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**Cominformist Split
among Yugoslav
Immigrants in
Australia 1948-1956**

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UDC 314.15-054.7(497.1:94)"1948/1956"

<https://doi.org/10.32728/flux.2025.7.5>

Original scientific paper

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When the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties published the *Resolution on the CPY* in June 1948, a split between pro-Tito and pro-Soviet members occurred in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. This split was not only limited to Yugoslavs inside the borders of Yugoslavia but also to Yugoslav immigrants in western countries. Members of the Yugoslav community in Australia, a community whose presence in Australia dates back to the 19th century and was active in Australia's political life with its organization the Yugoslav Immigrants Association and other organizations, also felt the consequences of the split. Using the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization files and other sources, this research will try to reveal what the community's initial reaction to the Tito-Stalin split was, whether the community was more pro-Tito or pro-Soviet oriented, what the main hot-spots of the conflict were, and what the community members' actual level of engagement in the conflict was.

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KEYWORDS:

Cominform, Australia, Yugoslav immigrants, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Communist Party of Australia

In the time period from the end of World War II until 1948, the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were troubled by a series of disputes. Stalin's disagreements with Tito's policies revolved mainly around Yugoslav territorial claims in Trieste and other areas, Yugoslavia exerting influence on Bulgaria and Albania and support of the communist guerrillas in the Greek Civil War. After a series of heated exchanges and disagreements during the first half of 1948 and Tito's insistence on pursuing independent policies, on 28 June 1948 the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties published the *Resolution on the CPY* which condemned the CPY for revisionism and hostility towards the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.¹

What followed was condemnation from the CPY and the beginning of complete disassociation from the Soviet Union and a purge of all CPY members who were perceived to be supporting the Resolution. From 1948 until 1956 when relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were normalized, it is estimated that 15,737 persons were arrested and imprisoned because of their support for the Cominform resolution.²

The split between pro-Tito and pro-Cominform Yugoslavs was not only limited to Yugoslavs inside the borders of Yugoslavia: in the USA and Canada, Yugoslav immigrant organizations and newspapers split and engaged in propaganda for one of the sides of the conflict.³ One of these immigrant communities, the Yugoslav community in Australia, will be the focus of this paper. The main focus of the research will be the effect the Tito-Stalin split had on the Yugoslav community in Australia and its organizations. Using the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization files and other sources, the research will try to reveal what the community's initial reaction to the Tito-Stalin split was, whether the community was more pro-Tito or pro-Soviet oriented, what the main hot-spots of the conflict were, and what the community members actual level of engagement in the conflict was.

Arrival of Yugoslav Immigrants to Australia

The arrival of the first Yugoslav immigrants to Australia can be traced back to the early 1800s as can be seen in the New South Wales censuses from 1800 to 1802, where two Croatian surnames can be found.⁴ From the 1860s until the end of the First World War, a big wave of migration from the Croatian region of Dalmatia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, took place. The primary reasons for this lay in the neglect of the region by the Austrian authorities, slow industrialization, distance from Trieste, which at the time served as the economic centre of the Austro-Hungarian territories

¹ Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918–2008* (Zagreb: Europapress holding; Novi Liber, 2008), 444–451; Ivo Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita: informbiroovski rascjepi u jugoslavenskom komunističkom pokretu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), 119–209.

² Martin Previšić, "Broj kažnjenika na Golom otoku i drugim logorima za informbiroovce u vrijeme sukoba sa SSSR-om (1948.–1956.)." *Historijski zbornik* 66, no. 1 (2013): 173–193.

³ John P. Kraljic, "Yugoslav Communities in North America and the Tito-Stalin Split," in *The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years After*, eds. Tvrtko Jakovina and Martin Previšić (Zagreb-Ljubljana: FF Press & Ljubljana University Press, 2020), 131–148.

⁴ Ivana Hebrang Grgić, "Hrvatske novine u Australiji početkom 1930-ih godina: načini provođenja i izbjegavanja censure," *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* 65, no. 1 (2022): 276.

on the Adriatic, and ultimately the Wine Clause signed between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy and the grapevine disease epidemic which decimated the region whose population traditionally made a living from wine-making.⁵ Until the end of the First World War, around 20% of the region's population left for Australia and other overseas countries.⁶ Most of the Dalmatian immigrants were from the town of Vrgorac and the surrounding area (40%), followed by Makarska (30%) and the islands of Korčula, Hvar, Vis and Prvić.⁷ The Croatian immigrants from Dalmatia formed the nucleus of the Yugoslav immigrant community, as during that time period every second immigrant of the total number of Yugoslav emigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to overseas countries was from Dalmatia.⁸

By the end of the First World War, the Yugoslav community was the fourth largest of all the ethnic European communities in Australia.⁹ The community was at first mostly concentrated in Western Australia in the city of Perth and the surrounding area and was employed as labourers in the fishing, wine-growing and fruit industries.¹⁰ The Yugoslavs later started to seek employment in the mining industry and started moving to the Australian outback, particularly to the town of Broken Hill. By the mid 1920s, a community of around 300 Yugoslav immigrants was formed, and Broken Hill became an important hub for the entire Yugoslav community in Australia.¹¹

Yugoslav Immigrant Organizations and Political Activity until 1948

The working conditions endured by the Yugoslav immigrants were harsh, especially among the miners, many of whom died from lung disease from exposure to lead in the mines.¹² The Yugoslavs in many instances also faced institutionalized discrimination. One example of this would be the policy of interment during the First World War. As they were nationals of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which was at war with the British Empire, they were considered enemy nationals and interned along with other Austro-Hungarian and German nationals.¹³ They also faced discrimination and violence directed towards them from the British and Australian-born workers and their unions at their place of employment as they were perceived as a tool of the capitalists to lower the wages of domestic workers.¹⁴

Due to these conditions, it is not surprising that many of the immigrants became politically active early on. The first political organization founded by the Yugoslav immigrants was the Croatian-Slavic Society (*Hrvatsko-slavensko društvo*) founded in Boulder City in 1912. The organization

⁵ Branimir Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori u iseljavanju iz Hrvatske u Australiju od konca 19. stoljeća do recentnog vremena," *Migracijske i etničke teme* 6, no. 1 (1990): 9.

⁶ Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori," 10.

⁷ Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori," 11.

⁸ Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori," 11.

⁹ Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori," 11.

¹⁰ Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori," 11; Većeslav Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1967), 223.

¹¹ Hebrang, "Hrvatske novine," 276; Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 225.

¹² Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 226.

¹³ Hebrang, "Hrvatske novine," 276.

¹⁴ Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 224-225.

was constituted as an organization for cultural and entertainment activities with strong emphasis on Yugoslav nationalism and anti-Austrian sentiment. Up until the end of the 1920s it was the only Yugoslav immigrant organization in Australia.¹⁵

Later on, with the arrival of a new wave of immigrants from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the political activities of the Yugoslav immigrants in Australia got more invigorated. These new immigrants were, as Croatian politician and writer Većeslav Holjevac noted, “disappointed with the newly founded Yugoslav state which didn’t solve the national and economic question” and many of them were politically left wing and part of the labour movement in Yugoslavia.¹⁶ The link between these immigrants and the labour movement in Yugoslavia continued even after their departure, and they continued to financially support the movement. For example, the Yugoslav immigrants in Broken Hill in 1926 collected funds to help the Yugoslav communist newspaper *Borba*.¹⁷

Continuing the more radical political course, the Yugoslav immigrants in Broken Hill formed the organization Militant Workers Movement (*Borbeni radnički pokret*) in 1928. Along with the cultural activities, the organization’s goal was to involve the immigrants with the local labour organization and unions.¹⁸ Around 1925, the Communist Party of Australia started to pursue a policy of involvement with foreign labourers instead of the more nativist anti-immigrant policy they pursued in the previous years¹⁹ and, as such, the Militant Workers Movement soon after its founding in 1928 started to work alongside the local Communist Party of Australia branches.²⁰ As it can be seen in the Australian Security Intelligence Organization files which will be referenced throughout this paper, the connection between the Yugoslav immigrants and the C.P.A. remained strong until the Tito–Stalin split in 1948, and many of the members of the later formed Yugoslav Immigrants Association were either sympathizers or direct members of the C.P.A.²¹

In 1934 all of the Yugoslav immigrant organizations in Australia were united in the Union of Yugoslav Cultural-Educational Clubs (*Savez jugoslavenskih kulturno-prosvjetnih klubova*). Two years later, the organization changed its name to the Yugoslav Immigrants Association. This organization became the main cultural hub for the whole Yugoslav community in

¹⁵ Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 230.

¹⁶ Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 230; Hebrang, “Hrvatske novine,” 276.

¹⁷ Mira Kolar Dimitrijević, “Odnos KPJ prema jugoslavenskoj radničkoj emigraciji u međuratnom razdoblju,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 16, no. 2 (1984): 71.

¹⁸ Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 231.

¹⁹ Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from origins to illegality* (Crow’s Nest: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 134–135.

²⁰ Douglas Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement 1945–1960” (PhD diss., Victoria University, 2011), 165.

²¹ National Archives of Australia (NARA), A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, Yugoslav organisations: Yugoslav Immigrants Organisation, August 1945; NARA, A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, Translations. Messages of interest from letters submitted by X.R.D. Section. over Scrutiny Order – 2973. Letter No. I., October 15, 1943; NARA, A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, Progressive Federation of Yugo Slav Immigrants, March 15, 1943.

Australia.²² During the Second World War, besides collecting funds for the Allied war effort, Y.I.A. vigorously engaged in a campaign for the recognition of the Partisan movement in Yugoslavia as the real resistance movement and the denunciation of the exiled Yugoslav government and the Chetnik movement.²³ In doing so, it often came into direct conflict with the Yugoslav government in exile embassy consul Nikola Marić and supporters of the royal Yugoslav government.²⁴ After the Second World War, Y.I.A. continued its support for Tito and the new Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and collected funds and supplies to help rebuild their homeland.²⁵ It also organized the return of Yugoslav immigrants to Yugoslavia via the Yugoslav vessels *Partizanka* and *Radnik* and in the period from 1945 to 1949, around 1,250 Yugoslavs left Australia.²⁶

Cominformist Split among Immigrants 1948–1955

When the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties published the *Resolution on the CPY* in June 1948, word of Yugoslavia's expulsion from the communist bloc soon got to Australia. The C.P.A. expectedly condemned the C.P.Y. leadership and its Committee and published a resolution in which the C.P.Y. course is described as leading "to a serious defeat for the international labour movement" and urging the C.P.Y. leadership and its members to "repudiate the present policy and place their party once more on the firm foundation of Marxism-Leninism."²⁷ At a meeting of the Executive of the Australian Communist Party held on 3 July 1948, a resolution was also passed demanding that the Yugoslav Community declare themselves either pro-Tito or pro-Stalin.²⁸ The ethnic Yugoslav branch of the C.P.A. published its own resolution strongly condemning the "anti-Soviet, Trotskyist policy being pursued by the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party" and urged the C.P.Y. membership to "reverse the disastrous policy of their leaders and to realign themselves with the world Communist movement."²⁹

²² Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, 231.

²³ NARA, A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, Yugoslav organisations: Yugoslav Immigrants Organisation, August 1945; NARA, A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, Progressive Federation of Yugo Slav Immigrants, March 15, 1943; NARA, A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, Yugoslav Diplomats Join Marshal Tito: Exposure of the Royal Yugoslav Government, May 11, 1944; NARA, A6122 181 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vols. 1 and 2, *Tribune*, October 4, 1943.

²⁴ "Croatian politics in Spearwood, 1920-1945," City of Cockburn, accessed July 16, 2024. <https://history.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Migration/Croatians/Croatian-politics-in-Spearwood,-1920-1945>.

²⁵ "Relief Clothing Ship Leaves Soon," *The Daily Telegraph*, May 10, 1945, 9; "WA Slavs Support Tito's United Front," *The Workers Star*, November 9, 1945, 4; "WA Slavs Rejoice at Tito's Win," *The Workers Star*, November 23, 1945, 3; "A Policy Outlined," *Manjimup and Warren Times*, March 13, 1946, 2; "Yugoslav Festival," *The Daily News*, March 30, 1946, 16.

²⁶ Vori Lalić, "Egzodus iz Australije u doba Hladnoga rata: Povratak hrvatskih iseljenika iz Australije brodovima Partizanka i Radnik godine 1948-1949," *Gordogan: kulturni magazin*, no. 19-22 (2011): 66-125.

²⁷ "Yugoslav C.P. Errors Exposed – 8-Party Statement," *Tribune*, July 3, 1948, 1; "Tito's Course Would Restore Capitalism – ACP Leaders Resolution," *Tribune*, July 10, 1948, 3.

²⁸ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Activities, July 8, 1948.

²⁹ "Yugoslavs in ACP Branch Rap Tito," *Tribune*, July 10, 1948, 3.

Contrary to the situation in Yugoslavia where support for the resolution was not widespread and confined to specific regions, the Y.I.A. branches in Australia surprisingly voiced their support for the Cominform and its resolution instead of supporting Tito. Although their initial response was more lukewarm than that of the C.P.A., in a telegram of greeting to the Congress of the C.P.Y. sent by the West Australian State Committee of the Y.I.A. in July 1948 it emphasized that "only in agreement with the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union, the New Democracies and the rest of the world can the five-year plan be successful and Yugoslavia advance on the road to Socialism." Similar messages have also been sent by Y.I.A. branches in Spearwood, Fremantle, Swan, Perth, Osborne Park, Maddington and Goldfields.³⁰ However, not all of the initial reactions had a forgiving tone. Commenting in the Yugoslav immigrant newspapers *Napredak* issue of 14 August on the killing of general Arsa Jovanović by the Yugoslav border guards, Peter Bosanich from Berkley Vale emphasized:

Instead of the people's democracy, which we immigrants welcomed so heartily, Tito would lead us into his personal dictatorship, with his dictator dream-castles, with prisons, terror and murder. Tito would lead Yugoslavia to capitalism instead of to socialism which can be built up exclusively in co-operation with the Soviets. He would lead to bring Yugoslavs under the Imperialistic dependence of U.S.A., the deadly enemy of socialism and the Soviets. We immigrants must therefore take the line against Tito on the side of the great Soviets.³¹

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Y.I.A., on the other hand, continued to voice its pro-Cominform stance in a more forgiving tone with a belief that the issue between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union could be resolved peacefully and brotherly. At a meeting of the Central Executive of Y.I.A., held on 24 August 1948, the conflict between Cominform and the C.P.Y. was discussed and a resolution with the following points was passed:

1. The relationship to Yugoslavia as a State remains unchanged.
2. In connection with the conflict between the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Cominform the Central Executive does not agree with the attitude of the present leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, being of the opinion that this attitude can only be harmful for the brotherly co-operation with the other Communist Parties and for the general co-operation of Yugoslavia with the other Countries of the People's democracy and the Soviet Union as we believe that without such co-operation socialism cannot be built up in Yugoslavia.
3. Keeping the viewpoint that it is urgently necessary to liquidate this conflict as soon as possible we consider it our duty to make a firm stand on the side of those members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, fighting for unity and for cooperation with the Cominform and against the present line of the leaders of the Party by which the conflict has only widened.

³⁰ "Local Yugoslavs Support Information Bureau Criticism," *The Workers Star*, July 30, 1948, 2.

³¹ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Activities, September 1, 1948.

4. We condemn most sharply the murder of General Arsa Jovanović and the whole terror exercised against those who stand for the viewpoint of the Cominform.³²

At the meeting a memorandum was also passed which stated that even though most of the Y.I.A. members agree with the Central Executive's pro-Cominform stance, a thorough and open discussion about the Resolution is a must among the various branches and heated arguments should be avoided. It was emphasized that despite their differences, the YIA members must remain united and continue to work for the progress and preservation of the culture of the Yugoslav community in Australia.³³

Despite the Y.I.A. Central Executive urging open discussion and unity, the differences among the Yugoslav immigrants started to grow bigger and the arguments got more heated. At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Warriewood Y.I.A. branch on the 22 September 1948 a the discussion about the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict became so heated that the meeting abruptly ended "in a state of disorder" without reaching any definite understanding or decisions.³⁴ Pressure was also asserted by the Y.I.A to the more influential members of the organization to pledge their loyalty to the Soviet Union and to disavow Tito and the CPY leaders.³⁵ At the end of 1948 most of the Yugoslav immigrants and Y.I.A branches held a pro-Cominform stance, with the exemption of a few smaller branches such as the Club Danica in Cabramatta and Zora Club in Sydney and the Yugoslav Embassy and its staff.³⁶

At the beginning of 1949, Y.I.A. dropped its moderate stance towards the conflict and openly condemned and distanced itself from Tito and the C.P.Y. At the 7th Annual Conference of the Yugoslav Immigrants Association, held at Sydney from 27th December 1948 to 3rd January 1949, a resolution was passed which strongly condemned Yugoslavia's course, expressed lack of confidence in the Government of Yugoslavia and their diplomatic representatives in Australia and promised to support "all our forces the movement in Yugoslavia, fighting to return Yugoslavia into the brotherly embrace of the international peace loving and socialistic front led by the Soviet Union." The conference also condemned the Yugoslav repatriates whose mission according to them was to "introduce the nationalistic policy of Tito among the immigrants and their organizations" and condemned their letters to the conference as "attempts to lead our followers in Australia into the camp of the renegades and traitors to the international and peace-loving democratic workers' movement."³⁷

³² NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, September 1, 1948.

³³ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, September 1, 1948.

³⁴ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Immigrants Association: Branch "ORJEN," October 8, 1948.

³⁵ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, John Kosovich, December 17, 1948.

³⁶ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Community in New South Wales, December 15, 1948; NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslavs in Sydney, January 14, 1949.

³⁷ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, The 7th Annual Conference of the

The conference proved to be a breaking point in the relationship between the Yugoslav immigrants and C.P.Y. as from that point on, the dynamic between the pro-Cominform and pro-Tito Yugoslav immigrants became similar to the one in their homeland, often becoming violent. During one of the voyages of the Partizanka ship, a section of the Yugoslav immigrants waited on the Yugoslav Embassy clerk Petar Todorčić at Fremantle port in Perth. A heated argument soon followed and Todorčić was at one stage in danger of being beaten up and thrown in the sea.³⁸ Consul Ivan Kosović and others connected to the Yugoslav Embassy also had to hide during their travels through Australia.³⁹ Kosović was soon expelled from membership of Y.I.A., ties with the Embassy were severed and pictures of Tito and Yugoslav flags were removed from all the branches throughout Australia.⁴⁰ The Macedonian–Australian People’s League went so far in its effort to not have any contact with the Embassy that it criticized immigrants who maintained contact because of their families back in Yugoslavia. Their reasoning was that this was “very harmful” and that “our brothers and sisters in Aegean Macedonia under the terror of monarch-fascism and American imperialism also have a family”, effectively equating the mere administrative contact with the Embassy as treasonous and siding with Yugoslavia.⁴¹

A noteworthy violent incident allegedly occurred during the football club Hajduk’s tour in Australia. The team arrived in Australia on 11 July 1949 and embarked on a tour throughout Australia which lasted three months. As historian Tvrtko Jakovina notes, since Hajduk was an important symbol to Dalmatians, the tour was considered as an “opportunity which could contribute to the rapprochement between Yugoslavs from Yugoslavia and Yugoslavs in Australia”.⁴² The Yugoslav Embassy provided logistical assistance during Hajduk’s tour and the consul Ivan Kosović followed the team around Australia, using the opportunity to also meet with the minority pro-Tito immigrants.⁴³ According to *The Workers Star* article, after a game in Perth the Hajduk team was invited to a social at a Y.I.A. hall in Osborne Park. According to the article, after the event’s host J. Buterack welcomed the team, Vojko Andrijašević allegedly started to attack and smear the Y.I.A. newspaper, praise Tito, attack the “People’s Democracies” and proclaimed that “everyone not for Tito was an enemy of the people”. Buterack disagreed

Yugoslav Immigrants Association held at Sydney from 27th December 1948 to 3rd January 1949, January 14, 1949.

³⁸ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Peter Ivan Todorich, February 8, 1949.

³⁹ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Peter Ivan Todorich, February 8, 1949.

⁴⁰ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, March 10, 1949; NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Immigrants Association Expulsion of Yugoslav Consul I. Kosovich, March 21, 1949.

⁴¹ NARA, A6122 173 Macedonian Peoples League of Australia volume 2, “Macedonian Spark” issue – September 1950, September 1950.

⁴² Tvrtko Jakovina, “Tito’s Traitorous Clique, Kangaroos and Croats: The Australian Tour of the Football Club Hajduk and the Fight against the Cominformists in Oceania in 1949,” in *The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years After*, eds. Tvrtko Jakovina and Martin Previšić (Zagreb-Ljubljana: FF Press & Ljubljana University Press, 2020), 159–60.

⁴³ NARA, A6119 2713 Ivan Kosovich – Volume 1, Ivan Kosovich, October 20, 1949.

with Andrijašević and said that those who didn't agree with Tito's politics were not enemies of the people and that "the workers of the world have to unite". After that, he was grabbed by Ljubomir Kokeza, dragged to the back of the stage and beaten by Kokeza and several members of the football team.⁴⁴ Another incident also occurred at the Leederville Town Hall during the farewell dance. The crowd got irritated with the Yugoslav football team praising Tito as they thought that politics should be left out and, because of that, they started protesting. As a response to that, some of the Yugoslav football team members started to randomly attack members of the crowd and continued to provoke them.⁴⁵

The Yugoslav Embassy, now the main hub of the pro-Tito activities in Australia, continued its efforts to influence the Yugoslav immigrants and to steer community's loyalty back to Yugoslavia. The Embassy printed a generous amount of propaganda material which was sent out in secret to members of the Y.I.A. branches throughout Australia. These propaganda materials included titles such as "Of False and Unfair propaganda against our Party and our Country", "The developing Socialist Economy in Yugoslavia", "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the fight for peace and socialism" etc.⁴⁶ During the first half of the 1950s, some of the Yugoslav consuls tried to engage the community through various events and speaking tours. However, these attempts were unsuccessful and were met with protesting and booing from the crowd.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, despite the Y.I.A's membership and most of the Yugoslav community's pro-Cominform stance, Y.I.A's influence in the community started to decline. Many of the pro-Tito members of Y.I.A which repatriated from Australia were capable organizers, and with them gone Y.I.A. lost capable cadre while the remaining members became more inactive.⁴⁸

While the pro-Tito immigrants were departing, new immigrants from Yugoslavia were increasingly arriving. However, these immigrants were the complete opposite from the old immigrants. The new immigrants were politically not just anti-Tito but also anti-Communist and anti-Yugoslavia in general and a lot of them were former members of collaborationist forces from Yugoslavia such as the Ustashe and Chetniks.⁴⁹ Although suspicious towards them due to their vocal anti-Communist outlook, Y.I.A tried to fill its empty ranks with the new immigrants while calling for "increased efforts among the post-war migrants to Australia." The new immigrants were to Y.I.A not only a way to fill their ranks, but also an asset in its fight against Titoism and its followers, claiming that not working with them "had thrown them into

⁴⁴ "Perth Demonstration of Tito Fascism," *The Workers Star*, October 7, 1949, 8.

⁴⁵ "Perth Demonstration of Tito Fascism," *The Workers Star*, October 7, 1949, 8.

⁴⁶ NARA, A6122 182 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 3, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, April 14, 1949.

⁴⁷ NARA, A6122 173 Macedonian Peoples League of Australia, vol. 2, "Napredak" Issue - Jan 13, 1951, January 13, 1951.

⁴⁸ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Quarterly Summary No. 2/56. (On information to 30th June 1956) - Part C: General Information, June 30, 1956.

⁴⁹ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, May 29, 1956.

the arms of our opponents when they could have given us invaluable help in the struggle against the Titoites.⁵⁰ Y.I.A also naively overestimated the possibility to influence the new immigrants political views:

Three, four, and five years in this country has changed the stand taken earlier by many of the new arrivals – in some cases very radical. What is more important their extreme political ideas have changed and are changing as they come more in contact with the realities, with the democratic organizations of the mass of Australian people, their unions; where they work, etc.⁵¹

As a matter of fact, quite the opposite was true. As ASIO observed, with the increasing number of new immigrants intermingling with the old immigrants, some of them have succeeded in influencing the “old settlers” to abandon their communist ideas.⁵² As the passivization of the old immigrants continued, their meetings at the local Y.I.A club and use of its facilities started to lose its political meaning and amounted to basic socializing. As one ASIO informant from the Leppington branch reported, “the main topic of conversation is the trials and tribulations of market gardening”.⁵³

Rapprochement and Decline 1955–1958

After Nikita Khrushchev became the new leader of the Soviet Union, a period of liberalization followed and with it a new will to restore relations with Yugoslavia. At the end of May 1955 Khrushchev flew to Belgrade to meet with Tito and discuss the restoration of relations between the two states. On 2 June, Tito and Khrushchev signed the Belgrade Declaration in which the normalization of relations between the two states was established based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, independence, and equality in mutual relations and non-interference.⁵⁴ Further normalization occurred in July 1956, when the Declaration on Relations between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was signed in Moscow, normalizing relations between Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and the rest of the Eastern Bloc.⁵⁵

The Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement was closely followed by the Yugoslav community in Australia and was welcomed by Y.I.A and its paper *Napredak*. Discussion took place in all branches of the Association and resolutions were passed calling for unity between the pro-Tito and pro-Cominform immigrants. From October 1955, the Yugoslav Consul Iso Njegovan

⁵⁰ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Quarterly Summary No.2/56. (On information to 30th June 1956) – Part C: General Information, June 30, 1956.

⁵¹ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, May 29, 1956.

⁵² NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Quarterly Summary No.2/56. (On information to 30 June 1956) – Part C: General Information, June 30, 1956.

⁵³ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, May 29, 1956.

⁵⁴ Goldstein, *Hrvatska*, 484–85.

⁵⁵ Goldstein, *Hrvatska*, 485.

and members of the Yugoslav Consul's office started visiting the members of the old community in an effort to reunite the two Yugoslav groups.⁵⁶

Efforts for reconciliation were continued in 1956, and in some areas of Australia some of the opposing immigrant groups were merged together.⁵⁷ However, even during these efforts, a power struggle was taking place and distrust remained high. Ivan Kosović indicated that one of his main goals was to gain control of the *Napredak* newspaper and change its pro-Soviet course, while Marin Kovačević from the Y.I.A Central Committee toured Western Australia to consolidate the position of the pro-Soviet group.⁵⁸ Older Y.I.A members disliked the sudden change in direction and wouldn't accept Tito under any circumstance and because of that Y.I.A lost many of its members. On the other hand, the new immigrants, which at the present moment vastly outnumbered the old ones, weren't affected by this decision as they were both anti-Yugoslavia and anti-Communist and their influence in the community spread even further.⁵⁹

Realizing the difficulty of reuniting the opposing groups, the Communist Party of Australia instructed their Yugoslav members to pursue the line of a "united Slav approach" and allow non-communists to take positions in the organization, while also hiding the connection between Y.I.A and C.P.A and not engaging in arguments in regard to Communism and Titoism.⁶⁰ At first, this approach had some success: the Sloga branch of Y.I.A. in Perth reported that the nomination of non-party members to some of the executive positions had revived interest in the organization and that both new and old members have made donations and taken out debentures for hall improvements while dances and socials at the Sloga Hall were well attended.⁶¹

However, due to the aforementioned general disillusionment of the old immigrants and the influx of new anti-communist and anti-Titoist immigrants, the success of this strategy in the long run proved to be short-lived and the results it achieved were the opposite of what Y.I.A. initially intended. In 1958, the Sloga branch split from Y.I.A. and renamed itself the Yugoslav Worker's Cultural Education Society. The new organization then passed resolutions which stated that the Society will function in accordance

⁵⁶ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, May 29, 1956.

⁵⁷ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Quarterly Summary No.2/56. (On information to 30 June 1956) – Part C: General Information, June 30, 1956.

⁵⁸ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, November 7, 1956; NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Marin Kovachevic, November 9, 1956.

⁵⁹ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, May 29, 1956; NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Quarterly Summary No. 2/56. (On information to 30th June 1956) – Part C: General Information, June 30, 1956.

⁶⁰ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Yugoslav Immigrants Association, June 1957; NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Secret report No. 57/305, June 28, 1957.

⁶¹ NARA, A6122 183 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 4, Secret report No. 57/305, June 28, 1957.

with its rules, will not be dominated by the Y.I.A. or any outside body and that it won't recognize debts of the *Napredak* newspaper printed by Y.I.A.⁶² Soon the Oreski club in Perth also split from the Y.I.A. and renamed itself Jadran.⁶³ According to ASIO reports, politically most of the members of these organizations were anti-communist and pro-Australian Yugoslav immigrants, some of which were members and supporters of the Liberal Party of Australia, while Titoist members were a minority.⁶⁴ At this point, the Y.I.A. was basically defunct, the pro-Soviet immigrants lost all of their influence in the community and their organizations, the Titoists were mostly irrelevant and the remnants of the infighting between pro-Tito and pro-Soviet groups among immigrants disappeared.

Conclusion

Since the end of the First World War, the Yugoslav immigrant community in Australia, at that time the fourth-largest immigrant group in the country, was actively involved in the Australian labour movement. The Yugoslav Immigrants Association (YIA), established in 1934, promoted progressive causes aligned with those of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), and many Yugoslav immigrants subsequently joined the CPA. During the Second World War, YIA strongly supported Marshal Tito and his Partisan movement in Yugoslavia, and it continued this support in the postwar period until 1948.

110 Following the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, YIA and the majority of Yugoslav immigrants in Australia aligned themselves with the Soviet Union and the CPA in opposition to Tito and Yugoslavia. The primary reason for this can likely be traced to the strong connection between the immigrants and the CPA, as well as their previous active participation in the Australian labour movement. The pro-Tito faction constituted a relatively small part of the Yugoslav immigrant community and was largely concentrated around the Yugoslav embassy.

However, the initial momentum of the pro-Cominform immigrants soon was lost due to the Yugoslav Immigrants Association's lack of organizing cadre, which led to member passivization, as well as the arrival of new immigrants from Yugoslavia who outnumbered the older ones and were strongly opposed to both communism and the Yugoslav state.

After the Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement in 1955, most of the pro-Cominform immigrants left the Yugoslav Immigrants Association disappointed with its new rapprochement policy, and the organization's influence diminished along with the growing number of anti-communist Yugoslavs arriving in Australia.

⁶² NARA, A6122 2112 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 5, Yugoslav Workers' Cultural Education Society (Sloga) Osborne Park (Formerly known as the Sloga Branch of the Y.I.A.), February 26, 1959.

⁶³ NARA, A6122 2122 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 5, Jadran Yugoslav Cultural Club, March 23, 1959.

⁶⁴ NARA, A6122 2112 Yugoslav Immigrants Association, vol. 5, Yugoslav Workers' Cultural Education Society (Sloga) Osborne Park (Formerly known as the Sloga Branch of the Y.I.A.), February 26, 1959.

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