



“Was the Road to Europe Paved with Good Intentions?
Building Highways in the Balkans”

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1. PROLOGUE

“Balkan roads were always proverbially bad roads. Between the World Wars, when I travelled frequently on the roads of Yugoslavia (...) I found them dusty, productive of flat tyres and broken springs, and permitting of no more than 150 miles a day. Very rarely did I run across a stretch of asphalt – more often, a fine selection of horse-shoe nails stuck in my tyres.”² Thus starts a 1955 article by Ernst Wiese in the road transport journal *Road International*. Indeed, building roads in the Balkans’ rugged terrain had been problematic for centuries.³ The same was true for other infrastructures and putting the area under effective governmental control had therefore been a major challenge for the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, as the area formed a remote backwater far removed from the imperial heartlands.

The end of World War I created a range of new states in the Balkans that sought to overcome the problems of poor internal communications. This paper will investigate the attempt to create road transport networks in the Balkans after WW I until 1960s. In the course of this period, the region’s ‘proverbially bad roads’ from the quote above changed into corridors allowing the flow of millions of tourists. To understand this development the history of twentieth century Balkan road transport should be embedded in a broader

¹ This paper forms part of my Ph.D. project “Free Mobility and the European Dream”, which is part of the project “Transnational Infrastructures and the Rise of Contemporary Europe”, submitted by Johan Schot (September 2002) and funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO (dossier nr. 277-53-001). More information on the project can be found on www.tie-project.nl.

² Dipl.-Ing. Ernst Wiese (1955), “Better Roads in the Balkans: New Construction and Improvement Projects Proceeding Apace”, in: *Road International* 18 (autumn), pp.39-42, here: p.39.

³ On the long history of poor road networks in the Balkans, see Mark Mazower (2000), *The Balkans: A short history*, New York: Modern Library, pp.20-22.

European framework. Road building in the Balkans involved the construction of both adequate internal connections and links to the European world beyond. The Balkans remained a ‘white spot’ on the European road map for a long time, nuancing the common view of infrastructures as ‘connective tissue’ and highlighting the restrictions and hindrances the (lack of) infrastructures can create by defining where it is possible to go.⁴

This paper gives a bird eye view of two episodes in European history that were important for the planning and realization of Balkan road development. The first concerns an ambitious plan for European public works in the Interbellum (1929-1933) that ultimately remained a paper reality. The second concerns the first decades after the Second World War, when actual change in network and the flows it supported did occur in the context of a broader concern for economic development in Southern Europe.

2. *BALKAN ROADS IN THE INTERBELLUM*⁵

The Interbellum was a time in which many projects for European integration were launched. Among the best-known examples is Aristide Briand’s 1929 initiative for the creation of a European Federation within the framework of the League of Nations. Such projects were fed by the urge to prevent a repetition of the atrocities of WW I and found an enduring European peace. The knitting together of European economies would create mutual dependencies making armed conflict detrimental to the economic interests of all European countries, and thereby less likely to occur. The creation of a continental economy would also enable Europe to compete with similarly large economic units, notably the Soviet Union and the United States.

In contrast to such lofty ideals, practice showed a divided continent. In his 1929 book *Les Deux Europes* (The Two Europes)⁶ the eminent French economist Francis Delaisi described the division of Europe in two halves, ‘Europe A’ and ‘Europe B’. The former consisted of the wealthy and industrialised countries in Western Europe, the latter of the newly founded states of Eastern Europe with a mainly agricultural economy, including

⁴ Edwards makes this point in Paul. N. Edwards, 'Infrastructure and modernity: Force, time, and social organization in the history of sociotechnical systems', in Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey, and Andrew Feenberg, eds., *Modernity and technology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), pp.185-225.

⁵ For a more elaborate discussion of plans for European motorway networks during the Interbellum, see Frank Schipper, [The drive for peace? Road planning and the European project during the Interbellum](#), Paper presented at the SHOT 2005 Conference, Minneapolis, USA, November 3-6, 2005.

⁶ Francis Delaisi (1929), *Les Deux Europes*, Paris: Payot.

the Balkan countries. For Delaisi the prosperity of the continent as a whole depended on the connection of Europe's two halves through economic cooperation and trade.⁷

Influenced by intellectuals like Delaisi, the inspired director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Albert Thomas formulated a comprehensive plan for European public works as a corollary to Briand's initiative of a European Federation to combat the economic crisis of the 1930s. Large-scale infrastructures providing a physical link between European states formed a necessary condition to achieve unification. This was *a fortiori* true in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, as the Hungarian Elemér Hantos exemplified in a memorandum on the economic organisation of that region presented to the Commission of Enquiry for European Union, which the League of Nations had installed to study Briand's proposals and collect responses from the member states. Hantos dedicated the lion's share of his memo to transport connections.⁸

Thomas too paid particular attention to how his ideas could be realized in Eastern Europe. He actively tried to establish contacts with a wide range of eminent politicians and Eastern European *hommes d'affaires*.⁹ In contrast to Western European countries, the countries of Eastern Europe responded enthusiastically to Thomas' initiative due to the dearth of infrastructures and their dependence on international finance for their realization.¹⁰ The result was that the program of public works of the Committee of Enquiry on Questions relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment, which the Commission of Enquiry for European Union set up in response to Thomas' initiative, focussed mainly on Eastern Europe. This is reflected in the list of projects (Table 1)¹¹ the Committee submitted to the 1933 Monetary and Economic Conference in London to discuss how such projects might be financed. The combined estimated expenditure for

⁷ On Delaisi's economic thought, see Franck Théry (1998), *Construire l'Europe dans les Années Vingt: L'Action de l'Union Paneuropéenne sur la Scène Franco-Allemande, 1924-1932*, Euryopa Études 7-1998, Genève: Institut Européen de l'Université de Genève, pp.53-57.

⁸ Central Europe refers here to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia, see Elemér Hantos (1932), *L'Europe Centrale: Une Nouvelle Organisation Économique*, Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan.

⁹ ILO Archives, Cabinet Albert Thomas (hereafter: CAT) 11A.1.1, folder a, Thomas to Fuss & Maurette, 10-11-1931.

¹⁰ CAT 6B.7.1.1, Francis Delaisi, 4/6-7-1932, Rapport sur le Financement d'un Programme de Grands Travaux Publics Européens, p.1; CAT 11A.3.5, Evans to Keynes, 9-2-1932.

¹¹ Apart from the countries mentioned in Table 1, Austria, Estonia, Latvia and Poland also submitted projects to the Committee.

road projects was 571,1 million Swiss francs, or 35,5% of the total, but the committee assigned them the label ‘indirectly remunerative’, thus giving them a low priority.¹²

Country	Project	Estimated expenditure (millions CHF)
Bulgaria	inland waterways	1,3
	roads	11,0
Hungary	roads	35,0
Roumania	railways	280,0
Yugoslavia	roads	137,5
	railways	230,5
	port of Belgrade	10,2
Overall Total of Submitted Projects		1.609,1
Source: CCT/TPON/50(2), annex I, List of Programmes of Works Retained by the Committee		

The list makes clear that priorities varied widely. Road projects did not form part of the Romanian submission, for example. The Yugoslav proposal was the largest in financial terms. The proposal emphasized connections between the Yugoslav capital Belgrade and the major border crossing posts with all neighbouring countries. A coastal highway was considered of secondary importance.¹³

Road builders also responded enthusiastically to Thomas’ initiative. They founded the *Bureau International des Autoroutes* (BIAR) and organised two European motorway conferences that resulted in far-ranging grand designs of a European motorway network, forming “an almost forgotten aspect of the history of motorway construction in Europe (...), which can be described as a dream of a European Community”.¹⁴ Yet the proposed networks did not connect all European countries to the same extent. Table 2 illustrates the point. The first column contains the theoretical right of each country, which BIAR’s secretary Marcel Nyffeler calculated on the basis of the expected income from a gasoline tax levied to finance the motorway scheme. The second column contains the desirable length for each country specified by BIAR’s technical committee. The third column is an elaboration of the plan the Italian road builder Puricelli sponsored at the second European motorway conference. For comparison a fourth column has been added, containing data

¹² League of Nations Archive, CCT/TPON/50(2), annex II, ‘Programmes of Works Retained by the Committee Classified according to their Probable Remunerativeness’.

¹³ CAT 11C.02, folder ‘Réponse yougoslave à la circulaire du 19.10.31 du Comité Travaux Publics’.

¹⁴ Ingrid Heckmann-Strohkark (1999), “Der Traum von einer Europäischen Gemeinschaft: Die Internationalen Autobahnkongresse 1931 und 1932”, in: Martin Heller & Andreas Volk (eds.), *Die Schweizer Autobahn*, Zürich: Museum für Gestaltung, pp.32-45, here: p.34.

on a Nazi scheme designed by the German Kurt Kaftan in order of Fritz Todt, Hitler's general inspector for the German road sector.

Table 2 - Comparison of European Motorway Network Proposals 1931-1936 (km)				
	Nyffeler 1931 (theoretical right)	Nyffeler 1931 (necessary)	Puricelli 1934	Kaftan 1936
Albania	-	-	200	360
Bulgaria	-	-	350	1.785
Germany	3.458	3.950	6.415	9.700
Greece	-	-	825	1.350
Hungary	83	180	1.175	1.125
Romania	-	-	2.865	2.430
Turkey	-	-	325	225
Yugoslavia	58	235	2.600	3.015
European Total	14.000	14.000	36.576	64.997
Source: CAT 6B.7.2.2, Marcel Nyffeler [1931], n.d., Règles Générales pour l'Exécution du Programme Albert Thomas Concernant la Construction d'un Réseau d'Autoroutes Européen Conjointement avec la Lutte contre le Chômage, p.34; Piero Puricelli (1934), "La Rete Autostradale Europea", in: <i>Le Strade</i> 16:12, December, pp.732-733; Kurt Gustav Kaftan (1936), <i>Europa Braucht Autobahnen! Vorschläge und Entwürfe zur Erbauung Nationaler Autobahnnetze als Ausgangspunkte zur Errichtung eines Europäischen Autobahnnetzes</i> , Berlin: Reichssportverlag, pp.14-15..				

A logic of scale increase characterises the sequence of proposals, both in terms of total European network length (and most network lengths for individual countries) and in terms of the number of countries included in the schemes. The Balkan countries illustrate this quite clearly. Several did not form part of the initial 1931 scheme while those Balkan countries 'included' in the scheme only got tiny stretches of motorway. This is quite different in the 1934 Puricelli and 1936 Kaftan proposals. Yet Balkan kilometrage in both absolute and relative terms dwindled in comparison with the lengths proposed for Germany, which ranked highest among European countries.

The 1936 Kaftan scheme is a late outgrowth of the earlier enthusiasm for proposing European motorway networks, but like its predecessors it was never realized. The 1933 London conference had already effectively put an end to the plan for European public works, as it became clear that there was no way to finance them. A third European motorway conference scheduled for the same year never took place and the successor organisation of BIAR vanished mysteriously from the scene. Balkan roads had to wait until after World War II until real change occurred.

3. *BALKAN ROADS AFTER THE WAR*

In the article quoted at the beginning of this paper, Ernst Wiese asserted that by 1955 “the motorist travelling today on international route E.5 from London to Ankara or Bagdad (...) will be amazed that motorisation and road construction have progressed far more rapidly and widely in the Balkans, west of the Iron Curtain, than in Central Europe.”¹⁵ Wiese’s assertion is revealing for three reasons. First, it indicates the improvement in the quality of post-war Balkan roads. Second, Wiese’s quote shows the quality of infrastructures could become a measuring rod for the quality of life within a Cold War context and thus hints at the adequacy of Mazower’s assertion that by 1950 the Balkans had become a “laboratory for the competition between the Free World and Soviet communism to lead traditional agrarian societies towards modernity”.¹⁶ Third, by referring to the E5 Wiese embeds Balkan roads in a larger European whole. The E5 formed part of a network of so-called European ‘main international traffic arteries’ specified in the September 1950 Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries. The Declaration contained the technical characteristics of the roads and required the provision of gasoline stations, adequate border crossing facilities, first aid posts and emergency telephones along them. The E5 followed the itinerary of an older plan originally proposed by the British Automobile Association for a road from London to Istanbul – and beyond.¹⁷

The density of the E-roads varied greatly (see Table 3). Turkey had the least amount of E-roads per square kilometre (6 m/km²), a position it shared with the United Kingdom. The amount of E-roads per inhabitant in Greece and Turkey was relatively high compared to other countries and the ratio per automobile testified of the low levels of motorisation in these countries, which was also true for Yugoslavia. The picture would surely not have looked very different in other Balkan countries, but Bulgaria, Hungary or Romania had not submitted any roads for the network yet.

¹⁵ Wiese, “Better Roads in the Balkans”, p.39.

¹⁶ Mazower, *The Balkans*, p.118.

¹⁷ On the main international traffic arteries, see Pär Blomkvist, “Roads for Flow – Roads for Peace: Lobbying for a European Highway System”, in: Arne Kaijser & Erik van der Vleuten (eds.), *Networking Europe*, forthcoming, Gijs Mom, “Roads without Rails: European Highway-Network Building and the Desire for Long-Range Motorized Mobility”, in: *Technology and Culture*, 46, 4, pp.745-772. On the London-Istanbul road, see Alec Badenoch (forthcoming), “Touring between War and Peace: Imagining the Transcontinental Motorway, 1930-1950”, in: *Journal of Transport History*.

Country	E-roads (km)	E-roads/km ²	Inhabitants/E-roads	Automobiles/E-roads
Germany	5968	0,025	8300	330
Greece	2425	0,018	3130	14
Italy	6671	0,022	7100	138
Turkey	4835	0,006	4320	13
United Kingdom	1545	0,006	32800	2430
Yugoslavia	1700	0,007	9300	16
European Total/Average	49485	0,011	6500	260

Source: IRF (1955), *Main International Traffic Arteries*, Brochure 'Europe no. 2'.

Road censuses on the E-road network revealed fast change in actual use of the network in the Balkans. Yugoslavia illustrates this nicely. In 1955 the Yugoslav average daily density of vehicles amounted to less than 2000 on all roads, by 1965 this percentage had already shrunk to 53%. In the same period the overall quality of the Yugoslav road network increased dramatically (see Table 4). Yugoslav roads fulfilled various functions. The increased availability of adequate transport infrastructures formed an important part of Yugoslavia's program of economic modernisation, providing the farm-to-market and distribution links that would become necessary due to the prospected rise in productivity resulting from the country's Five Year Plan. Roads also were a key factor in the development of tourism in Yugoslavia, attracting Western European tourists who increasingly travelled to their holiday destination by means of their own car. Tourism could ease balance of payment problems through bringing foreign currency into the country. An adequate road system presented a strategic interest too. In case of an armed conflict, the transport system in general had to enable the necessary logistics.¹⁸

	1939	1946	1950	1960	1970	1976
Paved	900	1.800	2.318	6.844	24.214	41.144
Gravel	42.800	45.700	46.256	50.047	41.644	35.862
Earth	37.000	33.800	32.826	25.462	25.431	24.583
Total	80.700	81.300	81.400	82.353	91.289	101.589

Source: Federal Committee of Transport and Communication of the SFR of Yugoslavia, *Yugoslav Transport* (Belgrade: prepared on the occasion of convening in Yugoslavia of the 49th session of the ECMT), p.34.

¹⁸ National Archives and Records Administration, Maryland, USA, Record Group 469: Entry 1463, box 1, Mission to Yugoslavia, Defense Production Division, subject files, 'Progress Report no. 54', 19th April 1953, p.7; Record Group 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records relating to Yugoslavia, 1947-1963, Box 1, folder (132/65) investments and loans: US, January 1 1958-dec 31 1959, 'Kohler to Dillon', 7 May 1958.

The basic structure of the Yugoslav road system consisted of two main routes. The most important ran from the Yugoslav-Italian border to the border with Bulgaria and Greece in the Southeast, following the course of the rivers Sava and Danube and passing through the capital Belgrade. The second followed the Dalmatian coast and joined the first in Skopje. Connections through the Dalmatian coastal mountain ridge from the coast and the Yugoslav heartland were costly and difficult.

Neighbouring countries had an important stake in the construction of roads on Yugoslav territory. This becomes visible in discussions on the development of Southern Europe taking place in the Economic Commission for Europe. This regional economic organisation forming part of the United Nations installed an Expert Group on Economic Development in Southern Europe in 1954. The Group originally comprised representatives from Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy and Turkey, thus involving countries with a recent history of non-friendly relations. Yugoslavia, for example, had supported the communist insurgency in Greece at the end of the 1940s and its relations with Italy had only recently improved with the settlement of the dispute over Trieste in 1954.

The Expert Group task was to investigate specific possibilities to develop the region taking due regard of financial issues.¹⁹ Yugoslavia suggested increasing cooperation in the field of transport at the second meeting in October 1954, especially in order to develop tourism in the region, for example through tourist bus services connecting the four countries.²⁰ More tourism would increase revenues and the balance of payments. At a subsequent meeting early January 1955 the experts concluded the establishment of good road connections was essential for further development of the tourist sector. The amount of North Europeans travelling to their holiday destination in their own car was booming and only adequate highway facilities, along with an accommodation infrastructure, could attract them to the Balkans.²¹

By May 1955 cooperation on transport issues in general had been narrowed down to the improvement of highway links in particular. Attention focussed on two links, a highway between the Trieste and Istanbul and a ferry service between Brindisi and

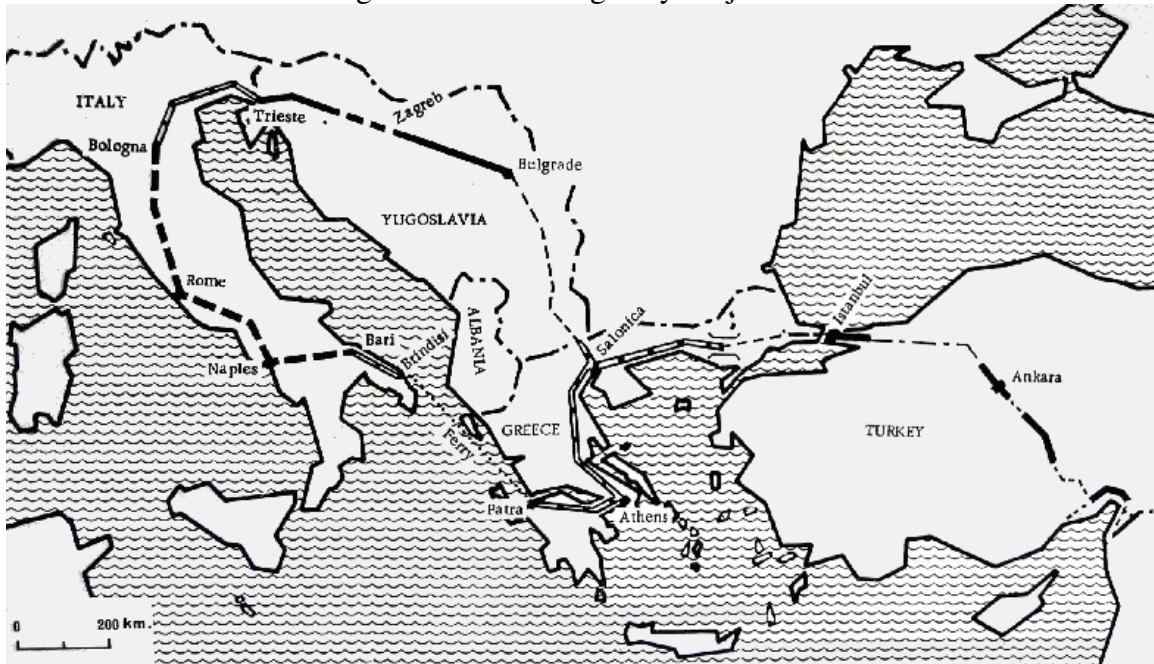
¹⁹ United Nations Office at Geneva Archives (hereafter: UNOG), ECE/SE/2, 30-7-1954, 'Summary of questions considered and decisions taken at the first meeting of the Expert Group', p.2.

²⁰ UNOG, ECE/SE/3, 23-10-1954, 'Rapport du Groupe d'experts sur sa deuxième réunion', p.5.

²¹ UNOG, ECE/SE/5, n.d., 'Report of the Expert Group on its Third Meeting'; *New York Times*, 11-9-1955, "Highway Encircling the Adriatic Being Planned by Four Nations".

Patras. This would enable tourists to make a circular tour rather than return along the same route they had taken to reach their destination. In July 1955 the Expert Group installed a working group of ‘highly qualified experts’ to prepare the broad lines of this so-called Circular Highway Project (see Figure 1), coordinate national programmes, and provide an accurate estimate of costs and time needed while minimizing both.²²

Figure 1 Circular Highway Project



Source: UNOG, G IX.13.1.29.18657, jacket 2, W/TRANS/SC1/157/Annex, 24-7-1956

The first meeting of the working group created high expectations. The project would reduce transport costs and thus enable the establishment of new industries, the enlargement of the market for products that had so far been consumed only locally, and regional specialisation allowing each individual region to fully benefit from its comparative advantages. Furthermore, the roads would open up hitherto virtually inaccessible regions to northern European motorists.²³

The meeting decided to add the stretches Rome-Brindisi and Athens-Salonika to complete the circle, and introduced a branch route from Istanbul to the Turkish border with Lebanon. The largest national stretch of the Trieste-Istanbul segment ran on

²² UNOG, ECE/SE/11, 12-7-1955, ‘Report of the Expert Group on its Sixth Meeting’, pp.3-4.

²³ UNOG, ECE/SE/TR/1, 30-11-1955, ‘Report of the working party on transport questions on its first session’.

Yugoslav territory for 1239 km, coinciding with the country's transport backbone connecting Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade, the three prime cities of the country. From this axis all other corners of the country could be reached.²⁴

At three points the roads of the Circular Highway Project were not yet open for traffic or only 'passable with difficulty'. First, the Patras-Brindisi ferry did not yet exist. Second, a 44 km stretch was to be built between Greece and Turkey connecting the two countries at Ipsala on the river Evros. The most formidable hurdle was the missing link between Belgrade and the Greek border of which a large proportion lacked a proper foundation or surface and suffered from occasional floods.²⁵ The appalling quality of this segment chased away many potential tourists. A small group of brave individuals reached Greece by car, defying the potholed routes through the rough Macedonian hills. In the first ten months of 1955 Greek border officials tallied 9000 of such rare adventurers,²⁶ a number far below the tourist potential from the north. After completion of the road at least an extra 75.000 tourists and 500 tourist buses would reach Greece by road through Yugoslavia.²⁷ To keep tourists informed of the current situation of the roads, the government issued booklets describing their condition.²⁸

In 1957, the initiative for developing roads in the Balkans was taken over by the International Road Federation, a non-governmental organisation promoting road-building worldwide. It organised a conference in Salonika, Greece, bringing together highway directors from Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia. Representatives of road associations from these countries, their Italian counterparts, and an American observer from the International Cooperation Administration participated as well.²⁹ The objectives of the meeting were to develop a 'firm' construction program, explore the possibilities of mutual assistance to accelerate construction and establish a coordinating committee for future consultations.³⁰ The conference paid special attention to the E5 in the participating

²⁴ UNOG, ECE, G IX/13/1/29, 18657, jacket 1, 'La Route: <Trieste> - Sežana – Postojna – Ljubljana – Zagreb – Beograd – Niš – Skopje – Gevgelija - <Salonique>', n.d. [1955].

²⁵ UNOG, ECE/SE/TR/1, 30th November 1955.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ UNOG, GIX/13/1/29, 18657, jacket 3, ME/415/58.

²⁸ Yugoslav National Tourist Office, *Road Conditions* (Belgrade, 1958).

²⁹ n.a. (1958), "The Salonika Conference November 15th to 27th 1957", in; *Road International* 28 (spring), pp.33-34.

³⁰ UNOG, GIX/13/1/29, 18657, jacket 2, 'Final Report Salonika Highway Conference for International Roads fo South-East Europe', 15-17 November 1957.

countries and how the Balkan might fit into the E-road network mentioned earlier.³¹ At the end of the meeting, the participants expressed the wish to continue having regular meetings, and to include Italy and Austria as members.³² Ensuing meetings took place in Istanbul (1958), Belgrade (1959), and Brindisi (1961).

For Yugoslavia it was clear that even financing the road backbone of the country on its own would be impossible. The \$ 30-40 million necessary to assure the sufficiently rapid construction of the road formed too heavy a burden for public finance.³³ Without foreign financial aid it would take the country 15 years to build the necessary roads. If foreign aid would be supplied the work would be finished in less than 5 years. The international financial community stimulated the road construction frenzy through lending considerable sums of money to cover the huge investments. The IBRD granted its first loan for highway development in Yugoslavia in 1963. In that year two thirds of Yugoslavia's 3 million visitors arrived by car or bus, the Adriatic coast being their major destination. The IBRD loan helped finishing the road along the Adriatic coast. In 1963, 1 million foreign cars would cross Yugoslav borders, but in 1970 this number had risen to an astronomic 14 million.³⁴ These developments resulted in a dramatic shift in the share of transport modes in total transport figures (see Table 5).

	Freight			Passenger		
	Rail	Road	Other	Rail	Road	Other
1960	74	15	11	67	30	3
1970	47	41	12	25	71	4

Source: World Bank country economic report, *Yugoslavia: development with decentralization* (World Bank, 1975), p.168.

As time passed, the working group started to include countries from across the Iron Curtain. Bulgaria was the first country that expressed its interest in joining the working group. The Bulgarian government emphasized that a shortcut to Istanbul through Bulgaria saved travellers 363 km.³⁵ Cooperation across the Iron Curtain depended on the

³¹ IRF, *Main European Arteries (E Roads) Traffic Census Maps 1965* (Geneva, 1965), p.3.

³² 'Final Report Salonika', 15-17 November 1957.

³³ UNOG, W/TRANS/263, 17th June 1959, 'Development of the Road Network in South-East Europe', §23; NARA, RG 59, Records of the Component Office of the Bureau of European Affairs, 1944-1962 Lot File 54D388, box 23, folder 'ECE ITC - January 1950 through Jan 1951', 'Clarke to McClure', 30th October 1950.

³⁴ World Bank, *Yugoslavia and the World Bank* (Washington D.C., 1979), p.22.

³⁵ UNOG, G IX.13.1.29.18657, jacket 2, 'Velikov to Le Vert', 28th May 1958; UNOG, GIX/13/1/29, 18657, jacket 3, 'A. Belineki to Myrdal', 24th April 1959.

temperature of East and West relations, so after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, marking a low point in East-West relationships, it took until 1965 before a next meeting took place in the Bulgarian seaside resort Varna. Here further E-roads for South Eastern Europe would be defined, changing the Balkans changed from a gap in the network to an integral part of the E-road network.³⁶

4. EPILOGUE

Balkan roads changed in the course of the twentieth century. This paper has demonstrated that studying Balkan roads from a European angle can be a useful exercise to understand their development better. Aided by international flows of money, usually accompanied by technical expertise, Balkan roads reached unprecedented levels in both quality and quantity. The ambition to combat the region's bad roads surfaced in the Interbellum in the plan for European public works. Due to the difficult conditions of the 1930s this plan remained a paper reality. This was different for in the post-war era, in which the road situation witnessed real improvement and thus was able to support ever growing flows of tourists. The growth of tourism and the development of the road network constituted two mutually reinforcing developments, but despite these developments the ugly duckling did not turn into a swan.

A small excursion beyond the time frame of this paper illustrates the point. By the mid-1970s the Balkans had become the protagonist of yet another European grand scheme, the Trans-European North-South Motorway Project (TEM).³⁷ The routes are strikingly similar to several of the ones discussed earlier in this paper. Yet today the region still lags behind considerably in terms of infrastructure development.³⁸ It shows the Balkan's road to Europe has certainly been paved with good intentions in the course of the twentieth century history.

³⁶ *Routes du Monde* 12, 1965, pp.2-3.

³⁷ UNOG, TRANS/SC1/AC.1/1, 28 May 1976, 'Rapport de la Réunion Spéciale sur l'autoroute européenne nord-sud'; Tom Rallis & Uno Helk, *The Story of the Motorways* (Lyngby: Institute of Roads, Traffic and Town Planning, Technical University of Denmark, 1993), Paper 1993-6, pp.23-25. For current developments, see <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/tem/tem.html>.

³⁸ See Caralampo Focas (ed.) (2004), *Transport Issues and Problems in Southeastern Europe*, Aldershot: Ashgate.