

Travel in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Croatian transcript:

Zoran: Imali smo pasoše, mogli smo putovati gdje smo htjeli, za razliku od drugih zemalja Istočne Evrope, koji su trebali posebne dozvole prvo od svojih vlasti, pa tek onda od zemalja gdje bi htjeli oni eventualno putovati. Državljeni Jugoslavije u to vrijeme su trebali vizu, ne znam, za Kanadu i Ameriku... Ne sjećam se više, za jedno pet-šest zemalja na planeti su nam trebale vize, a ostalo smo mogli ići kad smo htjeli. U shopping se išlo u Italiju i Austriju, što nam je relativno bilo blizu. Znači u Austriju, Graz i tamo ta mjesta. U Grazu se uglavnom išlo po tu neku mjesečnu kupovinu potrepština za kuću: hrane, ne znam, deterdženata, itd.

Aleksandar: Zar je bilo jeftinije kupovati?

Zoran: Pa bilo je, zato što su, bio je veći izbor pakovanja, na kraju krajeva uvijek je nekako bilo jeftinije. I bilo je blizu, za par sati bi se došlo, je li.

Aleksandar: A sad je upravo suprotno, ja mislim.

Zoran: A sad se to sve mijenja, ovaj, tako da... Nekad je nešto... Sad je prema kategorijama, da, kako šta. Ali, u Austriji su već tada bili ti veliki lanci koji su se natjecali sa cijenama, i ta velika pakovanja nekakvih elementarnih stvari su se mogli stvarno jeftino kupiti. A za, ne znam, odjeću-obuću, modne dodatke se išlo u Italiju. Ni Italija nije bila predaleko, znači. Išlo se u Trst, to kupovati, je li. Tako da, to je bio neki, neka izloženost zapadnom svijetu u Austriji i Italiji koju je svaki građanin imao jer je išao; to, ne. A sad malo ljudi koji su si mogli priuštiti ili koje je više zanimalo su išli na koncerte, znači, ovaj, na kazališne predstave; na izložbe se išlo u Beč, Minhenu, znači. Ja sam bio sigurno na pet-šest koncerata u Minhenu, na koje smo išli baš zbog toga. Znači, odemo tamo na dan-dva samo da bi vidjeli nekog izvođača koji u Jugu nije dolazio.

U Jugu je bio problem sa tim nečim što smo mi zvali „devize“, a to je ustvari hajmo reći *hard currency*. Znači taj jugoslavenski dinar, s njime se nije moglo plaćati, nije bio, nije ga se moglo mijenjati vani. I onda zbog, da se ne bi dolazilo do trgovačkog deficita, kako smo imali plansku privredu u to vrijeme, onda su na razne načine, vlada Jugoslavije se trudila da taj novac ostane što više u zemlji, da ga građani ne iznose u kešu i da, isto tako i firme, da ne kupuju neke stvari koje nisu esencijalne. Znači ako se taj novac u dolarima, u markama, u funtama koji bi se zaradio kroz ekonomske aktivnosti trebao potrošiti, onda se gledalo da se potroši na uvoz repromaterijala, koji bi opet potakao ekonomski rast, itd.

Tako da, ustvari su nas i obeshrabrivali da idemo u te šopinge, to nije baš bilo onako, kako bih rekao, šta ja znam... Mislim, moglo se, nije se branilo. Ali eto, Carina je znala kontrolirati, naplaćivati carinu na to. Jedno vrijeme je bio neki depozit koji su uveli, trebalo je platiti, ne znam, stotinjak dolara... Za svaki izlazak iz zemlje bi trebalo platiti, ne

znam, sto dolara na državni račun, i onda nakon godinu dana bi dobio taj novac nazad. Znači, nije bila baš krađa, ali destimuliranje tog izletništva, ovaj, tog...

Aleksandar: Uvoza.

Zoran: I tog shoppinga, da, da.

English translation:

Zoran: Our passports allowed us to travel wherever we wanted to, which was different to other Eastern European countries, where a person would need to obtain a special permit from their own government first, and then apply for a visa from the country that they wished to travel to. Citizens of Yugoslavia at that time needed a visa to enter Canada and the United States. We needed visas for five or six countries in the world, and we could travel to the rest whenever we wanted to. People would go to Italy and Austria for shopping. Both are relatively close. So, people would go to Austria - Graz and neighboring places. We'd go to Graz mostly to do our monthly shopping of household items; food, detergents and whatnot.

Aleksandar: So it was cheaper to shop there?

Zoran: It was, because there was a larger selection of different sizes of packaging, and in the end it was cheaper. It was also close - you could get there in a couple of hours.

Aleksandar: And now it's the opposite.

Zoran: Because the markets are changing, so... Now it depends on the category, on the type of item. Also, Austria [at that time] already had those big chains which had competitive prices, and the bulk package deals on basic items were really cheap. When it comes to clothes, shoes and accessories, we'd go to Italy. Italy was also close. We'd go to Trieste to shop. So, all citizens were in a way exposed to the Western culture in Austria and Italy because people went there, right? Also, those who could afford or were interested in it would go to concerts and plays; people would go to Vienna for exhibitions. I went to at least five or six concerts in Munich, and that was the sole purpose of our trips; we'd go there for a day or two only to see an artist who wasn't performing in Yugoslavia¹.

¹ The speaker here uses the term *Juga*, a common endearing term for Yugoslavia.

There was an issue in Yugoslavia with something we call *devize*², which roughly translates as "hard currency". The Yugoslav dinar³ couldn't be used to purchase things outside of the country. Because of that, the government made different efforts to try to keep the money in the country and to keep the citizens from taking it out in cash, as well as prevent companies from purchasing non-essential items in order to prevent an economic deficit, since we had a planned economy⁴ at the time. This meant that if this money in dollars or deutschmarks⁵ or pounds which was made through economic activities was to be spent, it had to be spent on importing raw materials, which would then further boost the economic growth, etc.

So in essence we were discouraged from going on those shopping trips, although it wasn't... We weren't banned. But the Customs Office would control or charge customs. For a period of time there was a deposit fee which was introduced, and you had to pay about a hundred dollars... For each departure from the country you had to pay a fee of one hundred dollars to the government account, which would then be returned to you within a year. So, it wasn't really a rip-off, it was more like a discouragement towards these excursions and towards this...

Aleksandar: Importing?

Zoran: And shopping, yes, yes.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use every day. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

© 2012 Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, Incorporated

² The term *devize* in BCS refers to common foreign currency in cash - most commonly dollars, pounds, Swiss francs, former deutschmarks, and more recently, euros. Since dinar was not a common currency in Europe or elsewhere, dinars had to be exchanged for *devize* prior to travel abroad. Also, contrary to dinar, the aforementioned currencies were relatively stable. This led to a common practice of keeping a certain amount of savings in *devize* in case of a further destabilization of the dinar, or any other potential calamity. Despite the fact that the post-breakup currencies in former Yugoslav countries are now stable, this practice continues to this day, with all banks in former Yugoslav countries offering a *devizni račun*, meaning, a foreign currency account in addition to the regular checking and savings accounts.

³ Yugoslav dinar was the official currency of Yugoslavia.

⁴ Planned economy is a socialist economic system in which the government of a country or one of its agencies creates a plan for investment and production.

⁵ Former German currency, now replaced by the Euro.