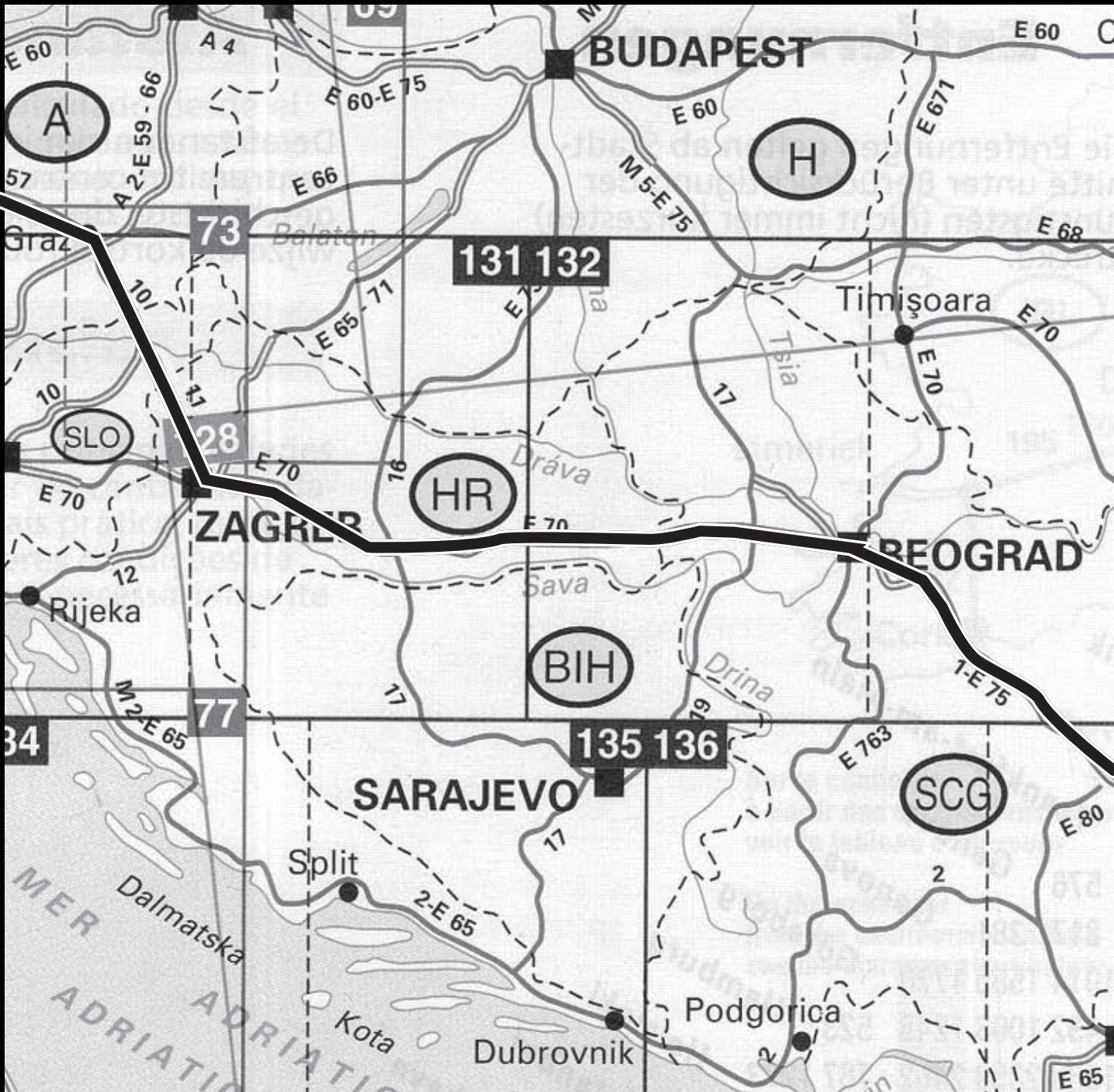


E70*

7 denied countries by Beatriz Ramo

* (The E70 refers to the highway composed by E70-E75-E80)

Driving through Southeast Europe is an experience in itself. One can find donkeys loaded like trucks led by Romanian women; four lanes of cars where there were supposed to be two; missing indicators; signs prohibiting animals to circulate in expressways or Bulgarian melon sellers on the sides. Driving the 550 km between Sarajevo and Sofia can take up to 17 hours and one

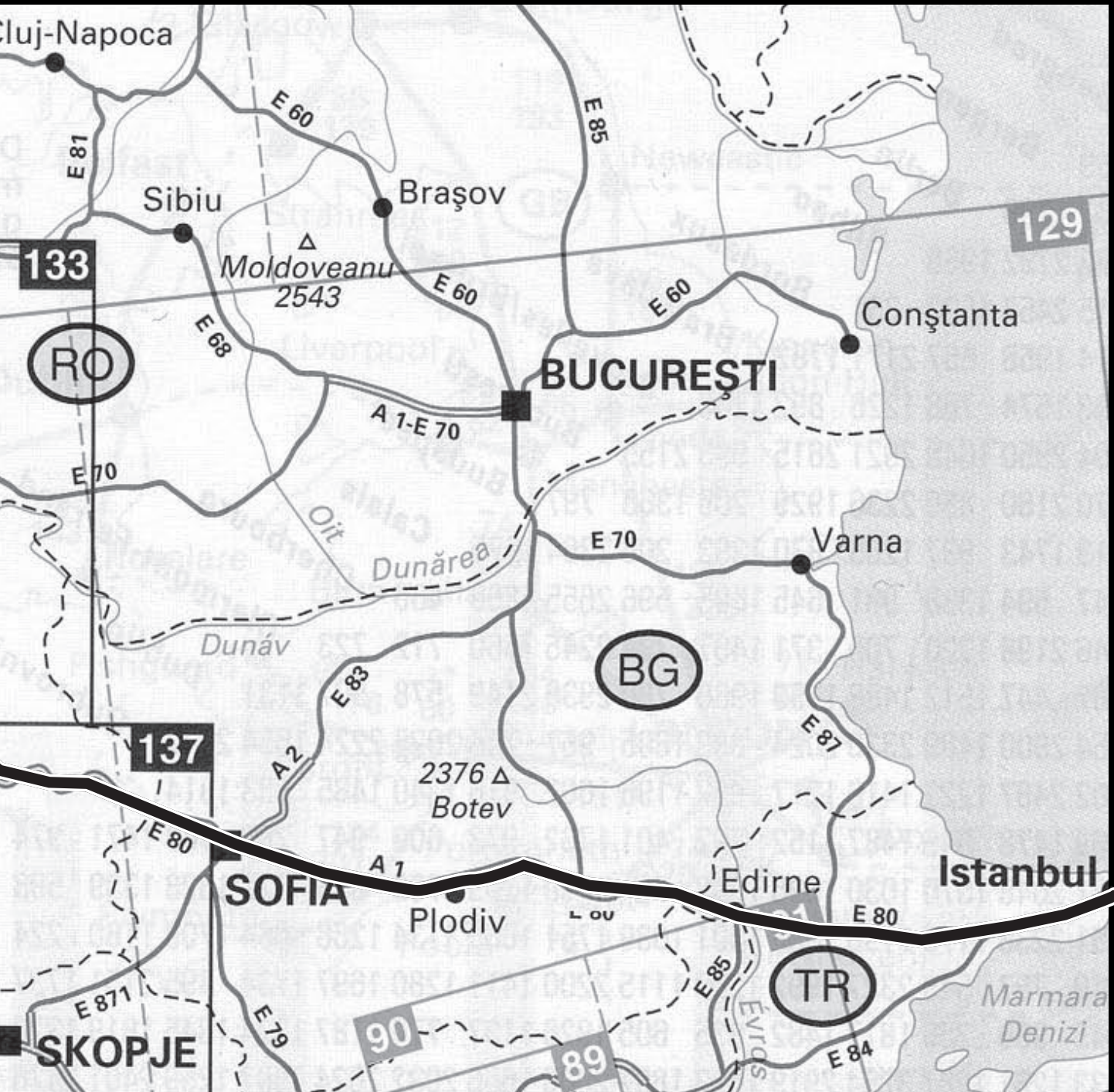


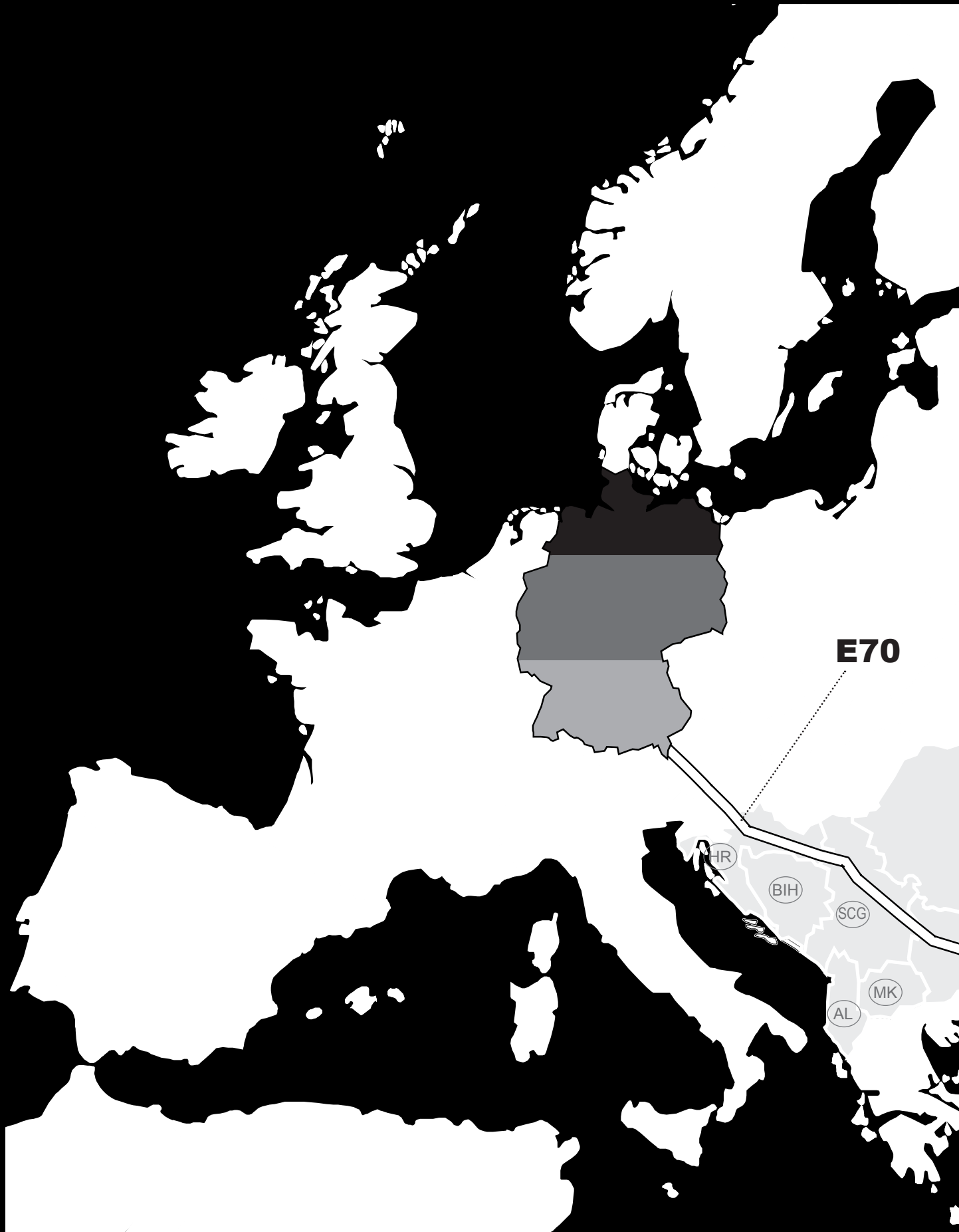
can expect to be on the road for 14 hours for the 400 km from Sofia to Bucharest, on a rainy day.

It is then a big surprise when the 400 km from Sofia to Belgrade take just 3.5 hours and the highway is better than most of those in Spain. And it is really a mystery that the road from Belgrade to Zagreb (less than 4 hours) is an spotless highway with perfect asphalt lanes served by first-class gas stations and brand new equipment. This reminds of a German highway (even more so, since many of the cars driving have German number plates although the families inside do not look like Germans at all).

Why does Belgrade have a perfect road going to Sofia or Zagreb, and not to Bucharest? Why is Sarajevo not connected with any city? Why do cities like Plovdiv, Edirne or Krnjevo have an impeccable highway while capitals like Sarajevo or Bucharest do not have one?

Zooming out on the road map to get a complete overview in Southeast Europe, one begins to comprehend the mystery: there is an unnoticed diagonal crossing the continent. The highway E70 traverses Southeast Europe in the shortest way to link something else: Western Europe and Turkey, or better, Germany and Istanbul. If Istanbul is the connection between Asia and Europe, the E70 is the link between Western Europe and Istanbul.





E70


HR

BIH

SCG

AL

MK



Today there are almost 4 Million Turks living in Western Europe - 10% of the population the Ottoman Empire had at its peak, an Empire that extended 20 million km² - almost 5 times bigger than EU today. On the one hand, the E70 connects them with their homeland, Turkey. On the other hand, countries that were once part of the Ottoman Empire are ignored today by the E70: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria and Serbia & Montenegro. (These last three are somehow luckier for being on the diagonal).



The E70 only uses the surface of the Balkans without any intention of connecting it.

Today 2.5 Million Turks live in Germany the biggest "Diaspora". In the 60's they were invited as "Gastarbeiter", and in the 70's they were not "guest" workers anymore but long-term residents settling down in almost every West German city where they opened private businesses that today employ thousands of Germans.

The E70 is the road to success for thousands of Turks who come for a bright future to Western Europe or for those who victoriously return to their beloved Turkey.

The E70 is a selective two-way pilgrimage path with a loved beginning and a desired end, but without stops in the middle.

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