

The Role of Diaspora in Cultural Transformations of Croatian Society

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Abstract of Presentation

The paper reflects upon the process of development of political attitudes toward the home country (Croatia) among the Croatian Diaspora in North America (Canada and the USA particular). The central hypothesis is that the Croatian Diaspora in North America played an important role in the nation-state building process in Croatia. In order to test this hypothesis, early stages of immigration of Croatians to the USA and Canada have been analyzed, as well as the process of Diaspora community creation and its activities toward Croatian society. The official weekly magazine, (*Fraternalist*, published by the most influential Diaspora organization, the Croatian Fraternal Union (CFU), has been chosen as the primary source for the study.

The research findings serve as an illustrative material for the famous Benedict Anderson's statement that the periodical press is of crucial importance in the emergence of a national community. The Croatian Diaspora's periodical press in North America acquired multiple roles of an agent of ethnic mobilization of a Croatian Diaspora, as well as guardian of the distinct Croatian identity, religion, patriotism, and language among the Diaspora (especially during the socialist period).

Two stages have been identified in the process of ethnic mobilization since the death of Yugoslav president Tito (1980). The first stage was ethnic homogenization as reflected through participation in Diaspora activities in the USA during the 1980s. The second stage of ethnic mobilization appeared with the beginning of the war in Croatia. The main conclusion is that the rise of ethnic mobilization of Croatian Diaspora community in North America is mostly determined by war conflict and economic difficulties within the home society and expressed itself in intensification of financial and material support to the new democratically elected Croatian government.

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