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DIASPORA POLITICS AND TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM:
AN HISTORICAL CASE STUDY

Mate Nikola Tokić

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE
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MATE NIKOLA TOKIC

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Abstract

In recent years, the terms transnationalism and diaspora have both become the focus of increased academic attention. Subsequently, the question has arisen as to how expanding theories surrounding transnationalism—which include an ever wider class of actions, processes and institutions that cross the boundaries of states—affect the ways in which both diaspora and diaspora communities are understood. This article examines how the transnational character of one diaspora group—Croats following World War II—influenced the organizational development of radical émigré separatism, particularly in relation to the strategies of action adopted by some of the more extreme nationalists. The article focuses on how difficulties arising from the fact that the Croatian diaspora existed in ‘landscapes’ as much as ‘lands’ helped define and delimit the repertoires of political action taken up by radicals. The internal and external pressures of being forced to operate in transnational space—including the fractional splintering which resulted from these pressures—helped shape the range of possible development for Croatian émigré organizations, including for some the adoption of violence as an acceptable form of political expression.

Keywords

Political Violence, Terrorism, Diaspora, Émigré, Transnationalism, Separatism, Croatia, Yugoslavia, Gastarbeiter, Ustaša

Diaspora Politics and Transnational Terrorism: An Historical Case Study *

During the 1960s and 1970s, few terrorist political groups were more active than those supporting the destruction of socialist Yugoslavia and the establishment of an independent Croatian state. Over one ten-year period, Croatian terrorists averaged one act of political violence every five weeks, including more than fifty assassinations or assassination attempts, forty bombings of public buildings and monuments, and two airplane hijackings.¹ The majority of these acts were committed in the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD), which, after 1960, became the organizational centre of militant émigré Croatian political activism. The remainder took place in other countries with sizable radical émigré populations, including Sweden, the United States, and, most notably, Australia.

This article explores the social and political context behind the radicalization of certain segments of the émigré Croatian population during the 1960s and 1970s and the processes which led to those segments' embrace of terrorism as an acceptable form of political expression.² Specifically, it examines how the transnational character of the Croatian diaspora influenced the organizational development of radical émigré separatism, particularly in relation to the strategies of action adopted by some of the more extreme nationalists. The article focuses on how internal cleavages and conflicts caused by difficulties arising from the fact that the Croatian separatist movement by its very nature existed in transnational space helped define and delimit the repertoires of political action taken up by radicals. The internal and external pressures of being forced to operate in transnational space—including the fractional splintering which resulted from these pressures—helped shape the range of possible development for Croatian émigré organizations, excluding some political opportunities while opening the doors to others.

In recent years, the terms transnationalism and diaspora have both become the focus of increased academic attention.³ While the concept of transnationalism is not limited to migration-related phenomena, its origins are tied closely to the concept of diaspora. The question becomes, in what ways do the expanding theories surrounding transnationalism—which include an ever wider class of actions, processes and institutions that cross the boundaries of states—affect the ways in which both diaspora and diaspora communities are understood. Clearly, political territorial entities—i.e. nation-states—remain the primary space of reference when understanding the concepts of both transnationalism and diaspora. But as transnationalism particularly shifts its focus from “lands” to “landscapes,” the argument could be made that even for the concept of diaspora the importance of the nation-state needs

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¹ Stephen Clissold. “Croat Separatism: Nationalism, Dissidence and Terrorism.” *Conflict Studies*, no.103 (January 1979). This text remains the most insightful and valuable of the very few studies on Croatian émigré separatism, nationalism, and terrorism. Also quite useful, if somewhat journalistic, is chapter three of: Paul Hockenos. *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.

² Material for this article comes primarily from the archives of the German Foreign Office in Berlin, the archives of the German Home Office and secret services, located in Koblenz, and from primary source materials produced by the Croatian émigré community itself, including letters, newspapers, and journals. From a very early period, the West German government systematically observed and reported on the activities of the Croatian émigré community, not just in the BRD itself, but globally. This only increased as the number of Croatians in West Germany grew dramatically in the 1960s. West German governmental sources provide a remarkably detailed account of the development of Croatian terrorist organizations and their activities.

³ For some analysis on the concept of transnationalism as it relates to migration studies, see: Ewa Morawska. “Disciplinary Agendas and Analytic Strategies of Research on Immigration and Transnationalism: Challenges of Interdisciplinary Knowledge.” *International Migration Review*, vol.37, no.3 (2003), Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald. “Transnationalism in Question.” *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol.109, no.5 (2004), Alejandro Portes. “Introduction: The Debates and Significant of Immigrant Transnationalism.” *Global Networks*, vol.1, no.3 (2001), Steven Vertovec. “Migration and Other Modes of Transnationalism: Towards Conceptual Cross-Fertilization.” *International Migration Review*, vol.37, no.3 (2003),

to be de-emphasised. As migrant groups and diasporas become more and more de-essentialized, there is a clear shift away from transnational *communities* to transnational *practices*. The question becomes, in what *spaces*—defined both statically and actively—do these transnational practices take place and in what way do they define and redefine diasporas as a whole?

For many years, migrant transnationalism generally referred to the binary relationship between migrants and their former (and often hopefully future) homelands.⁴ More recently this binary relationship has been upgraded to a triangular relationship among migrants, their homelands and their new countries of residence.⁵ This triangular relationship constructively complicates the problem of identity for diaspora communities, as it creates new contexts in which agency from both within and without a given community can be understood. While this new distinction is certainly an important one for transnational studies, however, in many respects it still does not go far enough, at least as far as our understanding of the nature of diaspora communities is concerned. Instead of a triangular relationship among migrants and source and destination countries, the relationship is in fact manifold, depending on the number of destination countries, the temporal context in which the migration took place, and the transnational landscapes within which the diaspora operates. Only in the rarest of cases do we find migrations which are limited to a single destination country or single historical era. Simply, diasporas exist in myriad transnational spaces which transcend multiple political territories.

This article explores how the transnational character of the émigré community itself—and by this I mean internal to itself, and not in relation to the homeland—is as much as anything a decisive factor in the development of that community. It examines specifically how the stresses and complications of this transnational existence among the Croatian diaspora in 1960s and 1970s helped lead to a radicalization of the émigré community and the adoption of terrorism as an acceptable form of political expression, at least among some. Fundamental to this is an understanding of the internal conflicts and cleavages within the diaspora which developed as a direct result of the transnational nature of the émigré community, and how this led to certain kinds of political action among various factions at play amongst Croats living outside Yugoslavia.

Following World War II, an estimated 12,000 former fascist collaborators and anti-communists from Croatia found political asylum in Germany. An additional 20,000 to 40,000 found their way—primarily through the infamous Ratlines run by Croatian Franciscan priests from the San Girolamo degli Illirici Seminary College in Rome⁶—to countries with sympathetic regimes, such as Argentina, Uruguay, and Spain or traditionally welcoming countries for immigrants, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. The head of the quisling Croatian government during the war Ante Pavelić, for instance, found refuge in Perón's Argentina, while the so-called 'Croatian Himmler'—General Vjekoslav 'Maks' Luburić—found sanctuary in Franco's Spain.

⁴ The limited literature on South Slavic diaspora communities attests to this. Recent texts on the "long-distance nationalism" of Southern Slavs, for example, focus almost exclusively on "national" émigré communities. *Transnational diasporic contacts or networks are dealt with only sporadically, if at all.* See: Zlatko Skrbiš. *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, homelands and identities.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, Birgit Bock-Luna. *The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the Wake of the Third Balkan War.* Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007, Nicholas Procter. *Serbian Australians in the Shadow of the Balkan War.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, Sam Pryke. "British Serbs and long distance nationalism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.26, no.1 (January 2003). Daphne N. Winland. *We Are Now a Nation: Croats Between 'Home' and 'Homeland.'* Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007.

⁵ For an excellent recent study which complicates transnational identities, see: Val Colic-Peisker. *Migration, Class, and Transnational Identities: Croats in Australia and America.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

⁶ For an interesting if controversial text on the Ratlines, particularly the role of Croatian Catholic Priests, see: Mark Aarons and John Loftus. "Unholy Trinity: How the Vatican's Nazi Networks Betrayed Western Intelligence to the Soviets." New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

The end result was that the 1950s opened with the post-war generation of Croatian emigrants dispersed, disjointed, disoriented, and lacking any real unity.⁷ The difficulties of life in exile and the reality of the situation both in Yugoslavia and on the larger international stage led to the development of deep cleavages and political in-fighting among exiled Croatian nationalists and anti-Titoists abroad.⁸ These rifts led in turn to a splintering of the émigré separatist movement, as rivals for control of the diaspora community fought one another for authority over the remains of the wartime Ustaša movement.⁹ Over time, this disunity contributed directly to the growth of a new wave of radical tendencies among some younger Croat emigrants, as the competition for support among fresh émigrés by opposing factions of Croatian separatists opened new space and new opportunities for nationalist extremism to re-emerge and proliferate within the diaspora community.

⁷ Complicating this situation was the reality that post-war émigrés had to compete with an already existing and well established émigré community, particularly in the United States. Politically distinct to the post-war émigrés were the numerically superior Croatian émigrés from the pre-World War I period. These émigrés were represented by the Croatian Fraternal Union (HBZ—Hrvatska bratska zajednica) which had been founded in 1894. Essentially the main umbrella organization of first wave Croatian émigrés, the HBZ had 110,000 members in over 125 cities world-wide in 1954 and resources in the area of \$25 million. In stark contrast to the political organizations of the generation of emigrants who arrived in the West after 1945, the HBZ generally supported the communist regime of Maršal Tito in Yugoslavia. From as early as 1927, Communist Party operatives had infiltrated the HBZ, mixing nationalistic and even separatist slogans with leftist revolutionary propaganda to gain support among members. During World War II, support for Tito and the communists grew as the Partisan leader was hailed both among Croats and all the major Western powers as the saviour of the Croatian nation against the evils of fascism. Although this support took a hit in the immediate post-war period as McCarthyism and the Red Scare weakened the Communist Party's position within the HBZ—several leaders of the Union were blacklisted for subversion—by the mid-1950s the leftist wing of the HBZ had reestablished its control of the organization. For the earliest generation of Croatian émigrés—meaning those who migrated before 1929 and even before 1914—Tito's Yugoslavia was seen as a resounding success and an agreeable solution to the 'nationalities problem' which had plagued South-Eastern Europe for more than a century. The establishment of an independent Croatia state—although perhaps nice in theory—was not a priority, and certainly not something over which blood needed to be spilled. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amt (Political Archives of the Foreign Office, henceforth PAAA). Bestand B12 (Band 562): Dok. 684/56 (20.Juni 1956).

⁸ Although initially the most Stalinist of post-war Europe's new communist countries, Yugoslavia quickly developed into the most independent, leading to increased friction between Belgrade and Moscow. In early 1948, finally frustrated by his failed attempts at bringing Tito into line, Stalin banished Yugoslavia from the official forum of the international communist movement and called for Tito's overthrow. The Tito-Stalin split directly led to a reorientation of both domestic and foreign policy in Yugoslavia, as Tito sought to forge a decidedly 'Yugoslav' brand of socialism which included closer ties to the West. Eager to exploit any rifts in Moscow's precarious but increasingly menacing Eastern Bloc, the West embraced Belgrade's overtures and actively moved to bring Yugoslavia into its sphere of influence. For Croatian émigrés, this was a serious blow to their movement, as it significantly decreased any real possibility that their anti-communist credentials might somehow lead to Western support for an independent Croatian state should the struggle between East and West lead to military conflict. With Yugoslavia firmly neutral, Croatian separatists had little to offer the West which the considerably more powerful and established Tito could not. Cold War geopolitics—once the one true friend of the Ustaša—left the émigré Croatian separatist movement marginalized and isolated.

⁹ In the early 1930s former radical members of the Croatian nationalist Party of Rights were forced to leave Yugoslavia following Serbian King Alexander Karadjordjević's declaration of a royalist dictatorship in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on January 6, 1929. Led by Ante Pavelić—a lawyer from Zagreb and former deputy in the Yugoslav parliament—these radicals formed an organization called the Ustaša—Croatian for insurgents or rebels—which was fashioned as an underground transnational separatist terrorist organization which drew its support from the ranks of exiled émigré nationalist Croatian students and hard-line nationalists. In addition—most famously—to the successful assassination of King Alexander in the French port city of Marseilles in October 1934, members were responsible for numerous bomb attacks, a failed armed uprising in the impoverished Lika region of Croatia, and several assassination attempts on prominent Yugoslav officials. The breakthrough for the Ustaša came with the Axis powers' defeat of royalist Yugoslavia in April 1941. Ante Pavelić was chosen to serve as leader of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH—*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) established by Hitler and Mussolini following Yugoslavia's destruction. Once in power, Pavelić and Ustaša engaged in a brutal and destructive program of ethnically motivated genocide which rivaled any within Nazi-occupied Europe.

The post-war generation of émigrés was divided among three principal political factions that sought to build on the traditions and legacy of the Ustaša.¹⁰ Despite his ignoble fall from power and severely weakened political standing, Ante Pavelić remained the principal leader of the Ustaša throughout the first decade following World War II.¹¹ From Argentina, Pavelić attempted to revive and revitalize the Ustaša movement by establishing a makeshift exile government in Buenos Aires and by founding an umbrella organization for all Ustaša organizations abroad called the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP—*Hrvatski oslobodilački pokret*). Flush with money and other resources smuggled out of Croatia at the end of the war, the HOP was essentially a military organization whose single aim was the liberation of Croatia from the clutches of ‘Serbo-communism.’¹² The NDH may have fallen and the Ustaša may have faced severe military set-backs both during World War II and after, but the war with Tito and the communist regime in Belgrade was not over. There may have been little the Ustaša and the HOP could hope to do in the immediate future, but with Pavelić as their leader, they would remain prepared to take up the struggle when the propitious moment arose.

Despite this support, however, Pavelić soon found himself relatively isolated from developments within the Ustaša movement in far off Europe, where he faced two strong challengers for his position as leader of the post-war Croatian separatist movement, one from the (relative) left and one from the right. One main competitor was Dr. Branko Jelić, an original founder of the Ustaša and former Ustaša representative in pre-war Nazi Germany. Through a somewhat auspicious turn of fate, Jelić emerged from World War II uncompromised by the crimes of the Ustaša regime in the NDH as he was forced to spend the entirety of the war on the Isle of Man as a prisoner of the British government.¹³ In 1950, Jelić formed the Croatian National Committee (HNO—*Hrvatski narodni odbor*) in Munich, which was meant to serve as an umbrella organization for all Croats who sought the re-establishment of an Independent Croatian State, regardless of political affiliation. As the founding program of the HNO

¹⁰ A fourth, non-Ustaša organization, the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS—*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*) led by its pre-war leader Vladko Maček, was in fact initially the most influential group among post-war refugees. In the period leading up to World War II, the HSS had easily been the most popular political party in Croatia, enjoying considerably more support than Ante Pavelić’s Ustaša. After the war, many Croat émigrés returned to the HSS in the hope of distancing themselves from the crimes of the Ustaša-led NDH. This backing proved short lived, however, as Maček failed to keep himself politically relevant among Croatian émigrés old and new. Maček was firmly committed to the idea of Croatian independence, but believed that this independence could only be achieved through more bloodletting between Serbs and Croats, something which he greatly opposed. For this reason, he distanced himself completely from both those who supported Tito’s Yugoslavia and those who called for its forceful overthrow. There were, however, few émigrés who, like Maček, chose neither side and who were willing to simply wait for external political events to sweep them forward. By the end of the 1950s, Maček and the HSS had become thoroughly marginalized as a political force among Croat émigrés. PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 684/56; “Die jugoslawische Emigration von 1914 bis zur Gegenwart, 1956. (20. Juni 1956). p.66.

¹¹ As a 1956 report from the German Foreign Ministry explained: “Without a doubt, even today the great majority of [post-war] emigrants stand behind Pavelić, in whom they see the only guarantee for an uncompromising struggle for Croatian freedom against the Serbs.” PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 684/56; “Die jugoslawische Emigration von 1914 bis zur Gegenwart, 1956.” (20. Juni 1956).

¹² As Pavelić—offering his assistance in the greater anti-communist struggle—wrote to the signatories of NATO in December 1957: In view of the fact that our homeland, Croatia, is at present enslaved by Communism, and her people is in consequence unable to raise their claims, we, representatives of the Croatian Liberation Movement, deem it our right and duty to act on their behalf. ... The Croat nation, and particularly the former officers and ranks of the Croatian armed forces now living abroad, are experienced in ... anti-partisan warfare. In fact, during the last war, Communists from all Balkanic lands had been thrown on their territory and the Croatian army was engaged in fighting them. Thanks to these facts, the Croatian Liberation Movement has been in a position to elaborate plans for an efficient anti-guerrilla warfare and has at its disposal the necessary personnel for the training of the corresponding cadres, with which we are willing to contribute to the liberation of the Croat nation and all other enslaved peoples, as well as the defense of the free world.” PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: “Letter from the HOP to the signatories of NATO.” (December 1957). Document quoted as written.

¹³ Jelić was arrested during the early stages of World War II as he was returning to Europe from a fund-raising mission to South America for the Ustaša. See: PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 684/56; “Die jugoslawische Emigration von 1914 bis zur Gegenwart, 1956.” (20. Juni 1956).

stated, “The HNO sets as its primary goal the liberation of Croatia and the re-erection of a sovereign Croatian state within its complete ethnic and historical territory. ... [In doing so, the HNO] rejects every form of Totalitarianism, including that from the left as well as the right.”¹⁴ This last statement was clearly aimed at Pavelić, whom Jelić saw as not having done enough to distance himself from the policies and, worse, crimes of the NDH. The HNO would serve as the alternative to the HOP for those Croats who wished to see the liberation of the homeland, but who also wished to see it done based on the principles of democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

Pavelić’s second challenge came from the former commander of the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp, Vjekoslav ‘Maks’ Luburić, also known as General Drinjanin or General of the Drina. Based in Franco’s fascist Spain, Luburić assailed Pavelić from the right, claiming that the former *Poglavnik* had compromised everything for which the quisling NDH state had stood. Luburić distanced himself from his former mentor after he learned that Pavelić had been in talks with the former minister president of royalist Yugoslavia Milan Stojadinović about a possible common split between Serbs and Croats.¹⁵ In those talks, Pavelić reportedly agreed to concede parts of Bosnia to Serbia and parts of Istria to Italy.¹⁶ For Luburić and other radical nationalists in the diaspora, such a deal was tantamount to treason. Luburić also attacked Pavelić for his role in Juan Peron’s Argentina, which Luburić—a charged war criminal—ironically claimed hurt the image of the Croat nation internationally. Pavelić had been organizer and leader of the Peronist terror organization *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista*, which was known for its harsh treatment of the Catholic Church—with which the NDH had been closely linked—and other political opponents. In Luburić’s view, so serious were these charges against Pavelić that, as Luburić himself commented in 1955, “When independence comes [for Croatia], there need to be two concentration camps built, one for traitors in the homeland, and one for traitors abroad. In the second, belongs Pavelić.”¹⁷

Convinced that Peron’s downfall also meant the downfall of Pavelić, Luburić attempted to position himself as the natural successor to Pavelić in the Ustaša movement. Luburić established the Croatian National Resistance (*Otpor—Hrvatski narodni otpor*) a paramilitary organization fashioned along the lines of Pavelić’s Croatian Armed Forces (*HOS—Hrvatske Oružane Snage*), the militant wing of the HOP. *Otpor*, as Luburić declared shortly after its founding, was

not only (as some have interpreted it) a half-military or even full military organization with just one goal, an armed coup against Yugoslavia, but rather will formulate concrete political definitions concerning its political struggle. ... Firstly we declare loud and clear: we are AGAINST EVERY YUGOSLAVIA, be it based on the principle of a monarchy, republic, democracy, socialism, class or personal dictatorship, political totalitarianism, political pluralism or on the principle of confederation. That it is impossible to establish a state federation with strong guarantees for national, political, economic, and cultural sovereignty—even under the principle of confederation—it is essential to BREAK FREE COMPLETELY FROM YUGOSLAVIA AS INDEPENDENT CROATIAN STATE the whole of Croatian territory, in its historical and ethnic borders without concern whether the other nations [of Yugoslavia] choose to do the same or not.¹⁸

¹⁴ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 1702/56, “Das Grundsatzprogramm des Kroatischen National-Komitees und die Stellungnahmen der übrigen Exilgruppen.” (8. Dezember 1956).

¹⁵ Speculation within the German Foreign Ministry was that this meeting was arranged—covertly—by the Yugoslav Secret Services, as a means by which to sow dissension within the radical Croatian émigré community. If true—and evidence suggests that it is—the plan seems to have been effective. PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 684/56; “Die jugoslawische Emigration von 1914 bis zur Gegenwart, 1956.” (20. Juni 1956).

¹⁶ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 684/56; “Die jugoslawische Emigration von 1914 bis zur Gegenwart, 1956.” (20. Juni 1956).

¹⁷ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 5006/55: “Aus der kroatischen Emigration—1.9 bis 30.11 1955.”

¹⁸ *Otpor*, no.1 (1975):3. Emphasis in the original.

Based in Spain, Otpor was particularly active in the Federal Republic of Germany, which was home to both to a large number of post-World War II émigrés and to Luburić's principal rival for Pavelić's throne, Branko Jelić. It was there, in West Germany, that the first real competition for support among Croat emigrants in Europe began. Luburić and Jelić both established themselves as serious alternatives to Ante Pavelić and as serious alternatives to one another, although all three claimed to be struggling for the same goal: an independent Croatian state.

Faced with this threat to his authority over the global Croatian separatist movement, Pavelić sought to bolster his own presence in Europe, particularly in West Germany where Jelić and Luburić had made the greatest inroads against him.¹⁹ Across the Federal Republic, branch organizations of the HOP were established, including the United Croats of West Germany (UHNj—*Ujedinjeni Hrvati Njemačke*) and the Croatian Worker's Union for Germany (HRS—*Hrvatski Radnički Savez za Njemačku*). These groups were overseen by the Central Committee of Croatian Associations in Europe (SOHDE—*Središnja Odbor Hrvatskih Društava Evrope*), an umbrella organization set up by Pavelić to direct the activities of each of the various national and local sections of the HOP in Europe.²⁰ More menacingly, leaders of Ustaša and other Croatian separatist organizations which aligned themselves with either the Croatian National Committee of Jelić or the Croatian National Resistance of Luburić were targeted by Pavelić supporters for harassment and intimidation. Pavelić even went so far as to draw up 'liquidation lists' against his rivals in Europe as he struggled to reassert his authority there. One list, according to West German governmental sources, included none other than Luburić.²¹ The struggle for an independent Croatian state was one without compromise, even with those whose aims were identical to one's own.

The hotting up of the competition among rival separatist groups was accompanied by a cooling down of the general political activity of radical Croatian émigrés during the 1950s. Hard-line Croatian separatists remained as belligerent as ever, writing books, treatises, op-ed pieces, and letters in support of their cause, often using extremist and even violent rhetoric. But direct action such as that taken by the pre-war incarnation of the Ustaša was nowhere to be found in post-war Europe. Terrorism, once a cornerstone of the Ustaša movement, ceased to be part of the functional political repertoire of radical émigré separatism. Even if armed struggle and political violence very much remained part of the rhetoric of Ustaša-ism in the post-World War II period, the impetus to act on that rhetoric had been lost. The movement had become old and its leadership fractured, making political violence easier to preach about than to actually engage in. To regain its footing, the movement needed a fresh infusion of committed and energetic supporters to assume the role of the vanguard of the Croatian separatist movement.

This infusion came thanks to the effects of the Federal Republic of Germany's post-war *Wirtschaftswunder*, or economic miracle. During the 1960s, West Germany experienced a severe labour shortage, which led to a massive influx of migrant workers from Croatia, many of whom ultimately took up permanent residence in the Federal Republic. In 1960, there were an estimated 10,000 Yugoslav workers in West Germany in addition to the 12,000 political refugees who had migrated to the country following World War II. Over the course of the next fifteen years, this number increased sixty-four fold, from 50,000 in 1965, to 280,000 in 1968, to 390,000 in 1970 and finally to 640,000 in 1976. According to official Yugoslav statistics, Croats—who comprised approximately twenty-two percent of the total population of socialist Yugoslavia at the time—accounted for over

¹⁹ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 1072/56: (13. April 1956).

²⁰ PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 98: Dok. 1222/61: "Die kroatischen Exil—Ustaschen" (7. Dezember 1961)

²¹ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 1308/56: "Die Auseinandersetzungen im Ustaschen-Lager." (14. September 1956). The liquidation of close rivals was nothing new to Pavelić. In 1933, Pavelić ordered the assassination of Gustav Perčec, one of the original founders of the Ustaša movement and potential rival to Pavelić for control of the movement.

sixty-five percent of all those who left Yugoslavia for West Germany.²² Thirty percent of these Croats, meanwhile, came from underdeveloped areas of Hercegovina, notorious strongholds for the Ustaša during World War II and a hotbed of Croatian nationalism in socialist Yugoslavia. Furthermore, over sixty percent of these emigrants possessed no or only limited education,²³ and over seventy-five percent were between 16 and 25 years old.²⁴ In comparison to the earlier generation of post-war emigrants, the Croats who migrated to West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s were not as politically conscious as their predecessors. Their demographic profile, however, as the government in Belgrade recognized, made their emigration to the West “not only a socio-economic, but also a political problem.”²⁵ Young, poor, uneducated, and disaffected, these new émigrés could not have been better suited for recruitment into the radical Croatian separatist movement, something which became a top priority of competing extremist groups.

For this reason, West Germany became the focus of competition among rival separatist groups from around the globe for support of the next generation of Croatian emigrants. As one West German governmental report from the late 1950s stated bluntly, “The struggle among the three main groups [of radical Croatian émigré] in Europe ... has become *primarily and foremost* about mining the newest group of refugees. Pavelić, for example, has assigned his agents in Austria, Italy, and especially the Federal Republic to conscript [these new refugees] as ‘Cadres of the Croatian Liberation Army.’”²⁶ With factional allegiances among members of the immediate post-war generation of émigrés essentially codified by the early 1960s, competing separatist groups recognized that the successful expansion of their own movements relied on the as yet unaligned second wave of post-war Croatian emigrants. The Croatian Liberation Movement, Croatian National Committee and Croatian National Resistance all actively recruited fresh émigrés, particularly the youth. In doing so, they helped radicalized many of these new émigrés, as they bombarded them with extremist rhetoric about the nature of the Croatian nation, Yugoslav state, and struggle between them.

The advantage in this struggle to gain followers belonged to the HOP, which, according to West German governmental sources, had as its base the same kinds of ‘uneducated masses’ which began to flood the BRD in the 1960s. Many of the newcomers saw in Pavelić and his organization quite simply “the only true guarantee for an uncompromising struggle against the Serbs for Croatian freedom.”²⁷ Maks Luburić’s Otpor, meanwhile, enjoyed a similar advantage, as many of his followers came from the same geographic region and socio-economic background as those of Pavelić. The clear loser was Branko Jelić’s more moderate Croatian National Committee, which drew the bulk of its support from urban dissident intellectuals and middle-class professionals,²⁸ a demographic which made up only a small minority of the new generation of Croats leaving Yugoslavia for the West.

To win the support of these new émigrés and to secure their backing, the competing factions of separatists established networks that helped new émigrés secure papers, housing, and jobs. These networks quickly became the hubs around which the social, political, and economic lives of both new and old émigrés revolved. According to one West German Home Office report looking into problems with and among Croatian guest workers, when new emigrants were asked who provided the

²² *Vjesnik*, (January 18, 1965) and *Oslobodjenje*, (June 27, 1965). See also: PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 1007: Dok. 1003/65: “In der Anlage überreichen wir eine Ausarbeitung: ‘Probleme der jugoslawischen Gastarbeiter.’” (1. Oktober 1965).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 999: “Probleme der jugoslawische Jugenderziehung.” (28. Januar 1959).

²⁵ *Borba*, (June 3, 1964).

²⁶ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: “Die Auseinandersetzungen in der kroatischen Emigration.” My emphasis.

²⁷ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 684/56; “Die jugoslawische Emigration von 1914 bis zur Gegenwart, 1956.” (20. Juni 1956).

²⁸ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: Dok. 5006/55: “Aus der kroatischen Emigration—1.9 bis 30.11 1955.”

“guarantees” necessary for a successful transition to life in the Federal Republic, they did not respond to the government in Bonn, local aid organizations, or even trade unions. Instead, the vast majority said “the older Emigrants” or “those who came before us.”²⁹ As this report recognized, this assistance was one of the means “political groups exploited the economic situation, ... by coupling guarantees for [living and work] arrangements with their own goals.”³⁰ Groups such as the HOP and HNO were more than willing to assist newly arrived refugees or *Gastarbeiter*—guest workers—in West Germany. They only asked for certain loyalties and commitments in return.

These social and economic networks not only politicized many new emigrants, they radicalized them through the institutionalization of quasi-military structures and politically charged peer networks. In the industrial town of Essen, for example, a former Ustaša lieutenant and ally of Pavelić oversaw a system of contacts which organized documents, living arrangements, and work opportunities for several thousand Croatian émigrés. The main aim of this network was not the well-being of new emigrants but rather the recruitment of young, unmarried nationalists into so-called “Croatian Divisions.” These divisions trained on weekends in preparation for the ‘coming conflict’ against socialist Yugoslavia.³¹ Before joining, new members were required to sign a registration form which asked about any time spent in the military and their highest rank. They were also required to sign a statement declaring themselves ready, should the need arise, “to fight for the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia.”³² Other organizations, such as *Stožer L 10.4.1941*, were even more stringent in their membership policies. This group, a military wing of Pavelić’s Ustaša which also oversaw the well-being of new émigrés, required new members to have either military or language training and a minimum of two references before being allowed to join.³³

Despite the stringent rules for joining many of these organizations and social networks, there was often nothing “voluntary” about the recruitment process leading to admission. Older émigrés used their social and economic leverage to pressure newly-arrived *Gastarbeiters* into signing-up with paramilitary or other radical organizations.³⁴ For those unqualified or unwilling to join such groups, blackmail and extortion were used to secure at the very least financial support. Restaurant and small business owners often were required to make ‘donations’ to radical separatist groups, lest, to paraphrase one owner of a fast food establishment, something should happen to either his enterprise or even physical well-being.³⁵ Construction and other manual workers were forced to sign up for subscriptions to radical newspapers and journals, the proceeds of which were used to finance acts of violence and terror. If they choose not too, not just their livelihoods but also those of family members and loved ones could be jeopardized.³⁶

²⁹ PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 999: Dok. 747/62: “In der Anlage überreichen wir eine Ausarbeitung: ‘Probleme der jugoslawischen Gastarbeiter.’” (10. Oktober 1962).

³⁰ Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

³¹ PAAA. Bestand B12, Band 562: “Die Auseinandersetzungen in der kroatischen Emigration.” Any notion that these divisions were nothing more than social clubs was belied by the ritual oath required of members before they joined. As the pledge of one such division—the Secret Revolutionary Ustaša Movement (TRUP—*Tajni revolucionarni ustaški prokret*)—read: “I (name) swear to the almighty God, my honor, and all that is dear and holy to me, that I enter into the TRUP and HOP. I will hold secret all that which is trusted to me, even from my relatives and loved ones. I enter into TRUP and will fight for the liberation and re-establishment of the Independent State of Croatia. I dedicate myself to this end with my time and ability. I will trust my superiors and will not work without their knowledge and permission. In case I do not obey, I agree to every punishment laid out in the statutes, so help me God!” PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 101: Anlageschrift, Dortmund, den 20. August 1963.

³² PAAA. Bestand B12 (Band 588): 6. Mai 1960: “Aide Memoire from Yugoslavia to the FRG.”

³³ PAAA. Bestand B42 (Band 100): Dok. 400/63. 28. März 1963, “Aus der kroatischen Emigration in der Bundesrepublik.”

³⁴ PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 99: Landeskriminalamt Saarland KJ I/c-441/62. (21. Juni 1963).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

This material pressure was coupled with an aggressive and radical propaganda campaign by extremist separatist leaders. New arrivals to West Germany and other Western countries were bombarded with radical materials which in no uncertain terms called them to direct violent action against the Yugoslav state. As one typical example of separatist propaganda read:

It must be clear to all, that this state [an independent Croatia] can only be established through a general Croatian revolution, and not through peaceful, legal, or diplomatic means. We know well the character and qualities of our adversary. They will never simply leave on their own, as long as they have the power and bayonets in their hands. One must take them away, so that the Croatian nation once again can have a state of its own and become master of its own destiny.³⁷

There was, the discourse of the separatists made clear, one aim and one aim only: the destruction of Yugoslavia. Neither the means nor the methods of achieving it mattered. As the title page of every edition of the organizational organ of Otpor read:

Our position is clear. Annihilate every Yugoslavia! To annihilate it with the Russians and the Americans, with the communists, non-communists, and anti-communists; to annihilate it with all those who annihilate it. To annihilate it with the dialectic of words and with dynamite, but to annihilate it absolutely; for, if there is any state which has no entitlement to existence, it is exclusively and alone Yugoslavia!

The old guard of the Ustaša may not itself have engaged in any violent or terrorist activities in the name of Croatian separatism since the final defeat of the remnants of the wartime Ustaša in 1948, but a full generation later their rhetoric remained as militant as ever. The time had come for the younger generation to take up the reigns left to them by their forbearers and continue the tradition of armed revolution which had—in the discourse of the Ustaša—led to the establishment of the first independent Croatian state in 1941. As new emigrants were repeatedly told, “All of us, to the last, must finally come to our senses and convert our belief in Croatia into actions. We must fight against every Yugoslavia, because the first was bad and the second worse. It is our duty to act. ... We must all become soldiers of Croatia!”³⁸

In a very real sense, this fiercely nationalistic and separatist propaganda formed the basis of a radical discursive milieu which influenced the very character of the Croatian diaspora community in the 1960s and 1970s. This milieu had a dynamic effect on a significant portion of the newer generation of emigrants and helped spark the emergence of repertoires of terrorist and violent action among young émigrés. In a 1962 interview in the émigré journal *Mlada Hrvatska*, Maks Luburić predicted, described, and even promoted this development among the new generation of émigrés:

The second revolution lay in the reality, that the Youth seeks, wishes, and will begin it. Alone!!! They are the ones who have proclaimed the war against Serbo-communism and the second Yugoslavia. We have waited long enough, what the West would say. This ‘West’ is not available. ... We are democrats, but democracy only helps our communism. ... Through their loyalty to the American constitution, the American Croats are bound. The young generation [in West Germany], however, is committed to the Croatian constitution. The constitution of the Croatian revolution! And this Youth sets itself in movement, and on the barricades against Serbo-communism in Yugoslavia there will be no more parties, no committees, no groups, legitimacy, no distinct Croatian military, nothing, which will serve as a reminder of class-based Croatia, or of geographic or confessional differences. On the barricades of the Croatian revolution, spiritually and physically, there will be only the Croatian youth! There is only one goal: the democratic, free, independent, social CROATIAN STATE of God!!! On the other side of the barricades, Serbo-communism and the second Yugoslavia! This is the second revolution ...³⁹

³⁷ *Hrvatska Sloboda*, no.21 (1968):3.

³⁸ Pavlo Perović. *Otpor*, no.3 (March 1976):8.

³⁹ *Mlada Hrvatska*, no.12 (1962).

This “second revolution” would not be a revolution of the old guard of Croatian separatists. They had fought their battle, and even for a short time drunk from the Holy Grail. The new revolution lay with the new generation, which had to recognize its role in the struggle and to be conscious of its ‘duty’ to the homeland. The older émigrés had paved the way forward, but it was now time for the next generation to take the struggle to the next level: armed struggle against the hated Yugoslav state.

This helped frame the repertoires of violence embraced by Croatian separatists as they stepped up their activities against the Yugoslav state. In keeping with the transnational nature of the separatist movement itself, violence against Yugoslavia took place in transnational space. With direct warfare against Europe’s fourth largest army clearly impossible, Croatian separatists believed they had to strike at Tito’s Yugoslavia wherever they could, including outside the borders of Yugoslavia itself. Competing separatist groups, eager to mobilize new supporters, advocated the killing of Yugoslav representatives and destruction of Yugoslav property wherever they existed as an effective first step in the eventual destruction of socialist Yugoslavia. As one *Otpor* leader wrote:

Yugoslavia does not exist only within its borders, but also abroad. Similarly, more than half of all Croats fit for action found themselves outside the country. ... This makes both the responsibility of those of us who live outside the homeland and who enjoy a reasonably sizable freedom completely clear and our cooperation in the revolutionary current justified and essential! We must annihilate Yugoslavia everywhere it exists.⁴⁰

Diplomats, trade and military representatives, journalists, and other agents of the Yugoslav government were all marked as possible targets for assassination by radical separatist groups. The offices of JAT—the official airline of Yugoslavia—and Jugotours—the government-run tourist bureau—in cities such as Frankfurt, Melbourne and Stockholm were designated as prime targets for bomb attacks.⁴¹ Any attack against the institutions of Tito’s state, young émigrés were informed, was a blow to the former Partisan leader’s regime and a step forward for Croatian independence. For this reason, ‘the soldiers of Croatia’ had to be prepared to fight Yugoslavia wherever the state had a presence, be it in Belgrade, Brisbane or Bremen.

Or Bonn. On November 29, 1962, socialist Yugoslavia’s “Day of the Republic,” twenty-nine members of the Croatian Crusaders Brotherhood (HKB—*Hrvatsko Križarsko Bratstvo*) stormed the Yugoslav trade mission in Bonn-Mehlem, blowing up a portion of the building and killing the mission’s Serbian porter. This was the opening salvo in the new émigré struggle against the hated Yugoslav state. The HKB had been formed just a year earlier in Dortmund as a militant youth organization associated with the HOP. With only one exception, each of the twenty-nine members of the HKB who attempted to occupy the former embassy building had been born between 1936 and 1942, making the oldest just nine at end of World War II in 1945 and twenty-six at the time of the attack. These *Križari*—as they referred to themselves—were not pre-war revolutionaries or wartime Ustaša fighters. They were the ‘vanguard’ of a new generation of “Croatian Freedom Fighters” who saw it as their duty to deliver the Croatian nation from the fetters of “Serbo-communist” oppression. Propaganda seized from the HKB stated that, “The hated chains of communism, the tyranny and slavery over the Croatian nation is nearing its last days. The Croatian revolutionary forces in the emigration are materially and morally ready to bring to an end all crimes, all crimes of the annihilation of Croatia and the Croatian nation, to shake off the tyranny and chains of slavery and bring to the Homeland its desired freedom.”⁴² For a generation, Croatian émigré separatists—to borrow from the rhetoric of Maks Luburić—had only been able to fight Yugoslavia with the dialectic of words. The

⁴⁰ *Otpor*, no.2 (1975):4.

⁴¹ As the Australia-based Croatian Revolutionary Brotherhood (HRB—*Hrvatsko Revolucionarno Bratstvo*) instructed their members, “Destroy all Yugoslav embassies and consulates, kill Yugoslav diplomatic representatives because they are common criminals and Fascists. Prevent migrants from traveling on Yugoslav aircraft, and destroy Yugoslav aircraft. Wreck the travel agencies.” Quoted in: Clissold. p.16.

⁴² PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 100: Dok. 403/63. (28. März 1963).

coming of age of the next generation of Croats abroad made it possible to return to dynamite, which was amply demonstrated by the ‘heroes of Mehlem.’

During the 1960s, Croatian radicals increasingly embraced the use of political violence. Terrorist activities ranged from the destruction of Yugoslav flags outside of train stations in Cologne and Sydney to the dissemination of banned materials to the transportation of explosives across state borders.⁴³ The offices of JAT and Jugotours in cities such as Paris and Munich were repeatedly targeted, as were representatives of the Yugoslav government throughout the West. In addition to several failed assassination attempts on various Yugoslav envoys,⁴⁴ Croatian separatists killed at least two Yugoslav diplomats, the ambassador to Sweden Vladimir Rolović and the vice-consul in Stuttgart Sava Milovanović. In June 1963, several young West German trained Australian émigrés were arrested by Yugoslav authorities shortly after entering the country with the intent of engaging in acts of sabotage. In 1968, West German-based Croatian separatists exploded bombs in the main train station and in a movie theatre in Belgrade.⁴⁵ The same year, exile Croats living on the Bodensee twice planted bombs on the Akropolis Express, a daily train which ran from Munich to Athens through socialist Yugoslavia. In the period between 1964 and 1967, thirty-eight Croatian emigrants were found guilty of ‘terrorist’ activities in the Federal Republic.⁴⁶ Many more engaged in activities deemed ‘terrorist’ by West German authorities, but eluded arrest or conviction. With only limited exceptions, these individuals belonged not to the earlier group of post-war émigrés, but to the second generation of radical Croats who had been recruited into the separatist movement only after arriving in the West.

After 1971, the frequency and seriousness of Croatian separatist violence only increased, as the population of young émigrés in the West continued to grow and as the political situation in Yugoslavia itself worsened.⁴⁷ Radical Croatian separatists slowly graduated from late-night bomb attacks and assassination attempts to plane hijackings and hostage taking. In 1972, a group of West German trained Croatian émigrés from Australia staged a failed armed insurrection in Yugoslavia itself, believing—incorrectly—that the Croats of Yugoslavia were ripe for revolution. In the same year, Croat émigrés in Sweden hijacked a plane in an attempt to secure the release those arrested for the arrest of ambassador Rolović. Four years later, Croats in New York hijacked a second plane with the hope of drawing world attention to the “plight” of the Croatian nation. In 1978, Croatian nationalists took six hostages in the West German consulate in Chicago demanding the release of several Croats being held by the government in Bonn. The problem became so acute that the West German government declared émigré Croatian separatism to be “the Number One problem with foreigners” in the country.⁴⁸ This assertion was shared by Tito himself, who, in approaching several Western

⁴³ PAAA. Bestand B42 (Band 1341): 11.11.1969. “Kroatische Emigrantenorganisationen.”

⁴⁴ Those targeted for assassination included the Yugoslav Consul in Munich Andrija Klarić, a government representative in Düsseldorf Mihailo Vlahović, and the head of the Yugoslav Military Mission in Berlin Ante Kolendić.

⁴⁵ For the ties of those responsible for these bombing to the Croatian émigré community in West Germany, see: PAAA. Bestand B42 (Band 1000A): “Aide memoire from the Yugoslav govt to the FRG govt,” 26.Juli 1968.

⁴⁶ PAAA. Bestand B42 (Band 1341): 11.11.1969. “Kroatische Emigrantenorganisationen.”

⁴⁷ During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Croatia experienced a resurgence in both cultural and political nationalism which greatly concerned the Federal government in Belgrade. In 1971, as this resurgence turned into a full-fledged political movement, Tito cracked down hard on the political and intellectual establishment in Croatia. Over 1,600 members of the Croatian Communist Party were either forced to resign from the Party or expelled outright, including its two highest ranking members Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Miko Tripalo. Hundreds of others were jailed. The movement eventually came to be known as the Croatian Spring. See: Ante Čuvalo. *The Croatian National Movement, 1966-1972*. New York: East European Monographs, 1990. See also: Steven Burg. *Conflict and Cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p.126; George Schöpflin. “The Ideology of Croatian Nationalism,” *Survey*, XIX/1 (1973):123-146; and Jill A. Irvine. *The Croat Question*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. p.258-272.

⁴⁸ PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 1475: Dok. 5.Mai 1972 “Besprechung mit dem Beauftragten für das Konsularwesen der jugoslawischen Regierung, E. Kljun, am 19.4.1972 um 10.30 Uhr über Aktivitäten kroatischer Emigrantenorganisationen.”

countries about Croatian émigré activities, characterized the Croatian diaspora as perhaps the greatest “threat to the [Yugoslav] regime and to the survival of the federal state.”⁴⁹

Rather than the product of some systemic or psychological dysfunction, this terrorism emerged out of a clear and rational process of radicalization which led to the adoption of strategic violence as a form of political action.⁵⁰ Established organizational structures in the diaspora community, internal competition between rival political factions, patterns of migration, and other external circumstances all contributed to the development of radical extremism among émigré Croats. Of course, this process of radicalization swayed only a small number of post-1960 Croatian emigrants to embrace terrorism and political violence in the name of Croatian independence. As one West German governmental report from 1972 stated clearly, “the vast majority of Croats in the Federal Republic are docile. [The problem of terrorism was] a matter of only a tiny, virulent minority.”⁵¹ But it swayed enough, resulting in a period of violence responsible for scores of deaths, not just in West Germany but around the globe. It is impossible to speculate whether alone either the established old guard of radical separatists or the new generation of *Gastarbeiters* possessed the necessary resources—social, political, ideological, economic—to have radicalized the Croatian political opposition movement abroad to the degree it was. Clearly, however, interactions between the two groups proved to be a lethal mixture, placing Croatian extremists among the most active terrorists of post World War II European history.

This was exacerbated by the pressures placed on the Croatian émigré community by its transnational character. The disjointed nature of the diaspora magnified the cleavages and conflicts among both leading and secondary political actors, which proved vital to the radicalization of the separatist movement. The repertoires of political action adopted by radical émigré nationalists—most notably political violence—were directly shaped by the transnational framework within which the Croatian diaspora was forced to operate. Although both the core and target of the Croatian separatist movement were ostensibly *national*—the Croatian nation and the Yugoslav state, respectively—violence by the former against the latter was only truly possible because both existed in *transnational* space. In this way, *landscapes* superseded *lands* when it came to imagining, organizing and realizing violence against socialist Yugoslavia in the name of Croatian independence. The end result was a wave of terrorist acts which left their mark on both Yugoslav and Western society.

⁴⁹ “Yugoslavia—The Ustashi and the Croatian Separatist Problem, 27 September, 1972.” In: *From “National Communism” to National Collapse: U.S. Intelligence Community Estimative Products on Yugoslavia, 1948-1990*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2007. p.470.

⁵⁰ Only toward the end of the 1970s did radical Croatian separatist political violence begin to fizzle out. As the decade wore on, a number of factors converged to sap the Croatian separatist movement of its impetus towards violence. One, simply, was Cold War détente, which severely limited the room to manoeuvre of all separatist and anti-Communist movements in Western Europe. A second was the dramatic increase in Western European left-wing terrorism, which led to increased government attention to all forms of political violence in Germany and elsewhere. The third was the effectiveness of the Yugoslav Secret Services both in infiltrating separatists groups and in liquidating leading separatist leaders. In just the first half of the 1970s, over 30 Croatian émigrés were murdered by the Yugoslav Secret Service in West Germany. The final factor was the ineffectiveness of the violence itself. The failed 1972 uprising in Bosnia was followed by several further failed undertakings, including the disastrous airplane hijacking of 1976 which resulted in the death of a New York City police officer.

⁵¹ PAAA. Bestand B42, Band 1475: Dok. 5.Mai 1972 “Besprechung mit dem Beauftragten für das Konsularwesen der jugoslawischen Regierung, E. Kljun, am 19.4.1972 um 10.30 Uhr über Aktivitäten kroatischer Emigrantenorganisationen.”

Author contacts:

Dr. Mate Nikola Tokić

Department of History

American University in Cairo

113, Qasr al-Aini Street

P.O. Box 2511

Cairo 11511

Egypt

Email: mntokic@gmail.com