

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

The Croatian experience

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This article addresses the relationship between multiculturalism, identity politics and active citizenship from the example of the history of Croatian settlement and Croatian associational or community life in Australia. My primary focus is on those Croats who arrived in the first two waves of post-1945 immigration because they represent the majority of Croatian-born in Australia and because there is a considerable amount of evidence (hitherto barely touched upon either by historians or by theorists of Australian multiculturalism) relating to this settlement experience and its impact on Australian civic life and identity.

My case study suggested the lived experience of Croatian association was a means by which individuals who had little education, poor English language skills and limited economic and professional opportunities exhibited an attachment to and an understanding of democratic processes and values in the pluralist society they had embraced as their own. This experience, in turn, contributed to their integration and, at the same time, to the retention of elements of their cultural background. In spite of arguments to the contrary, it also contributed to their peaceful coexistence with fellow Australians,

Yugoslav and non-Yugoslav, and to social cohesion.¹

The example of Croatian associational life is not exceptional and much of what I argue may be usefully applied to other immigrant groups in Australia across the same period.² The Croatian example, however, does stand out in some respects. It is instructive because, as this article shows, the history of Croatian communities in Australia presents us with a series of paradoxes that call into question some of the accepted stereotypes of Croatian behaviour in Australia.³ Further, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the ensuing wars of the 1990s enabled Croats in Australia to demonstrate their capacity to organise themselves and their local community structures on a global scale and provide the historian with the opportunity to observe the impact—locally, nationally and internationally—of their practice of active citizenship in the course of their daily lives.⁴ This article thus speculates on the effect of citizen engagement at the grassroots level on an evolving Australian identity and attempts, in part, to answer the question posed by Geoffrey Brahm Levey: ‘How well does Australia allow immigrants to serve Australian democracy?’⁵ Finally, we will consider the ca-

capacity of Croats in Australia to contribute to the future development and quality of Australian and Croatian civic life in the context of returns to Croatia (permanent and temporary) of members of the first generation and their Australian-born offspring.

Methodologically, my approach rests on the belief that close micro-studies of the history of the community engagement of immigrant groups from the inside out and from the bottom up provide an informed and nuanced understanding of the debates surrounding multiculturalism and citizenship in Australia. I will first discuss briefly the relevant points of contention in these debates and then outline the history of Croatian settlement in Australia in order to introduce my discussion of four paradoxes regarding Croatian community activism in Australia, which I believe warrant further reflection. The first of these paradoxes is that at a time when Croatian identity was not recognised in Australia and without government support, Croats displayed a high degree of initiative and flexibility in the establishment of community organisations. Second, Croatian women, overwhelmingly working class and poorly represented in formal Croatian structures, were active and visible in many aspects of associational life. Third, Croatian immigrants had low levels of education and low socioeconomic status but enjoyed success in their political lobbying for national recognition at the local, state and Commonwealth levels and attained a high degree of financial security relative to other immigrant groups and relative to the Australian population at large. Finally, whereas Croatia was not a sovereign state and one of the foundational tenets of Yugoslavism was that it would

supersede or 'accommodate' south Slav nationalisms, Croats became known for their strong national identity.

IMMIGRANTS AS CITIZENS

Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts argue that 'Australian citizenship is grounded in the everyday life of citizens and local communities'.⁶ Broadly, I support this premise, but reject their claim that multiculturalism militates against the practice of Australian citizenship and against social cohesion and that it is potentially corrosive. Galligan and Roberts argue persuasively against Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined construct and against minimalist conceptions of citizenship as grounded only in a set of laws or rights, universal and supranational, or 'anational'. Evoking Edmund Burke's 'little platoons' as the sites of the expression of civic identity and nationhood in its various guises, they suggest a middle way between triumphant and partial images of a monocultural Australian national identity and the (anarchic) cultural diversity of dogmatic multiculturalism, which, at its most radical, eschews the notion of a set of overarching commonly held Australian values in political, social and cultural life. Galligan and Roberts believe that Australia is not multicultural in the 'classic' sense and probably never was.⁷ Rather, they argue that the provision of support for immigrant groups, especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and the official promotion of tolerance for diversity and equal opportunity have facilitated a process of complete integration or 'transition' whereby the subsequent generations are 'thoroughly Australianised'.⁸ Referring to the various

ways in which Australians have revealed their affinity with each other and with a set of political and ethical norms, Galligan and Roberts discuss voluntary associational life spanning the provision of medical services to remote rural areas to local self-help or environmental groups as an expression of active Australian citizenship in the microcosm. (Curiously, associational life along ethnic lines does not figure in this scenario even when the outcome is, as Galligan and Roberts argue, integration.) It would seem, then, that in opposition to the concept of multiculturalism as a fixed alternative to (an incomplete) vision of Australianness as white, male and British, 'transitional multiculturalism' is a catalyst for change. But the idea that multiculturalism has reached its 'use by' date is based on a superficial understanding of integration (defined largely in terms of rates of intermarriage in the second and third generations) and a product of the failure to acknowledge that citizen association along ethnic lines has contributed to the moulding of an evolving Australian identity.⁹ While possibly nostalgic, even closed at times, ethnic structures have been responsive to change and have assumed some of the (positive) characteristics of the dominant culture to which their members freely and, generally, enthusiastically subscribed. Further, ethnic association has provided a vehicle for immigrants to experience the fullness of Australian civil society and active citizenship in communities that are familiar to them and which inspire trust, one of the preconditions of active citizenship and the formation of social capital. The earliest studies of ethnic associational life, even if generally sympathetic, labelled it as insular and thereby outside the parameters of 'Australi-

an' or 'host' associational life and irrelevant to the practice of active citizenship.¹⁰ This tendency has persisted for the most part in the critique of multiculturalism and in general debates about citizenship and Australian identity. I reject the glaring double standard that allows for associational life emanating from 'Australian' circles to be inherently open and enriching to the wider community and ethnic activism, inherently insular and without benefits for anyone beyond the group in question. By definition, all associational life—'Australian' or 'ethnic'—is, at least initially, inward looking in the sense that it serves a prescribed set of interests.

The debate about the appropriateness of the term 'multicultural' in Australian public life is largely semantic and, apparently, irrelevant to a vast proportion of the population who endorse its general application.¹¹ Critics of the term, alarmist or mild, are on occasion more theoretical or abstract than empirical in their observations of Australian multicultural practice.¹² Alternatively, some use the concept of multiculturalism in their armoury as they deny the integrity of an Australian national identity and the existence of a set of core civic values to which Australians generally adhere, and as they pronounce the end of the era of nationalism or the advent of the 'post-national' world. But this position is just as extreme and largely untenable. A more reasonable position recognises that multiculturalism, grounded in the ideals of equity, access and social justice, among others, is also a vehicle for the practice of active citizenship, which, in all its diversity, contributes to the continuing evolution of an Australian identity. This identity is not weakened but is nourished by the activism evident in eth-

nic association at the lowest level and among some of the least powerful members of the body politic.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CROATIAN IMMIGRATION PATTERNS

Croats have been arriving in Australia since the mid nineteenth century. A large proportion of Croatian settlers in Australia came from areas along the Croatian coast and had lived with a long tradition of departures from their islands, towns or villages. It could be said that emigration was part of their historical memory and culture. The number of Croats present in Australia in the nineteenth century remained hidden as they were variously known as Austrians, Italians and 'S(c)lavonians'.¹³ In Australia, Croats formed networks emanating from patterns of traditional family or chain migration but they also made connections with their co-nationals from regions much further afield than their local village or town. In nineteenth-century Australia, Croats travelled great distances to maintain contact with each other and celebrate important milestones in their lives from cradle to grave, including events such as marriages, christenings and funerals in what were, in essence, small Croatian communities.¹⁴ Croats arriving in Australia in the twentieth century continued to establish strong networks with each other. In the interwar period, they were known as and, indeed, referred to themselves as Yugoslavs. They were actively engaged in ethnic publishing ventures, musical and folkloric ensembles and featured prominently in labour activism, especially in mining communities in Western Australia and Broken Hill.¹⁵

All of the history of Croats in Australia since the end of World War I was mediated through the presence of a strong Yugoslav state, which, as the product of the collapse of empires in the wake of the Great War, became important strategically in international relations. The meaning of the word 'Yugoslav' was often contested. It was used differently by different people. For example, most 'Yugoslavs' in Mildura, Broken Hill and Kalgoorlie in the 1930s and 1940s were left-leaning or communist Croats, some of whom had left the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes because of its repressive politics.¹⁶ During World War II, Croats in Australia were involved in lobbying support for the Partisans led by Tito and complained to the Australian Government about the Yugoslav Consuls in Sydney and Perth because they were regarded as Serbian royalists and followers of the Chetnik resisters turned collaborators and their leader, Draža Mihailovi.¹⁷ After 1945, these Croats and others among the immediate postwar arrivals still referred to themselves as 'Yugoslavs'. This was often to distinguish themselves from the stereotype of Croats as anti-communist and as supporters of the wartime collaborationists, the *Ustaša*, or of the political far right.¹⁸ This distinction between 'Croats' and Croatian Yugoslavs was constant through to the collapse of communist Yugoslavia in the 1990s and it is important to recognise that in the Australian Croatian context it related less to ideas about ethnicity and nationhood than to attitudes towards the Yugoslav state or simple political affiliation—of the Croats and their outside observers.¹⁹

The post-1945 period saw a massive increase in the numbers of Croatian-born settling in Australia. They came in the first

instance as displaced people or as refugees. Limited numbers also came on assisted passage, some after having crossed the Yugoslav borders illegally. Later, they arrived as 'economic migrants' and in accordance with the agreement reached between the governments of Australia and Yugoslavia in 1970.²⁰ The definition of those departing Yugoslavia as 'economic migrants' in this second wave of post-1945 immigration was problematic from at least two perspectives: first, political factors governed the deteriorating social and economic situation in Yugoslavia in general; and second, those people who left often did so for a complex set of reasons—personal, economic, political and often, in the case of Croats, national—which made it difficult to demarcate strictly between economic and political migrants at that time. The numbers of Croatian immigrants dropped significantly from the 1980s. In spite of the fact that Australia received refugees from the wars of the 1990s, the total number of arrivals (many of whom were of a higher socioeconomic group) did not alter significantly the social makeup of the Croatian-born.²¹

A SERIES OF PARADOXES

One of the common ways of viewing Croatian settlement in Australia emphasises conflict and division. This perception is often then offset by a defensive and inward-looking story of 'success'. Neither approach takes into account the range of Croatian immigrant experiences. Both approaches are one-dimensional and ahistorical, reinforcing stereotypes with recourse to the usual dichotomies (of class in particular). Each approach, in its own way, undervalues aspects of Croatian association

that accommodate (rather than exclude) difference and have led to a sense of social cohesion, the accumulation of social capital and a strong affinity with Australian democratic processes.²² (Interestingly, discussions on the link between social capital and active citizenship identify high socioeconomic status as one of the significant contributing variables, which may in part explain why the relationship between ethnic association and activism and social capital is largely overlooked.)²³ In order to broaden the base of evidence on which we can draw to amplify our understanding of these important issues, we can identify the examples of and reasons for the emergence of a Croatian civic identity in the Australian context. An obvious way to do this is to look more closely at some of the features of association and activism that have hitherto been treated in only a cursory fashion or, indeed, thought to militate against cooperative social action and against integration. The four features or patterns of Croatian settlement I have chosen to discuss suggest ways in which Croats have mediated a reciprocal relationship between the old and the new, between maintaining elements of their ethnic identity and adapting to their changed circumstances, thereby exhibiting the qualities of active citizenship. Again, it is important to recognise that aspects of this discussion may apply to other immigrant groups, which also display high levels of engagement and voluntarism in the same time span.

The first point or paradox of note is that while for most of the period of Croatian immigration to Australia under review here there was no official acknowledgment of the settlers as ethnically or nationally distinctive, there was a high degree of

community activism and political lobbying by Croats as Croats. This culminated in their recognition by the Australian Government as a distinct national and language group.²⁴ Before ethnic and multicultural initiatives received financial aid—that is, before Australia embraced multiculturalism in the 1970s—Croats displayed a remarkable degree of flexibility, initiative and determination in setting up a range of structures to meet their social, cultural and welfare needs and did so without material or moral assistance from governmental agencies, either Australian or Yugoslav. They had no administrative or institutional support and relied on the voluntary work of Croats for their success. Thousands of individuals gave their time and skills freely in fundraising for the purchase of land on which they built halls, ethnic schools, sports centres and churches. In many regards, the achievements of the Croatian activists in South Australia stand as representative examples of the immigrants' resourcefulness in Australia as a whole.²⁵ Approximately 6.9 per cent (3580) of Australia's Croatian-born live in South Australia.²⁶ The first Australian 'Croatian club' was established in Adelaide in 1950 and others followed thereafter in capital cities and regional centres. Through sport, soccer in particular, Croats were able to find a social outlet and to have an impact on Australian sporting culture. The soccer team Adelaide Croatia, established in 1952, was the first of its kind in Australia, enjoyed a number of successes in the state league and still exists today. Adelaide is also home to the oldest continuously running Croatian ethnic school in Australia.²⁷ In addition, there are folk ensembles and local programs in Croatian have been produced for

South Australian community radio stations since 1976. There are activities for elderly members of the community (as befits the ageing demographic of the Croatian-born) as well as an Australian-Croatian Chamber of Commerce. While several associations have existed in South Australia since the 1950s and 1960s, others, such as the writers' group, are recent initiatives and reflect the changing social landscape of community centres across the country.²⁸ The range and intensity of this activity over several decades attest to a desire for broad social and cultural experiences and to the fact that these immigrants place a high value on participation in activities outside the home and workplace and whose benefits could not be quantified or are not measured in terms of direct (personal) material gain.²⁹ David Hogan and David Owen argue that there is a link between 'levels of social capital and levels of engagement in important citizenship practices, especially "voluntarist" practices within community organisations'.³⁰ Placing the example of immigrant voluntarist practices, not just that of Croats but of many other equally active groups, within this broader context presents us with a view that is different from the perspective of ethnic activism as 'closed' and amplifies our understanding of active citizenship. Moreover, privileging association as ostensibly more outward looking and more 'civic' purely on the basis that it emanates from the 'host' culture is, as we have seen, problematic on many counts.

The second point that invites reflection is the fact that while Croatian women are absent from most of the upper echelons of Croatian organisational structures, they have been remarkably active in community life. The Croatian women's contri-

bution has generally been deemed a simple extension of traditional female pursuits or domestic duties and as such has not been studied seriously. However, as historians of gender have demonstrated, women who seem to be publicly 'absent' from communities in the past have in fact been active in many different aspects of social and cultural life through their sociability and networks grounded in their associational life. For a long time, the wider import of this 'hidden' history was neither understood nor seen to be something from which we could learn and this was especially the case for immigrant women in Australia.³¹

The raw facts on Croatian-born women in Australia would seem to confirm the findings of general studies of migrant women in the workforce that show they are generally unskilled and poorly paid.³² In Victoria, for example, Croatian women have traditionally been employed in textile industries, in light manufacturing plants and, on occasion, as seasonal farm workers.³³ There is not much deviation from this pattern in other states, but Croatian working-class women have had a broader social engagement and have been more active than statistics about their employment history and levels of education might suggest. They established and ran ethnic schools and folkloric ensembles while also providing social support and caring for the welfare of their communities.³⁴ Often, as intimated above, this activism reflected their traditional (gendered) role in Croatian families and the population at large, but it also reflected the kind of associational life not ordinarily identified with working-class women.³⁵ Historians typically describe these as middle-class pursuits whereby women of a certain social standing who do not work outside the home

draw on the kinds of skills gleaned in bourgeois households.³⁶ The inherent class bias in analyses of Croatian women's lives needs to be redressed: their experience amplifies the received wisdom about migrant women in Australia and the evidence of women's organisational skills exhibited at the time of Croatia's war for independence (1991–95), for example, invites closer analysis.

During this war, Croatian women supervised large-scale aid projects and major fundraising events. They came to clubs and community centres after long hours of work, bringing their sewing machines with them. Having purchased hundreds of metres of material in bulk, they took to cutting it and sewing children's pyjamas, tracksuits, sheets and other items for dispatch in sea containers. They organised the collection of non-perishable foodstuffs for the victims of the war and the refugees. They purchased medicines and other necessities of life. They supported and continue to support orphans.³⁷ These actions were the product of goodwill but also of a kind of self-actualisation made more visible by the special circumstances, to be sure, but prepared for over many years by the commitment to voluntarism and the (unstated) recognition of its social and psychic benefits. Anecdotal evidence suggests these values are generally not shared by the waves of immigrants arriving since the 1980s (especially in the wake of the collapse of Yugoslavia), who equate voluntarism with 'unpaid work'. A possible interpretation of this difference in attitude may be that there is no longer a need for such intense activism and that recent arrivals have greater scope to pursue a range of professional opportunities. However, one might also consider this at-

titute a consequence of the erosion of civil and social life under communism and trace it to the perversion of the idea of voluntarism from the first years of communist implantation. In the aftermath of the destruction of World War II, brigades of youth 'volunteers' literally built the new socialist state through obligatory participation in construction programs. At the same time, the State did not tolerate 'social' or voluntary activities emanating from private initiatives (for example, church-run charitable work) because they were deemed inappropriate in a setting in which the State fulfilled its citizens' material needs.³⁸ Interestingly, the emergence of non-governmental organisations as representative of different interests in former communist states is often considered one of the markers of the relative health of the democratising process.

The third paradox, which is telling of the general and evolving social and civic experience of Croats, relates to the fact that post-1945 Croatian immigrants have had very low socioeconomic status in Australian society and yet have been able to achieve a degree of fluency in political processes and lobbying combined with a high level of financial security. Furthermore, they placed a significant value on investing in community infrastructure and in what I referred to above as social capital. Theirs is an impressive financial and cultural legacy of community centres and structures across Australia for use by future generations.³⁹ This is the case in spite of the fact that Croatian-born men and women are less educated and less socially mobile than their counterparts in the population at large. For example, in the 1990s, Croatian-born immigrants living in Victoria were less than half as likely to

be employed as professionals than the Victorian population as a whole.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Croats, along with other Southern European settlers, do have a very high per capita rate of home ownership relative to the population at large.⁴¹ Their early postwar patterns of settlement in urban centres, common to many immigrants, whereby, for example, they moved from inner-city rented dwellings to their own homes either in established working-class suburbs or in newer housing developments, indicated a degree of economic stability and continuous employment.⁴² The almost complete absence of a professional cadre of Croatian teachers, public servants and white-collar workers relative to comparable immigrant groups invites us to consider the possibility of barriers existing to their social advancement over time arising from the slow recognition of Croats as an identifiable national group with specific needs. Significantly, while an obvious impediment in certain areas of social advancement and mobility, the absence of this professional cadre did not pose a barrier to the establishment of a range of Croatian community groups. One possible explanation for this is that Croats, feeling they had an inferior status vis-à-vis other 'Yugoslavs' and other immigrants, expended greater effort ensuring their community structures did well.⁴³ Their collective business acumen and their recognition of the need to plan for the long term have remained unexplored by historians who have interpreted their efforts (superficially) as narrowly nationalistic or insular.⁴⁴ Moreover, the more recent tendency to focus on Croatian business elites, on the obvious and highly visible—the millionaire ship-builder or the owner of the three-times winner of the

Melbourne Cup, for example—has left a story that obscures the collective and individual experiences of the less spectacularly productive but nonetheless socially active Australian Croats. The greater emphasis on the outcomes rather than the process of immigrant community activism explains this imbalance as does the general absence of ethnic associational life from mainstream discussions about the relationship between active citizenship and the generation of social capital.

Finally, we had the paradox whereby Croatia was not an independent country but Croats in Australia were known for having a strong national identity. The partial explanation for this is that their high public profile was the product of their reaction against negative stereotyping.⁴⁵ One of their chosen methods of political lobbying—in group demonstrations and, where possible, near buildings housing Yugoslav consular staff or other official Yugoslav agencies—led to the conflation of all Croatian nationalist activism (anti-Yugoslavism) as potentially violent and rooted in the politics of collaborationism in World War II. This was the international framework for the teleological interpretation of all modern Croatian history and for the interpretation of the history of Central European and Balkan collaboration as exceptional. It was also the starting point for any analysis of Croatian émigré activities. This framework of interpretation persisted at least up to the fall of Yugoslavia, when some of the boundaries between Croats and Croatian ‘Yugoslavs’ became more blurred or disappeared.⁴⁶ It is also true that the Yugoslav Government’s attempt at discrediting Croatian activism by referring to it as ‘extreme’, ‘fascist’ or ‘separatist’ in inspira-

tion as well as its crude attempts at ‘neutralising’ Croatian ‘troublemakers’ eventually lost its capacity to undermine Croatian communities as a whole, either in Australia or elsewhere.⁴⁷ The reality of the situation meant that the media and government-manufactured Croatian ‘type’ was no longer sustainable because it was not rooted in the lived experience of Croats in Australia, or indeed the lived experience of Australians who came into contact with Croatian people. Croats did not exist in a vacuum nor were they simply reactive. They were contesting a negative and one-dimensional interpretation of their identity and positing another in its place. At times, this led to a certain defensiveness on their part.⁴⁸ On the whole, however, their reaction to the slurs against them led Croats (collectively) to be more outward looking: their behaviour was less ‘conspiratorial’ and ‘nostalgic’ than it was flexible, forward looking and adaptable. For example, a ‘petrified’ backward-looking community trapped in a time capsule could not have achieved what no other Croatian émigré community had achieved: official recognition of the integrity of the Croatian (as opposed to the so-called Serbo-Croatian) language, financial support for Croatian interpreting and translating services and Croatian language teaching in ethnic and public schools, and the establishment of the Croatian Studies Centre at Macquarie University in Sydney. The specific argument Croats had with the official use of ‘Serbo-Croat’ made their lobbying on this score distinctive.

CONCLUSION

It would be wrong to suggest that the story I have told relates uniquely or

equally to all Croats in Australia or that theirs is a narrative of unequivocal success in terms of community relations and citizenship formation. However, this article has argued that superficial and essentialist observations about the Croats' predisposition to a certain kind of narrow and inward-looking nationalism are wanting in many respects. Events leading to the collapse of Yugoslavia were not precipitated by conspiratorial émigré 'separatists' but by the breakdown of social, political and economic life, the absence of social cohesion, a serious deficit of social capital and the collapse of communism in Europe. As is well documented, the fall of Yugoslavia occasioned a series of terrible wars of succession and great suffering.⁴⁹ Some feared that there would be unrest and violence among and between South Slav groups in Australia, but this did not eventuate. On the contrary, in their relief work, Croats drew on the skills of active citizenship they had acquired over many years from the model of their 'multicultural practice' in the microcosm of their clubs and social and religious centres. It could be said that it was understandable that they should embark on concerted action given the circumstances of the war. But as any student of the social history of modern warfare can testify, there is nothing inevitable about a 'united front' at times of crisis or in war. It seems reasonable to suggest that having negotiated their acculturation without compromising their multiple (mutually compatible) identities—ethnic, social, political and professional—Croats could now draw on their experience of decades of activism. They had pursued this activism in the face of indifference at best, and hostility at worst, and for the duration of the war managed vast

shipments of aid in many forms as well as rallying moral and political support among the wider population for the cause of Croatian sovereignty.

The war of succession in Croatia was therefore a defining moment for regional and urban Croatian community life in Australia. It brought together, in concerted action, Croats from different centres including, for example, the Port Lincoln fishermen who donated tonnes of canned seafood. The experience of decades of intense associational life and voluntary activity for non-material gains schooled them and prepared them to manage aid on a substantial international scale. It was the persistent efforts of these Croats themselves to maintain a sense of national identity through language, music, sport and welfare work that ultimately produced a community that balanced the inward push to preserve their heritage and the outward pull towards integration. For example, many of the offspring of the Croatian-born who have successfully negotiated their dual national identities have founded, and now run, structures appropriate to the changed circumstances. These include, for example, the Australian-Croatian Chambers of Commerce. Such Australian Croats are also products of the socialisation experienced in the Croatian ethnic schools system.⁵⁰ The formation of social capital, as we have seen, is linked to voluntary activity, which is 'socially patterned': family background is an important variable in adult civic participation. This suggests that if we look beyond the structures of ethnic association we may find a high predisposition towards active citizenship of the Australian-born offspring of immigrants who are engaged in their communities.⁵¹

Some have depicted Croatian immigrants arriving soon after 1945 and in the 1960s and 1970s as incapable of accommodating multiple identities and more crudely 'nationalistic' than a later generation of educated immigrants who do not seek so much to 'preserve' Croatian identity or even distinguish themselves by it but to cultivate (personal) professional satisfaction and success. Possibly this dichotomous view is compromised by a superficial understanding of the dynamics at work in the established ethnic organisations and the limited data and small sample available in the study of recent immigrants.⁵² I have argued that there is much of interest in the lives of the earlier waves of postwar Croatian immigrants to the historian of Australian multiculturalism, active citizenship and national identity. There is also much that the current Croatian Government could learn from the example of members of its most far-flung diasporic community, including those returning to their country of birth permanently or temporarily, as it prepares for its admission into the European Community.⁵³

We have seen that theorists of citizenship and multiculturalism note one important way of integrating minorities into the body politic is to foster strong ties across various social strata in a vigorous associational life that allows individuals and groups to promote their interests and participate in political life, conventionally and less conventionally defined, for the greater good. There is a long tradition of discourse on civic life along these lines. For example, the keys to the final (successful) implantation of republican and democratic values in France 80 years after the French Revolution of 1789 were a vigorous civic life evident across different regions

and within different social groups. In France, women and men, separately or together, involved themselves in organisations ranging from those arguing for prison reform and agricultural progress to those sponsoring charitable ventures for the sick, the infirm and the outcast: there was not uniformity but a plurality of intentions and identities as people demonstrated their attachment to the centre through their intense activism at the local level.⁵⁴ The Croats to whom I refer here may, indeed, have been 'anti-Yugoslav' but, predominantly, they expressed this through the positive affirmation of their identity as Australian citizens and through their legitimate desire to maintain aspects of their Croatian heritage, which was in turn tolerated and then nurtured in their new home. Overwhelmingly, their silent and hitherto unacknowledged contribution to social cohesion and to the presence of a robust Australian citizenry, inside their communal structures and within Australia as a whole, has remained hidden by the worn but well maintained fabric of their associational life.

ENDNOTES

¹ One of the best examples of the way in which Croatian immigrants were typically portrayed may be found in Aarons, Mark 1989, *Sanctuary. Nazi fugitives in Australia*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne.

² Several of my propositions could be applied to the other immigrant groups arriving in large numbers after 1945, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to embark on an extended comparative study.

³ Aarons, for example, writes of the 'massive' and 'credible evidence' amassed by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) on (alleged) Croatian terrorist activity in Australia and routinely refers to faceless 'Croatian extremists' in *Sanctuary*. It was normal practice to conflate Croatian social and cultural activism with international terrorism and wartime collaboration. Possibly the lack of discrim-

ination in the appraisal of Croatian association made it more difficult to identify who, precisely, was responsible for the series of bomb attacks on Yugoslav properties in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s. For a discussion of some of these issues, see Drapac, Vesna 2005, 'Perceptions of post-WWII Croatian immigrants: the South Australian case', *Croatian Studies Review*, vols 3–4, pp. 27–39.

⁴ David Hogan and David Owen have noted three measures of active citizenship as: the 'breadth of participation' in voluntary organisations; the amount of time devoted to voluntary organisations; and 'participation in political actions'. See their 'Social capital, active citizenship and political equality in Australia', 2000, in Ian Winter (ed.), *Social Capital and Public Policy in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 74–104.

⁵ Here Levey is turning on its head the question James Jupp raises in his 2003 publication, *How Well Does Australian Democracy Serve Immigrant Australians?* Levey, Geoffrey Brahm 2008, 'Multiculturalism and Australian national identity', in Geoffrey Brahm Levey (ed.), *Political Theory and Australian Multiculturalism*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, pp. 254–76.

⁶ Galligan, Brian and Roberts, Winsome 2004, *Australian Citizenship*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p. xv.

⁷ By this they mean Australian immigrant groups from non-English-speaking backgrounds are not distinctive, mutually exclusive and self-perpetuating or entirely separate from the 'dominant Anglo-Australian mainstream'. They suggest that for most Australians multiculturalism means simply equality of opportunity and access as well as tolerance for cultural diversity. See their *Australian Citizenship*, p. 14 and Chapter 4. See also Levey, 'Multicultural political thought in the Australian perspective'; and Galligan, Brian and Roberts, Winsome 2008, 'Multiculturalism, national identity and pluralist democracy: the Australian variant', in Geoffrey Brahm Levey (ed.), *Political Theory and Australian Multiculturalism*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, pp. 1–26, 209–24.

⁸ Galligan and Roberts, *Australian Citizenship*, pp. 5, 14. One of their key markers of integration is the successive generations' marriage outside the immigrant group.

⁹ James Jupp is critical of sweeping interpretations of integration as represented by statistics on intermarriage and the relatively careless use of intermarriage as a marker of the transitional nature of ethnic association and activism. He notes that there are numerous ways in which the second and third generations as well as Australia as a whole continue to be influenced and shaped by multiculturalism. See Jupp,

James 2008, 'A pragmatic response to a novel situation: Australian multiculturalism', in Geoffrey Brahm Levey (ed.), *Political Theory and Australian Multiculturalism*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, pp. 225–41, 230–1.

¹⁰ The pioneering work of Jean Martin, for example, set the standard for assessing group organisation along ethnic or 'minority' lines in terms of its potential to engage outside or 'host' structures: 'Theoretically, ethnic associations might take upon themselves the role of socialising individual immigrants into the host society; like some therapeutic groups, their success might then be measured by their disintegration. No such function formed any part of the goals of ethnic community organisation in Adelaide.' See Martin, Jean I. 1972, *Community and Identity: Refugee groups in Adelaide*, The Australian National University Press, Canberra, p. 122. This position is also the background to the anti-assimilationist rhetoric of some elements in the multicultural lobby in its formative stages. See Lopez, Mark 2000, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945–1975*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

¹¹ A poll conducted in 2005 found 80 per cent of Australians supported or strongly supported the policy of multiculturalism. See Markus, Maria R. 2008, 'Is Australian multiculturalism in crisis? A comment on Galligan and Roberts and on Jupp', in Geoffrey Brahm Levey (ed.), *Political Theory and Australian Multiculturalism*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, pp. 242–55.

¹² In *Australian Citizenship*, for example, Galligan and Roberts do not address ethnic association and focus largely on government policy and citizenship debates.

¹³ Šutalo, Ilija 2004, *Croatians in Australia: Pioneers, settlers and their descendants*, Wakefield Press, South Australia. Until recently, historians argued that only a handful of Croats had arrived in colonial Australia. Šutalo has found that at least 850 Croats had lived here before 1890. Graeme Hugo's research reveals that the number of returns, previously very low, is now higher than many would have anticipated before the collapse of Yugoslavia and it is reasonable to suggest that this is a consequence of Croatia becoming a sovereign state. Hugo, Graeme 2006, Migration and development: an Australian perspective on Croatia, Presentation to the Colloquium on Australian-Croatian Relations and the Role of the Diaspora, Croatian Club, Adelaide, 24 June 2006.

¹⁴ Šutalo, *Croatians in Australia*, passim.

¹⁵ See Marin Alagich and Steven Kosovich, 'Early Croatian settlement in eastern Australia', and Neven Smoje, 'Early Croatian settlement in Western Australia' (2001, in James Jupp [ed.], *The Australian People. An encyclopedia of the nation, its people and*

their origins, Cambridge University Press, Victoria, pp. 235–7, 241–3). See also Holjevac, Veceslav 1967, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, pp. 207–26.

¹⁶ The Communist Party was banned in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1921. Croats also experienced considerable economic and political hardship in the kingdom especially after the establishment of the royal dictatorship in 1929 and this situation often influenced their decision to emigrate. For an overview of the history of the kingdom, see Benson, Leslie 2004, *Yugoslavia: A concise history*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Chapter 3; and Ramet, Sabrina P. 2006, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-building and legitimation, 1918–2005*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, Washington, DC, and Bloomington, Ind., Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁷ See, for example, National Archives of Australia, A989/1943, 'Yugoslav Patriotic Fund for Yugoslav Forces and Refugees'.

¹⁸ Dr Ante Pavelic, leader of the émigré *Ustaša* ('insurgent') organisation, was installed by the Axis powers as the head of the so-called Independent State of Croatia, which was noted for its collaborationism and its exclusivist nationalist vision of an independent Croatia.

¹⁹ Some political divisions remained though there was less incentive for Croats to identify themselves as 'Yugoslavs' after Australia recognised Croatia as a sovereign state in 1992.

²⁰ According to the 2006 Census, there are 50 996 Croatian-born residents in Australia. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2006 Census of Population and Housing, Persons born in Croatia*. The conservative estimate of Australians of Croatian ancestry is 105 747. See Hugo, 'Migration and development: an Australian perspective on Croatia'.

²¹ The total number of Croatian-born arriving before 1989 was 31 126. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2006 Census of Population and Housing, Persons Born in Croatia*. Statistics from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs for 2001 show that the Croatian-born population is ageing. They also show that Croats are half as likely to have higher qualifications than the total Australian population although they are slightly more likely to have certificate-level qualifications and are 10 per cent more likely to have a trade. The majority (more than 70 per cent) are employed as skilled and semi-skilled labourers and tradespeople.

²² Statistics on citizenship in the 2006 Census show that almost all Croatian-born immigrants are naturalised: 48 271 of a total of 50 996. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2006 Census of Population and Housing, Persons Born in Croatia*. Galligan and

Roberts discuss the wider significance for civic life and Australian identity of immigrants choosing to take up citizenship in *Australian Citizenship*, p. 95.

²³ Hogan and Owen, 'Social capital, active citizenship and political equality in Australia', pp. 95, 101.

²⁴ Official recognition of Croats as a distinct national and language group occurred in 1980. The Croatian language was accepted as a Year 12 subject in New South Wales in 1981 and in Victoria in 1984. See Šutalo, *Croatians in Australia*, p. 222. See also *Izbliza, Hrvati u Australiji* (2005, Zagreb, pp. 48–50), catalogue of an exhibition curated by the Croatian Heritage Foundation in 2005.

²⁵ Drapac, 'Perceptions of post-WWII Croatian immigrants'.

²⁶ Hugo, 'Migration and development'.

²⁷ This school recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary. See, *Croatian Ethnic School Adelaide, 1966–2006* (2006, Adelaide), a pamphlet produced by the Croatian Ethnic School Adelaide.

²⁸ Drapac, Vesna and Moran, Brendan 2004, *Croatians in South Australia: History, culture, contribution*, Brochure produced by the Croatian Community Council, Adelaide.

²⁹ Šutalo has identified 280 Croatian centres and associations currently active in Australia. See Šutalo, *Croatians in Australia*, p. 217.

³⁰ Hogan and Owen, 'Social capital, active citizenship and political equality in Australia', p. 75.

³¹ To an extent, it could be argued that the experience of immigrant women reflected the relative under-representation of women in general in aspects of Australian civic and professional life but that it magnified somewhat the gap between rights, community activism and access to positions of influence and power. See Galligan and Roberts, *Australian Citizenship*, Chapter 9, 'Women', pp. 185–200.

³² Data from the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet ('Select community profiles: 1996 Census', Multicultural Affairs Unit) confirm this.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ For example, in Adelaide, the first Croatian ethnic school was established by a woman, Amalia Rutar, in the early 1960s. This school closed after a short time and another was established in 1966.

³⁵ Hogan and Owen note the 'clear relationship' between 'socio-economic status and social capital formation' and between levels of social capital and levels of engagement in citizenship practices in 'Social capital, active citizenship and political equality in Australia', p. 95. The example of Croatian women offers a slightly different paradigm suggesting the

variable of socioeconomic status is less important in certain instances.

³⁶ See, for example, Perrot, Michelle (ed.) 1990, *A History of Private Life. Volume 4. From the fires of revolution to the Great War*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London; and Prost, Antoine and Vincent, Gérard (eds) 1991, *Riddles of Identity in Modern Times*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, vol. 5.

³⁷ Šutalo, *Croatians in Australia*, pp. 235–8. See also *Izbliza, Hrvati u Australiji*, pp. 51–3; and Drapac and Moran, *Croatians in South Australia*.

³⁸ For a summary of the early period of communist implantation, see Lampe, John R. 1996, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Chapter 8. There is a vast literature on government-sponsored capillary associations introduced from above by fascist and communist states in twentieth-century Europe and their failure to generate enthusiasm for the ruling ideology across different professional and social groups. The general consensus among historians is that these structures promote mass conformism rather than self-actualisation.

³⁹ Šutalo lists 43 Croatian-owned halls, clubs and sporting venues in *Croatians in Australia*, pp. 267–8.

⁴⁰ See Note 19 for statistics on educational qualifications of the Croatian-born. There are probably more Croatian professionals in Victoria than other states.

⁴¹ See Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'Select community profiles: 1996 Census', Multicultural Affairs Unit.

⁴² Šutalo, *Croatians in Australia*, p. 211ff.

⁴³ Zlatko Skrbish discusses aspects of the impact of such community activism on a sample of first and second-generation Croats and Slovenes in *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, homelands and identities* (1999, Ashgate, Aldershot).

⁴⁴ This was particularly the case from the 1950s onwards, when ASIO reports routinely referred to Croatian 'fascists' and 'extremists' in an undifferentiated fashion. For an indication of the extent of ASIO's interest in Croats, see McKnight, David 1994, *Australia's Spies and Their Secrets*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, New South Wales. Commentators, including Mark Aarons, have tended to accept uncritically the information about Croatian community association contained within ASIO reports. The history of the political predilections—real and imagined—of Croatian organisations and of prominent Croatian individuals has yet to be written.

⁴⁵ Kovacevic, Mladen and Gladovic, Mira 1990, *Articles Regarding Croatians in Australia as Printed by 'The Sydney Morning Herald'*, Croatian Students Association of New South Wales for the Croatian Resource Centre, Sydney; Shaw, Les 1973, *Trial by Slander*, Harp Books, Canberra; and Drapac, 'Perceptions of post-WWII Croatian immigrants'.

⁴⁶ See Stephen Clissold (1979, 'Croat separatism: nationalism, dissidence and terrorism', *Conflict Studies*, no. 103) for the classic articulation of this dichotomous treatment of Croatian nationalism outside Yugoslavia. Clissold served with the Military Mission to Yugoslavia during World War II and later at the British Embassy in Belgrade and became a prominent commentator on Yugoslav affairs.

⁴⁷ Clissold discusses various attempts by Yugoslav secret agents to silence or 'neutralise' Croatian émigré opposition including assassinations, kidnappings and show trials (*ibid.*, pp. 12–15).

⁴⁸ This was especially true in the 1970s when Croatian communities were said to be harbouring alleged terrorists, when Australian security services infiltrated their organisations and with the wrongful arrest (in 1979) and conviction (subsequently overturned) of the so-called 'Croatian Six', accused of plotting to bomb the Sydney water supply.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Gutman, Roy 1993, *A Witness to Genocide*, Element Books, Shaftesbury, Dorset.

⁵⁰ The Croatian Government has largely failed to recognise the importance of this socialisation and of language education at the primary and secondary levels (in comparison with its commitment to the continuing endeavour at Macquarie University, for example). The lack of appropriate teaching materials for the rising generation of descendants of the Croatian-born immigrants (largely brought up in English-speaking households) remains a constant problem for teachers of Croatian language in Australia. See *Croatian Ethnic School Adelaide, 1966–2006*.

⁵¹ Hogan and Owen, 'Social capital, active citizenship and political equality in Australia', pp. 91, 101.

⁵² See, for example, olic-Peisker, Val 2004–05, 'Australian Croatians at the beginning of the twenty-first century: a changing profile of the community and its public representation', *Croatian Studies Review*, vols 3–4, pp. 1–26.

⁵³ The notion of the transmission of social capital and the idea that the 'skills' gained from civic engagement are mobile are rarely addressed in discussions about the relationship between Croatia and its diaspora. The most pressing concerns relate to narrowly economic questions—such as investment opportunities—and welfare policies touching on pensions and medical insurance. A deeper understanding of the

impact of the community association of ethnic groups may stimulate more debate on this subject.

⁵⁴ This process is evocatively illustrated by Philip Nord in *The Republican Moment: Struggles for democracy in nineteenth century France* (1995, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.).