



History Seminar

Monday, 24 July 2023

1pm

Stretton Rm (Napier 420)

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“Write to us again dear brother”: Long-distance communication between emigrants and post-World War II Croatia

Matica iseljenika Hrvatske (Foundation for Emigrants from Croatia) was founded in 1951. As a semi-governmental institution in the Peoples Republic of Croatia which was a part of socialist Yugoslavia, its chief objective was to create links with emigrants and to improve the international image of Yugoslavia. Matica's main activities included publishing a magazine, *Matica*, and organizing various events for emigrants returning for visits to Croatia. Matica did not have any real political power, but it became the most important actor in mediating the relationship between the Croatian diaspora and their homeland. This was the result of the institution's policy of reaching out to Croats abroad through its journal and engaging in direct correspondence with them.

This paper will argue that Matica was successful because it adopted a much more inclusive strategy than was the case with other Yugoslav institutions involved with the diaspora. Matica exercised its soft power in the social mobilization of diasporic Croats. Reading the journal and communicating through letters with the homeland was a powerful emotional experience for them, as will be demonstrated in my analysis of around 9,000 letters exchanged between Croats in Australia and New Zealand and Matica from 1951 to 1977.