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The Balkans in exile : the relationship between Serbian and Croatian communities in Toronto

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THE BALKANS IN EXILE:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERBIAN AND CROATIAN
COMMUNITIES IN TORONTO

by

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A Major Research Paper
Presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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**THE BALKANS IN EXILE:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERBIAN AND CROATIAN
COMMUNITIES IN TORONTO**

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Master of Arts
Immigration and Settlement Studies
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ABSTRACT

The recent growth of the Serbian and Croatian communities in the Greater Toronto Area has encouraged a change in attitudes between the two groups. Nationalistic sentiments harbored by many in the post-World War Two wave of predominantly Četnik and Ustaša émigrés have been laid to rest by the most recent influx of immigrants and refugees from the former Yugoslavia. This study will discern the reasons for which the new cohort of Yugoslav expatriates of Serbian and Croatian descent has been able to overcome seemingly crippling issues of nationalism. This paper will discuss how two major political figure in the Balkan wars of the 1990s, Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tudjman, manipulated the nationalism of these two communities. In addition, an examination of media from Serbia, Croatia, and Canada will provide insight on the intricate web of factors that have influenced the conflict between the Serbian and Croatian communities in Toronto.

Key words: Serb, Croat, diaspora, media, nationalism

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Introduction

During the Second World War, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously noted that the Balkans create more history than they can consume. Nearly sixty years later in Canada this statement seems prophetic given the intensive political developments that have shaped the Balkans since Churchill's declaration, and more specifically, in the past fifteen years. As one looks back on the twentieth century, it is impossible to deny the significance that the Balkans assumed in the development of major political and military events, from the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz-Ferdinand in Sarajevo (which many consider to have been the catalyst for the First World War) to the ousting of Slobodan Milošević. Indeed, such triggers are not uncommon to the south-central European peninsula, often and appropriately referred to as the "Balkan Powder Keg".

In a historical analysis of the Balkans, one finds that for the most part of their existence, the Serbian and Croatian nations have been occupied by various imperial powers. Occasional bloody uprisings gave rise to brief interludes of independence. Struggling to identify themselves as "nationalities" and later "nations", both Serbs and Croats often resorted to violence. The trouble lies in the fact that for many Serbs and Croats, the concept of "identity" has essentially been altered. At first, it represented a way of differentiating themselves as Slavs from imperial authorities, such as the Ottoman Turks or Austro-Hungarian

Empire. For the Serbs and Croats, the crisis of their respective identities lies in the fact that “for centuries, the Balkans has had ethnicities and ethno-national groups whose sense of common destiny was strengthened even further by oppressive empires.”¹ Given its geographic location in the heart of Europe, the events that took place in the Balkans in the twentieth century attracted the attention of the world. However, for many Western nations, the particular brand of nationalism employed by the Serbs and Croats has been exasperating. This perplexity was clearly expressed by Otto von Bismarck who, as early as 1898, stated that if ever there were another war in Europe, it would “come out of some damned silly thing in the Balkans.” Though this is not a Major Research Paper on the nationalism of Serbs and Croats, this factor is nonetheless at the core of the study of the relationship between these two émigré groups in Toronto. Through an analysis of media from Serbia, Croatia, and Canada, this paper will seek to discover the reasons why new Serbian and Croatian Canadians are able to do what so many generations before them have not: peacefully co-exist, without tension or strain.

The emotions that arise from the nationalism of Serbs and Croats have defined the Balkans of twentieth century in a constant cycle of wars and periods of deceptive stability. Often, the hands of foreign governments are forced into exhaustive negotiations to preserve the

¹ Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities and Security (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 39

delicate status-quo² of a territory in the heart of Europe where Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam collide and resentments are strong. However, despite the best international efforts the flow of people exiting the Balkans has produced a large expatriate community. In Toronto specifically, the twentieth century saw the Serbian and Croatian communities grow large, particularly in the years immediately after the Second World War and following the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It is interesting to note that the majority of Serb and Croat refugees and immigrants who arrived in Toronto in the decade following the Second World War have maintained their anger and hatred towards the other. Even more striking, however, is the fact that the immigrants and refugees to arrive in the city at the end of the conflict in Bosnia in the 1990s have been able to overcome these nationalistic sentiments. If anything, at first glance, it seems as though the most recent cohort of Serbian and Croatian refugees and immigrants do not avoid each other's company. It is necessary to address the fact that the status of Serbs and Croats to arrive in Toronto in the past fifteen years differs greatly from that of the post-World War II generation. The Serbs and Croats who came to Canada with the end of the Second World War were predominantly political refugees fleeing the new communist state, fearing repercussions for their involvement in nationalist movements. There were of course individuals among them who had not been

² Ibid, p. 42

politically active, but disagreed with the Yugoslav union and the ideology of Tito's government. However, the generation of Serbs and Croats to arrive after the conflict of the 1990s is starkly different. The Serbian and Croatian refugees to arrive in Toronto in the 1990s were refugees who had been forcibly displaced by the other's army and had nowhere to return. Also, those to arrive after the Dayton Peace Accord in 1995 were mainly economic immigrants: educated professionals from Croatia and Serbia. Tired of living in a country where government coffers were emptied to support the war effort, they knew that their skills would yield a better standard of living in Canada. Indeed, the new generation of Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees in Toronto generally has no qualms about building friendships with the other, based on a commonality of language and experience. In order to ensure that this continues, it is imperative that one analyzes why this new group of immigrants and refugees differs so greatly from the previous one, and which policies, if any in Canada, have encouraged this drastic shift in attitudes.

Croats and Serbs in Canada

It is believed that the first Croatians to arrive in Canada came as crew members traveling with Jacques Cartier in 1542 and Samuel de Champlain in 1605³. However, Croatian migration to Canada was sparse and difficult to track before the 1920s, given that they were

³ Anthony W. Rasporich, For a Better Life: A History of the Croatians in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), p. 11

labeled as “Austrians”, “Hungarians,” or “Yugoslavs”. During World War I this association with the Austro-Hungarian empire resulted in the branding of Croats in Canada as enemy aliens, and news of the internment of some of these immigrants was brought to the attention of the National Croatian Society (*Hrvatska Bratska Zajednica*) in the United States. Though the precise number of ethnic Croatians released from these camps is unknown:

*“the actions of the National Croatian Society had at least secured the release of its own members and had alerted the Canadian authorities to the fact that representations would continue to be made upon behalf of those Croats whose civil liberties were endangered by arbitrary action.”*⁴

After the First World War, Croatians arrived in significant numbers, and most of these émigrés were labourers working in Canada’s chief industries such as forestry and mining. While identifying themselves as Croats, they enjoyed relatively good relations with the Serbs in Canada, with whom they shared a common language. A renewed Croatian presence was felt after the defeat of Axis Powers in the Second World War when tens of thousands of desperate Croatians fled the newly communist Yugoslavia. These throngs of political refugees who sought refuge in any country willing to accept them included the members of the Ustaša leadership who had escaped death at the hands of the Partisans.⁵ Truthfully, some of these Croatian immigrants and

⁴ Ibid, p. 83

⁵ Carol Off, *The Ghosts of Medak Pocket: The Story of Canada’s Secret War* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2004), p. 32

refugees to arrive in Canada post-World War Two became members of the Croatian Liberation Movement (*Hrvatski Oslobođilački Pokret – HOP*)⁶, under the auspices of the exiled Ustaša leader in Buenos Aires, Ante Pavelić⁷. In contrast to these radical exiles, the remainder of the Croatian community became comfortably integrated into Canadian society, referred to themselves as “Croatian Canadians”, and prospered in the country’s multiethnic society.⁸ These Croatian immigrants and refugees found employment mainly in the heavy industry and construction sectors, so that Croatians became one of the largest ethnic groups in Toronto’s construction industry.⁹ Though the numbers of Croatians in Canada do not rival other established and politically active ethnic groups, the Toronto community is admirably well-organized. Certainly, the number of Croats in Canada and their formidable lobby influenced the Canadian government in recognizing Croatia’s independence in January of 1992.¹⁰

The first Serbian immigrants in Canada arrived at the time of the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of the nineteenth century¹¹. However, as with the Croatian migrants, exact numbers cannot be determined due

⁶ Vinko Grubišić, “Croatians in Toronto” in *Polyphony* (vol. 6, 1984), p. 91

⁷ Ibid, p. 89

⁸ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 48

⁹ Grubišić, p. 89

¹⁰ Daphne Winland, “Croatians in Canada or Croatian Canadians?” Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.
<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/winland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

¹¹ George Vid Tomashevich, “Serbian Life in Ontario” in Sofija Škorić and George Vid Tomashevich (eds.), *Serbs in Ontario: A Socio-Cultural Description* (Toronto: Serbian Heritage Academy, 1988), p. 62

to the fact that the subdivision of the “Yugoslav” group into ethnic categories of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes only appeared in the Census of 1971¹². Focusing on concentrations of old Serbian immigrants, many of the post-WWII Serbian immigrants chose to stay in Southern Ontario, and particularly in the region today known as the Greater Toronto Area. Organizations such as the Serbian Brother’s Help (*Srpska Bratska Pomoć*) were formed to aid the transition of these migrants to a new country. More important, however, was the primary goal of providing assistance to the masses of Serbs (including many senior officers of the Royal Yugoslav Army) left behind in the displaced persons camps in Europe who refused to return to Tito’s Yugoslavia.¹³ Thus political affiliations were as strong within the Serbian community as in the Croatian group. Newsprint and radio programs established by the post-1945 Serbian émigrés were firmly anti-communist, and decisively supported the principles of Draža Mihajlović and the Četniks. Unlike the Croatian Canadians for whom political organization became an important form of community activity¹⁴, the Serbs who arrived after the Second World War did not participate extensively in Canadian politics. Though there is a lack of documentation concerning the voting

¹² Nikola R. Pašić, “Serbs in Ontario” in Sofija Škorić and George Vid Tomashevich (eds.), Serbs in Ontario: A Socio-Cultural Description (Toronto: Serbian Heritage Academy, 1988), p. 45

¹³ Ibid, p.45

¹⁴ Daphne Winland, “Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?” Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.
<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/winland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

tendencies of either group, the profiles of the two communities indicate the likelihood that many members would have supported conservative platforms in Canada. The members of this group were employed in primary resource industries. Besides the lumber, railway, or agriculture sectors, some Serb immigrants were also employed in the developing mechanical industry¹⁵. Though these Serbs became a reliable workforce, their interest in Canadian politics did not extend past their attainment of citizenship, and very few became active in any form of government. Instead, members of the Serbian community were interested in the politics of the old country, propagated by a handful of individuals who rose to prominence through their affiliation with the Church. Topics of conversation about the enemy Ustaša and greatness of Draža Mihajlović became irrelevant both with regard to Canadian political affairs, and the changing Balkans. As such, this group of émigrés quickly became insulated and fixed on affairs of the past. Much to the disbelief of new Serbian immigrants, Toronto radio programs hosted by the post-WWII generation still champion the cause of Draža Mihajlović and the Četniks. Over time, the divisions in the Serb community would become increasingly conspicuous, as various newspapers backed irreconcilable political views to accommodate factions of royalists, communists, and independents, giving truth to the saying: “two Serbs – three parties.”

¹⁵Pašić, p. 35

Welcomed and accepted as anti-communists, the Serbs and Croats to arrive in Toronto following the Second World War followed parallel paths in their participation in Canadian society. For example, with Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's implementation of a multicultural policy in 1971, Toronto Serbs and Croats capitalized on the funds offered by the Ontario government and the Ontario Heritage Language Program to establish weekly schools for the preservation of language and tradition. Moreover, both community groups were successful in their campaigns to persuade the Toronto Board of Education to make available Serbian and Croatian language and literature courses as high school Ontario Academic Credits. Despite such positive contribution to the multicultural composition of Canadian society, the post-World War Two Serbs and Croats in Toronto also allowed tensions and hostilities to fester between the two groups.

It is vital to note that the vast majority of these individuals, both Serb and Croat, faced serious repercussions upon return to the socialist republic established by Josip Broz Tito. The majority of these Serbian immigrants and refugees were Četnik prisoners of war in Germany or ardent supporters of the monarchy in exile. For them, a return to Serbia meant the certainty of a "fair trial" under the communist regime, followed by a sentence to Goli Otok, a work camp styled on Joseph Stalin's gulags. With them on the journey to Canada came formerly

prominent farmers who saw no prospect remaining in the villages of Yugoslavia only to turn over their profits to the local governments.

Similarly, it is not unreasonable to believe that the majority of Croatian refugees with a military past who came to Canada following the Second World War had been members of the fascist Ustaša movement led by Ante Pavelić. “Far from fading into obscurity, the ultra-nationalists regrouped in the new world and began plotting their eventual return to Croatia.”¹⁶ It was these militant émigrés that Franjo Tudjman, former Partisan general and participant in the Croatian Spring of 1971¹⁷, would later identify as *Iseljena Hrvatska*. Roughly translated as “Croatia in exile”, this concept emphasized the element of “involuntary resettlement”¹⁸ in Tudjman’s appeals to the diaspora in the late 1980s. He encouraged them to come “home” to Croatia. For them, the battle for Croatian independence would have to resume outside the borders of the Yugoslavia, in which they would otherwise have been forced to adopt a policy of “brotherhood and unity” with the despised Serbs. Such was the mentality of many other Croatian immigrants and refugees to Canada at the time who saw the struggle for an independent Croatia fall out of reach with the end of the war. Finally, not insignificant was the number of Serbs and Croats who left the Balkans due to the simple fact that the brutality of the war had stripped them of

¹⁶ Off, p. 29

¹⁷ The “Croatian Spring” (*Hrvatsko Proljeće*) also known as MASPOK (*Masovni Pokret*, Croatian for “mass movement”). Further addressed on page 15.

¹⁸ Hockenos, p. 45

their homes and families. For all of these immigrant and refugees, regardless of ethnicity or religious difference, Canada represented a place in which to settle and build a new life after the war.

In Europe, Serbs and Croats also sought refuge in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, where they were categorized as “gästarbeiter” (guest workers). As the name indicates, these people were not deemed to be permanent settlers, but rather guest workers who would take up temporary residence while amassing funds with which to build (or rebuild) a home in Yugoslavia. This “gästarbeiter” population in Europe had one advantage over the diaspora in Canada: geographic proximity to the Balkans. This permitted frequent travel to the “homeland”, and as a result, a firsthand chance to observe and participate in the vast changes in the region. Meanwhile, the physical distance between Canada and the Balkans had a profound psychological impact on the immigrants and refugees who settled in Toronto. The lack of convenient travel between Canada and Yugoslavia after the war encouraged many Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees to think of Canada as a new home. However, the fact that the members of these communities did not have personal contact with the Balkans for many years encouraged them to preserve romanticized memories and a static notion of what the “homeland” once was. Ironically, the population in Yugoslavia originally held the Canadian and American diaspora in higher esteem than the European gästarbeiters. Many were of the belief

that those in North America had become Americans or Canadians through citizenship as well as mentality. As such, they were expected to have become products of the “American dream”: successful businessmen who would one day return with the newly acquired *savoir-faire* necessary to support the Yugoslav economy. Consequently, ties between the Canadian diaspora and the homeland grew strong, despite Tito’s initial efforts to discredit them.

Of course, the sweeping generalization that all Croats to come to Canada after the Second World War were Ustaše, and all Serbs were Četniks, is undeniably false. Yet the fact is that Croatian immigrants of that generation tend to use the terms “Serb” and “Četnik” synonymously, much like the name “Croat” is coterminous with “Ustaša” for the same cohort of Serb émigrés. Though many had participated in military operations led by Ante Pavelić or Draža Mihajlović, others had simply been victims at the hands of the other. Given the profile of these two communities, it is understandable that there was bitterness and antagonism between them. While Tito had conveniently rid himself of many nationalists who might have posed a direct threat to his government, immigrant-receiving nations like Canada received former Četniks and Ustaše. Tito’s propaganda was consistent in its condemnation of Serbs and Croats abroad as Četniks or Ustaše, associating them with the world war, and more importantly,

with the brutal civil war.¹⁹ This strategy had two goals: primarily, to ensure that Serbs and Croats in the diaspora were divided and thus unable to unite in their efforts to overthrow the Yugoslav government, and secondly, to drive a rift between the diaspora and residents of the homeland. These efforts to disgrace the diaspora “nationalists” were deemed necessary by the Tito government in order to divide a potentially volatile population that could have undermined the dictatorship established in Yugoslavia.

It is clear that the Canadian government would not be able to please all of the religious and political factions in the Serbian and Croatian communities. For example, the Serbs and Croats in Toronto quickly misinterpreted Canada’s wartime alliance with Tito and the Partisans as support for the future dictator, whose autocratic regime they likened to previous attempts at suppressing language, religion, and tradition. However, despite conflicting beliefs on a number of levels, the Serbs and Croats were united in their distaste towards the support, extended to Tito from Western nations, Canada among them. Perhaps most offensive to the Četnik and Ustaša émigrés and sympathizers was that Canada and the rest of the world would acknowledge as a wartime ally the government that had essentially forced them all into exile under

¹⁹ Pašić, p. 39

the threat of imprisonment.²⁰ This line of reasoning was clearly flawed, as Serbs and Croats in Toronto interpreted Canada's tepid support of Tito's anti-Stalinist stance as an alliance with the Yugoslav government. This misunderstanding also explains why the notions of "being Serbian" or "being Croatian" were of such great importance, as most of these Serbs and Croats new to Canada became conflicted about their new Canadian identity. At the same time, rifts within the two communities became pronounced as some individuals, Serb and Croat, showed signs of support for Tito. Arguing that Yugoslavia was a strong country that would grow economically to the benefit of all its peoples, these Titoists earned themselves no admiration from the nationalists. The latter were offended that someone of "their own kind" could support a man against whom they had fought.

Nationalism in Toronto

After the war, while a process de-Nazification took place in Germany, Tito refused to implement a similar policy against the Croatian Ustaša group, the effects of which were felt both within the borders of Yugoslavia and without. Tito expected that all wounds would heal through the façade of "brotherhood and unity" and suppression of nationalist symbols. Instead of establishing new connections of trust between Serbs and Croats, Tito's authoritarian suppression of

²⁰ Arnold Suppan, "Yugoslavism versus Serbian, Croatian, and Slovene Nationalism" in Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (eds.), Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.136

nationalism allowed these sentiments to linger up until the 1990s when Serbian and Croatian leaders manipulated them. The consequence of this was twofold, and was felt both in the homeland and among the diaspora in Toronto. First, former Ustaša soldiers and supporters of Ante Pavelić were allowed to uphold frighteningly fascistic notions of an independent and ethnically pure Croatian state. These ideals were dangerously combined with the bitterness of what they deemed the occupation of the “fatherland” by Tito. Second, many issues and grievances remained unaddressed, and although these injustices and nationalist sentiments were officially suppressed in Tito’s Yugoslavia, Balkan historian Arnold Suppan argues that “the memories of the bitter internecine fighting were perpetuated in families and passed down from generation to generation”²¹, even in Toronto.

While some historians and political analysts have argued that Tito’s crackdown mollified nationalists in Yugoslavia, there is much evidence to the contrary. British ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1964 to 1968 Duncan Wilson asserts that by the 1960s, nationalism had by no means been quelled in the Balkans.²² For instance, there was the “Croatian Spring” movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Modeled after the example of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, Croats called for reforms spanning from the decentralization of the Belgrade government to the return of Hercegovina to Croatia. On the other side of the Drina River,

²¹ Ibid, p.136

²² Duncan Wilson, Tito’s Yugoslavia (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.171

Serbian nationalism intensified as many sought to blame the Croatian republic for an increasingly problematic economy. Though he never spoke publicly about it, Tito's Slovenian and Croatian heritage was all the "evidence" that Serb nationalists needed to be convinced that the dictator was showing preference to his Croatian "homeland". The Serbian and Croatian communities wielded a great amount of influence on family members "back home" and encouraged nationalistic movements. It was certainly not a coincidence that these events occurred at a time when Tito turned to "Yugoslavs" from abroad to invest in the country's fledgling industries.

Back in Canada, the tides were changing as well. With the 1970s, Canada officially implemented a policy of multiculturalism, and the federal government began to fund heritage language programs and folklore centres. However:

"unbeknownst to them they also paid for publications disseminating the message of the radical right wing. The federal support was naïve and often foolish: city halls in Toronto and Waterloo allowed Croats to fly the flag of the wartime Ustashe's Independent State of Croatia..."²³.

Unfortunately, though originally well-intentioned, the Canadian government's involuntary support of such events had unconstructive effects. The already insular Serbian community's desire for integration declined as its distrust for Canada's administration increased. Furthermore, to Serbs in Toronto, it seemed surreal that a democratic

²³ Off, p.33

nation such as Canada would allow the transfer of the Croatian National Resistance movement and its publication *Independent State Croatia* to Toronto. Ante Pavelić's son-in-law relocated the movement headquarters from Buenos Aires to Toronto in 1960, following the death of the Ustaša leader. Equally unacceptable to Croats in Toronto was the Serbian community's affiliation with the Chicago-based Serbian National Defense Council of America. It was from this organization that members of a radical fringe of Četniks were convicted for the bombing of the Yugoslav Consul General's home in Chicago in 1975.

In Toronto, established Serbian and Croatian associations such as the Croatian Fraternal Union, grew in size. New organizations such as the Serbian Brother's Help and the Canadian Croatian Congress were established to aid the transition of their members to a new country. These societies provided their members with a network of "countrymen" with whom to share their experiences in a new land. On the other hand, these associations also functioned to preserve a static image of the homeland, as well as outdated and obsolete political ideas. If the generation of post-Second World War Croatian and Serbian immigrants had one commonality, it was their mutual distaste and resentment towards the Yugoslav state under Tito, which led to their idealized and unrealistic perceptions of their respective "homelands". Individuals who attempted to establish newspapers with names like *Jedinstvo* (Unity), or programs that supported the Yugoslav union, were

swiftly put out of business after being branded communists or traitors, two terms that had become the most terrible of insults in both the Serbian and Croatian communities in Toronto.

Homeland politics and the diaspora in Toronto

While the post-World War Two Croatian and Serbian immigrants and refugees built new lives in Toronto, a natural rift between the diaspora and the homeland ensued, due not only to the political circumstances, but also because of the sheer distance between Canada and the Balkans. However, even before the modernization of travel and communication, Serbs and Croats in Toronto sent aid back to the Balkans in the form of medicine, clothing, or funds. These, as well as their constant support of nationalist outlooks, provided the base for a strong relationship between diaspora and homeland when tensions between Tito's government and expatriates were alleviated in the late 1960s and 1970s. In reality, the influence of these groups in their respective homelands is not one to be underestimated. However, the turn-about in diaspora-homeland relations did not occur of its own accord. It was through the manipulation of patriotic and nationalistic sentiments that Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milošević later secured support for the establishment of their political platforms.

In the first of his many visits to Canada in the 1980s, Franjo Tudjman pushed for the reconciliation of conflicting Croatian émigré factions. He called on the "sons and daughters of Ustashe" and "sons

and daughters of Partisans” to unite by arguing that they had “all been fighting for the same cause, the Croatian cause, just in different ways.”²⁴ Uniting the Canadian Croatian community in the common cause of an independent “fatherland”, Franjo Tudjman was tempted by the promise of financial aid from the émigrés. Prior to the election of his political party, the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica – HDZ*) in 1989, Tudjman made trips to Canada and the USA to garner support for his movement, despite the risk of being tarred with the Ustaša brush.²⁵ While working towards the goal of an independent Croatian state, Tudjman manipulated the diaspora as well as the local population in Croatia by basing his campaign solely on the national question. He promised to “erect monuments to all those who had sacrificed their lives on the altar of the homeland in the battle for freedom and independence”²⁶, and remained an apologist for the Ustaša World War Two Independent State of Croatia under Ante Pavelić²⁷. The importance that the Croatian diaspora played in the election of the HDZ became unmistakably clear by the “steady stream of newly appointed Croatian government officials who [were] features as keynote speaker at Croatian fund-raisers in Canada, particularly in Toronto.”²⁸ The role of

²⁴ Hockenos, p.47

²⁵ Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p.222

²⁶ Ibid, p.223

²⁷ Hockenos, p.42

²⁸ Daphne Winland, “Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?” Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.

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the Croatian diaspora in Toronto shifted dramatically with the triumph of the HDZ in 1990. One of Tudjman's first motions was to establish a Ministry of Return and Exiles to expedite the return of the *Iseljena Hrvatska* ("Exiled Croatia") – Croats in Canada, whose duty Tudjman felt it was to return. He felt that "Croatia would desperately need their international experience, investment potential and business acumen to build a prosperous, independent Croatia".²⁹

The man Tudjman chose to head the Ministry of Defense was Canadian-Croat Gojko Šušak. After having lived in Canada for twenty years, Šušak returned "home" to Croatia, becoming representative of the right-wing, militant Croatian diaspora in Toronto and elsewhere. Šušak was joined by other Croatian-Canadians of "exiled Croatia" who were enticed by the promise of high-profile positions in the independent state. These included Rosie Tomasić, who left her position with the Ontario Provincial Police to become Tudjman's head of security, Ivica Mudrinić who became head of communications in Zagreb, and Ante Beljo, among many others³⁰.

After securing the majority in Croatian Parliament in 1990, newly elected President Tudjman made an eerily Orwellian statement that "all people are equal in Croatia, but it must be clear who is the host and

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²⁹ Hockenos, p.48

³⁰ Off, p.46

who is the guest.”³¹ Such statements were cause for concern for the nearly six hundred thousand ethnic Serbs living in Croatia, and their families in the diaspora, including Toronto. Moreover, Franjo Tudjman’s quips that the HDZ had been born in Canada³² did nothing to endear Serbs to their Croat neighbours in Toronto, whom they deemed radical supporters of a revived Ustaša *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Independent State of Croatia) under the Croatian President. Tension grew even higher when the new government in Zagreb launched Operation Storm in 1995, expelling 250,000 ethnic Serbs from the Krajina region in Croatia. Toronto Serbs interpreted the Canadian government’s unwillingness to stop the flow of millions of dollars from the Croatian community to the war effort as support for the HDZ.

While the Serbs in Toronto were nowhere near as organized and politically active as the Croatian community, their concern for the struggling politics of the “old country” was no less significant. Like Tudjman, Milošević embarked on a manipulation of the diaspora, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he was faithfully supported. Historian Aleksa Djilas explained the hysteria over the president by stating that “Milošević was everything to everyone”: somehow appealing to communists, Četniks, pro-Yugoslavs, Serbian nationalists, and democrats.³³ His chameleonic nature allowed Milošević to capitalize on

³¹ Hockenos, p.54

³² Hockenos, p.50

³³ Hockenos, p.125

the diaspora's support by petitioning them to "loan" money to Serbia for development projects and economic modernization. However, as the money poured in, it became increasingly clear that the funds were used as political support for Milošević, who was elected president of Yugoslavia in 1990. Given the diaspora's significant influence on the politics of the homeland, it is not surprising that Milošević himself alluded to the power of expatriates in the disintegration of Yugoslavia:

*"The civil war in Croatia between the Serbs and Croats, as well as the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbs, Croats and Muslims are the consequences of fanning the flames of national hatred outside the borders of Yugoslavia."*³⁴

To the Croats in Toronto, the Serbian support for Milošević was unacceptable, and there was growing resentment towards the Canadian government. In the opinion of many Croats in Toronto, Ottawa was turning a blind eye to the massive amounts of money being sent to Belgrade from Toronto Serbs, and as such, directly supporting the Milošević government.

Homeland politics soon began to manifest themselves more tangibly in Canada. Tensions between Serbs and Croats in Toronto came to alarming levels in 1991 amidst controversy regarding the comments made by John Šola, member of Ontario's provincial

³⁴ CNN.com World: "Milošević Accused of Apartheid"
<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/02/18/milosevic.address/index.html> retrieved June 3rd, 2006

parliament. Born in Croatia, Šola made inflammatory remarks about the war in the Balkans and echoed the thoughts of many Croatians in his statement: "I don't think I'd be able to live next door to a Serb."³⁵ Petitioning their local members of parliament, Canadian Serbs were outraged at Šola's statement, describing it as a "shameful and dangerous incident which if left unchecked can breed intolerance and hate in Canada".³⁶ As a result, Šola was ousted from the Liberal party's caucus by party leader Lyn Macleod in 1992. However, he was not ejected from the party until 1994, outraging Toronto Serbs. It was a statement directly aimed at Canadian-Serbs in which Šola declared that they "support ethnic cleansing, that they support mass rape, that they support mass murder"³⁷, that finally ensured his rejection from the Liberal Party Caucus. Though the Ontario government may have been intolerant of such blatant attacks, the Tudjman government offered Šola the position of Consulate General of the Republic of Croatia in Chicago, where he now uses his Croatian name Domagoj Sladojević-Šola. These incidents, together with Canada's support of UN authorized

³⁵ Daphne Winland, "Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?" Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.
<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/wi nland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

³⁶ Transcript of Ontario Legislative Assembly
http://www.ontla.on.ca/hansard/house_debates/35_parl/session2/l016.htm retrieved August 28th, 2006

³⁷ Daphne Winland, "Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?" Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.
<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/wi nland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

sanctions on Yugoslavia, and “manipulative and sensationalized”³⁸ coverage of the war against Serbs, resulted in the Toronto Serbian community turning inward. While the Serbian community was by and large divided, Croats in Toronto who tended to be pro-Tudjman had mixed feelings about the comments made by Šola:

*“while on the one hand, they felt that Šola did not exercise good judgment in making his feelings on the issue public, particularly given his political position, almost all were pleased that he had been ‘courageous’ enough to put his opinion on public record.”*³⁹

Though through another medium, the Serbian community also managed to infuriate Croats in Toronto by broadcasting music written in support of Željko Ražnatović, or Arkan, leader of the Serb paramilitary group the “Tigers”, active in the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. Carl Redhead, vice president of operations at multicultural CHIN radio station in Toronto, remembers problems with a selection of musical pieces in which “patriotic lyrics included innuendo that was injurious to the other side or could be perceived as a slap in the face.”⁴⁰ The station cautioned the Serbian program organizers that they were

³⁸ Diana Dicklich, “The First Casualty” (Spring 1996) Ryerson Review of Journalism
<http://www.rrj.ca/issue/1996/spring/207/> retrieved June 8th, 2006

³⁹ Daphne Winland, “Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?” Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.
<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/winland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

⁴⁰ ⁴⁰ Diana Dicklich, “The First Casualty” (Spring 1996) Ryerson Review of Journalism
<http://www.rrj.ca/issue/1996/spring/207/> retrieved June 8th, 2006

under “contractual obligation to refer controversial matters to management.”⁴¹

Media coverage of the wars in the Balkans

In Canada in the 1990s, media coverage of the war in the former Yugoslavia deepened the hostilities between the two Toronto groups by concluding that the homeland conflict lay solely in ancient ethnic hatreds and religious differences. What the media failed to report was that the reason for the conflict was mainly political and contemporary: between two leaders who guised their territorial and economic ambitions in these historical prejudices.⁴² Tudjman and Milošević somehow managed to convince their populations that the other was resurrecting ghosts of the Second World War and encroaching on “historically Serb” or “historically Croat” land. Given the economic and political instability of the Yugoslav state at the end of the 1980’s, it was not difficult for the two leaders to play on the insecurities of the two nationalities, all the while holding clandestine meetings in which plans to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina were concocted. Recently, news has emerged of a meeting in March of 1991 between Tudjman and Milošević in one of Tito’s old hunting lodges in northern Serbia. The two leaders planned a division of Yugoslavia into a Greater Croatia and Greater Serbia, dividing the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina to that effect.⁴³ All

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ivanov, p.142

⁴³ Hockenos, p.91

the while, the world reported on nationalisms that were explained away as a historically rooted hatred for the other: a ticking time bomb of sorts. This implied that “somehow the people of the former Yugoslavia are more predisposed to war than anyone else in Europe.”⁴⁴ Accepting this theory allows observers to conveniently forget that the Yugoslav state underwent a civil war as had the English in the seventeenth century, and the Russians in 1917.⁴⁵ Though the contexts of these conflicts were drastically different, their similarities lie in the manipulation of historically rooted hatred by charismatic leaders. In light of that context, it becomes clear why the consensus of scholarly literature on the subject of the Balkan wars is that the “Yugoslav wars can’t be explained by theories of inevitable ethnic hatreds...there was plenty of racial and historical tinder available in Yugoslavia. But the conflagrations didn’t break out through spontaneous combustion. Pyromaniacs were required.”⁴⁶

Warren Christopher, former United States Secretary of State, once described the wars of Yugoslav succession as ‘the foreign policy problem from hell’.⁴⁷ Indeed, as the Balkan peninsula seemed on the precipice of chaos in the early 1990s, Western governments led by the

⁴⁴ Tim Judah, The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p.xi

⁴⁵ Warren Zimmermann, Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and its Destroyers – America’s Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why (New York: Times Books, 1996), p.209

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.210

⁴⁷ John V.A. Fine, “Heretical Thoughts about Postcommunist Transition” in Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (eds.), Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.193

United States were at odds on the appropriate measures to be taken in the region. Finally, on May 30th, 1992, the United Nations Security Council voted in favour of supporting sanctions against Yugoslavia. In an effort to garner public support for the sanctions, which would later lead to military intervention, Western mainstream media began a campaign of “Saddamizing” Slobodan Milošević.⁴⁸ However, by depicting the Croats and Serbs in rigid categories of “villain” and “victim”⁴⁹, Canadian media somehow blurred the lines between Milošević and the Serbs as people. Toronto Serbs became frustrated with the Canadian population’s “consequent association of anything ‘Serb’ with former Serbian/Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milošević,”⁵⁰ especially since the number of those who supported him was diminishing at an exponential rate. While the portrayal of the “Serb” as the monolithic enemy in the Balkans may well have worked to intensify their defensive identification as Serbs, division within the Toronto community became increasingly profound. Revelations of Milošević’s campaigns in Bosnia and Croatia, however inflated by the Canadian media, spurred many Toronto Serbs to turn their support to the growing opposition parties in Belgrade. However, the Canadian media was certainly balanced when it reported on the outrage expressed by the population at the handful of

⁴⁸ Zimmermann, p.214

⁴⁹ Mythmaking, the Balkans: A Look at the News Coverage of the War in the Former Yugoslavia (1994)

⁵⁰ Joanna W.A. Rummens, Assessing the Impact of the Kosovo Conflict on the Mental Health and Well-Being of Newcomer Serbian Children and Youth in the Greater Toronto Area ed. Rajko Seat (Toronto: Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2003), p.33

Canadian citizens of Serbian and Croatian descent who returned to the former Yugoslavia to fight against each other. Angry Canadians reasoned that those who were unprepared to leave battles of the “old country” outside of Canada’s borders should not be permitted to enjoy its citizenship. This sparked a debate among historians, politicians, and civilians who, like renowned historian Jack Lawrence Granatstein, questioned Canada’s practice of permitting dual citizenship and the implications of such a policy.⁵¹ The precise number of individuals who have had their Canadian citizenship revoked as a result of their involvement in the Balkans is not certain. There may be some truth to rumours in the Serbian community regarding one man of Serbian descent who has had his Canadian citizenship rescinded, but chances of discovering a name or similar cases are minimal.

For the Serbs and Croats in Toronto, the disintegration of Yugoslavia that began in 1991 brought to the surface unresolved issues of animosity towards the other. Moreover, the media also served to create mistrust between the Serbian and Croatian communities and Canada. For the Toronto Serbian community, the overabundance of negative, biased mainstream media portrayal, the use of derogative language, and unbalanced reporting contributed to the feelings of ambivalence that many Serbs felt towards Canada during the 1990s ⁵². Far from denying the atrocities attributed to the Serbian army in

⁵¹ *The Globe and Mail*, p.A 13, July 31st, 2006

⁵² Rummens, p.42

Bosnia, the Serbs in Toronto felt that Canadian media had failed to present the fact that “Serbs, Croats and Muslims began a civil war in which each group played a dual role of aggressor and defender, ethnic cleanser and expelled refugee, torturer and tortured.”⁵³ Front page headlines of Toronto’s major newspapers provided coverage of Serbian campaigns of mass murder, often likening Milošević to Hitler, but far more offensive to Serbs here in Canada was the attachment of the Nazi epithet to the nation as a whole. Moreover, frustrations and divisions among Serbs in Toronto were increasing. Those who were most vocal about the coverage were leaders of community associations and radio programs which were established in the years after the Second World War. These individuals often denied any wrongdoing on the part of the Serbs, expressing the argument that Serbia had been an ally to Canada in both World Wars, a stance that obviously disturbed Canadians. In addition, other members of the community who were more realistic in their understanding of the war were infuriated by these comments, recognizing that they would discredit the entire community. Serbs in Toronto were therefore caught in limbo. On the one hand, the vast majority did not support Milošević, and many supported family members in Serbia who refused conscription. On the other hand, they felt alienated from Canada, which to them had embarked on a campaign of demonizing their country through reports of Nazi-like

⁵³ Aleksa Djilas, “Funeral Oration for Yugoslavia” in Dejan Djokić (ed.), Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2003), p.318

death camps, while excluding reports of clashes between Croatian soldiers and Canadian peacekeepers in Medak Pocket, or the role of Muslim soldiers in the killings in Bosnia. Ironically, none of the community's members considered that their frustration over these types of generalizations mirrored those of the Croatian community. For example, reports of Ustaša symbols and slogans spray-painted on a Serbian Orthodox church in downtown Toronto in 1994 gave rise to frustration and anger in the Croatian community about the representation of Croats as Nazis.⁵⁴ As such, both Serbs and Croats in Toronto had similar experiences of the media attributing the actions of a handful of radicals to the entire community. Unfortunately, instead of recognizing the misrepresentation, each group welcomed the unflattering reports of the other as evidence of that nation's fanaticism. It is probable that the media's "Saddamization" of Milošević was also intended to dissuade Serbs from supporting him. However, the suggestion that Serbs as a people were to blame for everything in the war, a sentiment clearly expressed by United Nation's Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari⁵⁵, provoked a defensive reaction among Toronto Serbs.

⁵⁴ Daphne Winland, "Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?" Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.
<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/winland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

⁵⁵ B92, "Ahtisari: Ima Napretka"
http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2006&mm=08&dd=25&nav_id=209382 retrieved August 15th, 2006

They were not necessarily in favour of Milošević, but certainly objected to such over-simplifications.

Serbs in Toronto found some relief in the balance of coverage that was awarded to them through the support of prominent Canadians. In a letter to the editor of *The Washington Times*, former Canadian ambassador to Yugoslavia James Bissett addressed the tendency of blaming Slobodan Milošević and the Serbs for everything that went wrong in the former Yugoslavia. He contended that it was wrong to suggest that it was *only* Milošević's "genocidal policies" that set the Balkans ablaze in the 1990s⁵⁶. With the end of the war in Bosnia, though exasperated at their unsuccessful attempts to convince their Canadian friends that Serbs were not monsters, the Serbian community still felt strongly Canadian. It was only with the accounts of brutality in Kosovo that those feelings changed drastically.

In 1998, news of a new Balkan conflict captured the attention of Canadians, and more specifically, the Croatian and Serbian communities in Toronto. Confirmation of mass graves and atrocities at the hands of the Serbs became too numerous to overlook, and evidence of extreme violence in Kosovo forced the hands of N.A.T.O. countries to intervene. Finally, it was the massacre in the village of Račak in Kosovo that propelled Canada, with eighteen other countries in N.A.T.O., to

⁵⁶ *The Washington Times*, Letters to the Editor http://www.washingtontimes.com/op-ed/20060719-081857-6783r_page2.htm retrieved July 22nd, 2006

initiate a seventy-eight day bombing campaign in an effort to stop the Serbian crack down on ethnic Albanians in the province.

Despite their ambivalent feelings towards Milošević, Toronto Serbs were conflicted about their Canadian identity. During the bombing that lasted from March 24th to June 9th, 1999, many Toronto Serbs struggled with the fact that their tax dollars were paying for the bombs that were falling on their birth country. Furious with Milošević for entangling Serbia in yet another war, the Toronto community also felt that their:

“sense of betrayal at Canada’s involvement in this intervention, together with the negative media portrayal and ethnic discrimination experienced in their new country, have resulted in the development of strong, sometimes ambivalent, attitudes toward Canada.”⁵⁷

Of course, as images of Albanian refugee camps and reports of Serbian violence inundated the Canadian press, the general public was incensed at what they saw as the audacity of Toronto Serbs. Daily demonstrations of the Serbian community in front of the American consulate in downtown Toronto, and the crowd’s unflattering cries of “Hey, hey, U.S.A., how many kids did you kill today?” and “N.A.T.O. – Nazis!” did nothing to endear the group to Canadians. The latter simply could not comprehend that while many Serbs denounced Milošević as a tyrant, those same individuals so vehemently opposed the West’s (and Canada’s) efforts to curb his campaigns.

⁵⁷ Rummens, p.25

Nearly one year after the bombing ended, C.B.C. reporter Nancy Durham returned to Kosovo to follow up on her year old documentary entitled “The Rajmonda Murder”, about an adolescent soldier of the Kosovo Liberation Army. The soldier had claimed that the Serbian police had killed her younger sister and that she would avenge that death by fighting the Serbs with the KLA. The image of a young female soldier fending off the Serbs, whose reputation had already been tarnished, roused strong emotions among Canadians, while the Serbs felt isolated and targeted by the media. Durham found that in fact the girl had lied and that the supposedly dead younger sister was alive and well. The story’s protagonist defended her tale by stating that so many other Albanians had been killed by the Serbs that her dishonesty was justified. Broadcast after the late-night news, a retraction entitled “The Truth About Rajmonda: A KLA Soldier Lies for the Cause” was aired. It is now used internationally as a case study of war and propaganda in leading universities⁵⁸ and earned Durham a nomination for a Gemini award. Moreover, the C.B.C. aired a documentary entitled “The Road to Račak” in May 2000, which raised legitimate questions about the authenticity of the massacre which led to the bombing of Serbia and Montenegro.

⁵⁸ C.B.C. Personalities: Nancy Durham.

<http://www.cbc.ca/programguide/personality/index.jsp?personality=Durham%2C+Nancy&program=CB+C+News> retrieved June 6th, 2006

The Toronto Serbian community was livid that their home country and families had been subjected to nearly three months of incessant bombardment which had, in their opinion, been based on the manipulation of media. Because the community developed a defense mechanism towards these representations, many were unable to acknowledge the reality of the situation in Kosovo. Legitimate reports of aggression against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were disregarded as exaggerations despite evidence to the contrary. Serbs in Toronto felt the stigma of the “enemy alien” and;

“one of the most profound impacts of the consistently negative media presentation of Serbs throughout the coverage of the Kosovo conflict has been teasing, shunning, name-calling, provocation, harassment, bullying, exclusion and rejection experienced by many Serbian children and youth in Toronto schools.”⁵⁹

Serbs in Toronto argue that the retractions did not do much good after the fact, and argued that if Canada was willing to participate in the accusation of Serbs as violators of international law, the Canadian government and N.A.T.O. should answer for their contraventions of the Geneva Convention.⁶⁰ The nineteen N.A.T.O. countries that participated in the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 have dismissed these charges as erroneous, and found it ironic that Milošević, a man tried for over sixty crimes against humanity, would have the audacity to use the stipulations of international law against them. What the Toronto

⁵⁹ Rummens, p.33

⁶⁰ Michael Parenti, To Kill A Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia (London: Verso, 2000), p.115

Serbian community failed to acknowledge was that, however skewed, the media was not directly responsible for the bombardment of Yugoslavia.

In a turn of events to be expected, the Toronto Croatian community welcomed the onslaught of negative media attention given to the Serbs and gleefully accepted the media's nickname for Milošević "the Butcher of the Balkans." Ironically, the same name was pinned on Ustaša leader Ante Pavelić after the Second World War. This was seen as the golden opportunity to evade any guilt for the Bosnian conflict attributed to the Croats and Tudjman, advancing the theory that surely, after the Kosovo conflict, the world would see Milošević for who he was: a ruthless dictator, and exclusively to blame for the war. Needless to say, this did not endear the Serbs and Croats in Toronto to each other, as many members of the Croatian community refused to acknowledge Tudjman's participation in crimes against humanity. One of these was the master plan to ethnically cleanse large areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina and annex them. The plan was partly successful as the targeted regions of Bosnia are now completely free of Muslims and Serbs.⁶¹ Much to the indignation of Toronto's Croatian community, Carla del Ponte, chief prosecutor for the International Tribunal for Crimes in the former Yugoslavia, stated that "were he [Tudjman] not

⁶¹ Hockenos, p.19

dead, he would have been one of The Hague tribunal inductees.”⁶² On March 13th, 2006, Scott Taylor, editor of *Esprit de Corps* magazine in Ottawa, argued that much of the violence attributed to Milošević was propaganda and that he hoped his witness testimony at the Hague would “be able to at least paint a clear picture” of what actually happened, from which historians would consequently be able to draw⁶³.

Though the relationships between Serbs and Croats in Toronto is far from ideal, due to improved methods of communication and travel, there has been a rapprochement of Serbian and Croatian diasporas and their respective homelands since the wars of the 1990s. Indeed, an analysis of the current Croatian and Serbian governments indicates that they wield considerable influence in the politics of their home countries. For example, Article 45 of the Croatian Law on Citizenship and Culture reserves twelve⁶⁴ of the one hundred and fifty-two seats in the Croatian parliament for members of the diaspora. In Serbia, following the collapse of the Milošević government on October 5th, 2000, the arrival of a member of the diaspora, German-born Serb Zoran Đinđić, brought the hope of a western-based democracy. The government of Serbia has also recognized the importance of its émigrés

⁶² Hockenos, p.19

⁶³ CTV NewsNet “Scott Taylor on the Death of Milošević”

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060313/slobodan_autopsy06031/20060313?hub=World retrieved march 22nd, 2006

⁶⁴ Daphne Winland, “Croats in Canada or Croatian Canadians?” Session on Diasporic Influence on Host Country Domestic Political Activity.

<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:nGlwi6dVRFAJ:www.international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/winland.rtf+daphne+winland+diasporic+influence&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1> retrieved August 3rd, 2006

and reacted to the influence that the diaspora has in homeland politics. In March of 2006, the Republic of Serbia added a new ministry to the existing twenty-four of the Belgrade parliament creating the Ministry for Diaspora, which estimates that some four million Serbs live outside of the borders of the country. Both Serbia and Croatia have recognized a fact that we in Toronto have yet to properly address: Serb and Croat diasporas are extremely influential in their home countries, economically as well as politically, and their governments have made a conscious effort to strengthen ties with them. For example, the Government of the Republic of Croatia, along with the Croatian Olympic Committee and Croatian World Congress, have organized and promoted the first ever "Crolympics" under the campaign slogan: "Croats, welcome home!". The objective of these games, which would attract athletes of Croatian descent from around the world to a week-long "Olympics" in Zadar, is "in the first place, to develop a sense of love among the second and third generations of our emigrants towards the fatherland of their grandfathers and fathers, towards Croatian culture and tradition..."⁶⁵ These games, planned since the end of 2002, were attended by nearly seven hundred descendants of Croatian emigrants, from thirty countries, including Canada. Though the Serbian Ministry for the Diaspora is no more than a few months old, it has already collaborated with establishments like the Patria Organization to form

⁶⁵ *Hrvatsko Slovo*, p.4, July 21st, 2006

initiatives such as the “Come Back of Intelligence”, alluding to the “brain drain” syndrome noted both in Serbia and Croatia since the 1990s.

A new wave of Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees

In the Greater Toronto Area, the Serbian community now numbers roughly 70,000⁶⁶, and the Croatian community is estimated to be approximately the same: 60,000-80,000⁶⁷. However, exact numbers cannot be pinpointed due to the fact that secondary migration – the movement of recent immigrants to Canada between provinces- is not tracked⁶⁸. Moreover, it is impossible to guess how many Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees left the regions of the former Yugoslavia to nearby European countries, only to come to Canada after having obtained citizenship from those states. Further yet, even though Canada keeps records of how many people from Bosnia-Herzegovina are accepted into the country (beginning in 1992 with 17,000)⁶⁹, the ethnicities of those same immigrants was not documented. There is a lack of scholarly literature concerning this new wave of immigrants given the relatively short amount of time since their arrival in Canada. As such, the research with regards to this wave is in no way comparable to the literature regarding the Serbs and Croats to arrive in the decade following the Second World War. Despite these variables, the Serbian

⁶⁶ Rummens, p. 1

⁶⁷ *The Toronto Star*, p. A10, Sept. 15th, 1996

⁶⁸ *The Record*, p. A 10, January 16th, 1999

⁶⁹ *The Toronto Star*, p. A10, Sept. 15th, 1996

and Croatian communities in Toronto are large, and the plethora of shops, restaurants, churches, and ethnic-based service associations (both religious and secular), are indicators of the dimensions of both groups. The number of Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees to arrive in Toronto after the civil war of the 1990s is inarguably much higher than immediately after the Second World War. Based on the frequency with which one hears the Serbo-Croatian language in Toronto, it is possible to come to such conclusions. However, unlike the generation to arrive immediately after the Second World War, the immigrants and refugees to arrive in the past fifteen years have not founded community-oriented organizations. Rather, it is Serbian and Croatian privately-owned businesses that have mushroomed in the Greater Toronto Area since 1991. In contrast to the group of Serb and Croat refugees and immigrants to arrive in Canada post-World War II, the most recent immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, described as “a rolling wave of people from a splintered country,”⁷⁰ are educated professionals, who meet the requirements of Canada Immigration’s Point System. This immense “wave” of educated immigrants and refugees is equally felt by the nations of the Balkans. While Canada has felt the benefit of an influx of such highly trained professionals, the Balkans have seen the “youth and middle class – the foundation of

⁷⁰ *The Record*, p. A 10, January 16th, 1999

democratic construction”⁷¹ flee to the west. Tim Judah argues that while other western countries “fought to keep out refugees and migrants from the ex-Yugoslavia, the Canadians operated a shameless and highly profitable policy of creaming off the best of Serbia’s up-and-coming scientists, engineers, and others.”⁷² Indeed, the potential for this community is enormous because most of these people have good skills, good education, and they’re used to a winter climate already.⁷³ Though the previous statement resembles the attitude put forth by Sir Clifford Sifton, Canada’s Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905, regarding the suitability of certain immigrants to Canada⁷⁴, it nonetheless describes a promising group of individuals. One would hope that because of their education and experience in Yugoslavia, this new group would have discovered the unsubstantiated nature of nationalism and its role in the manipulation of the people of the Balkans, resulting in the conflict of the 1990s. Ostensibly, one could argue that the new group of Serbs and Croats in Toronto has been able to use neutral ground in Canada to mend the fragile rapport between the two communities. New Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees in Toronto are occasionally known to frequent each other’s stores, children are allowed to play with the “other,” and at Serbian social events, it is

⁷¹ Zimmermann, p.213

⁷² Judah, p.276

⁷³ *The Record*, p. A 10, January 16th, 1999

⁷⁴ Ninette Kelley and M.J. Trebilcock, The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p.120

not uncommon to meet a Croat, or vice-versa. Though these anecdotes might seem insignificant and “normal” for the everyday Canadian, to these two communities such acts are a reminder that prior to the twentieth century, and in between wars, their peoples lived relatively peacefully in the Balkans.

The same has been true in Canada. In fact, since the end of the Second World War, Toronto newspapers have only once reported on a violent incident between Serbs and Croats in Southern Ontario. In contrast to the gravity of events in the Balkans in the early 1990s, it seem almost ridiculous that the sole confrontation documented between the two communities occurred between approximately 1500 soccer fans in a match that pitted the Toronto Croatia team against the Hamilton White Eagles in 1996. Though the intentions of the Canadian National Soccer League were perhaps optimistic, both the Serbs and Croats agreed that the soccer match was a “recipe for disaster”, seeing as the war in the Balkans had officially ended with the Dayton Peace Accord a mere seven months prior to the game. Ironically, fighting began at the end of a ninety minute match that had been opened with a message from Ontario Premier Mike Harris commending the Serbs and Croats for healing the wounds of war⁷⁵. While the violence in Hamilton was the only major incident which physically pitted members of the Serbian and

⁷⁵ *The Spectator*, p.B1, June 25th, 1996

Croatian communities against each other, there were other reports of hostilities between the two, but remarkably few and far between.

It is central to this research paper to address the significance of the fact that the majority of the participants in the soccer match violence were Canadian-born and products of a multicultural education system. In Toronto, it seems that the generation of Serbs and Croats to arrive in Toronto in the decade after WWII have fallen into the ideological trap of “the immigrant mentality,” in that they have nurtured the memories of how Croatia and Serbia were when they left. As such, the ferocity that their grandchildren exhibited against the “other” at the soccer game is a testament to the outdated nationalistic notions passed on through generations.

Though the relationship between Serbia and Croatia is not one of adoration, the governments of both countries have recognized that the neighbour will be a constant. Consequently, they have realized that it is to their mutual benefit that the entire region prospers. Serbian psychologist and recent immigrant to Toronto Danijela Seskar-Henčić describes that attitude of living in the past as typically European. Dr. Seskar- Henčić contends that the majority of new Serbian and Croatian immigrants, though understandably wary of the other due to the war, “just want to settle here and stay away from all that madness.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *The Record*, p. A 10, January 16th, 1999

This idea echoes the original goals of this research paper. These vast differences in interactions between the Serbs and Croats to come to Toronto after the Second World War and those to arrive after the civil war of the 1990s are worthy of investigation. In the end, one must wonder if there is truly no solution to the tensions between Serbs and Croats, both in their (now respective) homelands, as well as in Toronto. Some have suggested that the powerful hatreds and conflicting principles between the two communities, as well as disagreement among outside forces in how to react to them are indicators of the hopelessness of reconciliation.⁷⁷ However, such an outlook is not only unproductive and defeatist, but overlooks the simple fact that “these are two nations that were at war until only yesterday.”⁷⁸ It would be unrealistic for Canadians to imagine that because of the physical distance between Canada and the Balkans, the members of these groups would be able to resign their memories to the past, and cast off ambivalent feelings owed to their recent history. In fact, given the atrocities that each group committed against the other in the homeland, Serbo-Croatian relations in the Greater Toronto Area are surprisingly decent. Much of this may be due to the fact that unlike the post-World War Two generation, the Serbs and Croats to arrive in Toronto in the

⁷⁷ Gale Stokes, “Solving the Wars of Yugoslav Succession” in Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (eds.), Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.193

⁷⁸ *The Toronto Star*, B 1, April 29th, 2001

1990s were not soldiers, and many, especially the Serbs, were opposed to the governments in power during the war that ended in 1995.

Serbian and Croatian media

In the post-war period of the late 1990s, Croatia and Serbia have been much too preoccupied with their respective problems to report extensively on the other, and as such, an analysis of the media of each country provides little insight as to the actual, unofficial relations between the two. For example, newspapers and daily news broadcasts will report on meeting between Serbian President Boris Tadić and Croatian President Stjepan (Stipe) Mesić with the goal of normalizing trade between the two countries. However, neither country's media will address the reality of the relationship between their populations. For instance, the fact that Serb tourists on the Dalmatian coast are encouraged to buy false Croatian license plates, as vehicles with Serbian registration are often vandalized.⁷⁹ While Croatia struggled with a fledgling economy and the establishment of a new, independent, democratic government, Serbia had to turn its attention to yet another war in Kosovo, N.A.T.O. bombings, the ousting of Slobodan Milošević, and a crippled economy. As such, it is not a surprise that the political sections of each nation's newspapers are too focused on the formidable amount of happenings in their own governments to bother with a widespread fostering of hatred for the other. Despite that fact, there is

⁷⁹ 24 Sata, "Srbija: iznajmljuje lazne hrvatske tablice" <http://www.24sata.hr/articles/view/31554/> retrieved august 22, 2006

an evident chill, if not outright antagonism, in any mention of “the neighbour” in television, radio, newspapers, and perhaps most notably, the internet. This resentful tone is a powerful remnant of the manufactured ethnic hatred that was the “pièce de résistance of Milošević’s manipulation of the media, as of Tudjman’s.”⁸⁰ This hostility is not exclusive to the “homelands”, but rather is reflected in all types of media within the Serbian and Croatian communities in the Toronto area. Canadian organizers of multicultural events such as Caravan, or the City of Toronto’s project “Christmas Around the World”, are still mindful to position Serbian and Croatian stands far from each other, and schedule the groups’ presentations at different times so as to avoid any “interaction”. However, it is interesting to note that the representatives of Serbia and Croatia at such events are generally members of the “old immigration” (*Stara Garda*) and rarely include any members of the post-Dayton immigrants and refugees. As such, these participants are not representative of the evolving relationship between the younger members of the two communities.

What then has enabled members of these communities to overcome their seemingly crippling difference? How might it be possible for a Serb and a Croat to drink coffee together in Toronto, laughing and conversing in their own language, having lost their homes, memories and family members to the other’s army? For the Serbs and Croats of

⁸⁰ Zimmermann, p.120

Bosnia-Herzegovina especially, the period between 1945 and 1980 was characterized by relative economic growth and political stability. People grew accustomed to studying with the “other”, and afterwards working with that same “other”, all the while living beside him. No doubt, for the Serbs and Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the “other” became human, not a politically demonized brute. As such, it is not surprising that Bosnia had the highest percentage of ethnically mixed marriages of any Yugoslav republic.⁸¹ Both Serb and Croat refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina in Toronto often tell stories of “the good time”, when sitting at a café in Sarajevo, their only concern was who would pay for the next round. Listening to such accounts, one can become an advocate of the opinions put forth by the last American ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmerman, who states that:

“Yugoslavia’s death, and the violence that followed resulted from the conscious actions of nationalist leaders who coopted, intimidated, circumvented, or eliminated all opposition to their demagogic designs. Yugoslavia was destroyed from the top down.”⁸²

However, subscribing to this opinion absolves these “regular people” of any responsibility for the atrocities perpetrated against the other. Were the Serbian and Croatian armies not made up of “regular people”? Truthfully, Zimmerman is right to assume that the Yugoslav civil war, much like all wars in the past, came to be due to the aspirations and manipulations of a handful of high-ranking politicians.

⁸¹ Zimmermann, p.114

⁸² Zimmerman, p.VII

However, the two most prominent figures of the time, Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milošević, would not have been able to provoke the brutal combat that ensued were it not for the presence of cynicism towards the other group within the vast majority of Yugoslavia's citizens. These citizens can be blamed for allowing their leaders to manipulate their ethnic insecurities in order to achieve political aspirations.

Finally, the Serbs and Croats to arrive in Canada in the 1990s have discovered that the recent war was the result of the manipulation of each nation's population by, for the most part, Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milošević. By recognizing that nationalism was used as a tool to achieve the goals of power-hungry leaders, new Croats and Serbs to arrive in Toronto have been able to recognize the absurdity of the strained relationship they found between Serbs and Croats already in Canada. If anything, new divisions have emerged within each community between new and old generations of immigrants and refugees. Often unsuccessfully, the younger group attempts to impress upon the older generation the meaninglessness of their "nationalism", which, they argue, is tremendously different than patriotism. Moreover, many new Serb and Croat immigrant and refugees in Canada blame the previous generation for playing a decisive role in fanning the flames of nationalism sparked by Tudjman and Milošević, resenting them for destroying the "idyllic" image of Yugoslavia preserved in their minds. For many of the Serbs and Croats to arrive in the past fifteen years,

Canada has become a place where strict categories of “Serb”, “Croat”, and “Canadian” have become blurred, awarding the members of these communities the opportunity to create new identities independent of historical prejudices.

Conclusion

However improved the relationship between Serbs and Croats, especially of the new generation of immigrants and refugees in Toronto, it would be false to assume that all is well and that the hatchets of war have been buried. It has been a little over one decade since the official end of the war in the former Yugoslavia. Personal friendships and inter-marriages have developed improved interaction between the two groups in Toronto, but memories of places like Knin and Sarajevo are still fresh. Further wide-scale progress is significantly hindered by the representation of the “other” as the aggressor and the “self” as the victim. For example, newspapers sold in the homeland and the diaspora occasionally publish cartoons or articles that perpetuate an unrealistic vision of the past and its “truth” as each side perceives it. Comments such as “they - the other side – started it and we’re only protecting ourselves” are implicit in articles and regular transmissions of Radio Zagreb or Radio Beograd in Toronto. Croatian newspaper *Hrvatsko Slovo* voiced the sentiments of many Croats who believe that the world falsely regarded Croatia as partially to blame for the Balkan conflict in a

cartoon printed on July 21st, 2006.⁸³ In the first panel of the cartoon, two European Union officials stand above a map of the Balkans painting Serbia over in black ink, above which the caption reads: “we’ll designate the ones who are *truly* to blame for the war!” In the second panel, the pail has spilled, pouring ink onto Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia, and the caption reads: “Oops! Oh well, that’s ok, we’ll just say they’re all equally to blame!” Such caricatures are not only dangerous as they breed past resentments, but also because they perpetuate the belief that the “other” is responsible for the nation’s slow integration into world markets.

Such mentalities impede further progress in the development of a remedial relationship between Serbs and Croats in Toronto. Though it is commendable that many have realized the irrationality of nationalism in the past war, not nearly enough have come to terms with the fact that the other’s patriotism is not necessarily injurious to them. Optimism for calm future relations between these two groups is often represented through the increasing friendships among Serbian and Croatian youth. These groups seem to want to cast aside the differences of their grandparents and align themselves with individuals who are like-minded, regardless of the country of birth of their parents. During a walk down the corridors of certain Toronto schools such as Lakeshore Collegiate Institute or Etobicoke Collegiate Institute, it is not unusual to

⁸³ see Appendix 1

hear students conversing in Serbian and Croatian. Based on this, one might conclude that to these students, language serves as a uniting, not dividing factor, and that their similar backgrounds function as a basis for friendship. However anecdotal, such instances demonstrate the possibility of a rapprochement between the two communities in Toronto. It is perhaps a credit to our educational system, and societal makeup in general, that these incidents are present at all, and that their frequency of occurrence seems to be increasing: proof of which lies in the very *raison d'être* of this research paper. Given the diverse makeup of Canadian society, it is imperative that our system of education instills in its students the tools with which to differentiate between nationalism and patriotism, and the open-mindedness to the other. Ideally, it would be possible to extend the paradigm of the shift in the Serbo-Croatian relationship to other communities of the former Yugoslavia such as Slovenes, Bosnian Muslims, and Macedonians in Canada. Had such a system been in place in the former Yugoslavia, one must wonder if it would have been so simple for Tudjman and Milošević to drum up the sentiments of dormant nationalism within its citizenry. It has been argued that today, Yugoslavia does not exist because the "education system had not succeeded in creating a sense of identity within its citizenry given their multiethnic, multireligious, multicultural and multilinguistic character."⁸⁴ Following its breakup, scholars argue

that the Yugoslav experiment could not have worked, as it was not a nation, but simply a state.

For the new Serbian and Croatian émigrés to Toronto, the concepts of “home” and “homeland” are not separate and distinct as they were for the cohort to arrive post-World War Two. Globalization and the modernization of communication and travel have enabled this newly arrived group to maintain a realistic image of the homeland. Moreover, unlike the post-World War II generation that left Yugoslavia still touting the horns of their leaders, the younger generation remains unwavering in their conviction that Tudjman and Milošević are to blame for the folly that catapulted the Balkans into war. Seeing as Serbs and Croats in Toronto have fortified relations with their home countries, we must not assume that they, or any other diasporic group, can separate their Canadian lives from their “ethnic” lives. Although extreme in the case of the Serbian and Croatian communities, similar problematic dynamics exist between other sets of communities in Toronto such as the Sri Lankans, the Indians and Irish. Therefore, this study is potentially important to other sets of communities seeking to resolve grievances. As such, we must accept that identities have undergone a transnational conversion. The considerable increase in contact between the Serbs and Croats in Toronto has been palpable and has indicated

⁸⁴ Charles Jelavich, “South Slav Education” in Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (eds.), Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.93

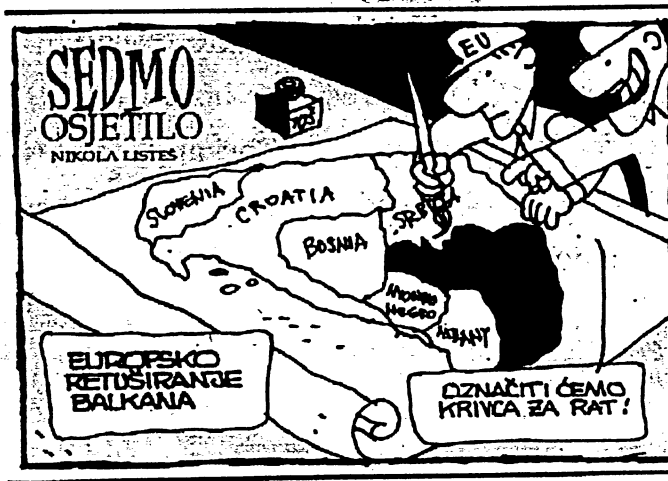
that the new Serbian and Croatian immigrants and refugees in Toronto are able to peacefully co-exist, without tension or strain.

Given the lack of research concerning the relationships between different generations of Serbian and Croatian émigrés to Toronto, this paper will be of assistance to further investigation on the subject. However remarkable the mending of ties between the two groups may be, one cannot overlook the factor of human nature in the reservation of some Serbs and Croats with regard to interaction between the two. These are members of nations that are still reeling from the effects of the war, and as such it is understandable that for some, there is still a certain guardedness vis-à-vis the other. However, the undisputed rejection of the post-World War II immigration's nationalistic sentiment by the new cohort is comforting, and promises a meaningful and productive life for these groups in Canada.

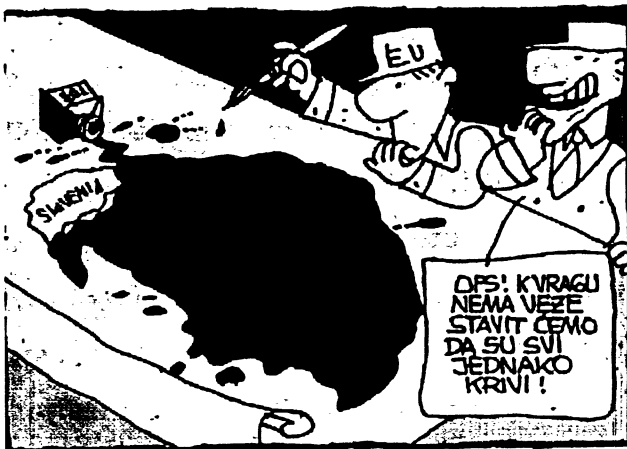
Appendices

Appendix #1:

Source: *Hrvatsko Slovo*, issue 587, page 32. July 21, 2006



(“We’ll designate the ones who are *truly* to blame for the war!”)



(“Oops! Oh well, that’s ok, we’ll just say they’re all equally to blame!”)

Note on Sources

Despite the growth of Serbian and Croatian communities in Toronto, there has been no research to address the relationship between the two groups that constitute a potentially volatile population. Given the lack of investigation into this topic, the research for this study relied heavily on analysis of media from Canada, Serbia and Croatia, as well as published works pertaining to Croatian and Serbian diaspora groups. Given the qualitative nature of the research, and the conclusions drawn at the end of the study, it is hoped that this work might act as a platform for further research. The applicability of this study transcends the Serbo-Croatian model and can be extrapolated to other communities in Canada with comparable dynamics.

In the event of additional investigation of the topic, different methodologies from the ones applied in this work would be necessary. For example, oral histories and interviews would be indispensable in order to discern the depths of animosity between the two groups. Interviews with members of the Croatian and Serbian communities were not considered for this report for a number of reasons. Primarily, Serbian and Croatian community organization are generally headed by members of the wave of immigrants who arrived immediately following the Second World War. As described, these individuals tend to espouse nationalistic ideals. As such, the presence of an individual with a distinctly Serbian name such as mine might encounter trouble with initial consent from members of the Croatian community, especially given the topic of discussion. Assuming that authorization was acquired, it is realistic to assume that answers given in the interview might reflect an agenda of representing the Croatian community rather than addressing the introspective nature of the questions. Conversely, the heads of the Serbian community would be more than willing to grant permission for interviews. However, those individuals might omit

crucial pieces of information to the study, under the assumption that my ethnic background places me in accordance to the views they express. Finally, given that this is the first piece of research with regards to the evolving rapport between the Toronto Serbian and Croatian communities, a healthy distance from oral histories and interviews was necessary in order to ensure an unbiased approach to the topic.

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