

## DANUBE BLUES

NARR: The Duna - the Dunav - the Dunarea - the Dunai - the Donau - the Danube.

The river has many names, because it flows through different countries, different cultures.

It may even have different names in the same country, because throughout the centuries, peoples have been uprooted from one place and deposited in another, like the river's own alluvia.

From time to time, one ethnic group tries to expel another, sending it "back where it came from" - just as attempts are made to tame the river, straighten it out, alter its course, change its speed.

NARR: The Danube flows directly through 10 countries, many of them newly created, or re-created.

It starts in Germany and Austria, prosperous states of the new Europe, and rolls through the struggling economies of Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine.

The Danube is Europe's most important water artery, flowing from the heart of Europe and emptying into the Black Sea.

The Danube Basin is home to 80 million people.

The river is a major trade link, a tourist and recreation route, a wildlife haven.

It is a vital source of hydro-electric power.

It is a font of drinking water for tens of millions of people.

It is also a sewer for human, industrial, and agricultural waste.

On the Danube, past and present flow together.

The Danube is a swift-flowing stream, otherwise you'd think it would silt up with the heavy sediment of history.

The river has seen the rise and fall of empires, the toppling of dictators, the slaughter of innocents.

It was this region, the Balkans, that started the first Great War of the Twentieth Century, and at the end of that century, blood shed in the break-up of Yugoslavia drained into its waters.

The Danube is a river of many colours.

On certain days, in certain places, in certain lights, the Danube actually is blue.

But the blueness of the Danube seems more a mood than a colour: a sense of loss, of the need to get back something you once had - land, kin, good times...

**TITLE: DANUBE BLUES - An excursion in space, time and music from Germany to the Black Sea**

NARR: This trip down the Danube took place in the autumn of 1999.

Our vessel for the first part of the journey from Germany to Yugoslavia was a tourist boat, the *Delphin Queen*.

In normal times, the river is navigable all the way to the Black Sea.

But the recent wars of the region meant that these were not normal times.

The expedition was undertaken on the initiative of His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who is committed to restoring the planet to environmental health.

This journey is also a mission to heal the spiritual scars of war.

An international group of experts has been to look for solutions to the Danube's environmental problems.

WOMAN: ...co-operation in environmental matters.

SALTZER: ... and the second problem was of course the pollution of the river.

MOISI: ...only in Romania, there's no waste-water treatment facilities along the Danube. And the people who live there, on the water, they take water out of the Danube, and put it in a pot, and have it boiled. Yeah.

NARR: But environmental problems seldom stand alone. On the Danube, they are worsened by economic distress, ethnic hostilities, and the trauma of war.

WELLER: ...of, of generating economic activity in countries like Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, or whatever else, that are beneficial to the environment, and allow people to have -

VOICE: - earn a living.

WELLER: - a livelihood from that.

ILLES: ...standards about the barges. Before, during the Communist time, they wanted to change the river, increase the water level, and to deepen the bed of the river, because the boats were not comfortable. How stupid was to change the river instead of change the boats!

NARR: For thousands of years, the Danube shaped the life of the people of the region.

For the last hundred years, people have shaped the Danube.

For the most part, this has not been good for the ecology or for the people.

Philip Weller runs the Danube programme for the World Wide Fund for Nature.

A Canadian, he is passionately dedicated to the river and to the people of Danubia.

WELLER: Well, the problems of the Danube are ones that can be categorized as alterations to the physical structure of the river, as well as pollution which has been added to the river. Too much attention has been given to the sort of pollution side without enough attention to the river as a living system, the floodplain connection. Pollution, there has been both industrial toxic waste, as well as the nutrients that are coming from sewage or industrial facilities. There has been general improvement throughout the system, that those levels are being reduced. What has unfortunately not happened is changes in a significant way with respect to the natural dynamics of the river.

NARR: Over the last century, major changes to the river were engineered to favour growth in the traffic of large commercial vessels.

WELLER: Throughout the Danube you have a basically a straightening and narrowing of the river channel, forcing the river to move the water along quickly. We're finding, though, that this straightjacketing of the river means that the river loses its ability to provide life for us. The floodplain's flowing up of water out of the river up onto the land is an essential element in terms of recharging ground water, it's an essential element in terms of reducing the amount of nutrients and pollutants that are in the river, it's a very very important means of maintaining the biodiversity that is adapted to these conditions.

NARR: The Danube's greatest service to its population - the flushing and cleansing of water drunk by millions of people - happens underground, unseen, largely unappreciated.

ID NIEDERALTAICH, GERMANY

NARR: At a Bavarian monastery, a monthly Sunday morning service binds people of different faiths together in a prayer for the protection of the river and the life it services.

It may be a good omen that the massive tanker swerves to avoid the flowers released to float downstream.

ID PASSAU, GERMANY

NARR: After the picture-postcard city of Passau in southern Germany, the *Delphin Queen* heads downriver towards Austria.

The Danube is an international waterway, and Germany and Austria have canalized the river to the Rhine, creating a commercial artery that flows 4,000 kilometers through the heart of Europe, linking the North Sea to the Black Sea.

ID: AUSTRIA

NARR: Hitler too dreamt of uniting southern and northern Europe, but through conquest, not commerce. He wanted to create an empire that would stretch from the Baltic to the Mediterranean.

Hitler was from the Danube region. When he took over Austria in the Anschluss of 1938, he was greeted ecstatically by the Austrian people: he was, after all, coming home.

ID: MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

NARR: In the peaceful countryside near the Danube, Austrian Nazis built a concentration camp, a Lager, and set about the task of ethnic cleansing.

This was not the first ethnic cleansing of the Danube region, nor would it be the last.

One of our group, Gabriella Durning, reads a *kaddish* - a Jewish prayer for the dead.

Mauthausen's inmates came from all over Europe.

This Austrian Lager was the first to be designated as "a camp of no return". All inmates were doomed.

Austrians fought enthusiastically for the Fuehrer, but at the end of the war, deserted him for the Allies.

This did not stop them from being occupied by the Russians.

But the Russians left, on condition that Austria remain neutral in the Cold War.

As a result, Austria had a privileged position in central Europe, and prospered. Its Nazi past was largely forgotten.

Austria's capital, Vienna, has a rich thousand year history. Its position, between the mountains and the Danube flatlands made it a confluence of trade and cultures.

It was a world leader in music, science, art and literature.

A dozen languages were spoken in its streets.

By the early years of the twentieth century, Austria ruled over a glittering Danubian empire that dominated central Europe.

But the discontent of the subject peoples led to the First Great War, and when it ended, Austria lost its empire.

By 1920, it was just another small country of Middle Europe.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Austria seems once again poised to dominate Danubia.

STREET MUSICIAN

NARR: Much of the European Union's prosperity is built on cheap labour from outside its borders.

From street musicians to road-workers, they come in their thousands from the lower Danube, refugees from poverty and war.

The tide of migrants, legal and illegal, seems as unstoppable as the flux of the river itself.

MUSIC

NARR: On the first 1,000 kilometers of the Danube, there are over 50 dams.

Many of these are meant to curb the seasonal flooding.

But they often just push the torrent further downstream.

In 1988, to control flooding, Vienna completed a vast project which divided the river by constructing an artificial "Danube Island".

But a plan to construct a hydro-electric power station downstream was blocked by massive protests from Austria's strong environmental movement.

Now, most of the Danube region east of Vienna has been turned into a nature preserve.

Currently, the World Wide Fund for Nature is unblocking channels to restore the river's natural flooding.

ID: DANUBE-AUEN NATIONAL PARK

WWF AUSTRIAN: And, er, two years ago, this was a traverse, there was no hole here, it was just blocked, there was a dam here. And as a result of this blocking, the water couldn't run. And as a result of the water that couldn't run was the sedimentation. So we opened this dam here so that the water can flow, and there is a dynamic that should push away all the gravel. You want that there 's more water and less land.

NARR: In fact, water is Austria's treasure.

From its rivers, lakes and glaciers, Austria has an abundance of fresh water.

In an era of dwindling resources, this small country has enough to supply Europe's 370 million people.

It may well be essential to the future of the continent.

The *Delphin Queen* heads east, to the new state of Slovakia.

ID BRATISLAVA, SLOVAK REPUBLIC

NARR: Like all the small countries of central Europe, Slovakia has always been torn between a desire for independence and the need to be protected by greater powers.

In the last century alone, Slovakia has been part of Austria-Hungary, part of Czechoslovakia, independent, and part of Czechoslovakia once again.

In peace and war, its boundaries have fluctuated.

In 1993, Slovakia split from Czechoslovakia , and is now independent once more.

MUSICIAN: Danke!

NARR: The Slovak Republic is a country of sparse resources, especially energy.

In the 1990s, the government managed to build a nuclear reactor, despite vigorous protests from environmentalists and from neighbouring Austria.

This nuclear facility is built on a tributary of the Danube.

ID: THE GABCIKOVO DAM

NARR: Towards the end of the Communist era, Czechoslovakia began to build the Gabčíkovo Dam as an energy source.

When Slovakia broke away from Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks continued alone.

ID SLOVAKIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: This was Danube before here.

NARR: The project changed the course of the Danube.

SLOVAKIAN OFFICIAL: ... four turbines, [?] turbines. And we can use the energy from this power-house.

NARR (OVER BELOW): The Gabčíkovo Dam is not only about energy.

It is an assertion of Slovak nationalism and independence

Within the country, there were protests from the environmentalists, but they were ignored.

TRUBINIOVA: This is a very huge large water dam which badly impacts the bio-diversity in this very precious area of floodplains, forests and sidearms of the Danube River, which was unique. The enormous area of about 40 square kilometers of floodplain, forests, and ecosystems were completely cut down.

NARR: The Danube floodplain feeds underwater aquifers which constitute one of the largest drinking-water reservoirs in Europe. The impact of the dam and diversion canals on this critical water supply could be catastrophic.

For part of its length, the Danube forms the boundary between Slovakia and Hungary.

The dam complex was originally intended to be a joint project between the two countries, and Hungary even began construction.

This was still in the Communist era, when defying the authorities was dangerous.

Nevertheless, Hungarian environmentalists challenged the government.

DROPPA: Then we organized a protest in 1985. According to my knowledge, this was the first ever organized protest in the Eastern Block. At that time, we had been beaten up by the police.

And at the next protest, we had 70,000 supporters and that was really the biggest step in softening up the regime. So the changes started in the same year, in 1988.

In 1989, the government stopped the construction at the Hungarian territory. It is difficult to imagine that an environmental group can achieve more. The problem was that in the Slovakian side they did not stop the construction and they actually built a dam, only on Slovakian territory, and they diverted the river in the Slovakian territory. In this map you can't even see, I mean, in a very slightly spot, you see that both sides of the river is belonging to Slovakia. And in that section they have diverted the river, and 20% of the river is going back to the original river bed, and 80% is going to an artificial navigation channel - and is going through turbines to produce electricity. And now the two governments have to find the solution of a compromise in order to have more water in the Hungarian side. Because the wetland, which is a unique wetland, is drying out.

NARR: The dispute over the Gabčíkovo Dam is very serious, and even led to talk of armed conflict. The matter is now before the International Court at the Hague.

Basic to the Danube's status as an international waterway is recognition that any major interference with the river's flow affects all countries.

ID: BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

NARR: At the beginning of the century, Hungary was junior partner in the Austro-Hungarian Empire that dominated central Europe.

When this Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory, one-third of its population, 90% of its natural resources.

There followed 50 years of revolution and counter-revolution, Fascism and Stalinism, revolt against communism and repression.

The anti-Communist revolt of 1956 was crushed by Russian tanks. Thousands of Hungarians were killed or imprisoned.

200,000 fled into exile.

Communist rule was reinstated. But by the 1980s, Hungary was one of the freest of the eastern bloc countries, and after the fall of Communism, received massive investment from the West. It became one of the more prosperous countries of eastern Europe.

In 1997 Hungary joined NATO. Almost immediately, the country was reluctantly dragged into NATO's conflict with its neighbour, Yugoslavia.

Due to the war, the Yugoslav stretch of the river was blocked. As the *Delphin Queen* headed back upstream, we traveled by road through a Serbia scarred by NATO bombs.

ID: PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA, NORTHERN SERBIA

NARR: This area, where Hungary, Croatia, and Yugoslavia converge, is of special importance to Philip Weller.

WELLER: The Drava is one of the main tributaries to the Danube River, and at the confluence of the Drava and the Danube rivers is one of the most spectacular floodplain ecosystems that exists, and the most important in terms of maintaining fish populations in this central part of the Danube.

NARR: But this region, a nature park reserve, became a field of battle in the war between Croatia and Yugoslavia.

WELLER: And you can still see in the nature park the artillery embankments where the front lines exist. It's also an area that perhaps is better protected than any other ecosystem or region in this area because it's heavily mined.

A large number of houses, the community infrastructure in this region, was totally destroyed.

NARR: The local Croat-Hungarian population was forced to leave, returning only after war's end.

Now, there is a plan to unite the warring people of the region.

WELLER: But there is the potential here to create a trilateral conservation scheme that involves Hungary, Croatia, and Yugoslavia, or Serbia, on creating what here could be a Peace Park.

NARR: The plan is to develop fishing and forestry in conjunction with eco-tourism.

WELLER: Peoples of differing nationalities, differing religious beliefs, differing perspectives, can come together and combine their interests in trying to insure that that natural base is retained. And I think even if this experiment is successful - and we certainly hope that it is, it's not something that will happen overnight - but it is something that can and should be an example both for the Danube river region, but also for other parts of the world, in how to re-establish both community and communities that are based upon maintenance of the natural ecosystems in war-torn areas such as this.

NARR: This is Yugoslavia, the place where at the end of the twentieth century the obscene tradition of ethnic cleansing and war's impact on economy and ecology came together in a flood-tide.

A welcome offering of bread and salt begins a reception given by local priests.

#### TRADITIONAL MUSIC

NARR: The presence of Orthodox and Catholic priests, rabbis and muslim clerics reflects the good relations between the different ethnic groups of this province.

#### MUSIC CONTINUES

NARR: For the first decades of the twentieth century, countries of the Balkans were constantly at war.

They fought over land, religion, ethnic difference.

Entire populations were driven from homes they had occupied for centuries. Frontiers shifted. Even when Hitler invaded Yugoslavia, there was no unity.

Yugoslavs killed more of their fellow-countrymen than Germans.

Nevertheless, Tito's partisans prevailed, and his leadership brought peace to Yugoslavia for 40 years.

With his death, the wars started once again, as different regions sought independence.

The slaughter was on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War.

It came to a halt with the bombing of Serbia by NATO.

#### ID: NOVI SAD, SERBIA

NARR: NATO considered Novi Sad a strategic target because of its Danube bridges.

The city was hard hit - even though it was known to be a centre of resistance to the Milosevic regime in Belgrade.

LAUSEVIC: So, you have a beautiful overview of Novi Sad, you know. The bridge has been bombarded six or seven times before it collapsed, and you see now that it is the main obstacle for the river flow, because the whole construction of this huge bridge - because it was a railway bridge and it was a transport bridge with two ways, you know, it is under the water now.

NARR: NATO's bombs also hit Novi Sad's oil refinery. Thousands of tons of oil and chemicals were released.

LAUSEVIC: The soil is heavily contaminated and it is sinking every day, and closer to the ground water, you know, so if we have to do something, we should do it immediately. To remediate the soil, and not allow contact with the ground water because then, if you contaminate the aquifer, then it is lost, you know, for years, maybe decades.

NARR: The people of Novi Sad built a pontoon bridge as a temporary connection between the divided city.

Now, after the fall of Milosevic, money is expected from the European Union for bridge construction.

It will also be a bridge towards Serbia's integration into Europe.

The priests of the different faiths - Christian, Moslem, Jewish - gather on a point overlooking the Danube for an interfaith Prayer for Peace.

The site chosen for this gathering is dedicated to the Second World War.

Here are engraved the names of the victims from Novi Sad who died in the war against Fascism.

Fifty years after that war can be added the names of those killed by NATO bombs.

PRIEST: Yet we who have condemned racism and nationalism, now wholeheartedly pray that the tempest of war has passed, so that even in this dreadfully tormented region of the Balkans, there will prevail the beloved peace.

Furthermore, the Danube, which has been disastrously wounded, will continue to flow and perform its peacekeeping role in this region.

ID: ROMANIA

NARR: We are now back on the Danube, traveling east of Yugoslavia, in Romanian waters. We have switched to a Romanian vessel.

At the breakfast table, writer Neal Ascherson and environmentalist Joachim Bendow talk about a Europe without frontiers, and the new face of war.

BENDOW: So, since territories become less important, Europe is uniting, we are building - we are destroying our border posts soon - is uniting, we are eliminating borders, ja. And since you don't have a territory to defend, you don't need war any more.

ASCHERSON: You're quite right about that, you know. Frontiers, declarations of war, it's all in the past. And formal invasions, even informal invasions, I mean, don't happen. But what happens now is this informal business of suddenly armed militias, thugs, guerrillas, you know, all sorts of people appear, and say, "Who is running this village?" You know, "Kill him, kill her," you know. "Who are you, which sort are you?" and all this kind of warlordism. And so the struggle unfortunately goes on, but it goes on in quite a different way. And it's much more difficult to control.

BENDOW: Right, right. But, that is at let's say the grassroots level, this type of war. But the reality - in between states and between countries, the power is exercised through the economic tools - the World Trade Organization, IMF, these are the modern tools of let us say, intervening and putting countries into the line where you want to have them. And that is the question of globalization. The result of that.

ASCHERSON: But as we were saying, it works only up to a point, because the moment at which you apply economic sanctions to a maverick state, it's very difficult to do so.

BENDOW: But there are other forces which are not yet controlled.

NARR: NATO bombed the Danube bridges to block Yugoslavia's vital oil supplies. As an international waterway, the river is easily used for sanction-busting - even by business interests in NATO countries themselves.

BENDOW: In Yugoslavia, there is an embargo on oil that's going through. The power of the multinationals, and this now is the conflict of the state and multinationals, and who has more power? In the end effect, I believe that our socio-political system will tend that the state will have more power than multinationals.

ID: THE IRON GATES

NARR: Now, we are passing through the region known as the Iron Gates, which used to be a barrier to river traffic.

LELAU: Why are they called the Iron Gates?

KOROMILA: Because it's very dangerous, it is, er - you cannot pass it, and it was not navigable. When you have very narrow passage from the mountains, they are called Iron Gates.

NARR: Historical markers speak of great changes in how the river runs.

ROMANIAN: We have here the tabula traiana, it is a very important story about the building of the Roman road.

NARR: This tablet was laid in the time of the Roman emperor Trajan.

Romania derives its name from the Roman conquest of the second century AD.

The Romans built a road along the river for their legions and for commerce.

ROMANIAN GUIDE: ...it was built up, but the water -

ITALIAN: - has come up.

ROMANIAN GUIDE: Yes, the real road is under the water.

ITALIAN: The Roman road.

NARR: The road is now submerged because the two Iron Gates hydro-electric power stations have raised the water level.

Human restructuring of the river has had a profound effect on fish life, especially the sturgeon, a huge fish, once plentiful in the Danube.

AMERICAN: You remember at the beginning, somebody mentioned that the last sturgeon that they saw in Vienna was 150 years ago?

DROPPA: There is that big sturgeon, 2 - 300 kilos big. This cannot pass through since these gates have been built. It's opening up.

NARR: Human impact on the region's fish population during the past century has been devastating. Not only did the locks and dams prevent the migration of giant sturgeon, but pollution from industrial waste, cyanide spills, chemicals from NATO bombs, grandiose drainage schemes, and overfishing have impacted the fish population all the way to the Black Sea.

NARR: The Iron Gates hydro-power station is the biggest in Europe and the second largest in the world.

Petruta Moisi is a Romanian environmentalist. She talks about the Iron Gates hydro-electric project, and the island it submerged.

MOISI: A very big project, and we Romanians all felt proud for it, of course, it was the electricity problem. Romania, you know, tries hard to find alternative sources for energy, for electricity.



NARR: Construction of the Iron Gates I hydro-electric project was completed in 1971.

MOISI: The history has dramatic aspects as well. The building of the hydro power station was possible after flooding the Ada Kaleh Island. Ada Kaleh Island was considered a unique ecosystem, which was lost forever.

NARR: Ada Kaleh was the only inhabited island on the Danube. Its population was Moslem, of Turkish origin. The Romanian leader, Ceausescu, sent them all "back to Turkey" - even though they had been settled on Ada Kaleh for hundreds of years.

NARR: All along the Danube, sewage disposal is a major concern, with 192 towns and cities dumping into the river.

Joachim Bendow is on the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube, and is involved in comprehensive plans for reinvigorating the river and its economy.

BENDOW: Whereas here the Danube, you have to see the whole basin, because the pollution finally ends up in the Danube. The Danube itself, the contribution to the Danube, you have it here in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Bratislava, Vienna, so you have certain pools along the Danube, but more important is what comes in from the hot spots and municipalities, cities which are in the whole basin.

HOPE: So what can you do with 192 hotspots, I mean, what's the programme, how much will it cost, and how long will it take?

BENDOW: Yeah, it's about 5.7 billion dollars. So it's not only a question of pollution, but a question of pollution reduction, and environmental concern is very closely linked with the introduction of new modern technologies, best agricultural practices, and a restructuring of the whole let's say socio-economic situation.

And as you can imagine, these countries have at this point in time, priorities are not really on the environment, ja. The first priority is on sufficient food supply, creation of new jobs, job opportunities, we have a very high unemployment rate, it's up to 30% in certain countries, so that is the first consideration.

The environmental concerns are given as a condition of the European Union. If the countries want to join the European Union, they have to apply a certain number of environmental standards, and this is very positive, it is positive in the sense that if there is new development, this new development has to go in line with environmental standards.

But I do believe that thinking should go to investment, Europe, the European Union should invest in the transition countries for future development and future growth of the region. To integrate the countries in the European economy, and to make it really a part, an equal part of Europe.

HOPE: Right.

## **ID: BULGARIA**

NARR: At this point, the Danube forms the boundary between Romania on the north shore, and Bulgaria on the south.

We make a stop at Vidin, because among our group is one king, Simeon of Bulgaria.

Since the fall of Communism, King Simeon's private estates have been restored to him, and he has promised forest and parkland to the nation.

He is a dedicated environmentalist.

King Simeon has been in exile since 1945, but now he is able to visit his homeland.

During the Second World war, Simeon's father, King Boris, had been forced into accepting German troops on Bulgarian soil. But despite German demands, there was no persecution of Bulgarian's Jews, and Bulgaria refused to declare war on Russia.

King Boris died suddenly in 1943, possibly murdered on Hitler's orders.

His six-year-old son went into exile upon the arrival of Russian troops.

King Simeon has been deeply disturbed by the wars that have devastated the Balkans during the last decade.

SIMEON: I was so moved and so horrified that we should see things like this at the threshold of the third millennium. We Europeans, who think that we are very advanced in our civilization, to have come to this extreme situation is very painful, and let us all hope that this will be soon repaired and generously compensated. The Danube is an international waterway, so it must be cleared. And here I'm very subjective about it, because Bulgaria is directly penalized because we are on the other side of the destroyed bridges, and suffer from it severely. And our economy had just begun to improve, when we were faced with this unexpected and most unfortunate development.

NARR: By blocking the Danube, NATO punished Bulgaria and all the countries of the region, not just Yugoslavia.

Our journey through the lower Danube reveals a dismal riverscape of rusting hulks, vessels with nowhere to go, and idle docks - a fragile post-Communist economy worsened by the bombed bridges of Yugoslavia.

#### **ID: ROMANIA**

NARR: In the Second World War, Romania had been forced into an alliance with Germany, and in an attempt to regain territory lost to Russia, actually supplied more troops to the Nazi cause than all other countries combined.

But the Russians invaded, and a Communist regime came to power in Romania.

After 1969, Ceausescu became a virtual dictator, and developed a personality cult.

Twenty years later, the dictator was overthrown in a popular uprising.

Since then, Romania has been struggling to establish democracy and a new economic system.

#### **MAP**

NARR: Romania and Ukraine share the Delta, and we are going to pass from Romanian into Ukrainian waters.

The divisions of eastern Europe are evident in the frequent passport checks.

WELLER: Somebody hold those, those are not done yet.

These kind of bureaucratic difficulties are something that are common here, and perhaps it's quite appropriate that we have to live it as well as anybody else.

VOICE: It is the Moldovan coast of the Danube here. These are the borders.

NARR. Moldova's share of the Danube is so short that it is easy to miss it.

#### **ID: IZMAIL, UKRAINE**

NARR: In the Second World War, Ukraine's thriving agriculture and industry were destroyed. Of all the countries of Europe, Ukraine suffered greatest loss of life proportionate to its population.

Ukraine has the worst environmental pollution in Europe. With few resources, it is struggling to restore a Delta savaged by demented schemes of the Communist era, when wetlands were drained for agricultural production, blocking their function as cleansing filters.

#### **ID UKRAINIAN PARKS OFFICER**

TRANSLATOR: We have zoned these islands, we try to create the Nature which is as close to the Nature itself as possible.

The water level this year was very high, and as a result, it damaged the dykes and the dam, and we are not going to save these islands, as look damaged, as they should be as Nature.

UKRAINIAN OFFICIAL (in Ukrainian)

TRANSLATOR: At the moment, any kind of economic activity is stopped here, is restricted.

WELLER: And this is one of the things that we are not very comfortable with, there are areas of the Delta that are fenced, and you can't fence Nature.

NARR: Philip Weller continues his crusade for integrating local people into protecting Nature.

WELLER: True conservation involves building in the local people, allowing them to understand and be a part of the conservation activities, to see themselves as part of the conservation.

NARR: Like all the countries of Danubia, Ukraine has dozens of minorities. In this part of the Delta, there are thousands of ethnic Germans and Bulgarians, driven or enticed here over the centuries.

UKRAINIAN: And now we have about 270,000 Bulgarian people in this area, in Ukraine.

STANCIOFF: Catherine the Great had a policy to bring Bulgarians and Germans into this area, there were German villages too.

UKRAINIAN: Yes.

VOICE: Bulgaria doesn't lay claim to any of this territory?

STANCIOFF: No, Bulgaria's policy is that we respect the borders we have, and we hope that others will respect them as well. We've never claimed these territories. This was contested between Romania and Russia. It was Russian territory until 1942. Then it became Russian again.

UKRAINIAN: Ukrainian.

STANCIOFF: Ukrainian. Within the Soviet Union.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

NARR: The peoples of Danubia have been mingling since before recorded history. Every attempt to disentangle them has led to misery.

STANCIOFF: Very often people say, 'Oh, this is Balkanized, the Balkans will always be bloody!'

NARR: In the last Yugoslav wars alone, 250,000 people were killed, and 3 million made refugees.

STANCIOFF: We just have to eliminate the borders, otherwise we will continue having the sort of problems the Balkans have had over the last century and a half, two centuries.

NARR: By forming an economic and political union, the countries of Western Europe have managed to avoid war for 50 years.

If the countries of the Danube can be integrated into a greater European Union, its ethnic squabbles could melt away - just as the many channels of the Danube Delta flow and merge into the Black Sea.

**CREDITS**