

# **The Ustaša in Australia: A Review of Right-Wing Ustaša Terrorism from 1963-1973, and Factors that Enabled their Endurance**

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## **ABSTRACT**

From 1963–1973, the Ustaša, a Croatian terrorist organisation, would find an unlikely safe haven in Australia. There, they established new Ustaša networks which trained new members, financed chapters overseas, launched incursions into Yugoslavia, and waged a terrorism campaign against the Yugoslav migrant community in Australia. In ten years, the Ustaša was found to be directly responsible for fifteen attacks, and inspired dozens more. It was not until 1973 that the Ustaša campaign in Australia came to an end, with a change in government, provoking a review of Australia’s law enforcement agencies. The Ustaša operated in Australia due to five major factors. Firstly, there was political sympathy for Croatian independence, which led to a reluctance amongst some officials to admit the Ustaša existed. Secondly, there was the political alignment of the Ustaša, which was favourably right wing at a time when Australia’s main enemy, communism, was on the left side of politics. Competing security jurisdictions and obscurity also undermined collaboration and counterterrorism efforts. Another factor was community relations, undermined by the language barrier and Yugoslav fear of retribution. Finally, strategic Ustaša targeting decisions enabled it to avoid provoking public censure.

**Keywords:** Ustaša, Ustash, Australia, terror, right-wing, history

## **INTRODUCTION**

**T**he Revolutionary Croatian Ustasha Organisation, otherwise known as the Ustaša (meaning ‘insurgent’), waged a decade-long campaign of terror in Australia from 1963 to 1973. Initially, its presence was ignored, then tolerated, and finally, suppressed. The full scope of Ustaša-inspired terrorism in Australia is rarely recognised but has new significance in a time when right-wing violence is unfolding in other Western countries. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) directly attributed fifteen attacks to the Ustaša, however, this research found that there are another twenty-five attacks which could possibly be linked to Croatian extremism. In reviewing Ustaša terrorism, this paper

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demonstrates the endurance of right-wing terrorism in Australia during a particularly turbulent period in history.

This paper identifies five factors which allowed the Ustaša to thrive in Australia and launch attacks. Firstly, there was existing sympathy to the Ustaša cause, given that they championed Croatian independence so soon after recognition that all peoples had the right to self-determination. Secondly, the Ustaša were ideologically aligned with right-wing politics, which, given the great communist threat of the Cold War, was convenient if not serendipitous. Thirdly, no one person or agency was in charge of counterterrorism in Australia during this period, with competing jurisdictions among law enforcement. Fourthly, Yugoslav language proved a barrier for law enforcement when liaising effectively with the community and attempting to penetrate the Ustaša. Finally, the tactical decisions of the Ustaša in targeting the migrant community and Yugoslav symbols minimised general outrage at their activities. These factors enabled the Ustaša to endure in Australia until a change in government provoked an overall review of Australia's security apparatus in 1973.

The primary process for identifying these factors was the historical method. This included reviewing records from the National Australian Archives, Queensland State Archives, Trove, and Hansard. These were contextualised against the broader historical milieu and record, especially regarding strategic targeting. Public statements gave indications of political sympathy, while ideological alignment was signposted through leadership statements and resourcing decisions. The jurisdictional obscurity was reflected in various security reviews, driven perhaps by the media highlighting the community relations issues.

## BACKGROUND TO CROATIAN EXTREMISM

The Ustaša arose from Croatia's long fight for independence. Until the end of WWI, Croatia was part of the Austria-Hungary Empire. Before the end of WWI, the Croatian parliament declared independence, becoming the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. The Kingdom of Serbs soon joined it. In 1929, King of Serbs, Alexander I, began a dictatorship following the assassination his political adversary, Stjepan Radic, in parliament. Radic, and several others, were shot by members of the Radical Party (Miljan 2016). In 1931, Alexander I renamed the country Yugoslavia.

In response to the dictatorship, the nationalist Ante Pavelić founded the Ustaša in 1929. The group was anti-Yugoslav, pursuing complete

Croatian independence. Its ideology was not purely nationalistic and separatist: it was also fascist, racist, ethnic and religious (Korb 2010). The Croats desired a one-party state of Croatian Roman Catholics, excluding the 1,925,000 Orthodox Serbs, which resulted in a surge of ethnic cleansing (Mirkovic 2000).

The Ustaša had influential benefactors, including the Internal Macedonia Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO). The IMRO was formed in 1893 and desired an independent Macedonia of Slavic and Orthodox Christians (Law 2009, 154). Following World War One, Macedonia was divided between Greece and Yugoslavia. The IMRO began focusing their attacks to these two nations, supported by Bulgaria, which had lost territory to Yugoslavia; and Italy, led by Benito Mussolini who desired an unstable Yugoslavia, donating £70,000 to the cause (Miljan 2016, 10).

Because of the IMRO, the Ustaša received support from Bulgaria and Italy, in addition to Hungary and Austria, both of whom bore grudges against Yugoslavia (Law 2009, 156). The IMRO trained the Ustaša in terrorist tactics, assassinations, and bomb-making, while Mussolini supported them financially. The price for Mussolini's assistance was high: if the Ustaša were successful, Mussolini would claim Dalmatia (Laqueur 1977, 76).

The Ustaša, now trained and funded, launched a terrorist campaign against Yugoslavia. In 1934, they assassinated King Alexander I and the French Foreign Minister Lous Bathou, which forced Mussolini to renounce them. Leaders took refuge in Austria, which refused to extradite them (Lewis 2014, 188). Outrage at the assassination led to League of Nations passing the Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism (1937), which was signed but not ratified.

The Ustaša were suppressed until World War Two, when, in 1941, they allied with the Nazi Party of Germany. That same year, the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia, and allowed the Ustaša to administer the territory. Pavelić became dictator and adhered to Nazi policy. Concentration camps appeared under the so-called Black Legion (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 1973a, 542). Camps such as Jasenovac claimed 100,000 lives - mostly Jews, Gypsies, and Serbians. The brutality of the Croatian camps challenged the systematic extermination of other camps, as internees were killed one by one, with hammers, bludgeons, knives, and bullets (Highim 2001, np).

In 1945, a Communist-supported resistance arose in Yugoslavia, calling themselves Partisans, led by Marshall Josip Tito. The last battle of the European theatre in World War Two was the Battle of Poljana, where a mixed force of Nazi and Ustaša forces were routed by a Yugoslav Partisan force. After the war, Marshall Tito became the President of Yugoslavia, driving a modified national communist agenda for the six republics, including Croatia. Pavelić ordered the Ustaša to flee abroad to Argentina, Canada, or Australia.

### USTAŠA IN AUSTRALIA

The term Ustaša has been used here to refer to the Croatian extremist movement, although the Ustaša did not constitute a single organisation in Australia. After WWII, CIA files suggest that the Ustaša movement internationalised and expanded, reaching out to Croatian separatist movements around the world (CIA 1972). As a result, it was an evolving network of organisations. There were three major groups in Australia, and later, two minor organisations.

The first was the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP), established in 1956 by Ante Pavelić in Argentina. In Australia, it was run by Fabian Lovokovic, who established twenty-five branches, and published *Spremnost* magazine (Blaxland 2015, 124). Secondly, there was the Croatian National Resistance (HNO). It was originally founded in 1957 in Spain by General Vjekoslav ‘Maks’ Luburic, the commander of Jasenovac. In Australia, it was run by Srećko Rover. He, and his father Josip, were original Ustaša leaders, immigrating to Australia in 1950 (Cain 1994, 206). HNO published a magazine called *Obrana*. Thirdly, there was the Croatian Revolutionary Brotherhood (HRB).

It was run by a Catholic official, Father Rocque Romac, through the Croatian Catholic Welfare Centre; and by Srećko Rover. Romac was integral to weapons and terrorism training in New South Wales (Cain 1994, 206). Later, in 1972, two more organisations surfaced. One was the Union of United Croatian Youth of the World (SHUMS), which published *Uzdanica*, and had around a hundred members. Its emergence coincided with the Croatian Illegal Revolutionary Organisation (HIRO) (Blaxland 2015, 149). According to a sympathiser, these groups wanted ‘to destroy everything that is Yugoslav and free the state of Croatia from Yugoslavia’ (NAA M132:330a).

By 1962, Marshall Tito was seventy years old, and some Croatians thought the time was again ripe for independence. Operating from

Australia gave the Ustaša three tactical advantages. Firstly, insurrection on foreign soil and with foreign citizenship gave the terrorists some measure of protection from the Yugoslav Intelligence Service (YIS). Secondly, it gave them the capability to launch attacks directly into Yugoslavia. Thirdly, it allowed them to launch attacks against the large Yugoslav migrant community in Australia. As counterterrorism was not the central task of either ASIO, the Commonwealth Police (Compol), or the State Police Special Branches, this was a further, if somewhat unintentional, advantage for the Ustaša, who would have faced the ruthless YIS had they operated solely in Yugoslavia (Blaxland 2015, 158).

#### EARLY CAMPAIGN, 1963–1967

The Ustaša campaign began inconsistently, with sporadic conflict within the migrant community. One known attack occurred in May 1963, at the start of the cane cutting season in far north Queensland. A group of masked and armed men burst into Yugoslav canecutters barracks armed with knives and guns. They damaged the dwelling, targeting political pictures and symbols. No one was hurt, and attackers were never uncovered (QSA 39:37399a). The attack was seen as criminal, despite the long-simmering political rivalries in migrant communities.

Right wing groups were considered by the ASIO Director General Spry, as ‘good anti-communists’, aligned against ASIOs primary enemy. Due to this, only four officers were tasked to Croatian extremism in 1963 (Blaxland 2015, 125). This was convenient for the Ustaša, especially when photos surfaced of uniformed Ustaša training with the Australian Citizens Military Force (CMF) in Wodonga in April 1963 (NAA M132:330b). One Ustaša member was holding an Australian-made Owen submachine gun, with the group posing in front of an armoured vehicle. Officials claimed that the Ustaša were on a picnic and had accidentally stumbled upon the CMF force (“Govt Links to Croat Fascists” 1963). The *Spremnost* claimed it was a five-day exercise, and wrote this poem:

Hullo Wodonga you are our centre  
You are the nest of Croat Ustashi  
Fellow campers of Ante Pavelić  
Wodonga again calls you,  
All the camps which have been broken down will again rise.  
 (“Poem for Terrorism” 1972)

After the poem, Dr Jim Cairns of the Labour Party made a speech in the House of Representatives, presenting the Wodonga photos, *Spremnost*, and other evidence implicating several members of the Liberal Party with the Ustaša. The Attorney-General dismissed his concerns. Prime Minister Harold Holt maintained that there were law enforcement agencies capable of dealing with terrorists, to which Cairns demanded why he ‘did not use them?’ (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1964b). In fact, ASIO was closely monitoring Croatian extremism, however, it was not for prosecution and was not being shared with Compol, who did have the powers to lay charges (Blaxland 2015, 127).

Ustaša training camps were established in NSW, run by the HOP. This same group was thought to be responsible for training the Croatian Nine, who were members of the HRB. After training in NSW, nine HRB members travelled to Yugoslavia on 5 July 1963, and launched a sabotage mission near Trieste. YIS, which routinely tracked Croats, captured the Croatian Nine (Cain 1994, 206).

Though of lesser consequence, there were other signs of unrest. On 24 November 1963, a group of Croatians smashed the windows of the Yugoslav consulate in Sydney. The consulate suspected that Croatians were Ustaša, and informed ASIO (Blaxland 2015, 126). Some officers, according to Blaxland, were sceptical, believing YIS was involved, attempting to foster hostility and outrage against the Ustaša (2015, 143-144). This isn’t unlikely, as many consulate staff were allegedly YIS officers or collaborators.

Despite these isolated events, the Ustaša campaign really began on 7 May 1964. A young Croat called Tomislav Lesic carried a suitcase bomb towards the Yugoslav Consulate in Sydney, where he intended to leave it for later detonation. It exploded prematurely, damaging his legs and rendering him blind. Lesic claimed the suitcase was given to him by communists, although few believed him (“Disabled Croat demands Rights” 1966). This attack put the Ustaša in the national headlines, along with suspicions of government leniency.

After the failure of the suitcase bomber, on 12 May 1964, a Brisbane teacher, Louis Gugenberger, claimed he received a death threat from the Ustaša. Gugenberger had independently investigated the Ustaša and had posted his evidence to the Department of External Affairs for translation (QSA 39:37399b). The threats, which were both verbal and written, were considered so serious that the Police of the South Coast recommended that

Gugenberger receive a firearm permit and taught him how to shoot (QSA 39:37399c).

Another victim who came forward was a Yugoslav priest, Father Marko Gjokmarkovic, of the Holy Spirit Church in New Farm. He too had received threatening letters from the Ustaša. Father Gjokmarkovic believed it because of his opposition to the HOP, and criticism of the Ustaša (QSA 30:37399d). Subsequent Queensland Police investigations yielded nothing. That month, Attorney-General Bill Snedden dismissed fears, saying that the publicity given to the Ustaša “far outweighed its significance” (“Croatian Group Leaders Warned” 1964).

Further obscuring Ustaša’s presence were opportunists invoking the Ustaša as an excuse for criminality. One high profile case was that of Milan Novakovic. He was a Serbian farmer in Dimbulah, Queensland, who stabbed and killed local Croatian, Gojko Radalj. Novakovic said that he killed Radalj in self-defence, alleging that Radalj was a member of the Ustaša (QSA 39:37399e). Though he escaped conviction, the Queensland Special Branch believed that Novakovic ‘merely concocted this story to impress upon the jury at his trial that he was a peaceful citizen being hounded by a terrorist organisation, and thus gain sympathy’ (QSA 39:37399f). Novakovic’s solicitor later reported that six cars of armed Yugoslavs had cruised past Novakovic’s house. When one car was pulled over by police, a knife, shotgun, and cartridges were found.

Two more Ustaša-related events took place towards the end of 1964. A Melbourne police station received bomb threats and were warned that their officers would be shot if they investigated the Ustaša. Shortly after, three alleged Ustaša broke into a Sydney home, demanding the whereabouts of a female communist, whom they intended to murder. The victim refused to expose the woman and was tortured (QSA 39:37399g).

In January 1965, Brian Bolton reported in the *Sunday Truth* that the Ustaša were setting up more training camps, this time in north Queensland (QSA 39:37399h). Specifically, these were in Dimbulah and Atherton (though it would take six years for these claims to be proven) (QSA 39:37399i). There, younger Ustaša men trained in guerrilla warfare under the leadership of older Ustaša. Though there was an investigation by Queensland’s Special Branch, little evidence was found, and security agencies continued monitoring the Ustasa without much collaboration.

On 19 February 1965, Ustaša member Ambroz Andric bombed a Yugoslav Settlers Association dance in Geelong West Town Hall,

Victoria. He broke the window to the hall, and threw in a pepper bomb, followed by a bomb containing ammonia concentrate and pyridine (“Ustashi Supporter” 1965). While some suggested it was only a stink bomb, ammonia concentrate is severely damaging to the lungs if inhaled. It seemed to indicate the Andric wanted to cause harm and disruption, rather than fatalities. During the trial, witnesses received death threats for testifying against Andric. To lend weight, the top Ustaša leader in Australia, Srecko Rover wore his Ustaša Gestapo badge in the public gallery in support of Andric. Andric was nonetheless convicted of the attack.

By 1965, the campaign was gathering traction. On 19 March, an Australian Croatian called Josip Senic was detained from international travel because his passport was invalid. A search revealed he was in possession of extremist literature, including the membership book for the HRB. Undeterred, Senic travelled to Europe illegally. He would go on to mastermind more attacks, abroad and at home.

On 17 November 1966, an anti-Ustaša campaigner called Marjan Jurjevic had a lucky escape. A book bomb had been posted to him, which was supposed to explode upon opening. Instead, it detonated prematurely in the General Post Office mail chute. This was fortuitous in two ways: firstly, it thwarted the assassination of Jurjevic, and secondly, it prevented the bomb detonating in the mailroom, where six people worked (“Politics behind bomb outrage” 1966).

The year of 1967 was a particularly active time for the Ustaša. On 1 January, Ustaša managed to smuggle gelignite into the Yugoslav Consulate in Sydney. Surprisingly, given their previous mishaps, they successfully detonated the explosives, though the building was empty, and no one was injured. A note claimed: ‘We missed you this time, you communist bastard but we shall not miss you next time’ (Blaxland 2015, 136). Compol raided several extremists following the bombing, but it took over a year for the documents to be translated by ASIO (Blaxland 2015, 136-137).

On 19 February, a bomb was thrown into a meeting held by the Yugoslav Settlers Association in Fitzroy, without casualty (Blaxland 2015, 137). In March that year, the house of Josip Senic was raided by Compol. While seizing over 700 documents, police found that Senic was a top man of the HRB, and that the Australian organisation was keeping the European chapters afloat financially (NAA A6980:S203532c). The only consequence of this was Senic being denied a passport a year later.

On 19 April, a bomb was detonated in a flat in Darlinghurst, while a Yugoslav couple slept inside. They escaped injury. On 24 April, a petrol bomb was thrown through the St Kilda home of ALP candidate Brian Zouch, causing significant damage but no fatalities (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972c). On 10 May, ammonia bombs made another appearance, being thrown through the open doors of the Geelong Trade Hall during a Yugoslav Settler's dance ("Ustashi Bomb" 1967). The Free Settlers Association President condemned the Ustaša, but no further action was taken.

In September 1967, Queensland Police confirmed the presence of the Ustaša, and suspected that small groups of men were quietly drifting up to Queensland in preparation for a new wave of violence. It turns out they were only partly right: rumours surfaced of a Ustaša training camp in the Atherton Tablelands; several years later, another such camp was found in Mackay, disguised as a picnic area (QSA 39:37399j).

On 1 December 1967, a fountain pen bomb exploded at another Yugoslav social function at Richmond Town Hall in Victoria. It is difficult to tell who the target was, between Marjan Jurjevic, political adversary Dr Jim Cairns, and the Yugoslav Consul-General, Nicholas Zic ("Boy Hurt in Pen Bomb Blast" 1967). The bomb prematurely detonated, disfiguring a child. A note from the Ustaša claimed the attack was 'just letting the Yugoslavs know that they were around' (Blaxland 2015, 138). It was later revealed that the Andric brothers had built the bomb.

#### LATER CAMPAIGN, 1968–1972

There were only three major attacks related to Croatian extremism in 1968. On 8 November, a bomb was thrown into a South Melbourne home, though no one was reported injured (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972c). Contrary reports indicate that the South Melbourne bomb blew up the station wagon owned by Yugoslavs, but they could also present as two separate incidents (QSA 39:37399k). On 1 December 1968, Croatians gathered at the Yugoslav Consulate in Sydney, smashing windows and trying to burn it down. Apparently, William McMahon, the Federal Treasurer at the time, stumbled upon Ustaša arsonists. McMahon allegedly told a newspaper that 'they seem a good bunch' and 'They have a good cause' (NAA M132:330d), further encouraging a permissive atmosphere.

The campaign in 1969 began with murder. In March, a Yugoslav migrant Yago Despot and an Australian Charles Hughes were shot dead in

their Caulfield home. Prior to the murders, there were claims that they had a story about the Ustaša. No one was ever convicted (NAA M132:330e). The following month, in April, a bomb was detonated in the home of Danica Solunac in Mona Vale, injuring her and her 13-year-old daughter (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972c). After the attacks, the new Attorney-General, Ivor Greenwood, refused to admit the Ustaša had a presence in Australia.

In May, there were numerous threats to businesses stocking Yugoslav goods, including David Jones. Ustaša gangs also began racketeering in the Yugoslav community. For example, a Yugoslav café owner had his Moonee Ponds café destroyed by Ustaša thugs for refusing to pay extortion costs. Rumours of bashings persisted (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972d). In June, a large explosive charge was detonated in front of the Yugoslav Consulate in Sydney by Joseph Senic. He was assassinated a year later in West Germany, allegedly by YIS (“Yugoslav agents ordered murder” 1972).

The Ustaša had cause for concern, with deepening Australian-Yugoslav government ties, in the form of the Yugoslav-Australian migration agreement. In response, on 28 November, the Ustaša bombed the Yugoslav Embassy in Canberra. This was followed by an attempt to burn down the Immigration Office in Canberra three days later (Blaxland 2015, 141). It was later revealed that Compol had petitioned Attorney-General Greenwood to prosecute and deport Croatian terrorists, without success (QSA 39:373991). The Senator Lionel Murphey claimed Greenwood was, at best, irresponsible; and at worst, complicit (“Senate Statement on Terrorism” 1973).

The following year saw increased activity by suspected Croatian extremists. On 2 January 1970, a gelignite bomb was detonated outside a Serbian Church in Canberra. Two Croats were convicted of the crime, but not deported (NAA A12389f). A few months later, in March, a Yugoslav concert was being held by Croatian singer and pioneer of Yugoslav music, Ivo Robic. Ustaša leaflets were showered from a balcony with a hit list of prominent Yugoslavs (NAA M132:330g). On 20 October, the Yugoslav Consulate in Melbourne was bombed, resulting in serious damage to the Consulate and twenty homes nearby, even though one of the devices was successfully defused (NAA A12389f). Finally, in November, Prime Minister Gorton received letters from Croatian extremists threatening to sabotage the new Westgate Bridge. A joint ASIO-Compol meeting

identified the need for proper coordination, but this did not occur (Blaxland 2015, 145).

There were four prominent attacks against Yugoslav interests in 1971. The first was on 17 January, when the Soviet Embassy in Canberra was fire-bombed as USSR support for Tito made it an Ustaša target (Blaxland 2015, 146). On 4 July 1971, a bomb damaged the Serbian Orthodox Church in Melbourne, causing \$3000 worth of damage (NAA A12389f). On 23 November 1971, a Yugoslav Government-owned business, Adriatic Trade and Tourism Centre on George Street in Sydney was bombed (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972c). Finally, 19 December, a suburban cinema in Newtown, Sydney, was bombed while screening Yugoslav war films (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972c).

All of this activity was building to a crescendo. In 1972, the Ustaša were at their most active. On 11 January 1972, Croatian extremists targeted the Free Serbian Orthodox Church in Canberra, bombing a statue of a Serbian war hero, General Draza Mihailovic. This was followed by an unruly protest in front of the Southern Cross Hotel, and a flag burning. In March, there was brawling on the streets when a Yugoslav migrant in Footscray was assaulted by a Serbo-Croat, Miso Bobinac (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 1973e). On 6 April 1972, there were two coordinated bombings in Melbourne by the Ustaša. One bomb targeted the ANZ Bank Migrant Advisory Centre, and the other targeted the home of Marjan Jurjevic. A Liberal senator, George Hannan, insinuated that Jurjevic had planted the bombs himself (“Senator Hannan apologises to anti-Ustasha man” 1974).

Through the preceding nine years, successive governments had refused to publicly admit the Ustaša were operating in Australia. This was put to the test on 3 June. That night, a young Croatian called Ivan Mudrinic had a late-night interview with Sergeant Robert Turner of the Crime Car Squad (NAA M132:330h). Mudrinic had some serious questions to answer – most importantly, why he had 231 sticks of gelignite under his bed.

It was found that Mudrinic helped Ustaša members to hide a significant Ustaša weapons cache in the Warburton ranges. The cache contained hundreds of rolls of gelignite, with half in a wooden box and half in a nylon bag; three rolls of fuse wire; two electric detonators; two tins of gunpowder; a green alarm clock; a walkie-talkie; and some books on politics and guerrilla warfare (NAA M132:330i). Two days later,

Mudrinic returned alone and removed the cache, reaching out to Marjan Jurjevic and police authorities. Investigators suspected that it may have been a YIS plot to incriminate Croats. Nonetheless, four men were charged in relation to the Warburton Range explosive cache.

Despite the conviction, Attorney-General Ivor Greenwood was still publicly denying the existence of the Ustaša and the rumours of their training camps (“Ustasha Investigation” 1972). Later that same June, nineteen Croats, including Ambroz and Adolf Andric, and a number of other Australians, travelled to Yugoslavia via Germany and Austria. They planned to undertake terrorist missions against the Tito Government. The group expected to find the citizens supportive of the resistance, but it was the reverse. The terrorists engaged in a running battle with Yugoslav security forces near Bugojno, killing thirteen Yugoslavs before the fifteen of the terrorists were killed, and four were captured (CIA 1972, 3).

Following the nineteen, the Yugoslav authorities provided an *aide de memoir* to the Australians, which resulted in dozens of premises being raided by Compol. Though a great deal of material was seized, no charges were laid (QSA 39:37399m). The Ustaša training camps had now become an international problem for the second time. That same year, Interpol allegedly approached the NSW Bomb Squad, informing them that a number of Australian Croats were involved in terrorism overseas, and they considered Australia the international headquarters for Ustaša terrorism (QSA 39:37399n).

A big police raid came in August 1972, where dozens of Yugoslav premises were raided in Sydney and Melbourne, targeting Croatian extremism. The raids yielded hundreds of documents and other materials, but translations incurred a lengthy delay, and eventually no charges were laid (QSA 39:37399m). On 30 August, the Australian Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, sent an urgent message to Compol. The Ustaša, angered by the failure of the Bugojno group, were planning a new round of attacks. In the ‘Fourth of September Plot’, the Ustaša intended to bomb international Yugoslav diplomatic missions simultaneously, while another cell would ‘deal’ with the diplomats. No attack was recorded for that date (QSA 39:37399o).

However, on 16 September, two Yugoslav travel agencies in Sydney, Adriatic and Andria Travel, were bombed, leaving sixteen civilians injured. This event would prove to be one of the catalysts for government action. For the first time, the Ustaša had indiscriminately harmed pedestrians indiscriminately. Still, there was resistance to recognising the

Ustaša. Liberal MP Bill Wentworth stated that it was ‘impossible to know if the bombings were done by the coms or not.’ He also claimed: ‘It could be that the communists are endeavouring to create a ring wing plot just like they did with the Australia First movement during World War II’ (QSA 39:37399k).

By 22 September, ASIO had sent some agents to Queensland to examine the training camps (QSA 39:37399p). That same month, a document was published called the “Croatian Struggle,” which detailed methods for Croats to use against Yugoslavs in Australia. This included harassing night calls, verbally abusing Yugoslav women, mailing abusive letters and postcards, subverting Yugoslavian housewives, disturbing the consulate with trivial calls, vandalising ships and trains, and disrupting logistics. The purpose was to divert Yugoslav Consulate attention from the Ustaša network (NAA M132:330j).

On 4 October 1972, with the net closing around the training camps, the Dimbulah Bridge was bombed. Close to one hundred sticks of gelignite were used for the bombing. It was only poor explosive placement that prevented the bridge from being destroyed (QSA 39:37399q). On 8 December 1972, a car bomb was detonated outside the Serbian Church in Brisbane, killing an American man, Thomas Patrick Enwright. Queensland Police held two competing theories. The first was that the American man was simply the wrong victim, and the bomb had been intended for the thirteen Serbian men inside the church. The second theory was that that Enwright detonated the car deliberately, as part of a suicide attack (“Wrong Victim Theory” 1972). Given the Ustaša’s history of premature detonations, it is also possible that Enwright accidentally triggered the blast. Some Liberal senators also blamed the bombings on the communists.

An ASIO Special Report over the period from 1969 to July 1972 further substantiated the scale of terrorist activity. Around 175 attacks were recorded, of which 25.5% included the use of explosives and incendiaries. The main culprits were the Ustaša, and several left-wing groups including the Provo, the Peoples Liberation Army, and the Worker-Student Alliance (NAA A12389). The language barrier, and the ongoing threat to Yugoslavs and their families, made peaceful Yugoslavs reluctant to interact with police. The report concluded that the Ustaša represented a present and continuing threat.

## THE MOVEMENT FALTERS, 1973

A year passed without any further significant attacks but understanding of the Ustaša *modus operandi* had deepened. Messages circulated Queensland Police warning of potential Croatian attacks around significant dates in the Croatian calendar. These included April 10, the date when an independent Croatia (under the Nazis) was announced in 1941; and April 21, the date when General Luburic was assassinated in 1969 (QSA 39:37399r).

It was a tense time for the Yugoslav community: many naturalised Croatians were tracked by police, suspected of Ustaša activity (QSA 39:37399s). The magnitude of the Ustaša problem was finally being realised, in addition to an awareness of cooperation issues between ASIO and Compol. The two agencies didn't enjoy mutual support, which limited the ability of Compol to both translate Croatian documents and prosecute Croatian extremists (Blaxland 2015, 158).

Up until 1971, the Ustaša had cost the government \$29,100 in repairs to the consulates; and the Compol had expended \$29,507 in protection (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 1972d). After the events of 1972, this number was no doubt higher. Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam made a motion on 19 September 1972 that the government should develop intelligence and police organisations with the specialist knowledge and resources to prevent terrorist activities in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1972c). On 5 December, the McMahon Government conceded defeat to Whitlam's Labour Party, leaving this proposal to be undertaken by the incoming government.

The new Attorney General, Lionel Murphy, took a hard-line approach to the Ustaša, and worked to ensure proper resourcing and collaboration between ASIO and Compol. The Ustaša campaign in Australia ended in a slump. There was a half-hearted attempt to paint bomb the Yugoslav Embassy in Canberra in 1978; and in 1979, a Croatian extremist group known as the Lithgow Bombers planned a bombing campaign in Sydney, which never eventuated. In 1979, the Queensland Police compiled a Yugoslav Extremist List, but within five years, the situation was judged to have changed so dramatically that the list was ordered to be destroyed.

The time of the Ustaša in Australia was seemingly over. A change in government and reviews in security processes inhibited the ability for the Ustaša to operate in the open, and few serious attacks were recorded

after 1973. Retrospectively, it is important to look back and assess what enabled the Ustaša to endure for so long. There were five major factors which facilitated the Ustaša to operate in Australia with such effect. These include political sympathy, ideological alignment, jurisdictional difficulties, community relations with security agencies, and strategic Ustaša targeting decisions.

#### FACTORS INFLUENCING USTAŠA ENDURANCE

Firstly, there was considerable political sympathy for the Ustaša in Australian circles because of the perceived legitimacy of their cause. The Treaty of Versailles had established the right of national self-determination, which was further defined in international law following the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966, meaning all peoples had the right to political and national self-determination (OHCHR 2017). Ustaša activity was also occurring in the context of decolonisation, where ethnicities around the world were throwing off the colonial yoke and claiming independence. Unwittingly, the legitimacy of a cause was not distinguished from the violent method, resulting in political sympathy, or at least tolerance, for the Ustaša. This was demonstrated by the comments of Hannan and McMahon, who believed the Ustaša were a good bunch with a good cause (NAA M132:330d). The reluctance to admit the presence of the Ustaša in Australia by Attorney-General Greenwood, was perhaps most indicative of this sympathy (“Greenwood again denies existence of Ustasha” 1972). This led to accusations of complicity with the Ustaša.

Tolerance predominantly came from the right wing of Australian politics, spurred by ideological alignment. The Australian Government, under successive prime ministers, was caught in an ideological grapple with communism in the Cold War. The Liberal Party was ideologically aligned against left wing politics, so the right wing Ustaša represented the lesser ideological threat compared to communism. Some ministers of the McMahon Government were sceptical whether the violence was right wing at all, with many preferring to focus on communism (QSA 39:37399k). Others worried that to condemn the Ustaša was to imply that all Croatians were terrorists, thus insulting the broader migrant community. Tolerance led to accusations of complicity, which were not helped by HOP leader, Fabian Lovokovic, once being a member of the Liberal Party (Queensland Government 1972).

Auxiliary to enabling Ustaša endurance was jurisdictional obscurity, which undermined the efforts of law enforcement. A Senate inquiry under

McMahon found that, throughout this period, there was no single person or agency responsible for counterterrorism in Australia. Compol, State Police Special Branches, and ASIO were all investigating the Ustaša, but with inadequate cooperation and intelligence sharing (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 1973a). This inadequacy was identified in a Cabinet Decision (1406) in 1972, urging a “radical re-examination” of the role of Compol, and its cooperation with ASIO and the Department of the Attorney-General (NAA A12389f). ASIO had a purely investigative function, mostly targeting communist subversion. Only four officers were resourced to investigate the Ustaša in 1964, although this was later increased (Blaxland 2015, 123). With a change in government in 1973, Attorney-General Murphy proposed new federal laws, security reviews, and the relocation of ASIO to Canberra (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 1973a).

Directly impeding investigations were community relations issues. There were few in Australian law enforcement capable of translating Croatian, which added “considerable time” to assessments (QSA 39:37399m). These delays were noted on several occasions in the historical newspapers (QSA 39:37399l&m), impeding investigations and the penetration of the network. Even if the language barrier was overcome, local Yugoslavs were afraid to speak to the police for fear of retribution. To that end, an ASIO Special Report listed the language barrier as an impediment to community relations, followed by a fear of retribution (NAA 12389: A30).

Newspaper articles claimed that the Ustaša employed a “code of fear,” leaving Yugoslavs afraid for their safety (QSA 39:37399t). Special Branch documents in Queensland also demonstrate the complexity of community relations: in Mackay, inspectors described their relationships with the Yugoslav community as good, while in Longreach, inspectors reported the unwillingness of a community member to cooperate (QSA 39:37399u). This can be ascribed to two potential factors: firstly, ASIO noted that offenders nearly always escaped detection, further legitimising community fears for their personal safety; and secondly, Yugoslavs feared deportation if they were found in any way complicit with the Ustaša. Efforts to investigate the Ustaša network were thus impeded.

Finally, the strategic targeting choices of the Ustaša in Australia greatly enabled the networks' endurance, coupled with the low casualty rate. The Ustaša were directly responsible for fifteen terrorist attacks from 1963-1973 and were implicated with many more. Most of their attacks

directly targeted the Yugoslav migrant community in Australia, bombing prominent Yugoslav individuals, dances, businesses, and community functions. Their second most frequent target were political symbols of Yugoslavia, such as consulates and embassies. The third most frequent target was religious symbols, such as churches. By focusing their attacks on the Yugoslav community, the Ustaša avoided provoking general outrage and public censure. The violence was considered a Yugoslav migrant problem. It was not until the tourism centre bombings injured sixteen random civilians that decisive political action was taken.

### CONCLUSION

The Ustaša and affiliated networks were active in Australia from 1963 until 1973. They were directly responsible for fifteen attacks and linked to many more. The major factors which enabled their campaign to endure was political sympathy and a reluctance to admit their presence; ideological alignment in the Cold War atmosphere; jurisdictional difficulties with no centralised counterterrorism agency; language barriers between migrants and investigators; and, finally, Ustaša strategic targeting against the migrant community, avoided provoking the public. Ustaša terrorism had endured for ten years, and prompted security reviews, recommendations, and improvements which fundamentally altered the security landscape. Attorney-General Murphy declared in 1973: ‘Toleration of terrorism in this country is over’ (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 1973a), and to a large extent, history would prove him correct.

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