

Luka L. Budak: “Review of F. Lovoković, *Hrvatske zajednice u Australiji, Nastojanja i postignuća* [Croatian communities in Australia, Endeavour(ing)s and achievements]”.

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Fabijan Lovoković, *Hrvatske zajednice u Australiji*. Riverwood (Sydney): Ligare Pty Ltd, 2010; pp. i-xiii, 768; hbk, AU\$80; ISBN: 9780646530536.

The first Croatian migrants to arrive to Australia in the years after World War II were mainly displaced persons and refugees, survivors of postwar atrocities, both soldiers and civilians. In the mid-1950s as well as late 1950s they were joined by those who had experienced both the horrors of war and the difficult social, political and economic conditions of the first decade of the Yugoslav communist regime. Many fled illegally,¹ but were welcomed to Australia by the Menzies government.² The next ‘wave’ of Croatian migration to Australia, both from Croatia and from Bosnia and Herzegovina, was after Yugoslav authorities opened borders when faced with high rate of unemployment in the early 1960s.³ It was followed by those migrants who arrived under Australia’s skilled and semi-skilled immigration scheme⁴ which lasted roughly until the mid-1970s. The official attitude to Croatian migrants had by now changed, culminating during the federal Whitlam Labor government with raids on the homes of Croatians who were alleged to have participated in terrorist activities in Australia.⁵

In the 1980s, due to high rates of unemployment and political uncertainties, a number of skilled and professional people left Croatia for Australia in a search of a better life.⁶ They were followed in the 1990s, by which time Yugoslavia was already defunct, by some refugees from Croatia and somewhat larger number of Croatian refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the time of this writing a number of young and skilled people are arriving, or are trying to migrate, to Australia due to

¹ Budak (1988): 343.

² Biršić (1988): 337; Čolić-Peisker (2004/05): 6.

³ Biršić (1988): 343.

⁴ Čolić-Peisker (2004/05): 7.

⁵ Biršić (1988): 343; Čolić-Peisker (2004/05): 6; Drapač (2004/05): 29-31.

⁶ Čolić-Peisker (2004/05): 9.

high rate of unemployment in the Republic of Croatia as well as due to low wages which are often paid with weeks and months of delay.⁷

The post-Second World War Croatian migrants, and in particular those who came in the early postwar years, differed from the interwar migrants, and not only because they now came from all the regions of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were very proud of their Croatian nationality and cultural heritage, and the great majority supported the idea of an independent, sovereign, and democratic Croatia, and refused to be referred to as “Yugoslavs”. Like many other Croatian communities around the world, many postwar Croatian migrants in Australia directed all their political, social, cultural and intellectual efforts to the struggle for Croatian national independence and secession from Yugoslavia. Unlike their interwar predecessors, they took up the challenge to engender a Croatian identity in Australia. This group set the nationalist direction of the community and founded and built a plethora of Croatian associations, clubs, sporting and cultural organizations, welfare associations, churches and Croatian language schools which affirmed the Croatian identity in an urban environment, which encouraged multiculturalism and cultural diversity as social ideals. Their efforts and achievements were immediately boosted by those Croatian migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s.

The pinnacle of their efforts and engagement came with the proclamation of independent, sovereign and democratic Republic of Croatia in 1991. Their efforts were rewarded with a visit by the first President of the Republic of Croatia, Dr Franjo Tuđman, in 1995, and later by diverse state officials and academics. The land for the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in Canberra was purchased by the local Croatian community and the embassy soon built thereafter on it as a joint effort and project of Croatian Australian community, the Croatian General Consulates in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth were opened in premises purchased by the local Croatian communities. During the 1990s quite a few Croatians departed for Croatia. Some settled there for good, but a number of them returned back to Australia. It is estimated that over 250,000 Australians are Croatian migrants or their descendants.

There is no doubt that the post-Second World War migrants played the pivotal role in both the development of the Croatian community and Australia as well. Although a considerable literature, in Croatian and English, exists on Croats and Croatian community in Australia, Fabijan Lovoković’s book *Croatian communities in Australia, Endeavour(ing)s and achievements* makes a valuable contribution nevertheless.

I should stress at the outset that Lovoković’s book is not an academic work. Unfortunately it is neither a narrative of the evolution or history of the Australia’s post-war Croatian communities. It is rather a diary or ‘dot point’ annals, recording dates and events in the Croatian community, a very unusual and unconventional style and manner for book writing. By author’s own admission:

⁷ In a last half year or so I have been receiving a numerous emails from young people with the university education asking me for a job as well as an advice how to migrate to Australia. This symbolizes a potential ‘new wave’ of Croatian migration to Australia.

“Most of these data have been extracted from a number of bound newspaper copies of ‘Spremnost.’⁸ Also I used a number of clippings from Australian newspapers, letters from individuals, records from the Federal Parliament. In other words, for all the above I sought legal basis, or confirmation in writing, so that this part of work and life of Croats in Australia would be a true representation.” (p. xiii)⁹

Be that as it may, this enormous publication consists of 768 pages, of approximately 1,200 entries and 524 photographs, 112 of which are in colour.¹⁰ The major portion of the book consists of three main parts. Each part consists of a number of sections. There are other segments of the book which we will also be look at.

Part I: Activities of Croatians in NSW 1950-1992 (*Djelovanje Hrvata NSW-a 1950.-1992.*)

This first part of the book refers to events in Croatian community of New South Wales from 1950 to 1992. It consists of five sections with almost 800 entries and 180 photographs

- “Arrival of Croatians after World War II” (pp. 3-15) - it consists of 18 entries and 11 black and white photographs.
- “Croatian community of Sydney 1951-1959” (pp. 17-75), with 103 entries and 25 black and white photographs.

⁸ Fabijan Lovoković was one and only editor of the Croatian-language newspaper *Spremnost* since its inception in 1957 till its extinguishing in the first decade of the 21st century. *Spremnost* reflected the editor’s and post-war Croatian migrants’ non-recognition of the state and government of Yugoslavia as the legal representative of the Croatian people. This is well confirmed by the very first photograph in the book in which a young man holds a sign: “Please don’t call me a Yugoslav! I am a Croat. Yugoslavia is a symbol of slavery for Croatian.”

⁹ I am not so sure about this statement, especially when I personally know that the Governing Council of the *Croatian Studies Foundation* never gave or approved any lists of its membership, but in spite of that Lovoković went ahead and published a partial list of CSF’s members which caused quite a bit of unnecessary unrest among CSF’s membership and in community in general. In relation to that Lovoković says: “We publish the data which we were able to come across because we are of the conviction that names of the donors should be inscribed not only into the book of *Croatian Studies Foundation*, but also into those annals which will be accessible to much greater number of interesting persons and institutions.” (p. 336). Lovoković always wanted to be a busy-body in the community (*Htio je uvijek biti svakom loncu poklopac*). Furthermore, he takes a handful of names from one CSF’s invitation to a cocktail party and publishes the names of students who have studied Croatian from 1983-2000 without any consultation and without anyone’s permission, ignoring Federal *Privacy of Information Act*. What is even worse, the author publishes any information, untrue or misleading, to undermine the *Croatian Studies Foundation* and its activities. Good example of this unverified and planting information is the correspondence that the author received from Mrs. Štefica Maglica and readily published it in his book (pp. 337-41).

¹⁰ It would make an interesting research to see whether the colour photographs signify the importance of a group in relation to the author and his political views. For example, Croatians on Tasmania have only 8 entries altogether but 28 photographs of which 16 are in colour as compared to 22 entries on Croatians in South Australia, 16 entries on Croatians in Western Australia, and 17 entries on Croatians in Queensland but no colour photographs!

- “Croatian community of Sydney 1960-1969” (pp. 77-135), with 167 entries and 52 photographs of which 16 are in colour.
- “Croatian community of Sydney 1970-1979” (pp. 137-205), with 237 entries and 35 photographs of which 16 are in colour.
- “Croatian community of Sydney 1980-1992” (pp. 207-89), with 271 entries and 56 photographs of which 16 are in colour.

So, for example, if you turn to page 63 you will find there four entries: “Annual function of *Australian Council of Australia* (ACA) was held on 16th November 1957”; “A proposal about formation of *Central Council of Croatian Associations of Australia*”; “The action for buying of Croatian Club (*Dom*)”, and that on 15th December 1957 the first issue of *Spremnost* came out. On page 77 you can find and read about the “Last wish of the *Poglavnik*”¹¹ as well as “Memorial service for the *Poglavnik*”. On page 113 we find about a lecture on Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac in Croatian Club (*Dom*) on 25th February 1966 by a young speaker, Franjo Lazanja; on a same page we also find the entry that Sir Robert Menzies leaves politics, etc., etc.

It must be pointed out that many of these entries are riddled with bias and incomplete information, which makes them, putting it mildly, misleading. For example, if we turn to page 235 we find four entries on that page. The second one reads: “Dr Vinko Grubišić in Australia”:

“On Sunday 14th April 1985 Dr Vinko Grubišić, who will be teaching Croatian language and literature at Macquarie University, has arrived to Sydney. He graduated out of Croatian Studies in Zagreb under the guidance of Professor Ljudevit Jonke, and obtained his PhD in Slavonic philology in Switzerland. For the past nine years Vinko Grubišić has been living in Canada in town of Sudbury.”

The fourth entry reads: “Michael McAdams in Australia”:

“In the early days of May 1985 Professor Michael McAdams, professor of history and expert on Croatian issues, arrived to Sydney and held a series of lectures. He gave a lecture on 4th May 1985 in Croatian Club ‘King Tomislav’, on 5th May 1985 in Croatian Club Ltd in Punchbowl, and on 7th of May he held a lecture at Macquarie University. This lecture on ‘Yalta Agreement’ was held in front of numerous students, Croatians, Ukrainians, Poles and Macedonians. The lectures were held in the organization of SOHDA [Central Council of Croatian Associations of Australia]. Professor Michael McAdams was a guest of Croatians in Melbourne, Geelong and Adelaide.”

The above is only partially true. Dr Vinko Grubišić and Professor Michael

¹¹ *Poglavnik* (the Leader) is a title used by Ante Pavelić, supreme leader of collaborationist Independent State of Croatia in the Second World War.

McAdams did not come to Australia just because of their own accord. It is a well-known fact that both colleagues, Dr Grubišić and Professor McAdams of University of San Francisco, were invited to Australia by the writer of this review and with the support of the *Croatian Studies Foundation*. Without their efforts and support the two gentlemen and academics would not have come to Australia and I cannot understand why this is passed over in silence! This is a very dangerous path to tread upon.

Part II: Organizing of Australian Croatians through associations and institutions (*Organiziranje Hrvata Australije kroz društva i ustanove*)

This second part of the book relates to formation of Croatian organizations and the institutions across Australia during this period. It illustrates the social, cultural, folkloric, sports, media, and political activities and it consists of 360 entries, 301 photographs, 36 scanned front pages of Croatian printed media, and 45 scanned covers of Croatian books published in Australia:

- “Umbrella Croatian institutions in Australia” (pp. 293-342); it consists of 25 entries and 14 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in Sydney” (pp. 345-427) with 70 entries and 57 photographs of which 16 are in colour.
- “Croats in NSW outside Sydney” (pp. 429-42) with 16 entries and 8 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in Victoria” (pp. 445-96) with 32 entries and 56 photographs of which 16 are in colour.
- “Croats in South Australia” (pp. 499-523) with 22 entries and 16 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in Western Australia” (pp. 525-40), with 16 entries and 10 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in Tasmania” (pp. 543-54), with 8 entries and 28 photographs of which 16 were in colour.
- “Croats in Queensland” (pp. 557-81), with 17 entries and 23 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in Canberra and Queanbeyan” (pp. 583-89), with 10 entries and 12 black and white photographs.
- “Croatian printed media in Australia” (pp. 601-12), with 47 entries and 36 scanned front pages.
- “Books printed in Australia” (pp. 615-25), with 1 entry and 45 scanned front covers.
- “Religious life of Croats in Australia” (pp. 627-60), with 32 entries and 24 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in building of Australia” (pp. 665-72), with 5 entries and 8 black and white photographs.
- “Croats in cultural and sports life of Australia” (pp. 675-90), with 22 entries and 27 photographs of which 16 are in colour.
- “Croatian institutions established in NSW after establishment of the

[independent] Republic of Croatia” (pp. 693-727), with 37 entries and 18 photographs.

Part III: Appendices (*Dodatci*)

In this third and final part of the book we find eight different sections; it consists of 17 entries and 2 black and white photographs:

- Croatians and Slovenes (p. 730); Members of ACA Sydney 1951-1955 (pp. 731-2); Second wave of immigrants 1959-1960 (pp. 732-3); First Minutes of the ACA Sydney 1951 (734); First memorandum of the Croatians to the Federal Government 1952 (735-6); Letter by ACA Melbourne in relation to memorandum 1953 (737); First Minutes of ACA Geelong 1957 (738); Letter of Federal Government in relation to the opening of Yugoslav embassy in Canberra 1966 (739); Notice about the bomb attacks in Sydney 1972 (740); Announcement in the name of Croatian freedom and independence 1974 (741); Notice from Australian Government in relation to symbolic Croatian embassy in Canberra in 1977 (742); Recognition of Croatian language in Victoria 1979 (743); Recognition of Croatian language in NSW 1979 (744); Statement by Canberra Croatians about democratization of Yugoslavia 1988 (745); Resolution from the meeting of Croatian political organizations in Canberra on 26th February 1989 (746-7); Letter from SOHDA to Prime Minister of Australia about the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Croatia 1991 (748); Notice from Australian Prime Minister about recognition of the Republic of Croatia 1992 (749).

In addition to the documents listed above, we also find the following parts of the book such as the Note of thanks (*Zahvala*) in which author expresses his gratitude to 106 persons from different Croatian organizations who have helped him in bringing his book to a fruition (pp. 750-52) and a list of numerous abbreviations (pp. 753-54). After going through 754 pages of discordant and often not very soothing entries – at times passionate, polemical, biased and even ironic – we finally come to the Bibliography on pp. 756-66 which is not in fact bibliography but a list of ‘well-known’ books published in Australia and New Zealand in Croatian about Croatians in Australia and New Zealand or on Croatian themes published in English. And finally, we come to the last page in the book: “Sponsors of the book”, mentioning seventy Croatian individuals, businesses and community organizations, to whom the author dedicates the following thoughts:

“I wish to express my thanks to the persons and associations who with their financial donations helped printing of this historical book about Croatian communities in Australia in a hope that the book will be of use for further thinking about achievements of Croatians, especially with our younger generations both in Australia as well as in other historical spaces where Croatians now reside.” (p. 768).

A huge data of information on the social cultural, sports, religious, and political activities of the Croatian expatriates in Australia in post-war period have been

gathered and presented in this book. A lot of that information, however, comes from Lovoković's own newspaper *Spremnost*. The possible researchers of this newspaper will not have to browse and plow through the many issues of the paper as selective summary of *Spremnost* is available in this book. Nevertheless Lovoković's book will, no doubt, with all its weaknesses and flaws, contribute to the better understanding of history and problems of the Croatian community in Australia during a very difficult and arduous period of Croatian history.¹²

Apart from the lack of formal cohesion, and other shortcomings mentioned only briefly above, the book also suffers from the 'Spremnost syndrome' - the biased coverage of the issues in the Croatian community. For that reason, and many others, the book will not live up to promise of delivering a true history of post-World War II Croatian-Australian community. Just as in the times of his editorship of *Spremnost*, here too the author employs the same approach and underhand dealing with unlike-minded persons and members of Croatian community and Croatian community organizations of different views. As the editor of *Spremnost* he would undermine them and belittle in every way he could, and that unfortunately transpired into the book under the review. Due to this egocentric approach many important events in the Croatian community and several community organizations were hardly mentioned or they were left out altogether. That is very disturbing and negative side of this book in 'dot-point' form. And that is really sad as there is no room in today's space and time to express such intolerable attitudes with no respect to the views of other people. Croatian community of Australia is a diverse community and the book should have provided a deeper appreciation of the diversity of Croatian life in post-war Australia, as well as greater presentation of the Croatian migrants' input into and contribution to the multicultural fabric of the Australian nation.

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¹² Ante Vukasović, p. xii; Professor Ante Vukasović, well known Croatian pedagogue (now in retirement), wrote a Comment on the book (pp. ix-xiii); and Dr Mladen Ibler, ex-Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia to Australia and New Zealand (1999-2005), wrote a short Introduction (pp. vii-viii).