing it should do and is not doing – asking questions.

Drakulić's essay was translated into Serbian and republished in a Belgrade paper a few days later, where it provoked a tremendous, impassioned response. By connecting the concept of national – instead of personal – guilt to the ongoing denial of White Schengen to Serbia, she touched a nerve among Serbian readers. But the published responses of various Belgrade artists and writers, all well into their thirties and forties, did not focus on this aspect of Drakulić's essay. Instead, they took issue with Drakulić's "racism" towards Serbs, as demonstrated by the fact that she held the entire nation responsible for the crimes of a few, and remonstrated her for demanding that young Serbians confront their parents about the crimes of the nineties – while apparently demanding no such thing from Croatian youth. But – they missed the point entirely. The true injustice in Drakulić's essay is not that she demands that Serbian youth confront their society's recent past – on the contrary, this absolutely must happen. But it should happen on its own time and of its own accord – not because it is a precondition for addition to the White Schengen list.

This was the tone struck by the Serbians in their twenties or late teens when discussing this article - one asked rhetorically why Germany had not been left outside of the European Union until it had fully come to terms with its difficult past. Another wondered how the EU would know whether she had yet confronted her parents about what they had done during the war – perhaps with a hidden microphone in the living room?

Yes, the strict visa regime is hurting the European movement in Serbia, but not for the reason that everyone thinks. EU politicians love the idea that young Serbians returning home from their summer vacations in Paris or Prague will bring back pro-European ideas along with their snapshots and souvenirs, picked up through a kind of ideological osmosis from the people they meet and sights they see along the way. But the situation is much more complicated than that.

Travel, as we have seen, was both a fact of life and a point of pride for citizens of Tito's Yugoslavia: the ability to travel to Paris or Vienna for the weekend set Yugoslavs apart from citizens of other communist states. In Ukraine, Belarus or Moldova – other eastern European countries with which the EU maintains a strict visa regime – the ability to travel across borders has been limited, in living memory, to the most privileged political classes. But for Serbians, mobility is not a privilege but an expectation. Closed borders and inertia came only with the war years, and therefore, the EU's maintenance of those strict visa regimes is viewed as a punishment too long extended – an accusatory finger pointed square at the only segment of Serbian society which should have nothing to be ashamed of – an antagonistic, tiresome and unfair reminder of a dark chapter in Serbia's history – instead of the natural and original state of the country. EU politicians

seem to be mostly unaware of the fact that their “tough-but-fair conditionality” is viewed by Serbians – and, apparently, by Slavenka Drakulić – as a punishment for the nineties.

But the view from the line in front of an embassy in Belgrade is unmistakable.

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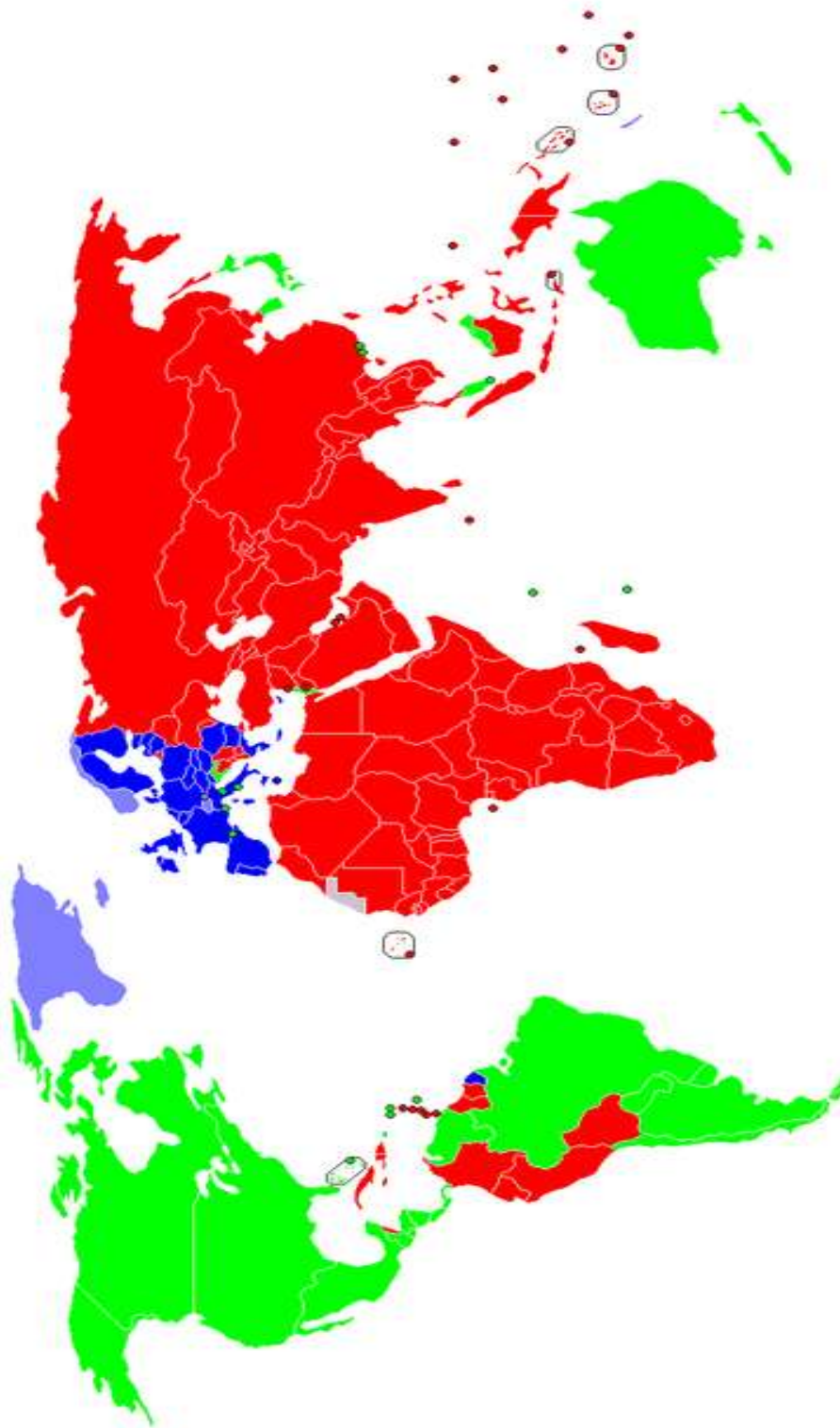
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Appendix A – White Schengen and Black Schengen Countries



Appendix B – (Bosnian-Croatian-)Serbian pronunciation guide

- š - pronounced “sh”, as in “shower”
 - ž - pronounced like the “s” in “pleasure” or the “z” in “azure”
 - c - pronounced “ts”, as in “tsetse fly”, or as in the German “z”
 - č - pronounced like “ch”, but rather far back in the mouth, as in “churlish”
 - ć - pronounced something like the “tch” in “itch”, but with the tongue placed directly behind the front teeth
 - dž - pronounced like the “j” in “judge”, but again, further back in the mouth
 - đ - pronounced like the “j” in “jeans”, but with the tongue directly behind the front teeth.
 - j - pronounced “y”, as in “yo-yo”
 - lj - a “soft l”, pronounced only after months of practice
 - nj - a “soft n”, pronounced like the Spanish “ñ”
 - h - slightly breathier or raspier than the English “h”, but still a long shot from the German velar fricative in “machen”
 - r - always rolled or trilled, particularly when speaking with a bit of gusto. “r” can also function as a vowel, as in “prst” (“finger”) or “vrh” (“peak”). It’s not as hard as you might think.
- Vowels are “continental”, i.e. a as in father, e as in bet, i as in feet, o as in for, u as in boot

Appendix C – Survey Questions

Gender: male/female

How old are you?

18-22

23-26

27-30

Older than 30

Are you a student?

Yes

No

I am a former student.

Where do you live?

In Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac or Subotica

In another city in Serbia with between 50,000 and 100,000 residents

In another city in Serbia with between 10,000 and 50,000 residents

In a town in Serbia with fewer than 10,000 residents

Where are you from?

Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac or Subotica

From another city in the former Yugoslavia with more than 100,000 residents

From a city in Serbia with between 50,000 and 100,000 residents

From a city in another former Yugoslav state with between 50,000 and 100,000 residents

From a city in Serbia with between 10,000 and 50,000 residents

From a city in another former Yugoslav state with between 10,000 and 50,000 residents

From a town in Serbia with fewer than 10,000 residents

From a town in another former Yugoslav state with fewer than 10,000 residents

Have you ever applied for a visa?

Do you think the requirements/amount of paperwork required for receiving a visa were reasonable?

Have you ever been denied a visa?

For what country?

For the US

For an EU member state

For Canada, Australia or New Zealand

For Russia

For some other country

Do you think your visa application was unfairly denied?

Mother's level of education

Elementary school

Middle school

Vocational school
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Ph. D.

Father's level of education
Elementary school
Middle school
Vocational school
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Ph. D.

[Parents' income (sum)
Less than 250,000 dinars
250,000-500,000 dinars
500,000-1,000,000 dinars
More than 1,000,000 dinars] (question deleted)

Have you ever lived abroad long-term (i.e. longer than one month)?

(for those who answer yes)

Where? Select all that apply:

In an EU member state
In the USA
In Canada, Australia or New Zealand
In Russia
In some other country

What was the reason for your time abroad?

Work
Education
Both work and education
Neither work nor education/ some other reason

How long did you spend abroad?

1 month – 1 year
1 year – 5 years
5 years – 15 years
Longer than 15 years

Would you be interested in living and traveling abroad again?

Yes, I would like to live abroad again.
I would like to travel abroad, but not to live abroad again.
I would not like to either travel or live abroad again.

Where would you like to live?

In an EU member state

In the USA

In Canada, Australia or New Zealand

In Russia

In some other country

It doesn't matter.

I don't know yet.

What do you imagine would be the reason for your future time abroad?

Work

Education

Both work and education

Neither work nor education/ some other reason

How long do you imagine your time abroad would last?

1 month – 1 year

1 year – 5 years

5 years – 15 years

Longer than 15 years, but I would return to Serbia someday

I would not like to return to Serbia.

I would spend multiple periods of time of varying length abroad.

(for those who answer no)

Would you like to live abroad?

Where would you like to live?

In an EU member state

In the USA

In Canada, Australia or New Zealand

In Russia

In some other country

It doesn't matter.

What do you imagine would be the reason for your future time abroad?

Work

Education

Both work and education

Neither work nor education/ some other reason

How long do you imagine your time abroad would last?

1 month – 1 year

1 year – 5 years

5 years – 15 years

Longer than 15 years, but I would return to Serbia someday

I would not like to return to Serbia.

I would spend multiple periods of time of varying length abroad.

Have you ever traveled outside of Serbia?

Have you ever traveled outside the countries of the former Yugoslavia?

(for those who answer yes)

Where? Check all that apply.

To an EU member state

To the USA

To Canada, Australia or New Zealand

To Russia

To some other country

Would you like to travel outside the countries of the former Yugoslavia again?

(for those who answer no)

Why haven't you traveled before?

I could not get a visa.

It's too expensive.

I don't have enough time.

Some other reason.

No particular reason.

Would you like to travel outside of Serbia/the former Yugoslavia?

Where?

To an EU member state

To the USA

To Canada, Australia or New Zealand

To Russia

To some other country

Anywhere!

Read the following sentences and think about how much you agree with them, then select the corresponding statement. Answer as you truly, personally feel, and not how you think someone ought to feel, or how the majority of people feel.

Strongly disagree Disagree I don't know Agree Strongly Agree

1. Serbia is a part of Europe.
2. I often discuss politics with my friends.
3. I think each of us can do a lot to improve Serbia's global reputation.
4. The average citizen can have an effect on the government's decisions.
5. A closer relationship between Serbia and the US would be useful/beneficial.
6. Serbia's future is in the EU.

7. The majority of politicians are not interested in the problems of the average person.
8. A few powerful people control the world, and ordinary people can't do anything about it.
9. Russia is Serbia's only true ally.
10. The EU's treatment of Serbia isn't fair.
11. If someone is persistent enough, they usually can get what they desire.
12. My parents' generation had more freedom when they were young than my generation has now.
13. The "tycoons" are making life in Serbia worse while they are making themselves even richer.
14. It's easier to earn enough and live a comfortable life in the EU than in Serbia.
15. If I didn't have to worry about making money, I'd rather live in Serbia than in some other country.
16. The quality of life for people of my generation will be better than the quality of life for people of my parents' generation was.
17. If Serbia were to become an EU member state, Serbians would be disappointed with the benefits of membership.
18. The EU is biased against Serbs.
19. Better relations between Serbia and the US are possible regardless of the disagreement over the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence.
20. Ratko Mladić should turn himself in.
21. The EU won't allow Serbia to join unless Serbia recognizes Kosovo's independence.
22. If it were necessary to choose, it would be better for Serbia to give up Kosovo than to give up the possibility of EU membership.
23. Russia's involvement in Serbian affairs is not concerned with Serbia's best interests.
24. Not a lot has changed in Serbia since October 5, 2000.
25. The EU, and not Serbia, is responsible for the slowness of Serbia's accession process.

With which of the following countries would a close relationship be best for Serbia?

- With the US
- With the EU
- With Russia
- With the other former Yugoslav states
- With China or India
- With some other country

The greatest benefit of EU membership for Serbia is...

- An increase in political stability in Serbia
- Strengthening the Serbian economy, encouraging foreign investment
- An improvement in Serbia's reputation abroad
- Relaxation of visa regimes, greater ease of travel
- Strengthened environmental protection

An increase in Serbian diplomatic influence in Europe and in the world
An increase in funds from the EU (e.g. through the Regional Policy)
Some other benefit
There will be no benefit whatsoever.

When do you think Serbia will join the EU?

In less than 5 years
In 5-10 years
In 10-15 years
In more than 15 years
Never

Think about your future and judge how important each of the following life goals and values are to you. Circle the corresponding numbers on the scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being “unimportant” and 7 being “extremely important”.

Material well-being
To spend some amount of time abroad
To get a good education
To be able to spend money on nice things
To have a profession which I enjoy
To make a lot of money without working hard
To fulfill myself as a personality
To have a high income
To emigrate permanently from Serbia
To contribute, in one way or another, to the development of Serbia
To participate actively in politics
To fight against injustice in Serbia

Answer yes or no:

Did you vote in the last election?

Have you ever participated in a political demonstration?

Have you ever attended a political meeting?

Have you ever taken part in activism directed toward the government?

Are you a member of a political organization?