

Croats in Emigrant Organizations from Central and Eastern Europe during the First Half of the Cold War: International Peasant Union and Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations

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Abstract: Based on relevant literature, emigrant press and Croatian archival sources, the paper presents and compares the activities and the attitudes of Croatian political emigrants in organizations of emigrants from Central and Eastern Europe in the period of the first half of the Cold War from 1945 to the end of the 1960s. Two main groups were active within the Croatian political emigration at that time. One group was gathered around the leadership of the Croatian Peasant Party, the strongest Croatian pre-war party, while the other group was made up of former members of the Ustaša movement, the Nazi war ally. Members of both groups had to go into exile at the end of the Second World War as opponents of the new communist regime. By coming into exile, they very quickly began to connect with other political emigrants from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on an anti-communist basis. The group gathered around the Croatian Peasant Party found its activities within the International Peasant Union and organizations sponsored by American Free Europe Committee, while the group close to the Ustaša movement found its platform for action in the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations. The aim of this paper is to contribute to a better understanding of the history of Central and Eastern Europe, especially the Cold War activities of political emigrants from that area, through the activities of Croatian emigrants within international emigrant organizations.

Keywords: Croatian political emigration, International Peasant Union, Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, Ustaša Movement, Anti-communism, Cold War

Introduction

Croatian political emigration played a significant role in Croatian political history in the second half of the 20th century. Although in recent years there has been an increased interest in the activities of Croatian emigrants, their undertakings in emigrant organizations in Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War have been very poorly researched. Some attention has been paid to the activities of the leaders of the Croatian

Peasant Party (HSS) in these organizations,¹ while the pursuits of a group of emigrants associated with the Ustaša² movement have remained almost completely neglected, so this paper will present some information about it for the first time. International authors were more interested in the fate of Croatian emigrants in the immediate post-war period,³ as well as their armed actions⁴ and the operations of the Yugoslav secret service towards them.⁵ The general interest of international authors in the activities of emigrant organizations from Central and Eastern Europe is somewhat more significant when it comes to organizations sponsored by the American National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee⁶ (NCFE/FEC),⁷ while there is a lack of a more systematic treatment of the remaining organizations.

The time frame of this paper begins with the end of the Second World War, when emigrants went into exile, and ends in the second half of the 1960s, when significant

¹ Ivan Tepeš, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS* [Croatian Political Emigration-HSS] (Zagreb: AGM d.o.o., 2021); Ivan Tepeš, "Odnos Vladka Mačeka prema hrvatskom pitanju i Jugoslaviji kroz djelovanje u organizacijama emigranata srednje i istočne Europe od 1947. do 1964. godine" ["Vladko Maček's Attitude towards the Croatian Question and Yugoslavia through Activities in Organizations of Emigrants of Central and Eastern Europe from 1947 to 1964"], in *Zbornik radova međunarodne znanstveno-stručne konferencije "Migracije i identitet: Kultura, ekonomija, država"*, ed. Marina Perić-Kaselj (Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnosti, 2020), 869–82.

² Ustaša is the Croatian name for an insurgent.

³ Amy Schmidt, "Vladko Maček i Hrvatska seljačka stranka: Prizori iz izbjeglištva" ["Vladko Maček and the Croatian Peasant Party: Scenes from Exile"], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 37, no. 3 (2005): 407–22; Bernd Robioneck, *Croatian Political Refugees and Western Allies: A documented History* (Berlin: Osteuropa – Zentrum Berlin, 2010).

⁴ Mate Nikola Tokić, *Croatian Radical Separatism and Diaspora Terrorism During the Cold War* (West Lafayette, Indiana, USA: Purdue University Press, 2020); Mate Nikola Tokić, *Diaspora Politics and Transnational Terrorism: An Historical Case Study* (Florence: European University Institute, 2009); Kristina Kalfic, "'The Bomb Is Set...': Responses to Croatian Political Activism in Australia, 1947–1989" (Doctoral thesis, University of Wollongong, 2017); Alexander Mitchell Lee, "'They Seem Like a Good Bunch': Liberal Party Support for Violent Croatian Nationalism in Australia 1949–1972" (Doctoral thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 2022).

⁵ Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Yugoslavia and Political Assassinations: The History and Legacy of Tito's Campaign Against the Émigrés* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2020); Bernd Robioneck, "Mercenaries of a Phantom War The 'Hostile Emigration' in Yugoslavia's Globalized Ideology of Insecurity," *The Exile History Review* 2, (2023): 49–75; Robioneck, "State Security out of Control? The Influence of Yugoslavia's Political Leadership on Targeted Killings abroad (1965–84)" (OEZB Working Paper, March 2020).

⁶ The National Committee for a Free Europe changed its name to the Free Europe Committee in 1954.

⁷ Katalin Kadar Lynn, ed., *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare: Cold War Organizations sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee* (Saint Helena, Ca: Helena History Press, LLC, 2013); Arkadiusz Indraszczyk, "The Cooperation of Peasant Parties from Central and Eastern Europe in Exile after 1945," in *East Central Europe in Exile*, ed. Anna Mazurkiewicz, vol. 2, *Transatlantic Identities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 193–225; Anna Mazurkiewicz, *Voices of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War: The Assembly of Captive European Nations 1954–1972* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021).

changes took place in the activities of international emigrant organizations, but also significant changes on the Croatian emigrant scene. With the death of the president of the HSS, Vladko Maček, in 1964, the activity of Croats in the IPU declined, and at the same time the general passivity of the activities of the IPU began. In the mid-1960s, a crisis began in the operation of the FEC, the most important American organization for financial and logistical support for the activities of emigrants, which was completely ceased to function in 1971. At the same time, on the other hand, the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) moved from the European framework to the wider world stage in 1967 with the establishment of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), in whose work Croatian representatives also participated actively.

In addition to the existing relevant literature, the paper mostly relies on the emigrant press, namely the official ABN newspaper *ABN Correspondence*, the official HSS newspaper *Hrvatski glas* and the official gazette of the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP) *Hrvatska*. From archival sources, the documents of the Yugoslav secret service that are in the collection of the State Security Service of the Socialist Republic of Croatia in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb were used in the paper.

Before the Second World War, the HSS was the leading Croatian political party that enjoyed the plebiscitary support of the Croatian people in the last pre-war elections in 1938, and on August 26, 1939, its president Maček concluded an Agreement with the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Dragiša Cvetković, which established a more autonomous political unit within Yugoslavia, the Banovina of Croatia. With the attack of Germany on April 6, 1941, Yugoslavia fell apart, and with it the Banovina of Croatia as well. On April 10, 1941, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed, and power was taken over by the Ustaša movement led by Ante Pavelić, who imprisoned Maček and kept him in internment until the end of the war. During the war, the HSS became stratified, the Ustaša movement was compromised by its collaborating with the Nazis and fascists and the crimes it committed, and the Communist Party entered the scene, which, at the head of the guerrilla anti-fascist Partisan movement, emerged victorious on the Allied side. When they took power, the Communists started committing crimes against war opponents, as well as other political opponents, priests and civilians. The only salvation from the communists was exile, in which tens of thousands of people found themselves, including politicians gathered around the HSS and the Ustaša movement led by their leaders Maček and Pavelić. Although their common enemies were the communists, their mutual rivalry did not diminish when they came into exile. They reproached each other for choosing allies. The HSS members reproached the Ustaše for their alliance with the Nazis during the war, and the Ustaše reproached the HSS members for their pre-war cooperation with the Serbs and their tendency to resolve the Croatian question within Yugoslavia. However, the main conflict was over the question of which of them was the main representative of

the Croatian people. The HSS referred to the results of the last free elections held in 1938, while the former Ustaše based their legitimacy on the fact that the Ustaše movement created an independent Croatian state in 1941.⁸ Both operated from these positions within the organizations of emigrants from Central and Eastern Europe.

Both groups understood the importance of international connections by looking for an ally in the internationalization of the Croatian question, and their natural partners in this were emigrants from other countries who had also escaped from communism. But in relation to them, the Croats had a big problem with the outbreak of the conflict between the Yugoslav communist leader Josip Broz Tito and the Soviet leader Stalin in June 1948. After that, the West financially and militarily helped Tito's regime and the integrity of Yugoslavia, hoping that other communist states would follow Tito's example and thereby cause a split in the world communist bloc.⁹ Yugoslavia was no longer considered part of the Soviet communist bloc, and expanded its influence on African and Asian countries through the Non-Aligned Movement from the first half of the 1950s.¹⁰

The Cold War also brought new Western policy settings, according to which all Soviet enemies were welcome. Thus, the old, defeated war rivals grew into new desirable but covert Cold War anti-communist allies, especially those who had war experience in direct combat with the Red Army or with communist guerrilla groups, which was the case with the Croatian Ustaše, and armed forces of other nations from Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹ However, political emigrants who were not burdened by cooperation with the Nazis during the war received primacy in support for action. Their main stay in the first years of the Cold War was the NCFE/FEC, which helped them generously and was created primarily to conduct political and psychological warfare against the Soviet Union.

Croats in IPU and Emigrant Organizations Sponsored by the American NCFE/FEC

NCFE was founded in May 1949 and was formally made up of private United States (US) organizations and prominent anti-communist public figures, such as various politicians,

⁸ Tepes, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*.

⁹ Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ For more on the Yugoslav foreign policy position during the Cold War, see: Martin Previšić, *Breaking Down Bipolarity: Yugoslavia's Foreign Relations during the Cold War* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021).

¹¹ Thomas Boghardt, *Covert Legions: U.S. Army Intelligence in Germany, 1944–1949* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2022); Christopher Simpson, *America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988).

military officials, and US businessmen, among whom were the later US President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the later Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Allen W. Dulles, but in reality it was backed by the US government and the CIA. NCFE/FEC supported more than a hundred organizations around the world, among which the most famous were Radio Free Europe, which broadcast programs for people behind the Iron Curtain, and the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN).¹²

The main Croatian representatives in the organizations sponsored by the NCFE/FEC were from the group around the HSS and its president Maček, who stayed in Paris from 1945 to 1947, and then, from 1947 until his death in 1964, in Washington. Given that he enjoyed pre-war political electoral legitimacy as the leader of the Croatian people, Maček immediately began to establish international contacts after his arrival in Paris, using his pre-war acquaintances, such as the French politician Robert Schuman.¹³ In July 1945, Maček gave an interview to *The New York Times*, in which he sharply criticized the new Yugoslav communist government and mentioned the Iron Curtain that the Partisans had lowered over Yugoslavia.¹⁴

Maček became more active in connecting with the leaders of the East European peasant parties in September 1946, after a meeting in Pittsburgh with the leader of the Bulgarian Peasant Party, Georgy M. Dimitrov, who had defected to the USA shortly before. The founding of the IPU was officially presented to the public in Washington on July 3 and 4, 1947, and the first congress was held in Washington from May 24 to 27, 1948, by which time all the leaders of the peasant parties from Central and Eastern Europe ended up in exile. Stanislaw Mikolajczyk from Poland was elected President, Vladko Maček from Croatia, Ferenc Nagy from Hungary, Grigore Niculescu-Buzesti from Romania and Milan Gavrilović from Serbia as Vice-Presidents, and Georgi Dimitrov from Bulgaria as Secretary General.¹⁵ The IPU immediately became active, acting towards the USA and the United Nations, appealing against communism and the occupation of the homelands of their members by the USSR, citing the figure of 100 million peasants fighting communism and totalitarianism in the area.¹⁶ The leaders of the peasant parties were politicians who in the first post-war years until 1947/48 cooperated with the communists in coalition governments, receiving a lot of votes in the process.¹⁷

¹² For more details on the Committee, see: Katalin Kadar Lynn, "At War While at Peace: United States Cold War Policy and the National Committee for a Free Europe, Inc," in *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare: Cold War Organizations sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee*, ed. Katalin Kadar Lynn (Saint Helena, Ca, SAD: Helena History Press, LLC, 2013), 7–70.

¹³ Tepoš, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*, 49–51.

¹⁴ Cyrus Leo Sulzberger, "Matchek Predicts Tito Dictatorship," *The New York Times*, July 23, 1945, 6.

¹⁵ Tepoš, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*, 185–90.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 191–2.

¹⁷ For more on coalition governments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, see: John Connely, *Od Naroda do nacija: Povijesti stočne Europe [From Peoples Into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe]* (Zagreb:

During its activity, IPU had financial support from the NCFE/FEC. The IPU was most active during the 1950s, when it also had a network of offices in the USA, Canada and Western European countries, and in the early 1960s the activity of the IPU began to weaken.¹⁸ In the late 1950s, the IPU included peasant parties from the Baltic countries and Ukraine, which were then part of the USSR, as well as from Central and Eastern European communist countries.¹⁹ Like Maček, who invoked pre-war electoral legitimacy, the IPU was considered a representative of those parties that had enormous electoral legitimacy in the post-war elections before the complete “Soviet subjugation” of their countries in 1947/48.²⁰

However, at the same time as the period of the greatest activity of the IPU, there was also a separation of the interests of political emigrants and their patrons from the USA, which began to support the policy of appeasement and agreement with the USSR, i.e. reproachment and peaceful coexistence, especially after the death of Stalin in 1953.²¹ The IPU condemned such a policy towards communism, considering it a license for the communist destruction of democracy by all possible means.²²

The IPU advocated the unified positions of overthrowing communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the departure of the Soviet army and allowing free democratic elections under international supervision. The ruling communist parties considered an extension of the USSR without influence among the people. The IPU further demanded the right of the people to self-determination, personal freedoms and private ownership of land. Since 1948, the IPU advocated the idea of a European gathering into a federation of states whose components would include their liberated peasant homelands.²³

Maček and his HSS, operating within the IPU, made additional efforts to explain to the West that the positive policy pursued towards Yugoslavia after 1948 was wrong. Maček had to keep repeating that Tito and the Yugoslav communists were no different from the Soviets, and he denied the West's thesis that the so-called “Titoism” and “National Communism” were better forms of communism. He assured that the Yugoslav communists in the late 1940s carried out the violent collectivization of peasant estates

Fraktura, 2022), 635–74; Odd Arne Westad, *Povijest Hladnog rata [The Cold War: A World History]* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2021), 90–108.

¹⁸ For more details on the IPU, see: Indraszczyk, “The Cooperation of Peasant Parties,” 193–225.

¹⁹ Tepeš, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*, 231.

²⁰ “Resolution of the Fifth Congress of the International Peasant Union on International Affairs,” *Hrvatski glas [Croatian Voice]*, November 12, 1956, 1.

²¹ Kadar Lynn, “At War While at Peace,” 51.

²² “Resolution of the Fifth Congress of the International Peasant Union on International Affairs,” *Hrvatski glas*, November 12, 1956, 1.

²³ “New Year Declaration of the International Peasant Union,” *Hrvatski glas [Croatian Voice]*, February 3, 1948, 3.

on the model of the Soviets in the early 1930s. Maček also criticized Western financial aid to Yugoslavia, believing that it helped the dictatorship and supported the communist repressive apparatus, and that it undermined the morale of the people in Yugoslavia. He emphasized the persecution of the Church and priests in Yugoslavia and warned of the persecution and imprisonment of the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac. He was convinced that the peasantry in Yugoslavia strongly resisted communism, and the communist abandonment of the forced collectivization of peasant estates in Yugoslavia was proof of this. He warned that yielding to Tito would not lead to democracy and capitalism in Yugoslavia, nor to its foreign policy turning to the Western camp. Aware of American foreign policy, he did not insist on breaking up Yugoslavia, although he insisted on emphasizing the uniqueness of the Croatian people.²⁴ The HSS belittled Tito's Non-Aligned Movement while promoting the IPU as a more important and powerful organization,²⁵ but in the end Maček was still convinced that the West did not give it the necessary importance.²⁶

Croatian emigrants around the HSS, in addition to the IPU, also participated in other emigrant organizations that were sponsored by the NCFE. From August 1949, Maček was NCFE's advisor for Croatia, while several dozen Croatian emigrants close to HSS worked in various departments of NCFE/FEC. Through the funds received from the NCFE/FEC, HSS members managed to secure scholarships for several Croatian students to study at The Free Europe University in Exile, which operated from 1951 to 1958. University's headquarters were in New York and its component was the College de l'Europe libre in Strasbourg, France.²⁷ During the 1950s, HSS members, through their Croatian Association of Free Journalists, were also active in the International Federation of Freelance Journalists, which had been gathering emigrant journalists since 1948.²⁸

In addition to the mentioned organizations sponsored by NCFE/FEC, there were also those that did not open their doors to Croatian emigrants, and the most important among them was certainly ACEN, which operated from 1954 to 1972. ACEN was a kind of parliament of representatives of enslaved peoples in which, due to American respect for Tito, there were no political emigrants from Yugoslavia, but also representatives of emigrants from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, so as not to further conflict with

²⁴ Tepeš, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*, 200, 221–32, 237, 435.

²⁵ "Povodom kongresa Međunarodne seljačke unije" ["On the Occasion of the Congress of the International Peasants' Union"], *Hrvatski glas*, September 18, 1961, 3.

²⁶ Vladko Maček, *In the Struggle for Freedom* (USA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park and London, 1957), 273.

²⁷ Tepeš, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*, 214–9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

the USSR.²⁹ The HSS members were extremely dissatisfied with the non-admission of representatives of the Croatian people to ACEN's membership, so Maček forbade his members to attend ACEN sessions indirectly through the IPU, which was also respected by political emigrants from Serbia and Slovenia at Maček's urging.³⁰

A part of the Croatian emigration gathered around the HSS, more precisely its general secretary Juraj Krnjević,³¹ enjoyed the support of British political circles, including Winston Churchill himself, who included them in the work of the European Movement (EM). EM was an organization that was founded in 1948 with the aim of unifying Europe. In its activities, EM also enjoyed the support of ENFC/FEC. HSS members within the EM became involved in the work of the Commission for Central and Eastern Europe, which operated until 1953. Krnjević was also present at the first congress of the EM held in the Dutch city of The Hague in May 1948, which was attended by several prominent European statesmen. Krnjević passivated his activities in the EM after 1953, which was obviously a consequence of Tito's visit to Britain that year.³²

Croatian Emigrants in ABN

Another group of Croatian emigrants, former military and civilian officials of the NDH, found their allies within the ABN. Unlike Maček, who was one of the founders and a prominent official of the IPU, the Croatian representatives in the ABN were respected, as were their organizations around the world, but no Croat found himself in the very leadership of the organization.

The ABN was founded at a conference held on November 21 and 22, 1943 in the forests of western Ukraine, near the town of Zhytomir, on the initiative of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists of Stephan Bandera (OUN-B) and under the protection of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). At that time, representatives of 12 nations from the territory of the USSR and a representative of Hungary gathered and set goals for the fight against communism and the liberation of the people under the rule of the Soviet Union. After the end of the war, the ABN held its first post-war conference in Munich

²⁹ Anna Mazurkiewicz, *Voices of the Silenced Peoples*.

³⁰ Neda Prpić, *Dr. Juraj Krnjević – Tri emigracije I: razgovori-pisma-prilozi [Dr. Juraj Krnjević – Three Emigrations I: Conversations-Letters-Contributions]* (Zagreb: Udruga za promicanje hrvatske političke povijesti Neda Prpić-Gamiršek, 2004), 164.

³¹ Juraj Krnjević went into exile on Maček's order in April 1941 with the Yugoslav government after the German attack on Yugoslavia. From then until his death in 1988, he worked in London.

³² For more details on the activities of the HSS in the EM, see: Tepes, *Hrvatska politička emigracija-HSS*, 201–8.

on April 16, 1946, and the former short-term Ukrainian Prime Minister Jaroslav Stetsko was proclaimed the president of ABN.³³ At that time, representatives of peoples from the Baltic and other European Soviet satellite countries also joined the ABN.³⁴ In addition to the overthrow of communism, the ABN also advocated the stratification of the USSR,³⁵ which brought them into conflict with the Russian anti-communist émigrés, especially with the strongest organization, The National Alliance of Russian Solidarists (NTS).³⁶ The ABN's main objective was to fight Bolshevism by operating on the ground within the territory behind the Iron Curtain, so it was not considered an émigré organization. The ABN committee was considered only a body for the coordination of homeland activities,³⁷ representing 200 million people behind the Iron Curtain ready to fight against communism.³⁸ In its activities, ABN enjoyed the support of British intelligence services, especially MI6, and after 1951 it also had the support of the West German government, given that his headquarters were in Munich.³⁹

Those individual members and officials who collaborated with the Nazis during the war were the target of ABN opponents, who readily used the argument to discredit ABN.⁴⁰ Its officials did not hide their cooperation, but they had an explanation for that as well. They claimed that many of them fought in alliance with the Germans for the national interests of their peoples for liberation from Russian imperialism and Bolshevism, which did not mean that they were Nazis because of this. As a counterargument, they mentioned the example of the cooperation of the Western Allies with the Communists during the war, which did not mean that the Westerners were automatically Communists.⁴¹ They also considered it unfair that they were accused of collaborating with the Nazis, while on the other hand, some political émigrés, such as Ferenc Nagy from Hungary, Georgy Dimitrov from Bulgaria and Petr Zenkl from Czechoslovakia, were

³³ Yaroslav Stetsko was the Ukrainian Prime Minister appointed by Stephan Bandera on June 30, 1941 after the declaration of Ukrainian independence. On July 12, the Germans annulled the proclamation, and Stetsko was taken to a concentration camp where he stayed until the end of the war. More about the creation of ABN during the war and the first post-war years, see: Grygoriy Riy, "Reasons for the Creation of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN): Eastern European and Ukrainian Dimensions," *Almanac of Ukrainian Studies* 19 (2021): 149–57.

³⁴ Niko Nakashidze, *The Truth About A.B.N.* (München: A.B.N. Press and Information Bureau, 1960), 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁶ "Fight of the ABN," *ABN Correspondence*, February 1950, 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁸ Niko Nakashidze, "20 Years' Activity Of A.B.N.," *ABN Correspondence*, October–December 1963, 41.

³⁹ Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 222–48, 442–54.

⁴⁰ [unknown author], *What is ABN: Freedom for Nations! Freedom for Individuals* (Executive Committee Ukrainian Liberation Movement, 1958).

⁴¹ Nakashidze, *The Truth About A.B.N.*, 14.

admitted into NCFE/FEC sponsored organizations as democratic elements without any condemnation, although from 1945 to 1947/48 they collaborated in coalition governments with the communists, who committed a number of crimes at that time.⁴² In addition, ABN members generally resented the existence of double standards in the West, according to which, for example, Francisco Franco's authoritarian regime was condemned, and on the other hand, Tito's dictatorship was rewarded, while attitudes towards Stalin, Leon Trotsky, Nikita Khrushchev and others were changed if necessary.⁴³

From the beginning of its post-war activity, the ABN, like the NCFE/FEC sponsored organizations, advocated the idea of the European Union, with the Union recognizing the freedom and full sovereignty of all peoples.⁴⁴ They believed that in the interest of the then existing efforts for European integration, the full liberation of the peoples within the USSR should be advocated, and that Europe should learn a lesson from the Third Reich, which, according to them, did not understand this and therefore lost the war in the East. It was especially disputable to them that the peoples of Africa could gain independence, while the old European and Eurasian nations could not.⁴⁵

The inclusion of the people of the USSR in the Resolution by which the US Congress established the Captive nations Week in July 1959, which was held annually in the third week of July, was considered a great success.⁴⁶ Such equating of the enslavement of the peoples of the USSR with the peoples of other European Soviet satellite countries was not always the case.

It was for this reason that the ABN had conflicts with ACEN, which was criticized for not representing the right to freedom of all subjugated peoples, such as the peoples of multinational communist states like the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and even the Germans from East Germany. The only exception for ACEN was the Baltic states, as the USA did not recognize their Soviet occupation. ABN also believed that ACEN, with American help, is misrepresenting itself as an assembly of legitimate representatives of peoples living in countries behind the Iron Curtain. In contrast to that, ABN considered that ACEN's true role is to preserve the status quo in Europe, which was established by Moscow.⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid., 31; Dalibor Pokorný, "What Is The ACEN," *ABN Correspondence*, May–June 1960, 25–6.

⁴³ Nakashidze, *The Truth About A.B.N.*, 32–3.

⁴⁴ "Fight of the ABN," 7; "ABN and the European Movement," *ABN Correspondence*, March 1950, 1.

⁴⁵ Stefan Panov, "European Integration and the Freedom of the Peoples in the East," *ABN Correspondence*, June 1952, 5–6.

⁴⁶ Nakashidze, "20 Years' Activity," 44; "The American People Defend The Subjugated Nations," *ABN Correspondence*, September 1959, 1.

⁴⁷ Pokorný, "What Is The ACEN," 25–6; A.W. Bedriy, "ACEN Against The Liberation Of The Enslaved Nations," *ABN Correspondence*, July–August 1967, 42.

Croats joined the ABN during its post-war reactivation,⁴⁸ had a representative at the ABN conference in Munich on April 16, 1946,⁴⁹ and from 1949 they became full members of the ABN.⁵⁰ From August 1949⁵¹ until his death in 1959, the main Croatian representative in the Central Committee of the ABN was former Ustaša colonel Hinko Alabanda, who also served as the deputy president of the ABN Military Commission.⁵² Alabanda was succeeded by Andrija Ilić, who in the second half of the 1950s became a high-ranking official of the HOP,⁵³ an organization founded in Argentina by Pavelić in 1956 and which has been the only Croatian organization in the ABN since then.⁵⁴ Before the founding of the HOP, these were alternately the Croatian National Resistance and the Croatian National Committee, and accordingly, due to mutual conflict, for a short time in the first half of the 1950s, Stjepan Buć was also the Croatian representative in the ABN.⁵⁵

In addition to the above, many other Croatian emigrants and their societies around the world, in the USA, Australia, England, Europe, Canada and Argentina, had an active participation in the activities of the ABN. Croats were involved in ABN events and public gatherings everywhere,⁵⁶ and where the Croatian community was strong and organized, such as the one in Australia, it was also the host of ABN gatherings.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Croats from the Ustaša movement and Ukrainians from the OUN have maintained ties since the 1930s, and a congratulatory telegram was sent from the OUN-b's headquarters in Krakow on the proclamation of the NDH in April 1941 (Per A. Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, no. 2107 (2011): 7).

⁴⁹ Nakashidze, "20 Years' Activity," 41.

⁵⁰ "Hrvatski oslobodilački Pokret na svjetskom kongresu Anti bolševičkog bloka naroda (ABN) i Europskog vijeća za slobodu (EFC) u Londonu od 17. do 22. listopada 1968" ["The Croatian Liberation Movement at the World Congress of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) and the European Council for Freedom (EFC) in London from 17 to 22 October 1968"], *Hrvatska [Croatia]*, November 30, 1.

⁵¹ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, Dossier Alabanda Hinko, no. 301799, p. 30.

⁵² "Major-General Hinko Alabanda," *ABN Correspondence*, September 1959, 3.

⁵³ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, 10.10/1, "Hrvatski oslobodilački pokret (HOP)" ["Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP)"], p. 77.

⁵⁴ "United in Genuine Friendship," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1958, 5; "Croatian Leaders in Munich," *ABN Correspondence*, October–December 1964, 59.

⁵⁵ "Plenary Meeting of the A.B.N.," *ABN Correspondence*, March–April 1953, 6; HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, 10.7/7, "Hrvatski narodni odbor – Jelićevci" ["Croatian National Committee – Jelićevci"], p. 8–12; Mile Boban Otporaš, ed., *Pisma Vjekoslava Maksa Luburića 1952-1969: Izvorna povijesna građa [Letters of Vjekoslav Maks Luburić 1952-1969: Original Historical Material]* (Zagreb: Despot Infinitus d.o.o., 2014) 25, 35–6.

⁵⁶ Andrija Ilić, "Dvadeset i pet godinašnjica Antibolševičkog Bloka Naroda" ["The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations"], *Hrvatska*, January 25, 1969, 5.

⁵⁷ "ABN in Australia and New Zealand," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1961, 28; "ABN Activity in Australia," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1965, 43.

As the ABN constantly emphasized its support for the guerrilla freedom fighters behind the Iron Curtain, Croatian representatives also tried to show the strength of Croatian resistance in their homeland by mentioning in 1950 news about Croatian “Crusaders”, i.e. insurgents⁵⁸ who were active in Croatia in the period between 1945 and 1950.⁵⁹ There was even mention of obvious misinformation about the visit of the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian insurgent UPA Army, Taras Chuprynka, to the General Staff of the Croatian Crusaders in 1946.⁶⁰ In general, Ukrainians and Croats in the ABN emphasized their Ukrainian-Croatian harmony and mutual assistance of the Croatian and Ukrainian people for the freedom of their homelands.⁶¹

Croatian representatives, like others in the ABN who collaborated with the Nazis during the war, also offered their arguments for such cooperation. They claimed that the Croats had begun their struggle for independence long before the existence of fascism and Nazism, and that members of the armed forces of the NDH had fought only against the Bolsheviks, Communists and Serbian Chetniks, and that they had never fought against the armies of the Western Allies.⁶² Alabanda said that it was true that Croatia fought as an ally of the German people, but it did not fight for the goals of Hitler and Mussolini, but it was a fight for its freedom and state independence, a fight against world communism and for the whole of humanity, and not a single bullet was fired against British or American troops.⁶³ To support these claims, he provided some details about Pavelić’s alleged rejection of Stalin’s offer at the end of the war. Accordingly, Stalin guaranteed the survival of the NDH, but at the cost of the unimpeded passage of Soviet troops across its territory to the Adriatic and further to the north of Italy. By rejecting it, Pavelić initiated the fight against the Red Army in the north of the NDH and thus saved Western Europe from catastrophe and general Bolshevization in the long run.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Dr. A.I. (pseudonym of Andrija Ilić), “Croatia’s Crusaders Are Fighting in the Stepinac’s Spirit,” *ABN Correspondence*, March 1950, 6.

⁵⁹ For more details on the Crusaders, see: Zdenko Radelić, *Križari: gerila u Hrvatskoj 1945.-1950.* [*Crusaders: Guerrilla in Croatia 1945–1950*] (Zagreb: Alfa d. d. i Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2011).

⁶⁰ “Govor hrvatskog ABN delegata” [“Speech of the Croatian ABN Delegate”], *Hrvatska*, November 18, 1950, 3.

⁶¹ “The Common Front Against Moscow,” *ABN Correspondence*, March–April 1962, 29–30.

⁶² Andrija Ilić, “On the Anniversary of Croat Independence,” *ABN Correspondence*, May 1951, 8–9; Hinko Alabanda, “The Croatians Reply,” *ABN Correspondence*, June 1952, 8.

⁶³ Vladislav Škaričić (pseudonym of Hinko Alabanda), “Croatia’s Sacrifice for the West,” *ABN Correspondence*, May–June 1958, 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid.; Based on this text, Croatian historian Jere Jareb wrote a scientific article on Croatian-Soviet ties during World War II. See: Jere Jareb, “Sovjetski dodiri s dr. Antom Pavelićem od rujna 1944. do veljače 1945.” [“Soviet Contacts with Dr. Ante Pavelić from September 1944 to February 1945”], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 27, no. 1 (1995): 7–31.

As in the case of Croatian emigrants sponsored by NCFE/FEC, the Croatian representatives in the ABN also had significant problems due to the favorable international position of Yugoslavia after 1948. That is why the peoples of Yugoslavia were not explicitly mentioned in the Resolution of the Captive Nations Week,⁶⁵ but regardless of this, Croats participated in its celebration every year and were mentioned in the proclamations of some American cities where the events were held.⁶⁶

Croatian representatives in the ABN also publicly explained on all possible occasions that communism in Yugoslavia was no different from communism in the USSR and other satellite communist countries, and that it was only a communist tactic for further expansion around the world, and concluded that the Western experiment with support for Yugoslav communism in favor of the schism in the Eastern Bloc had failed.⁶⁷ Croatian representatives in the ABN also explained the uselessness of Yugoslavia for the West from a military point of view, claiming that the Yugoslav army would immediately disintegrate after the attack of the Soviets and their satellites, like the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the German attack in April 1941, because it was composed of oppressed peoples who were not ready to defend it, especially not the Croats.⁶⁸ They spoke publicly about Tito's crimes and murders of Croats immediately after the end of the war until 1948, giving figures from 150 thousand to half a million.⁶⁹ They also talked about the persecution of the Church in Croatia and Archbishop Stepinac, who was considered a Croatian spiritual leader, and his sacrifice and suffering as an inspiration in the fight against communism.⁷⁰ Tito's policy in the Non-Aligned Movement was also criticized, believing that Tito hypocritically supported the rights to self-determination of African

⁶⁵ In addition to the constituent republics of the USSR and European Soviet satellite countries, the Resolution explicitly mentioned North Korea, North Vietnam, Mainland China and Tibet. The Czech Republic and Slovakia are also not separated, but Czechoslovakia is mentioned. See: "Senate Joint Resolution 111," *ABN Correspondence*, September 1959, 1.

⁶⁶ "Captive Nations Week," *ABN Correspondence*, September–October 1960, 2; "Captive Nations Week, 1965," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1965, 37–40; "In Australia," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1965, 44; "Observance of Captive Nations Week 1967 in New York," *ABN Correspondence*, September–October 1967, 34–5.

⁶⁷ Andrija Ilić, "National Communism A Contradiction In Itself," *ABN Correspondence*, March–April 1959, 5; "Croatia Under Tito's Yoke," *ABN Correspondence*, September–October 1961, 29–31; "Croats Demand Independence," *ABN Correspondence*, October–December 1964, 39–41.

⁶⁸ "Marching Orders against Tito Imminent?," *ABN Correspondence*, April 1951, 1–2; "Croatian Memorandum," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1953, 10.

⁶⁹ "Request to Extradite Dr. Artukovic Dictated by Hatred," *ABN Correspondence*, July–August 1958, 15; Andrija Ilić, "United in Struggle," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1964, 19; "Penalty for Insulting Tito," *ABN Correspondence*, May–June 1964, 38.

⁷⁰ Dr. A.I., "Croatia's Crusaders," 6.

and Asian peoples in the process of decolonization, and he did not want to apply the same principle in his own country.⁷¹

Unlike the Croatian group sponsored by NCFE/FEC, the Croats in the ABN were not ready for Yugoslav solutions but demanded exclusive Croatian independence and the breakup of Yugoslavia, explaining that this state was an artificial creation in which the Serbs had dominance, and the Croats were neglected. They also denied the idea of Pan-Slavism, considering it a creation of Russian imperialism, claiming that Croats and Serbs are not the same race, just as there are differences between Ukrainians and Russians.⁷² In this respect, they shared views with the leadership of the ABN.⁷³

The leadership of the ABN generally accepted all criticism of Tito and Yugoslavia by its Croatian representatives as its official policy and used every opportunity to portray Western policy towards Tito as wrong. It advocated the stratification of the artificial multinational creations of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia created after the First World War against the will of the Croats and Slovaks, and which, with the help of Russia, survived even after the Second World War.⁷⁴ They also demanded the stratification of the USSR, which they considered the last surviving colonial empire, complaining that at the time of decolonization and liberation of African and Asian peoples, the same right was not recognized by the peoples of the USSR.⁷⁵ The leadership of the ABN supported the Croats in criticizing Tito's Non-Aligned Policy, and the general policy of the Non-Aligned Movement and their role as the Third Force in the World were also criticized. Instead, the ABN claimed that they were the real third force and considered the Non-Aligned Movement an extension of communism. They argued that there could be no neutral states in the world, but that each should declare itself in favor of one bloc, with the most ideal being joining the Western democratic bloc.⁷⁶

A particular thorn in the side of the ABN⁷⁷ and the Croats in the ABN⁷⁸ was the policy of peaceful coexistence of the two blocs, which they considered to be the weakness of the West and a means of leaving the subjugated peoples at the mercy of the communists.⁷⁹

⁷¹ "From Letters to ABN," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1961, 34.

⁷² Stjepan Buć, "Panslavism," *ABN Correspondence*, August–September 1951, 3–4.

⁷³ "Pan-Slavism – A Russian Idea," *ABN Correspondence*, May–June 1962, 15–6.

⁷⁴ "On Captive Nations Week," *ABN Correspondence*, August–October 1965, 35.

⁷⁵ Niko Nakashidze, "The World-Front Against Bolshevism," *ABN Correspondence*, August–September 1956, 5.

⁷⁶ "The Third Force: Neutralists are not a Separate Force," *ABN Correspondence*, March–April 1961, 21–2; "Russian Colonial Policy in Captive Nations," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1962, 34.

⁷⁷ "Against a Policy of Coexistence," *ABN Correspondence*, April–May 1956, 1; Niko Nakashidze, "Moscow's Coexistence Swindle," *ABN Correspondence*, March–April 1960, 1.

⁷⁸ Ilić, "National Communism," 5.

⁷⁹ "The Fiery Signs of Desperation," *ABN Correspondence*, August–September 1956, 9.

They believed that instead of a policy of coexistence, it was better to strongly support the peoples behind the Iron Curtain in the struggle for self-determination, because this was the most powerful Western Cold War weapon that would lead to the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

From the mid-1950s ABN began to look for allies beyond the European framework, looking for ways to get involved in the wider international anti-communist struggle, especially among the Asian peoples who were also fighting strongly against communism at that time. ABN President Stetsko visited the Chinese branch of The Asian Peoples' Anti-Communist League (APACL) for the first time in October 1955 in Taipei, Taiwan,⁸¹ and in March 1957 he participated for the first time in the APACL conference in Saigon, South Vietnam.⁸² In 1958, together with APACL, Stetsko attended the preparatory conference for the creation of a world anti-communist organization, which was finally realized with the founding of the WACL in 1967.

APACL conference in Saigon in October 1963 was particularly important for the Croats, when the ABN leadership for the first time managed to unanimously push through the part of the conference resolution in which the problem of Croatia was mentioned, which until then had encountered significant opposition at APACL conferences due to the special position of Yugoslavia in international politics,⁸³ but also Tito's long-term campaign among Asian nations, especially through the Non-Alignment Movement.⁸⁴ The same was done at the APACL conferences for the next two years. The resolutions expressed support for the Croats in the restoration of national independence and the fight against Tito's tyranny in the artificial creation of Yugoslavia, and Tito was called a communist Trojan Horse that pushes the non-alignment of the countries of Africa and Latin America in the interest of Moscow. It is interesting that these parts of the resolution were mostly protested by representatives of ACEN and NTS, who attended the discussions at the meetings of the preparatory committees as guests.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ "From the Address by Dr. Stjepan Buć, Representative of Croatia," *ABN Correspondence*, June–July 1951, 6.

⁸¹ "No Compromise in the Anti-Communist Fight," *ABN Correspondence*, January–March 1956, 15.

⁸² "ABN at the Asian Conference in Saigon," *ABN Correspondence*, May–June 1957, 1.

⁸³ "The 9th Conference of APACL," *ABN Correspondence*, October–December 1963, 18.

⁸⁴ "IX. Konferencija APACL-a u Saigonu u prilog hrvatske državnosti" ["9th APACL Conference in Saigon in Favor of Croatian Statehood"], *Hrvatska*, Božić [Christmas] 1963, 5.

⁸⁵ "APACL Conference for Liberation Policy," *ABN Correspondence*, October–December 1963, 20; "The Main Topics of the Conference Were:," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1965, 19; "Resolution on Soviet Russian Colonialism and the Liberation of Subjugated Peoples," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1965, 23; "APACL Conference," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1965, 4–5; "Resolution on the Liberation of Nations Subjugated by Soviet Russian Imperialism and Communism," *ABN Correspondence*, November–December 1965, 7.

The introduction of the Croatian problem to the wider world stage through the APA-CL conferences was only a prelude to the later involvement of Croatian representatives in the WACL during the 1970s and 1980s, which was the result of strong support from the ABN leadership. In 1967, ABN also participated in the creation of the European Freedom Council (EFC), which was an extended arm of ABN in Western European countries. For ABN, WACL and EFC were the beginning of a stronger engagement in the fight against communism at the European and world level.⁸⁶

Conclusion

Both Croatian emigrant groups expected a great conflict between the Western democracies and communism and sought their space in it, expecting Western help to return to power in Croatia. The group around the HSS strengthened its position in cooperation with peasant parties from Central and Eastern Europe and counted on the support of the peasantry from these countries, while the group around the former Ustaša relied on advocates of armed guerilla anti-communist resistance in all nations behind the Iron Curtain, including those from the Soviet Union. Due to the Cold War circumstances of the status quo and American policy, the group around the HSS was much more pragmatic and inclined to resolve the Croatian question within the Yugoslav framework, while the group around the former Ustaša insisted on Croatian independence and the stratification of Yugoslavia, which was then a radical solution disrupting the balance of power against Western interests. After the conflict between Tito and Stalin in 1948, the West saw Yugoslavia closer to the Western camp, regardless of its communist regime, so no emigrant group could undermine it. In the end, the Croats only took advantage of the favorable international situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to overthrow communism and gain independence. At the same time, the maximalist demands of other Eastern European emigrants also came true. Communism was overthrown, the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia disintegrated, and most of the newly formed countries joined the EU.

⁸⁶ "Here and There," *ABN Correspondence*, January–February 1968, 1–3.

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