

(TFART5)

"TAKEN FOR A RIDE"

(A detour through the heart of Yugoslavia)

Treatment for a screenplay

by

Rina Reiss/Paul Davies

(c) All rights by all media reserved- Private & Confidential

Some time in the near future. . . in a small, cluttered, parliamentary office in Melbourne, Sarah Steinberg watches her boss on television. He is the Shadow Minister for Trade in the Labour Opposition and is on his feet on the floor of state parliament talking about "privatisation".

As the speech proceeds Sarah becomes more visibly annoyed with his performance and with the particular line that he is taking. She is interrupted by phone calls, journalists asking for "backgrounds", papers to be signed etc. She takes an easy, efficient command of the office.

Moments later the Shadow Minister comes through, clearly pleased with himself, and looking for some pats on the back. Sarah is not forthcoming. She holds a much more idealistic line on the subject of government involvement in health, transport, education etc. and demands to know why he didn't stick to this point of view in her speech ?

Her boss however, feels that the thrust towards privatisation is a fait accompli. It's not even an argument any more. The thing has arrived. Everybody wants it. Sarah rejects this. It's only considered a fait accompli by those forces pushing for it. Nothing is ever a fait accompli in politics. She feels that he has simply bowed to right wing pressure in caucus make a fast buck on the sale of state assets. Sarah is not impressed by the logic of numbers. Whatever happened to their principles ? If they can't offer an alternative in opposition what's the point in even trying for government ? The Shadow Minister thinks she's becoming a little overwrought. He urges her to concentrate her efforts now on the forthcoming Budapest Trade Mission. He needs at least an outline of his keynote speech by the weekend. Sarah wonders why she should bother writing speeches for him when he never sticks to the point ! He passes through to the inner sanctum. She buries her head in her hands.

The phone rings- its her mother. Mrs. Steinberg apologises for calling the office but she can never catch Sarah at home. Where is she all the time ? Always at work, or some meeting somewhere. . . Sarah rolls her eyes. Mother is just ringing to say that she gave Sarah's number to Rachel Rosenbaum her friend who she plays cards with who has a nephew who's available- a dentist. Against Sarah's protests Mrs. Steinberg reminds her daughter that she is already over thirty and still unmarried. It's not natural. She will have a reputation. All the men will think she must be trouble- or worse ! Sarah insists that she's perfectly capable of finding and choosing a man for herself. Then why hasn't she found someone ? She'll end up an old maid. This man is perfect. The same age as Sarah, maybe a little older. Then, protests Sarah, why hasn't he found someone himself ? He must be

trouble too. Or gay. The conversation degrades into the irrational and soon gets out of hand- the usual familiar slanging match. Her mother plays the hurt martyr. She is only doing a mother's job. After all Sarah had said it was Ok to ring her at work. Mother thought it was what Sarah wanted- to look round for a friend for her daughter. Sarah, exasperated, hangs up.

The phone rings immediately. Assuming it's her mother again Sarah picks it up and yells back at her to stop meddling in her life ! -only to discover that it's not her mother but Liz, a close friend. Liz is amused. Sarah is feeling guilty now. Confides in Liz that she's having a difficult time at work. A male colleague peers round the door, reminding Sarah of drinks after work: end of parliamentary session celebrations. Sarah declines in a distracted way and turns back to Liz. The male colleague leaves disappointed. Liz is reminding her about the opening of her play tomorrow night. She's saved a ticket for Sarah. Sarah promises to be there. The rehearsals have been going well.

The following night Sarah is alone in the office. Everyone else has gone home. She is lit only by the glow from her lap top computer. We see the start of a speech about the potential for Australian trade in "the new Europe": the need to circumvent the huge trade blocs developing within Europe/Russia and America/Japan. Australia is caught in the middle. She reaches an impasse in her flow of thoughts and turning away from the machine accidentally catches the time: 9.30 pm. She's missed the play ! Cursing, she quickly gathers her bag.

Sarah arrives at a small alternative theatre just as the audience is streaming out. She looks anxiously around for Liz, hurries backstage. The cast are celebrating. It's gone well. But where's the director ? Sarah finds her in the women's toilet, distraught, in tears. Liz's partner, Simon has left her. Just announced tonight. Great timing. Great honesty. Liz is furious, depressed, hurt, confused. He even brought the other woman to the premiere. Wanted to be civilized about it. What's more, she's ten years older than Liz ! Liz doesn't know whether to be insulted or relieved. Sarah comforts her friend. All Liz can think of now is getting out, going away for a while. This play and the end of this relationship is the dead end of her career and her life to date. For the first time Liz has no ties to Melbourne. Sarah is confused, from the look of the audience the play seemed a great success. Liz is dismissive- sure it's a success like all the others were- so what ? What does that mean ? "A success." The theatre is no longer challenging for her anymore. There's an emptiness at the heart of her work. It's so "safe" so predictable. She can produce "successes" till

the cows come home but where's the excitement in that?

A short time later the two women arrive at a late night bar, a trendy watering hole in the "nouveau italian style": lots of marble veneer and bad acoustics. There's the inevitable theatre crowd, artists, layabouts and young professionals. Across the bar Sarah sees the same male colleague she knocked back for a drink the day before. He sees her and can't quite catch her attention. He concedes defeat, stares at his glass.

Sarah casually mentions to Liz her forthcoming trip to Eastern Europe. Her boss has insinuated himself into a high powered Trade Mission to Budapest. With its depressed rural economy, Victoria is desperate to sell more wheat in the Balkans. Sarah's never been overseas before, apart from a childhood visit to Munich with her parents twenty years ago (their place of birth in Germany). Consequently, what she knows about Hungary and the Balkans generally, is a little on the sketchy side.

Liz seizes on this opportunity. She has a sudden urge to lash out, to get out, go away, travel, do all the things she used to love doing before Simon. Travel is good for the soul but it's even better if you can share it with someone. Besides, Liz is not very comfortable with the idea of being by herself at the moment. Together they could make the Dubrovnik Festival in seven days time! She urges Sarah to have a holiday. A few days off in Dubrovnik prior to the Budapest conference may not only inspire the speech, but recharge the batteries.

At first Sarah is reluctant to take that kind of time off. She can't conceive of herself just lying on a beach on the Adriatic doing nothing for a week. But Liz persists. After all, you have to get over the jet lag somewhere and it might as well be in a place that's not only spectacularly beautiful but teeming with handsome, unattached men. Sarah even speaks German- it'll be a terrific advantage.

Sarah, however, throws up a barrage of impossibles: she has to write the speech, her boss won't give her the time off, there's too much work on her plate to organise the travel arrangements. Liz says to leave the travel arrangements to her. She's done it all many times before. Liz has already cheered up considerably and is smiling casually at Sarah's male colleague. So Sarah just stares at her glass and wonders what she's getting herself into, leaving the arrangements to Liz could be a big mistake.

Getting time off from her minister is not such an easy task either. He clearly relies on her for just about everything

and is extremely reluctant to let her travel independently. This Trade Mission is crucially important. Huge export deals are at stake.

For once, however, Sarah puts her foot down. He's just going to have to do without her for a bit. She promises to connect back up with him in Budapest and have his speech ready. With grave apprehensions and all sorts of threats he concedes her the time off. She asks him if he has ever known her to let him down? He admits that he hasn't.

So, while Liz sets about making the travel arrangements and packing her bathers and some femme fatal items, Sarah returns to her lap top where the texts on the Yugoslavian crop failures of the 1950s and various state committee and embassy reports get shoved aside and replaced by maps of the Balkans, and travel brochures and books like "Yugoslavia-a travel survival kit"

A week later Sarah and Liz are disembarking at Beograd airport and, as Liz anticipated, they find it quite a simple matter to transfer straight on to an internal flight to Dubrovnik. Sarah is quoting from her "Do's and Don'ts In Yugoslavia". Curiously, one of the things it recommends not doing is travelling by car. The roads in some places are still fairly primitive and the drivers tend to fall a bit short of our western standards of traffic safety.

However, they do have an enormous pile of luggage (mostly Liz's expensive suitcases). So, despite the book's warning, a taxi at this stage is obviously more convenient. And surely it's not that far into town. The driver, Franjo, is delighted to get some western tourists in his cab. His cheery manner notwithstanding, they quickly realise that the book was absolutely right. Five minutes into the mountains and both women are wondering if they'll make it to Dubrovnik alive. They find themselves speeding along narrow mountain roads with no guide rails. Sarah is staring down from the cab window open-mouthed at the sheer drop just inches away. Instinctively, they both grip the hand rail on the back of the front seat, bracing themselves as if going on a roller coaster ride.

Near collisions with buses and donkey carts coming round blind corners hardly even interrupts the driver's proud (broken German) commentary on all the places of interest that they pass. Franjo happily tells them about a famous 800 year old tree; a tiny hall where Tito addressed the local folk during the war; a Roman ruin etc. In showing them the ruin he actually swerves onto the wrong side of the road to afford a better view. The women gasp audibly. A little further along he shakes his head, taking his hands off the wheel as if

raising his arms to the heavens. The women gasp again as the car careers on. He sadly points to a spot where a bus recently went over the edge killing 7 people. Sarah translates this for Liz as a "spot where rabbits often cross at night and are skittled."

The women emerge from the cab shaken and amazed at the driver's speed on such hopeless roads. They resolve never to take a taxi again, to avoid cars altogether. The book was spot on. In future they will stick by it at all costs. Then the warm Adriatic sun hits them and they finally unwind from the trip realising, at last, how glad they are to have arrived.

There follows several sunfilled and carefree days of unbridled self-indulgence: cruising on boats around the islands, lying on the beach, checking out the men and attending brilliant orchestral concerts under the stars in magical locations. The Dubrovnik Festival is undoubtedly a real bonus. And for the first time in what seems a long time Sarah begins genuinely to unwind. She doesn't even mind it much when Liz is drawn away by a very suave young Frenchman. Sarah is there to absorb the culture, to soak up the enormous political changes flowing through the country, even to work on her minister's speech- although she spends less and less time on it as the precious days roll by.

Her attention does become focused though, on what some of the English papers are saying about Yugoslavia. There is talk of strikes and ethnic unrest, even potential civil war. Tensions continue between the different ethnic groupings, republics and provinces. All of which seems quite unreal and certainly another world away as she looks up from the papers and gazes from her hotel balcony across the peaceful and idyllic old city of Dubrovnik. One could not imagine a place more remote from such disturbances. Can the press really get things this wrong? Her job makes her acutely aware of the vagaries of journalists but this seems out of proportion.

And so as Sarah becomes more absorbed in the background to this unravelling political situation Liz continues to enjoy herself. Inevitably Sarah is laid low by a mild dose of stomach cramps. This requires Liz to continue to attend to the travel arrangements. A casual visit to the local tourist bureau sends her into a state of some anxiety: all the flights to Budapest are booked out for a month ahead. The only alternative is the train.

While Sarah is beginning to regret letting Liz organise things she is still a bit too off-colour to intervene, so Liz hurries on to arrange the train tickets. Eventually she obtains what she believes to be two seats to Beograd. From

there they are guaranteed a plane connection to Budapest. The only problem is that the train station is a two and a half hour bus ride from Dubrovnik to Kardejevo.

Summoning their courage and dragging Sarah from her sick bed the women realise they have no choice and determine to risk another road journey. Sarah had insisted on getting to the bus station a good hour before departure in order to secure a seat. Liz shaves 40 minutes off this by indulging in an extended leave-taking of her Frenchman. Sarah lets her anxiety and her impatience show but fortunately for them the bus has been delayed by an accident along the road and they make it just in time. The French boyfriend peers at their bus to wave good-bye, but they can't be seen: the two women have already adopted crash positions and have disappeared below the window.

Miraculously, they arrive at the station with 20 minutes to spare (the only advantage of having travelled so fast). They race into the building and are stopped at the platform by a railway official who tells Sarah (mainly through sign language) that their so-called tickets are only reservations. He points to another queue. Time is running out. The station is crowded with very un-tourist like people. A grim portrait of Tito stares down on it all. In contrast to the delights of Dubrovnik it's like they've entered another country.

While Liz waits with their embarrassingly large pile of luggage Sarah frantically heads for the counter. She has at last determined to take charge of the arrangements having been less than impressed with Liz's efforts so far. At the counter, however, Sarah is confronted by iron bars and an unfriendly woman who does not speak English and refuses to interpret sign language. Sarah stabs nervously around in her bag for the Berlitz phrase book and establishes that the woman can offer her two sleepers. Sarah eagerly accepts them but to her chagrin is pointed towards another room: an open modern office that, despite this extra complication, nevertheless looks more hopeful. The crowd here is huddled around a tired and harassed looking booking clerk. Sarah hurries over to join the mob with about 12 minutes to spare. She asks out loud if anyone speaks English. A tall man in front of her turns around to help. He establishes (by speaking above the heads of the others to the man behind the desk) that all the sleepers on the Beograd train are taken. Sarah says she'll take a seat then, a space in the corridor, anything. Her translator informs her that to get seats she has to go back to the original ticket window.

Sarah begs her interpreter to accompany her and leads him back past Liz who is still ensconced with the bags and nervously looking from her watch to the Beograd train waiting

at the platform. Eventually Sarah gets the two tickets and races back to Liz only to see the train pull out of the station an impossible 30 metres away.

For a while they both just hang there in shock. This sort of thing has never happened to Sarah in her life before. It's unbelievable. She's only got 24 hours to meet her boss and now no way of getting there. Above all, she's really annoyed with Liz. Her inability to organise the trip properly has landed them in this mess. Liz bristles and counter accuses Sarah of being an endless drain, buried in newspapers when she should be out and about, having a good time. In every holiday abroad there is always this low point where the travelling companions let all the constraints go and rip right into each other. This is one of those points. The tensions of the last three hours bubble over into an all-out slanging match which erupts and eventually subsides. They sit there on their suitcases wondering what the hell to do next. If Sarah doesn't make it to Budapest her job will definitely be on the line- probably over. Liz placating, suggests she fax the speech on ahead. Sarah yells at her to wake up to herself and take a good look around. Karadejevo looks like it would be lucky to have a public telephone let alone a fax machine. Although unaware of it she is standing below a sign saying (in Serbo-Croatian) that, in fact, international phones and a fax machine are available right there inside the station.

Sarah paces a bit and the anger subsides a little. Anyway, faxing the speech is not the point. Sarah has to be there. It's her job to be there. She sweated blood to get this much time off, bending over backwards, promising the earth- all because Liz talked her into this stupid diversion. She knew she shouldn't have come!

For some moments there's silence. Liz thought Sarah had liked Dubrovnik. Sarah stabs back that yes she liked Dubrovnik but now the whole bloody thing is a disaster ! They're stuck in this godforsaken place with no likelihood of going anywhere let alone Budapest. Liz gives up. More silence. They become aware of the local people giving the two mad tourists a wide berth.

For want of anything better to do Liz pulls out her pocket atlas and turns to the "Balkans" page. She points out that according to this the distance from where they are now to Beograd appears to be roughly, as the crow flies, only a bit more than the distance between Melbourne and say, Albury- ie about 320 kilometres. Perhaps they could drive there ? Hire a car or . . . catch a cab ?

Sarah thinks that's just the sort of crazy, harebrained idea



that Liz is notorious for. And, from what Sarah's already seen of the country, where the crow flies and where the actual roads go bear absolutely no relation whatsoever. Doesn't Liz realise she's suggesting they cut directly across one of the most difficult terrains in Europe? Sarah's studied the problems they had trying to push railways through. Most connecting roads run along the valleys- north south,. This way they'd be cutting in an easterly direction across one of the hardest, highest, roughest parts in all of Europe. Liz shrugs, at least there ARE roads. What else can they do? She she's only trying to suggest a practical way out. Liz picks up her bags and starts heading out of the station. With a sigh, Sarah picks up her bags and follows.

They find the taxi rank and aren't too impressed with the look of the first driver so they let him go, and then a second... checking each other's reaction and shaking their heads. In this way they hang back from the queue until several cabs are taken.

Finally Zeljko Tomicic arrives at the head of the queue. He has a rough, weathered sort of handsomeness about him. And despite the inevitable ravages of time looks remarkably fitter than his 40 odd years. Liz is nodding keenly at Sarah who shrugs as they climb into Zeljko's battered mercedes. If they're going to die in mountains of Bosnia Herzegovina it might as well be with someone who's good looking.

Sarah starts speaking in her kitchen German but to their immense relief Zeljko speaks a very reasonable English. In fact there is about him the air of someone who is well educated.

As soon as they're aboard he turns round to ask, cheerfully, where to? To Liz his smile is like light bulbs turning on. Sarah explains somewhat sharply that they want to go to Beograd. Not understanding her accent immediately he quotes a nearby town starting with "B" (Budva -on the coast) Liz repeats "Beograd"- "Belgrade" the capital of Serbia.

Zeljko's eyes widen as it slowly sinks in. He can hardly believe his luck. He's got two western turkey tourists in his cab and they look rich! They negotiate a price which he insists on being paid in Deutschmarks, explaining that it's necessary to buy petrol with. Without other alternatives they are forced to agree to the price and so are left with only pocket money for the rest of the trip. Happy with the deal, he explains that first he'll have to go via his place to get a change of underwear.

While Zeljko packs a toothbrush and has a quick shower the two women are invited in to meet his mother with whom he

shares a small second storey flat. The first thing that strikes Sarah is the number of books and papers crammed into every spare inch of space. Clearly, even for a taxi driver Zeljko is extremely well read- in not only Serbo-Croatian and German but also in French, Russian and English. Sarah takes all this in while Liz keeps up a chatty conversation with Mrs. Tomicic. In broken English the old woman freely airs her concerns about her son to these strangers. In fact she's quite wound up about it. Why can't he settle down with a good woman? Why does he waste his life in taxi's when he could have been a doctor- or a priest? He was so close to finishing the medical degree. Then the troubles and then no more university. He was too much mixed up in politics. She tried to warn him. But does a son listen to his mother? Not this generation. It's no wonder the country's in a mess. To Sarah it all sounds vaguely familiar. Muttering all the while Mrs. Tomicic packs some pickled eggs and home made wine for the trip.

Zeljko finishes his preparations, kisses the old woman good-bye and soon they're back in the car and wending their way out of Kardejevo into the mountains with the sun setting behind them. The darkness is both a blessing and a worry. The driving appears to be just as reckless as the first cab but at least you can't see down those frightening precipices anymore. You do also get some warning of vehicles approaching from round corners by virtue of their headlights streaking ahead. This, however, doesn't dampen Zeljko's similar enthusiasm for keeping up a constant narrative on items of local interest. Sarah's first impression is that he's cheerful and very likable; just a bit too macho for her taste but with a certain charisma nevertheless. It pretty soon becomes apparent however that his knowledge of local landmarks is declining, in fact he's soon in unknown territory.

Rather than be phased by this Zeljko seizes the opportunity to stop at the next inn to elicit directions. His entrance has all the flamboyance of grand opera. He bursts through the doors to announce in Serbo-Croatian that he's here and he's got two turkey tourists who he's driving all the way to Beograd! Sarah catches the "Beograd" part of this but not the rest and is a little disconcerted as to why their arrival should be treated with such amusement and shaking of heads. He orders coffee and cognacs for them and disappears into a back room. The two women take their drinks and smile pleasantly, if somewhat dumbly, at the gaping but enthusiastic locals. Sarah checks her watch, wondering where Zeljko's gone. Eventually he emerges from somewhere out the back and leads their return to the car with a farewell every bit as operatic as the entrance.

Back on the road Sarah wonders aloud why Zeljko doesn't just try a map. But he says it's better this way, the locals know not only the shortest routes but the road conditions. This is much more than a map can tell you. Besides he doesn't have a map- not for anything so far away from home.

Partly to while away the time, partly to keep Zeljko awake, Sarah and Liz press him about his background. Why is he driving a cab when he could have been a doctor? Loosened by several cognacs Zeljko is happy to oblige.

He makes mention of Praxis- the student movement. In the late sixties he left home to study at Zagreb university. At age 24 he was expelled for editing a student newspaper that attacked the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968). They all expected to be called up. The upshot of it was that Zeljko lost his chance to become a professional. For a while all he could get was farm labouring. There is no social security in Yugoslavia.

Zeljko's father was a partisan in Tito's army. He was killed by the Russians as they withdrew in 1945. The famous Red Army had it's barbarous side. In some villages they behaved as badly as the Nazis before them as they swept through the north eastern corner of the country at the end of World War II. They shot peasants and raped women as they left. Born six months after his father's death Zeljko grew up in Kardejevo with his mother and older sister.

And so, while Liz dozes, Sarah becomes more and more intrigued by their driver. She wonders about what his mother called "the troubles". Zeljko is brief and unforthcoming on this point. Who wants to be a doctor anyway?

He likes driving a cab, he likes staying with his mother. He shrugs, it's a living. He can work when he wants to, go where he wants to. There's no boss or bureaucrat breathing down his neck. Besides, he likes meeting people, chatting to strangers, especially foreigners. Is he sorry that he challenged the authorities? No. People everywhere want and expect a system that respects individual rights and values. A humane system that provides for the basics in life, a system that is equitable- call it what you will. In times of new economic austerity however these hopes seem as dim as ever. He shrugs, all is not hopeless though, one day he will pay the car off. They share jokes, laugh. . . Sarah continues to warm to him.

After another hour or so he starts becoming unsure of the way again. They arrive at a second inn, ordering more coffee and cognacs. Gallantly, he stops the innkeeper from overcharging them. Then again Zeljko slips unobtrusively into a back room,

leaving the women with the singing/dancing locals. Liz notices his exit and becomes curious. Sarah spots a public phone and decides to try to put through a call to the hotel in Budapest where her boss will be staying.

Some moments later Liz casts a cursory glance through a window and gets a shock to see Zeljko now outside engaged in a huddled conversation with a couple of men inside the taxi.

While Sarah tries to shout the story of their complicated detour in a message to a desk clerk at her boss's hotel Liz disappears outside and confronts Zeljko just as he's coming back in to collect them. What's going on? Zeljko feigns ignorance/innocence but Liz is an astute interpreter of action and knows something has just been transacted inside the cab that they have hired. So Zeljko bends and admits that he's running a little private trading in imported scotch whisky on the side. Surely that's not a problem is it? The black market is virtually the only real economy the country has. Everybody does it. And besides he has a mother and sister with two kids to support. What he makes out of actual cab driving is a pittance. In fact if there's anything she wants he can get it for her- anything. She smiles and says that what she wants isn't available on the black market. He smiles back. Liz becomes intrigued by all the facets to this man and makes a mental note to develop something potentially larger in dramatic sense. She begins to think that maybe even here in this highly educated, peasant-looking, improbable character are the seeds of something really quite foreign to her and therefore rather new and exciting. . . a potential new story perhaps!

So she tacitly agrees to overlook Zeljko's transactions but warns him not to let Sarah know. She's incredibly straight and works for an even more incredibly straight politician. Any hint of a scandal in a foreign country would undoubtedly end her career- and probably her boss's (although that would be no great loss). He has to be super-careful that Sarah doesn't find out. Zeljko smiles, thanks her for the tip. Again, the smile's like a Christmas tree lighting up. He kind of warms to the idea of sharing a secret with Liz. Her feelings are mutual.

They move on. But at the next inn, instead of disappearing into the usual back room Zeljko is dragging Liz onto the dance floor- again much to the amusement and enjoyment of the locals. Sarah is somewhat less than impressed by his peacock-like performance. During the dance he manages to lose his balance slightly and bumps into Sarah's table. His wallet falls to the floor beside Sarah and in retrieving it she notices a photo of a young girl and a woman.

The off-balance tendency alerts Sarah to Zeljko's growing inebriation. The flirting with Liz doesn't do much for her mood either. In handing him back the wallet she insists that they get on with the trip. She has an appointment to make. As they leave we notice one patron follow their exit with particular attention. As soon as they've gone he moves to the inn's public phone and starts dialling.

This business of stopping every hour to ask the way may seem unconventional but it appears to work for him as a way of getting round the place. However, it is taking too much time and is also, suspects Sarah, simply a way for him to keep drinking. Liz consoles herself with the fact that at least they are seeing something of the country away from the normal tourist haunts. After all this is what they came for. It's much more interesting than a train- despite the growing alarm over the number of cognacs being consumed by Zeljko. Sarah tends to disagree.

As they push on into the night Sarah searches on the cab radio for some lively music to keep them all awake. But Zeljko points out that the country's media is uniformly dreadful. All state controlled. There's only so much folk music anybody can stand. He turns out to be a rock and roll buff and soon they're merrily singing all the classics that they have in common- including a medly of Beatles songs. An image of the three of them belting out "Yellow Submarine" inside a yellow mercedes in the midst of a dark Balkan night makes for quite an unlikely spectacle. The worry however, is that Zeljko is becoming unmistakably inebriated.

They stop at fourth inn where against Sarah's protests Zeljko and Liz continue to drink. By now they are openly flirting with each other. But Sarah has had enough. She consults her travel guide and insists in her usual forthright campaign-manager style on driving the cab herself to the nearest Turkish bath to sober him up. There's a spa town nearby called Ilidza.

So, while Liz snores quietly in the back seat Sarah drives them to Ilidza and then leads Zeljko directly into the bath house. It's quite grotty inside, full of rusting pipes and flaking cement with broken grungey tiles. But Sarah hardly notices and Zeljko is too drunk to care. Alone with him for the first time Sarah is annoyed but charmed in a strange sort of way by his floppy, fall-about, drunken act. And as she tries to take his shirt off she becomes aware that he's playing up the drunken act. Dragging him on into the sauna she mentions how intrigued she is by his past and the changes in his life. But she is curious as to why he isn't more inspired by the

new opportunities that the liberalisation of the East is bringing? A little more sober now (under the effects of the sauna) he rejects what's happening as a "liberalisation." In some cases not even the bureaucrats are changing. As far as he can see the only changes are that prices are going through the roof, the local currency's going down the gurgler and there's even less consumer items to choose from.

One system is really no better than another. The West has been big on rhetoric celebrating the destruction of the Berlin wall etc. - but so far, little practical economic aid has flowed. Only the black market is flourishing. And in many cases the old structures have simply been taken over by the same old people. The new republics have thrown out state support for housing, roads, telecommunications, broadcasting, education, health, and there's still no social security - all demolished in the name of the new economic imperatives. Sarah draws parallels here with the trends in the Australian experience. She voices her concerns about her boss and his wavering position on these exact same issues.

So, he shrugs, it's the same all over the world, big deal. But Sarah is frustrated with his laissez faire attitude. Especially in someone who used to be so active. Isn't this period of flux a chance for people like him to make a comeback? Perhaps finish his degree? Even become involved in politics again? Zeljko is dismissive of any commitment and makes light of their intellectual argument. Instead, he turns his attentions to Sarah - personally. He touches her lips with his finger for silence. No more talk. She can't help wondering out loud if he's married? Not any more. She saw the photos in his wallet. He says that he and Katica are still good friends and he loves his daughter but that's all dead and buried a long time ago. And again he urges silence.

So they sit there side by side for a few moments, enjoying the warmth, the hot steam of the sauna. They close their eyes. Sarah realises how tired she is. The bath house at this time of the night is completely empty. There's only the sound of a tap dripping, echoing through the tiled building. The world outside seems to disappear. Sarah is tired but her mind is racing. He opens his eyes, turns to her and takes her hand. Kisses it. Now her eyes open. She turns to him. Squeezes his hand back. Slowly he reaches up and loosens the tuck in her towel. She doesn't resist. . .

Later, on the way out Sarah, feeling the mountain air, decides to get a jumper from one of her bags. Zeljko insists on getting it for her. Sarah smiles at his gentlemanly offer and moves into the front seat, glowing.

Back on the road again Sarah, pushes the point. If people

like him, with his experience and his prior commitment, don't become involved then things could indeed drift again into the same bad old oppressive ways. But Zeljko lacks her idealism and her youthful energy. He wants no part of any of it. Periods of liberalism come and go. What remains constant is the military and the bureaucracy. For Zeljko life has become a simple matter of survival. His cynicism aggravates Sarah. She wishes she could snuff out his lethargy.

It gradually becomes evident that Zeljko is struggling with the road signs again and at the next inn it becomes crystal clear that the racial mix of the customers has markedly changed. Whereas they started out on the Dalmatian coast in Croatia they are now well and truly inside Bosnia/Hercegovina in what appears to be a distinctly muslim area.

The traditional bursting through the door to grandly announce their arrival falls flat as a pancake. Zeljko senses his mistake immediately. Here there is no more going into a back room. A dead silence falls upon the place. All eyes are upon them.

Quietly in German (with Sarah translating for a very sleepy Liz) Zeljko urges them to quietly finish their coffees and directly leave without looking at anyone. All eyes follow their exit, not a person stirs in the room. It's all very wierd and threatening. Zeljko of course doesn't even bother to ask for directions and after some prodding from Sarah admits that yes, he is finally lost.

They halt at a crossroads and Sarah insists that he pull over. They have to stop and sleep. By now she's frustrated with both his driving and his politics. She's angry that he's delayed their journey and embarrassed that she could feel attracted to this man. Zeljko wonders aloud what he's done ?

Sarah isn't forthcoming. She refuses to let him drive on until at least daylight- which should only be a few hours away now anyway. Their progress is hopeless. She'd hoped to be in Beograd by the morning. Now she could lose another day and be effectively late for her boss. They'll just have to doze as best they can in the cramped confines of the car. Zeljko offers Sarah the front seat while he goes off to sleep against a tree.

Dawn breaks and Sarah and Liz wake from one of the most uncomfortable nights of their life. Zeljko is nowhere to be seen. To Sarah this is just about the last straw. But Liz has woken up in a warm afterglow from her flirting with him the night before. Their wild passionate dancing has thrilled Liz to the core. She's become quite besotted with him. What an amazing, virile, sensuous spunk he is ! Oh god ! She'd like

to bundle him up in one of her bags and take him straight back home to Australia. Sarah is uncomfortable with this rave, not sure how to break the news to Liz. But she has to be frank and honest with her friend. Eventually Sarah suppresses her guilt and decides on the direct approach. Interrupting Liz's rapturous flow Sarah reveals, quite candidly, that she and Zelko made love in a sauna last night while Liz slept on in the car.

Sarah braces herself for Liz's reaction. But Liz is overjoyed for her. At last Sarah has broken out ! Now she can truly begin to enjoy herself. Liz is very happy for her and concedes that she has excellent taste. Sarah breaths a sigh of relief. Despite their predicament her spirits rise.

Liz wonders what they will do now ? She dreams of a comfortable bed with room service. Sarah also is starving. And she needs to get to a phone to try the hotel, her boss will be there by now. They contemplate Mrs. Tomovic's bottle of pickled eggs somewhat unenthusiastically. Doubts begin to creep in. Where is he anyway ? And where are they ? How far have they got to go ? Has he left the car keys. . . ?

Just as she's scabbling around for them Zeljko appears with breakfast ! He's scrounged together quite a feast: real fresh eggs, cheese, bread, goat's milk, even some coffee which he proceeds to build a fire for. Obviously not all the locals in this area are hostile. Won over by his irrepressible charm Sarah truly relaxes. The view is stunning, the food fills a much needed gap.

As they sip their coffee Liz asks him about the last inn they went to and the strange reaction. Zeljko explains there's an election going on at the moment in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a lot of racial differences are surfacing. Each republic is continually in danger of being torn apart by its warring ethnic factions. Yugoslavia was always an artificial creation to start with.

Sarah can't understand this reversion to provincialism, the renewal of all the old tribal tensions tearing the community apart. Especially now that Europe as a whole is dismantling its boundaries and looking beyond national or regional borders to seek out what is common or complementary - particularly in the economic/trade areas.

Zeljko thinks that's all very well coming from an Australian with little cause to worry about the necessities of life. The Slovenes and the Croats have always been the wealthy "European" top of Yugoslavia. Whereas the Muslims, the Montenegrans and the Macedonians have inherited the poorest parts with the Serbs are somewhere in between. If there are



tribal rivalries there are sometimes good solid economic reasons for it which are not just ethnic or religiously based.

Sarah wants to find a fax machine. She reminds Zeljko that her boss will be in Budapest by now and no doubt having a complete fit over her absence. Zeljko thinks there may be at a station in the next town.

Their discussion is cut short by the approach of a car some distance away down the valley. Zeljko reacts, alarmed, orders them back into the mercedes and speeds off. A wild chase ensues through the mountains. The women demand to know what is going on? Concentrating hard on shaking off his mysterious pursuers Zeljko is embarrassed and explains that the man behind them is a jealous husband. Zeljko had an affair with the man's wife some time ago and he has sworn vengeance. Eventually they shake him off as rounding a sharp corner the "husband's" car slides over the edge of the road and disappears down a sharp incline. Sarah is unimpressed while Liz laughs.

They reach a medium sized village and while Sarah goes off to become entangled with the local fax machine Liz presses Zeljko about their recent close shave with the other car. That was no jealous husband was it? He admits it wasn't. She warns him not to take Sarah for granted. Zeljko feels Sarah is a wonderful woman and knows exactly what she's doing. Liz is not so sure. She's just warning him that's all. Zeljko shrugs. Is there some problem?

Inside the station the fax of Sarah's speech just isn't getting through, perhaps she has the wrong number, perhaps the machine at her bosses hotel is not switched on? Frustrated and angry Sarah storms back to the taxi.

As they travel on Sarah insists that at the next big town they try another fax machine and buy a map! Thus facilitating a more effective and time-efficient way forward, obviating the need to stop at every inn they happen to pass. But the next big town they pass through is Zagreb! Even Liz realises this is totally off course. Sarah is furious. It means she is going to miss the opening of the Trade Mission completely.

Zeljko placates them with a promise to drive them straight to the airport but a quick call from the nearest phone box reveals that there are no flights until tomorrow. All flights have been cancelled. Alarmed Sarah has to borrow some coins from Zeljko to put through another call to her boss. She starts to apologise for the failure of her faxing attempts

*100's of km's off course.*

and tries to explain about their delay. But the Shadow Minister cuts that short. What on earth is she still doing in Yugoslavia? Doesn't she realise that the place is on the brink of civil war? Forget about the fax. Just get out of there. Little telecommunication is happening either into or out of the country. The central government has resigned, or been dismissed by the general staff. Nobody is sure. The army is on full alert. Fighting has already broken out in Montenegro and Macedonia. He urges her to get on the first available plane out of there and promises to pull whatever strings he can to organise a ticket. Sarah calls out to Zeljko for a contact phone number. He gives them his ex-wife's number which Sarah passes on to her boss demanding, by the way, two tickets out of Yugoslavia (one for Liz). The Shadow minister urges her to sit tight and ring again in 3 hours if he hasn't called her. He'll see what he can do.

Back in the car Zeljko promises to have them at the airport first thing tomorrow or whenever the planes start flying again. He's sorry. He admits that he's blown it, but now they're caught up in a crisis that nobody could have predicted. The streets seem eerily deserted. Military vehicles are much in evidence. Small bands of demonstrators are taunting the police. The tension is palpable. Martial law could be declared at any moment. He says they will all stay with his ex-wife overnight. She has a flat above a small Romany bar in an older part of the city.

With no money left the women have little choice but to submit to Zeljko's protection. He drives them straight there and while they wait for his wife he sets them up in the bar below. He has to go and buy petrol- if he can. He'll unload their bags later and bring them up to the room.

Too tired to argue the women accept their fate and soon surprisingly (despite the national crisis- or perhaps because of it), the place starts filling with people and music. It's quite bohemian and charming in its way. A gypsy band plays live music (incredibly, a couple of the musicians manage to watch tv while they play- until the place becomes more crowded.) Sarah and Liz meet Zeljko's estranged wife Katica. She communicates with Sarah in German.

She tells them about the bar and the people who come there- intellectuals, artists, teachers, theatre people. Crisis or no crisis life must go on. It's soon alive and vibrating. Liz is dancing. Sarah and Katica talk about Zeljko. Their split was amicable but final. His inability to hold down a decent job was the last straw. In those days his politics came before his family. Also he's a terrible flirt. Off with any woman who comes within striking distance. Katica brought up their daughter on her own. Sarah buries her reaction.

Zeljko certainly appears to be taking his time with the petrol. Sarah is worried, should they do something? Katica assures her that he can look after himself. Sarah is also concerned that her boss has not rung and decides to find a phone away from the noise. Katica tells her there's a post office around the corner and offers to accompany her there. So Sarah and Katica move out onto the street and continue their conversation. They have an immediate and easy rapport. Katica talks about local efforts to build something new, spearheaded by local women. Katica says that Zeljko claims to be cynical but helps in the best way he can. This crisis must have a silver lining. Katica feels that the army is too divided to present any sort of threat to the people.

They wander past a market. The Yugoslavian tendency to carry on life as normal is remarkable. Sarah is struck by an unusual coat for sale. Liz has one exactly like it. It's a small world alright.

In another, more secluded street some distance away, Zeljko is haggling with a couple of men round the open boot of his car. We don't see inside the boot but clearly some kind of deal is again being struck. The three of them are distracted by the approach of a demonstration.

Zeljko closes his boot and looks anxiously in the direction of the gypsy bar. There are neo-nazi signs amongst this particular group of demonstrators and the bar lies directly in their path. As the march swirls around him he looks torn between staying and driving away.

Meanwhile is again having trouble with the Post Office fax machine and just as she tries to phone the Trade Mission again the Sarah and Katica are distracted by the explosion of tear gas grenades as a line of police mount a countercharge against the demonstration.

Somewhere off, there are people screaming and soon the alarm bells of emergency vehicles can be heard. Sarah and Katica hurry back around the corner to find the Romany bar in flames. People are emerging terrified, injured, calling for help. Sarah and Katica go in search of Liz. She is not seriously hurt but a brick came through the window near her table and she has been cut by flying glass.

Katica explains that in recent weeks there have been a number of attacks on Jewish and Romany establishments. Sarah, with her own Jewish background is deeply shocked. But before they can get Liz to hospital the women are caught in the middle of a police retreat and a hail of rocks comes at them from the reformed demonstration.

Later that night Liz and Sarah are detained in a police interview room. Liz is nearly hysterical. She is on her feet screaming at the police that she is a major-minor playwright in Australia and they better be very careful how they conduct themselves because what happens in the next twenty minutes is going to end up as the key scene in her next international play !

Rather than be intimidated by this amazing threat her captors appear to be quite amused by it. Clearly this Australian woman is quite deranged. Sarah tries to explain that her friend is an innocent victim of this afternoon's disturbance and is obviously in a state of shock requiring medical attention.

The main interviewer however is not convinced. Where are their passports ? Where have they come from ?- Dubrovnik. How did they get to Zagreb?- By taxi. A taxi ! That's absurd ! Why not catch a train ?- They missed the train. Or a plane ? - The planes were full. Now they're not flying at all. What were they doing at the gypsy bar, way off the tourist track ? - Waiting for the taxi to come back. What taxi ? - The one they travelled in from Dubrovnik. Why are they virtually penniless ? - Because they spent all their spare cash on the cab. How much did they pay ? - A lot. Where are their passports ? -with their luggage in the cab. Where is this taxi ?- They don't know. He said he'd gone to get petrol. How long ago was that ?

Outside the police station, a discreet distance away, Zeljko paces: a man locked in a struggle with his conscience. Should he try to rescue them ? What of his own position ? He can hardly subject himself to any kind of police interrogation. But he knows the women will be in trouble. He pulls the two passports out of his pocket and looks at them. He opens the photo of Sarah. He rubs his finger across it, closes the passport and heads towards the police station's front door.

Back inside, the police are finding the women's story highly improbable. Their explanations are hopeless. The more they open their mouths the more they put their foot in. No one is quite sure what to do with them. Sarah demands to speak to the Australian consulate. She works for an Australian politician. . . . The police react sharply to the mention of the word "politician." So- she is a political operative. ~~Is she spying on the republic ? Who sent her to Yugoslavia ?~~

Sarah backtracks -he's only a state politician, just a Shadow Minister for trade for godsake- not even a real minister. The police view however is that economic espionage is just as significant as military spying these days. This requires interrogation from an entirely different department.

The officer in charge decides to move them to a cell until he can make a few phone calls.

As Liz and Sarah are being taken in handcuffs down a corridor Liz happens to notice Zeljko at the front desk innocently trying to drop off the passports- as if they are something he's just found in the back of his cab something left behind by absent minded tourists. Liz seizes on this one glimmer of hope and screams out that that's him ! He's the taxi driver ! Sarah, knowing Zeljko's background, tries to over-ride Liz saying "No! That's not him !" Getting someone like Zeljko involved at this stage will only make their predicament look even more dodgy.

The officer in charge orders the women taken on to their cells and turns to Zeljko. Zeljko pours on the charm, decides the best way to handle it is to be perfectly frank. Yes, of course he's the taxi driver who brought these two crazy Australians from Dubrovnik. He couldn't find them where he'd left them when he went to get petrol and then discovered they'd carelessly left their documents behind and thought since he had no way of knowing where they might be he thought he'd better at least hand the documents over to the authorities in case something untoward had happened.

Where has he brought these women from ? A little sheepishly and with that winning grin of his he admits that he brought these two turkeys all the way from Dubrovnik. He tried to explain that they could have just gone to a closer town with an airport but they seem to have more money than sense these westerners and insisted on being driven the whole way from Dubrovnik to Zagreb ! Well, Zeljko could hardly believe his luck. How much did he charge for the trip from Dubrovnik ? - A lot. Wouldn't anybody charge the earth if these two rich women insisted on hiring a cab for such a incredible distance ?

Sure he took them for a ride. They deserved it. Besides its all good hard currency coming in, Zeljko's just doing his bit for the economy. The fact that both the women and Zeljko have quoted the same extravagant amount for the trip lends credence to Zeljko's story.

Why didn't Zeljko just take them to another nearby airport, say Titograd, Kotor or Mostar ? Well, like he said they seemed to want to go straight to Zagreb. How was he to argue with them when they're so crazy ? But the interrogator says that the women said they wanted to go to Beograd. Why has he brought them to Zagreb ? Zeljko throws his hands up in the air. This is what he's been dealing with for the last 24 hours ! One moment they want Beograd then it's Zagreb

tomorrow they will probably want him to drive them to Budapest ! If this keeps up he could probably single handedly revive the entire Croatian economy with this couple.

Besides, they're not bad looking are they, quite frankly. They might be crazy but they're not too difficult on the eyes. Would the sergeant kick them out of his cab if they came along, begging to be taken ? It's time some of these wealthy tourists realise that the attractions of Yugoslavia aren't just to do with the history and the landscape. Zeljko smiles and twirls his moustache. The other police smile with him, nodding. They understand, besides with these riots going on all over the city there's far more important things to attend to. The officer thanks Zeljko and takes the passports off him and heads back down the corridor.

Half an hour later Liz and Sarah emerge onto the steps of the police station glad to be out of there but just as lost as ever. And not sure what to do next. They have their passports back but they don't have any money. . . .

They hang around for a moment at the bottom of the steps without any real idea of what they're going to do next, just sort of dazed by it all. They head off towards the right, stop, turn and go towards the left. Sarah tries to interrupt a passerby asking where the Australian consulate might be ? She's was supposed to ring her boss hours ago. But in the current climate people just hurry past ignoring her or pretending not to understand either German or English.

Then suddenly the yellow mercedes slinks up beside them and Zeljko is beckoning urgently at them, indicating for them to get in. Liz strides determinedly towards him demanding that he hand over their bags are. Sarah brushes Liz aside, firmly declaring that she wants nothing more to do with him and to leave them alone. Liz wants their luggage back. Sarah couldn't care less about luggage. She just wants to get to the Australian consulate. Any consulate. The bags will only weigh them down. The women argue amongst themselves.

Zeljko jumps out of the cab insisting that they come with him- somewhere to clean up. But Sarah repeats that she wants absolutely nothing more to do with him !

Liz wants her property back immediately then she'll hail her own cab and make their own way to the airport. She storms round the other side of the car and rips the keys out of the ignition. As she strides round to the boot he has to physically prevent her from opening it. Why can't she open it? Because, says Zeljko smiling through gritted teeth they're still in front of the goddamn police station. They'll

be watched. So, says Sarah what's wrong with that ? It's only their luggage. Liz is stopped in her tracks, realises what Zeljko means. But she can't let on to Sarah that she knows, indeed she now feels guilty that she knows. Sarah is looking from one to the other confused. Zeljko wrenches the keys off Liz and opening the doors for them says he'll explain later-just get in ! Liz calmly tells Sarah that they have to get in. Sarah frowns and follows puzzled.

High up in the police station the interrogating officer and his comrades stare down on this street scene amused by the strife Zeljko has gotten himself into. The officer twirls his moustache and laughs that he has enough trouble with his one wife why would any man choose two ? The others laugh with him shake their heads turn away from the window back to work.

In a safer, quieter part of town Zeljko pulls to a halt and throws his head into his hands. Sarah wants to know what's going on ? Looking from Liz to Zeljko. Zeljko's charm drops. Suddenly, for the first time he looks really tired. Liz quietly explains that mixed in with their bags is a load of illegal scotch whisky.

Sarah's jaw drops. So something is going on between Liz and Zeljko ? Still going on ? Sarah is flabbergasted. It's not just the deceit of the whisky- it's the personal deceit. She thought they had an understanding- after the sauna. Liz tells Sarah not to be ridiculous. There's nothing going on. Sarah spits back at Liz that she just wishes she had never been talked into this rotten bloody experience and jumps out of the cab. Zeljko gets out and tries to catch up with her. She shrugs him off. What a two-timing bastard ! He eventually grabs one of her arms and manages to stop her walking away from him. In the background civil disturbances continue. They look round sharply as some distance away a tear gas grenade goes off. He pulls her behind a tree partly to get out of the way but partly to talk more directly at her.

He says quite frankly that all politics is bullshit. The only thing in life that really matters is what he feels for her as a man and what they felt for each other last night in the sauna. Sarah says that's another thing he's got wrong she could never be involved with a man who thought like that. Politics is her life and any man she'd be interested in would have to have a commitment to something beyond mere lust.

He argues back that it's easy for her to make moral judgements and talk about what's pure and what isn't but he knows why they chose his cab way back in Kardejevo. He saw the way they stood back from the cabs in the queue in front of him. Waiting for him, and he knows why they waited for

someone like him. They behaved towards him exactly in the manner of of all bosses; picking and choosing the most suitable worker, ripe for exploitation, willing to do their bidding, ready to indulge their expensive fantasies. Well in his case they got a bit more than they bargained for.

And now they condemn him for trying to make some money on the side ? What would they really know about the struggle to survive ? Did they even bother to enquire as to why he might be dealing in the black market ?

He's distracted by the sight of Liz opening the boot. She's taken the key out of the ignition again and is staring down on a load of contraband: scotch, computers blue jeans, guns even. But no luggage, no sign of any of their possessions.

He comes quickly over to close the boot. Does she want the whole world to see ? It's Liz's turn to be shocked. Where are their bags.

Stubbing the ground with his boot he shrugs and has to admit that he's sold them- traded it all for a couple of computers and some electronic equipment. One of the computers is Sarah's laptop. She might as well take that back.

So- he's taken them both for a ride. Ripped them off. Zeljko protests that that is precisely what the West in general has done to his country. "Taken it for a ride." Encouraged the East to throw off the shackles of communism only to be abandoned and left standing there with crippled industries, stagnant trade, insecure democracies, no free press, polluted environments and no hope of any way out. The West encouraged this situation and now the whole of Eastern Europe has virtually been left to rot. Because the financial and technological support that was promised simply has not materialised.

Sarah isn't interested in his excuses or his deals. There can be no excuse for such violence. Or trading in the means of violence. None. Guns are beyond the pale.

And on top of that he's deceived her. Sarah trusted him, she even liked him, she gave him what he wanted. And he took it. And then he just abandoned them. He protests that if he'd abandoned them why did he risk everything by coming in person to the police station ?

Anyway says Liz they don't want his apologies they just want some compensation for what he's stolen from them. Then they're out of here.



Zeljko takes a thick wad of notes from a strap around his leg and hands it over to her. Take it. Take the lot. It was supposed to be for the radio station but he's not going to argue any longer with them. That's the lot. That's more than what he got for their clothes. They might have been expensive to buy but let's face it what some stuff is really worth is only tested when you try to sell it. Anyway now they're even.

Liz hesitates, then takes the money. Sarah wants to know what radio station? Liz says to forget about that and come with her. If they can find a cab still working they'll go straight to the airport and wait till the flights start again. But Sarah repeats her question. What radio station?

Zeljko shrugs. It's not important now. They've made their point they might as well go. But Sarah remembers Katica's words about Zeljko helping where he can. He nods. The plan was to raise money from the black market to finance an independent radio station in Zagreb. An objective non-party radio station - it was to be run by Katica's women's group. A rallying point for oppositional forces. Something to be positive about and help to counter the misinformation of the state controlled network. Maybe somewhere in it is the seeds of a new kind of grass roots revolution: one that demands a new language to describe it even. Something without dogma yet which aspires to entrench the dignity and the rights of ordinary people. It would also specifically promote the need to hold onto what gains women have made so far: child care, contraception, these issues are again under direct threat from the new conservative forces. They heard something of the state radio on the trip last night. They can obviously see how such a thing would be needed here. Unfortunately there's no government grants like in Australia. And in any case the main problem has been to find the equipment.

Liz looks unimpressed. Sarah wonders if she can believe him. It's Zeljko's turn to be scornful. She's the one who's constantly harped on the need to do something! What choices has a person like him had- compared to the choices that Sarah or Liz have had? Their respective positions and countries are hardly even comparable.

What after all, have they done about the situation in Australia? Write safe middle of the road plays and run the office for a ineffectual, self serving politician?

He pulls out a box of transistor parts that he's kept protectively in a special satchel inside the lapel of his coat opens the satchel and looks at the tiny plastic bits and pieces. This electronic gear better work, he smiles wryly- they were smuggled in from Australia. He sighs and puts the stuff back.

He admits he has used them and maybe in planning to just abandon them with Katica he went too far. But by then it was best that they knew as little as possible. And anyway he did come back when they got into serious strife and he knows they are both incredibly resourceful. They would have found a way out and Katica would have helped them.

What are a couple of suitcases full of expensive western clothing anyway, compared to his people's need to hear the truth? What else is a man like him supposed to do? Has either of them got any marvellous suggestions?

Sarah takes most of the money off Liz and gives it back to Zeljko. It's been an experience that's all she can say. She's keeping a bit of the money for the trip to the airport. So that's her donation to the cause and he's welcome to it. Now goodbye.

With a smile and a flourish he opens the door to his cab. He promises he'll take them to the airport immediately. No diversions, no questions, no hard feelings no extra tarriff. The two women look at each other, still unsure. Thanks to his activities in the import/export area he has certain contacts with certain, shall we say, officials who may be called upon in a crisis such as a plane being full or over-booked. It's worth a try. Against her better judgement Sarah hops in. Liz follows. He smiles as ever and hops around to the driver's side.

Moments later they are negotiating a way through the city looking for a route that attempts to avoid the worst outbreaks of violence. He keeps his ear tuned to the radio trying to deduce from the news where the hold ups are and stopping occasionally to ask strolling citizens for the best way through. It's almost like before- but without the inns.

Finally they reach the beginnings of a freeway and Zeljko starts to put on speed. Here there's even a bit of traffic. There isn't much to say. Liz tries to cheer things up by observing that at least they'll save a bit of time by not having to wait in a baggage queue. . . that's assuming that the planes are flying of course. Zeljko assures them that he just heard a commentator say that the planes were flying and foreign nationals with valid passports were being allowed to leave.

Sarah mentions cryptically that she'd rather do without his leverage with certain "officials" thank you very much. If there's any trouble she'll call her boss again and get him to pull the necessary strings with the Australian embassy in Belgrade . . .

As she says it she becomes aware of Zeljko frowning into the rear vision mirror. What's up? Nothing. What is it another jealous husband? Zeljko coyly admits that the previous character who chased them wasn't in fact a jealous husband but a member of a rival, blackmarket gang. That gang's politics are completely absent. They're just criminals. At least he has principles.

Then he frowns as the car he's been watching pulls alongside them in the traffic. The driver is jerking his fist at Zeljko and yelling abuse. There's a woman in the car with him. She looks acutely cowed and embarrassed by the whole thing. Sarah notices that the woman studiously avoids looking at Zeljko.

Sarah and Liz become alarmed. What is he saying? Zeljko, embarrassed, explains that there's a slight correction to that last story: this time it really is a jealous husband. That's the woman next to him. Exactly as he says it the mercedes is jolted sideways as the husband in question slams his car into theirs. We begin to understand why there are so many dints in the mercedes.

Zeljko puts on speed, the other car gives chase. We see them coming towards the turnoff to Zagreb airport- but because of the mad chase now ensuing Zeljko has no chance of making the correct lane. The mercedes and the mad husband in hot pursuit turn away from correct route and take off in a completely other direction. It looks like our two intrepid travellers have no hope of going anywhere near the airport for some considerable time.