THE MOTIVES OF THE CROATIAN-CANADIAN PRO-COMMUNIST RETURNEES OF 1947-48

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ABSTRACT

During 1947 and 1948, over a thousand Croatian-Canadians went to Yugoslavia as part of a larger return movement that was organized by the Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist umbrella organization, the Council of Canadian South Slavs. The returnees were strongly encouraged to return by the Council and by its related Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist organization and newspaper, and left Canada aboard the Yugoslav vessel Radnik in a series of voyages. Many of the returnees had been in Canada for some twenty years, and quit jobs, sold houses and business assets, and uprooted their families in order to return.

This thesis places the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist return movement within the context of return migration from North America by examining to what extent the returnees' decision to go back to Yugoslavia is explainable in terms of circumstances specific to themselves, and to what extent it reveals forces that were felt by other ethnic groups of the period. This study draws mainly upon interviews with participants in the return movement and upon the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist newspaper Novosti in concluding that the returnees were motivated by a powerful and complex combination of forces: "traditional" return migration pressures; radicalizing and anti-assimilationist influences that were typical during the 1930s among the followers of the ethnic
pro-Communist movement in Canada; Yugoslav wartime and postwar conditions that encouraged and allowed the returnees to go back; and a highly-organized and skillfully-propagandized return movement that both capitalized upon and created a desire for return among the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists.
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INTRODUCTION

Return migration may be deemed the neglected sister of migration studies. The study of the immigrant experience has concentrated on the Old-World-to-New journey, rather than back again. Relatively recent studies, however, have estimated return rates of between 25 to 60 percent among various ethnic groups that came to the United States.¹ Instead of supporting the traditional view of North America as peopled by masses seeking a "new homeland," these studies indicate not only that many immigrants returned to their countries of origin, but also that many of those who remained in North America had not intended to do so prior to immigration. As John Bodnar has commented, "Because everyone did not not or was unable to return should not obscure the fact that a return was usually every emigrant's goal."² The relative neglect of return migration is due not only to the fact that it runs contrary to a popular myth, but also because it was largely unobtrusive in a North American context: after their sojourn, the return migrants would quietly disappear--their act of leaving commemorated only in immigration records, and sometimes not even these. The unfulfilled return


²Bodnar, 53.
impulse among their countrymen who remained behind has made even less demand upon the attention of researchers.

This thesis concerns a group of return migrants who did not quietly disappear, but left in an dramatic and controversial organized return movement. During 1947 and 1948, over a thousand Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists abandoned Canada to return to Yugoslavia, a country in ruins after the Second World War. Many of these return migrants had been in Canada for some twenty years, and quit jobs, sold houses and business assets, and uprooted their families in order to return. Their leaving Canada created much controversy over their motives, including protests that they were the dupes of Yugoslav-Canadian Communists and the Yugoslav government. The unusual features and ideological element of the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist return movement of 1947-48 raise the question of to what extent this episode is explainable in terms of return migration forces that were common to other ethnic groups of this period, and to what extent it was the result of circumstances particular to the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists. The purpose of this thesis is to answer this question by examining the motives of the returnees.

In establishing the boundaries of this study, it is first necessary to explain what I mean by "Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist return movement." The Croatian-Canadians who returned to Yugoslavia did so as part of a wider return movement that was organized by the Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist umbrella organization, the Council of Canadian South Slavs. This return
movement was "Yugoslav" in the sense that it sought to repatriate members of the South Slavic ethnic groups in Canada, primarily Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes. The Yugoslav-Canadian repatriation, in turn, was part of a wider back-to-Yugoslavia movement in which sixteen thousand Yugoslavs returned from Western and Eastern Europe, the Americas, and Australia from 1945 to 1951. During most of the Yugoslav-Canadian return movement, the repatriation campaign was conducted through fraternal Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian pro-Communist organizations and newspapers. The Council of Canadian South Slavs repatriated almost two thousand returnees, most of whom were Croatian-Canadians. Any study of the "Yugoslav-Canadian return movement" would require an examination of the repatriation campaign as it was conducted by all three fraternal organizations and newspapers. This thesis concerns only the Croatian component, but I also refer to it in its Yugoslav-Canadian context.

The other limitation of this study concerns the returnees. Some of the participants of the Croatian-Canadian return movement were not returnees but rather second-generation Croatian-Canadians going to Yugoslavia for the first time. Most of these were dependent children accompanying parents, but some were old enough to have been responsible for their decision to go to Yugoslavia, and a few even went independently. Other Croatian-Canadians were technically returnees as they had been born in

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Yugoslavia, but had been brought to Canada as children during the 1930s. The decision of these second-generation Croatian-Canadians and Croatian-Canadian child immigrants to go or to return to Yugoslavia is outside the scope of this thesis. In my discussion of "returnees," I am referring only to the core group of the return movement: the immigrants who had arrived in Canada as adults during the interwar period, and, to a lesser extent, before the First World War.

An examination of the motives of the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist return movement provides insights not only into return migration, but also such issues as immigrant political radicalism, ethnic organization, and their respective impact upon assimilation. This is also a study in group psychology, and of the influence of a Communist leadership elite in an ethnic organization. Finally, it is my hope that this thesis will contribute in some measure to a greater understanding of the ethnic pro-Communist movement in Canada.
CHAPTER 1
CROATIAN IMMIGRATION TO CANADA, AND THE CROATIAN-CANADIAN PRO-COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION TO 1946

The massive immigration to Canada from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe during the 1920s included a net increase of nearly 23,000 Yugoslav nationals.\(^1\) Despite the lack of precise data on the ethnic breakdown of this migration to Canada, there is no question that most immigrants were not from the main Yugoslav ethnic group, the Serbs, but were Croats and other minorities. It has been estimated that probably over ten thousand Croats immigrated to Canada from 1924 to 1929.\(^2\)

Regardless of their ethnicity, however, the majority of Yugoslav immigrants who arrived during the twenties shared certain characteristics. Most of them were young men from peasant backgrounds who hoped to save some money over a few years and then return to their homeland. Like the other interwar immigrants from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe, the

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\(^1\)This figure is calculated from Yugoslav statistics for 1922-29. See table, page 71.

Yugoslavs were brought to Canada by the Canadian National Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway to serve as farmworkers. ³

Although many Croats worked at least one season on a farm, they generally preferred the cities and the resource frontier. By the late-1920s, Croatian newcomers were employed in the Ontario milltowns and manufacturing centers of Hamilton, Welland, Windsor, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, and Port Arthur, and in the Ontario and Quebec mining towns of Rouyn-Noranda, Timmins-Schumacher, Kirkland Lake, and V'al Dor. Others found jobs in the timber hinterland around Arvida, Port Arthur and Sault Ste. Marie, while still others joined the well-established Yugoslav community in Toronto, and the smaller one in Montreal. In Western Canada, Croats gravitated toward the Coal Branch in Alberta, and to British Columbia, where they found work in fishing, forestry, railway and urban construction, and—most of all—mining. Recent Croatian immigrants were employed in the mines around Princeton, at Britannia Beach, on Vancouver Island, and at Anyox. Vancouver offered jobs in construction and fishing, and newcomers boosted the number of Croats in the city to about five hundred.⁴

Most Croats who arrived during the 1920s had little liking for their homeland's political system. The Yugoslav state—officially known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes

³Rasporich, For a Better Life, 94-103.

from the time of its creation in 1918 until 1931—had
concentrated power in the hands of the Serbs. The power struggle
between Serbs and Croats was the dominant theme of Yugoslav
interwar politics. Ethnic tensions were exacerbated in June
1928, when the leader of the most important Croatian political
force, the nationalistic Croatian Peasant Party, was assassinated
by an ethnic Serb from Montenegro. In January 1929, King
Alexander of the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty responded to the
crisis by abolishing parliament, banning the Croatian Peasant
Party and other nationalistic parties, and imposing a dictator­
ship that lasted until the Second World War.

Many of the Yugoslav immigrants in Canada were attracted to
political organizations that either formally or effectively
reflected the ethnic divisions of their homeland. Beginning in
1930, branches of the Croatian Peasant Party were formed across
Canada.⁵ The stronghold of the nationalist Serbs was the pro-
monarchist Yugoslav-Canadian Association, founded in January
1932.⁶ Other Yugoslavs, however, were more attracted by a
radical ideology that appeared to have a coherent explanation for
their experience of poverty and discrimination in Canada during
the Depression, and offered them a vision of a better world. The
Communist Party of Canada (CPC), which had relied largely on

⁵Stjepan Gazi, ed., Spomenica na dvadeset godina Hrvatskih
Seljackih Organizacija u Kanadi, (Winnipeg: Croatian Peasant

⁶Olga V. Markovic, Doseljavanje Srba u Kanadu i njihova
Eastern Europeans to fill its ranks since its founding in 1921, found that the immigration wave of the 1920s had expanded a number of Eastern European ethnic groups to the point where it was possible for them to sustain pro-Communist organizations similar to those which already existed among the Ukrainians and Finns. Both directly, and through such front organizations as the Canadian Labour Defence League and the Workers' Unity League, the CPC was successful in its campaign to attract disillusioned and alienated immigrants, and, between 1929 and 1933, pro-Communist organizations and newspapers were established among the Hungarians, Bulgarians, Slovaks, Poles, Lithuanians, Yugoslavs and Scandinavians.

The Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association and the Finnish Organization of Canada provided the CPC with the bulk of its membership during the 1920s. By 1929, 95% of the CPC's nearly three thousand members were Eastern Europeans. Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party of Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 35-38, 66.

The Canadian Labour Defence League was established by the CPC in 1925 to provide legal assistance to workers arrested for political and labour agitation. By 1931, the organization had 123 branches, of which 37 were Ukrainian and 27 were Finnish. Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 137. Many other CLDL branches were also ethnic-based, however: for example, a number of the fifteen or so Yugoslav pro-Communist clubs that were in existence by 1932 were also CLDL branches. The Workers' Unity League was an umbrella organization established by the CPC in January 1930. Within a year the WUL had organized 12,000 workers within eleven Communist-led unions, and unemployed Eastern European men figured prominently in its ranks. Avery, 128. Avakumovic, 71-75.

The Hungarian *Kanadai Magyar Munkas* was founded in Hamilton in 1929, the Bulgarian *Proletarsko Delo* in Toronto in 1931, the Slovakian *Roboticke Slovo* in Toronto in 1932, the Polish *Glos Pracy* in Toronto in 1932, the Lithuanian *Darbininku Zodis* in Toronto in 1932, and the Scandinavian *Frihet* in Winnipeg in 1933.
The appeal of these pro-Communist organizations to immigrant workers was multi-faceted. Firstly, the organizations offered several avenues for collective political activity: They were a conduit into the many conferences, marches, demonstrations, and other campaigns promoted by the Communist International (Comintern) and the CPC on behalf of various domestic and international causes; they provided a means of supporting Communist parties in the immigrants' own countries of origin through collective pressure on consular authorities and overseas governments; and they allowed the pro-Communists to counter the organized "nationalist," monarchist, and religious elements within their ethnic groups. On the labour front, the ethnic pro-Communist organizations and newspapers were a recruiting instrument for the Workers' Unity League and its member unions and conducted fundraising campaigns on behalf of CPC-backed strikes. Finally, the pro-Communist organizations also offered a full social calendar of dinners, picnics, concerts, dances, theatre, and other events which blended old-country culture and Marxist ideology. All of these organizations were ostensibly "cultural" and "educational" bodies whose membership included many people who were not Communist party members, thus the term "pro-Communist" rather than "Communist" in describing them. They

referred to themselves as "progressive" or "workers'" movements.

The Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist organization and its newspaper Borba (Struggle) were founded in Toronto in November 1931. By mid-1932, there were about fifteen Yugoslav pro-Communist clubs in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia. In 1935, the organization split into separate fraternal Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian bodies, and the Croats and Serbs founded separate newspapers. These organizations and newspapers were all banned in July 1940 as part of a wider wartime crackdown on the radical left. At the time of the ban the Croatian organization had about two thousand members, and its Serbian and Slovenian counterparts had a combined membership of somewhat over one thousand. Within a year the

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Tomo Cacic (1896-1969), a CPC organizer of Croatian descent, was the most-influential founder of the Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist organization and press. Cacic was arrested along with the CPC leadership in a police raid in Toronto on 11 August 1931, and was deported from Canada on 1 January 1934 after serving a prison sentence for unlawful association and seditious conspiracy. A.W. Rasporich, "Tomo Cacic: Rebel Without a Country," Canadian Ethnic Studies 10 (1978): 86-94. Also on the origin of the Yugoslav pro-Communist organization and newspaper, see Council of Canadian South Slavs, 20 godina--Kratki pregled historije naprednog pokreta jugoslavenskih iseljenika u Kanadi (Toronto: Council of Canadian South Slavs, 1950), 6-14.

120 godina, 15.

120 godina, 34-36.

120 godina, 45.
Croatian and Serbian newspapers had resurfaced under different names. The Croatian organ was now called *Novosti* (*News*).

The Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in May 1941 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June prompted the Yugoslav pro-Communists to form the Movement for the Liberation of the Old Homelands. This organization raised aid for the Soviet Union and also backed the Serbian royalist leader, Colonel Draža Mihailović. In mid-1942, the pro-Communists followed the Comintern's new line in denouncing Mihailović as a collaborator and embracing Tito's Partisans as the only organized force fighting the occupiers. This re-orientation roughly coincided with the liquidation of the Movement for the Liberation of the Old Homelands and the re-establishment of fraternal Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian pro-Communist organizations.

At a conference in Toronto in June 1944, the Yugoslav pro-Communists formed the pro-Titoist Council of Canadian South Slavs to Aid Free Yugoslavia (*Vijece kanadskih Juznih Slavena za pomoc Slobodne Jugoslavije*), an umbrella organization that had an initial membership of over five thousand. The Council oversaw a relentless campaign of fundraising events and solicitations that succeeded in raising an impressive $500,000 in cash during

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15 *20 godina*, 46-47.

16 *20 godina*, 52-53.

17 *20 godina*, 65.
and after the war, plus $425,000 in clothing and medical supplies. The dynamism of the pro-Communists, and Tito's favourable wartime image, attracted a number of Yugoslav-Canadians who had formerly been apolitical or even somewhat anti-Communist. By late-1945, Tito was firmly in control of Yugoslavia. The Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist organization, in turn, reveled in its new-found numerical strength, legitimacy, and influence.

By the end of the Second World War, the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist community had undergone some important changes. Although the community still had a high proportion of single men, some pro-Communists had brought their wives and children to Canada, while others had married in Canada. In economic terms, the urban employment opportunities and steady work created by the war had resulted in a measure of security—and often a change of occupation—for most pro-Communists; many had found jobs in construction or manufacturing. The wartime prosperity had also allowed many families to improve their housing, and a movement out of the Slavic ghettos had begun. Despite the fact that it

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1820 godina, 67-68.

had never been stronger and more committed, the postwar Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist community was beginning to be eroded by rising prosperity and deepening assimilation. Soon after the war, however, a movement erupted within the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist ranks that was to have a much more immediate and dramatic impact.
CHAPTER 2
THE RETURN MOVEMENT

The hope of returning to Yugoslavia arose in the pro-
Communists as soon as it appeared that Germany and Italy would
eventually be defeated in the war, and that Tito's forces might
emerge victorious in Yugoslavia. As early as 1943, Vancouver
pro-Communists were discussing the founding of collective farms
in Yugoslavia, and in July 1945 they proposed in Novosti that
pro-Communists across Canada raise one million dollars for this
purpose.¹ The Council of Canadian South Slavs rejected this
proposal as premature;² it was still circulating a questionnaire
to ascertain the level of interest in repatriation among its
members, and how they might assist in Yugoslav postwar
reconstruction.³ Meanwhile, individuals were putting forward
their own ideas for return: Stanko Josipovic, a Hamilton pro-
Communist, announced that he would return with a new tractor to
assist in reconstruction and invited others to follow his

¹Novosti, 28 July 1945.
²Novosti, 2 August 1945.
³A copy of the questionnaire is contained in the file of the
Royal Canadian Mounted Police on the return movement. See the
report from the Windsor detachment for 20 June 1945. RCMP
documents on the return movement were obtained from the Canadian
Security and Intelligence Service through the Access to
Information Act.
example, while a pro-Communist in Kitchener urged potential repatriates to enroll in vocational and technical evening classes in Canada, so that they could best contribute to rebuilding Yugoslavia "into the most prosperous country on earth."  

At its national convention in Toronto in February 1946, the Council of Canadian South Slavs moved to provide leadership to the grass-roots enthusiasm for repatriation. The thirty-four delegates resolved that potential returnees who wanted to work in reconstruction should organize themselves into groups according to occupation, and that these groups should make arrangements to purchase the tools and machinery they would need in Yugoslavia. The Council promised to assist returnees in such groups.  

Returnees across Canada organized occupational groups on a regional basis during the Spring and Summer of 1946. On August 13, a five-man delegation representing the construction, forestry, fishing, and mining groups departed Toronto for Yugoslavia. The delegation—which also represented the Council--was empowered to present a proposal for return to the Yugoslav government, and to settle questions regarding transportation, deployment, and equipment. On 1 October, Novosti published a letter from delegation member Jure Saban announcing that the labour ministry had informally approved the occupational-group

4Novosti, 14, 28 June 1945.
5Novosti, 23 February 1946.
6Novosti, 8 June, 9, 25, 27 July, 3 August 1946.
7Novosti, 22 August 1946.
plan. On October 20, delegates representing the Council of Canadian South Slavs and the occupational groups convened in Toronto, and resolved that the repatriation of Yugoslav immigrants in Canada was now the "number one goal" of the Yugoslav-Canadian "progressive movement":

...the return issue has passed from a state of theory and discussion to a state of practicality. There is no longer a place for talk about whether to go or not, but rather to go as soon as possible. The plan is settled and approved--and must be implemented.  

The Council supported return in occupational groups on the grounds that it was the best means of assisting rebuilding, that it was the only way of taking machinery out of Canada, that it would be better for single men to remain with a group overseas, and that, if nothing else, groups could expect more government assistance after arrival than individuals.

A "reconstruction fund" was established to equip the groups and to purchase machinery and tools for Yugoslavia. Both returnees in and outside the occupational groups were encouraged to repatriate their savings by purchasing reconstruction fund "certificates," which were guaranteed by the Yugoslav government.

The returnees were supposed to travel to Yugoslavia aboard passenger liners, and the equipment was to be transported by a Yugoslav

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8Novosti, 26 October 1946.

9Novosti, 26 October, 19 December 1946.

10On the reconstruction fund, see Novosti, 26 October, 19 December 1946, 4 January 1947.
vessel. As it developed, both the returnees and the equipment crossed the Atlantic aboard a freighter purchased in San Francisco by Yugoslavia with the assistance of an $85,000 deposit from the Council. The freighter was renamed the *Radnik* (Worker).

The initial response to the return movement was impressive: enlistment for the first sailing of five hundred passengers aboard the *Radnik* was quickly filled to capacity, generating expectations of many more voyages. The reconstruction fund had a correspondingly successful beginning: even before the Council had set its target of two million dollars in loans, the Vancouver local unanimously resolved that it would raise $500,000, of which $150,000 was pledged in two days. By mid-March of 1947 the amount pledged across Canada had reached $947,000.

The "group" plan of return had several attractions. Firstly, it offered passage to Yugoslavia at a price as low as $130.50 for adults, and half fare for children from seven to fourteen years of age. Children under seven could travel free. The low fares and the exemption for young children facilitated the return of many individuals and families who might have had

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11Novosti, 26 October 1946.

1220 godina, 73.

13Novosti, 19 December 1946.

14Novosti, 13 March 1947.

15Novosti, 8, 17 April, 6 May 1947, 17 January 1948.
difficulty meeting regular trans-Atlantic fares and other travel expenses. Secondly, the groups were a means of circumventing the difficult travel conditions that existed in the immediate postwar years. Aside from these mundane considerations, groups were promoted as the most patriotic way to return, for they could supposedly contribute the maximum effort to reconstruction, and the Yugoslav government was consequently said to prefer to receive returnees in this manner.

A related but distinct aspect of repatriation was the recruitment of a "Canadian brigade" for volunteer work on the 237-kilometre long Samac-Sarejevo "youth railway." Part of this brigade was composed of Yugoslav-Canadian youth who were already travelling to Yugoslavia with their parents for permanent settlement. The balance was recruited specifically for railway construction, and this participation was not limited to Yugoslav-Canadians. The youth railway received much publicity in Novosti; return movement organizers must have hoped that any Croatian-Canadian who worked on the railway would settle in Yugoslavia permanently.

The Council of Canadian South Slavs lived up to its promise to make repatriation its "number one goal." The return movement achieved the status of an almost-sacred mission with the organization, and few members dared to criticize it openly. The Council maintained that the continuation--and, even, expansion--
the Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist movement in Canada was an important objective despite the repatriation drive.\textsuperscript{17}

Repatriation was pursued, however, without any significant regard as to how the remaining membership and infrastructure would sustain itself afterwards. The overriding objective became to send the maximum number of people and the maximum amount of resources to Yugoslavia.

The national campaign to convince the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists to return to Yugoslavia had two main components: a press campaign by \textit{Novosti} and speechmaking tours by propagandists. Once the Council decided to back the return movement, repatriation came to occupy a great deal of space in \textit{Novosti}'s editorials, news coverage, and the club and readers' correspondence sections. As for the speechmaking, this was primarily the responsibility of Stevo Serdar and Nikola Kombol, members of the occupational-group delegation. Serdar and Kombol returned to Canada in late-November of 1946 as honorary officials of the social attache of the Yugoslav embassy. Serdar began a series of speaking engagements at pro-Communist clubs in Eastern Canada, while Kombol was dispatched to Western Canada for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{18} Another important speaker in favour of repatriation was Edo Jardas, a Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist leader and journalist who had travelled to Yugoslavia in November 1946 as part of the Yugoslav-Canadian delegation to the All-Slav

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Novosti}, 17 January 1948.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Novosti}, 3 December 1946.
Congress in Belgrade. Jardas returned to Canada in March and became National Secretary of the Council of Canadian South Slavs. The Yugoslav government's spokesman on repatriation was Major Branko Vukelic of the Yugoslav legation in Montreal, who made speeches in a number of Canadian centres.

During the Spring of 1947, Novosti carried reports of farewell dinners and tearful partings across Canada as the first group of returnees made their way to Montreal to board the Radnik. After spending a few days in Montreal, they sailed for Yugoslavia on 30 May. When the Radnik arrived in the Croatian city of Rijeka on 24 June, a crowd of twenty thousand was reportedly on hand to give the returnees a hero's welcome. Novosti subsequently published letters from returnees describing their joyful voyage aboard the Radnik and their euphoria at being in the "new Yugoslavia." A significant detail of these accounts was that the occupational groups were not mentioned by the returnees, who instead wrote of being offered their choice of jobs by the authorities. In fact, the Yugoslav government broke up the groups and diverted the equipment they had hoped to use to other purposes. The groups were never subsequently mentioned in Novosti, and it appears that the Council of Canadian South

19Novosti, 19 November 1946, 7 January 1947.
20Novosti, 3 June 1947.
22Novosti, 28 June, 10, 19 July.
2320 godina, 73-74.
Slavs made no further effort of consequence to organize returnees for work abroad. After this point, the return movement organizers dedicated themselves mainly to filling the Radnik to capacity as it shuttled back and forth across the Atlantic. The second voyage of returnees, which departed Montreal on 13 August 1947, transported 448 Yugoslav-Canadians. The third voyage, which left on 28 October 1947, sailed with 323.

The 354 Yugoslav-Canadians who departed as the fourth group on 26 June 1948 received stunning news once they had left port: on 28 June, the dispute between Tito and Stalin had become public with Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Communist bloc. The Council of Canadian South Slavs—which had absorbed the Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian pro-Communist organizations in May 1948—initially maintained a cordial attitude toward Yugoslavia in the hope that the regime would soon return to the Soviet camp. The Council also continued to support the return movement, and 191 Yugoslav-Canadians departed as the fifth group of returnees on 28 August 1948. The Council's relations with Yugoslavia grew steadily cooler, however, and by late-October its newspaper Jedinstvo (Unity) was warning that the Titoists were resorting to "terror and arrests throughout the country" in an effort to crush the pro-Soviets. Only twenty-two Yugoslav-Canadians departed in the sixth and final group of returnees on 12 November 1948. The departure of this last group was the end of the return movement.

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24 Novosti, 1 June 1948. 20 godina 82-3.

25 Novosti, 22 October 1948.
movement. In published summaries, the Council revealed that it had repatriated 1,869 Yugoslav-Canadians and raised nearly $1.8 million in loans for the reconstruction fund.²⁶

Although Jedinstvo tried to be optimistic about the fate of the returnees who had left for Yugoslavia before the Tito-Stalin break, contending that the Yugoslav political situation could only change for the better,²⁷ the pro-Communist leaders must have privately lamented over having sent many of their best members into the hands of the Titoists. The pro-Communists would eventually reconcile themselves to Titoism, but the return movement had decimated their ranks, and had left them with a demoralizing sense of having wasted nearly twenty years of organizational work in a monumental mistake.

²⁶Jedinstvo, 12 November 1948. This article gives the exact number of Yugoslav-Canadians that departed with each group. The 26 November issue provides a final accounting of the reconstruction fund. In a summary of the return movement dated 8 July 1955, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reported that the Radnik repatriated a total of 1,996 persons, of whom 1,049 were counted as Canadian citizens, 765 as "Yugoslav nationals," and 182 as "other nationalities." This indicates a maximum of 1,814 Yugoslav-Canadians. The RCMP totals are problematic, however, because a few of the Yugoslav nationals counted may have been Yugoslav citizens from the United States who departed from Montreal, although the Radnik boarded Yugoslav-Americans at New York (Novosti, 27 August 1948). Furthermore, the RCMP total for Canadian citizens may include some Eastern Europeans with Canadian citizenship who also returned aboard the Radnik. See page 65 below. The Council’s total of 1,869 Yugoslav-Canadian repatriates should not be assumed to be too high, however: after the Council’s break with Yugoslavia, it had no reason to inflate the reported total of returnees for propaganda purposes.

²⁷Jedinstvo, 3 December 1948.
CHAPTER 3
PUSH MOTIVES FOR RETURN

The postwar recession in durable goods manufacturing in Eastern Canada, and the lifting of wartime price controls, resulted in regional increases in unemployment and a rise in inflation during 1946-48, attended by a wave of labour unrest.\(^1\) Novosti interpreted the worsening Canadian economic indicators as part of an international slide into another depression. Such articles as "Before a New Economic Crisis," "Is Canada entering a New Depression?" and "Signs of a Coming Depression," raised the specter of an economic cataclysm as severe as that of the 1930s.\(^2\) This interpretation was consistent with the Communist doctrine that capitalism must alternate between war and depression. Canadian capitalists were depicted as eager to roll back the increase in real wages, benefits, and rights that had been achieved by the working class during the war.\(^3\) Novosti warned

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\(^1\)The durable goods manufacturing index dropped from 129.8 in 1944 to 90.2 in 1946 (1949 = 100). The cost-of-living index rose from 107.0 in 1945 to 124.8 by 1948 (1935-39 = 100). The number of strikes and lockouts increased from 199 in 1944 to 228 in 1946, and the number of affected workers rose from 75,290 to 139,474. Source: F.H. Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Statistics Canada, 1983), series D528-539, series K1-7, and series E190-197 respectively.

\(^2\)Novosti, 4 January, 22 March, 6 April 1947.

\(^3\)Novosti, 8 January 1946.
its readers who might remain in Canada to brace themselves for another round of class confrontation and labour strife. 4

The newspaper's pessimism extended to the massive postwar European immigration to Canada that was already in evidence during 1946, which it interpreted as a capitalist plot to drive down wages and displace older immigrant workers with younger men. 5

As the pro-Communist men in 1946 were a largely middle-aged group of workers whose memories of the Depression were still relatively fresh, predictions of unemployment, impoverishment, and class confrontation might well be expected to be very worrisome. Indeed, many returnees' letters in Novosti cited the prospect of ruin if they remained in Canada. A returnee from Windsor wrote:

What can we immigrants expect here? We younger immigrants are already forty or older. In many cases employers do not hire workers over forty. The economic crisis is already becoming evident. There are already over 150,000 unemployed workers in Canada. This means that the market for labour will be full. In that case the brunt of the economic crisis falls mainly on foreign labour, of which we are part. That is in short the outlook for our workers in this country. 6

Evidence of economic fear as a return motive is rare in interviews with returnees, however. On the contrary, most

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4 Novosti, 17 December 1946.

5Immigrant arrivals during the years of the return movement were: 1946, 71,719; 1947, 64,127, and 1948, 125,414. From 1932 to 1945, arrivals had remained below 23,000 a year. Source: Historical Statistics of Canada, Series A350. For Novosti's interpretation, see 22, 31 May 1947.

claimed that they or their husbands had enjoyed good job security or earnings potential after the war. This was consistent in the case of returnees from both Western and Eastern Canada, and from those who had been employed in both steady and seasonal resource industry work as well as those who had held urban jobs. If economic confidence was indeed prevalent among the pro-Communists on the eve of the return movement, then who were the returnees who were motivated by what Novosti called the "fear of tomorrow"? Some likely candidates were unattached men who had immigrated prior to the First World War. These so-called "old-timers" may have feared employment displacement by younger immigrants, or envisioned a lonely and meager existence as pensioners in Canada. As for the interwar immigrants, there is a contradiction between the economic fears expressed in letters to Novosti and the claims of economic security expressed in most interviews.

A case can be made that it was not a more adverse future in Canada that some returnees feared, but rather a continuation of their present existence. By war's end, many pro-Communists had been employed for some twenty years in resource industry jobs that were physically taxing. Mining often had the additional disadvantage of demanding permanent residence in an isolated community with a hostile climate. Loggers, miners, and fishermen were all subject to accidents that could result in serious injury or death. Miners were further jeopardized by the cumulative

\[\text{Novosti, 8 May 1947.}\]
effects of lung disease, as recalled by a returnee from Schumacher:

I wasn't worried about losing my job, but gold mines were such that men died young of silicosis contracted there. Then I and my friend _______, we decided to quit and go East, to Hamilton and here-abouts--that way to rid ourselves of the mines. Then the [return movement] arose... .8

The wife of the friend referred to by this returnee remembered that her husband's dissatisfaction with minework became acute once the return movement began:

The mine had damaged his health, and he started saying, when [other returnees] were already leaving, "We'll sell our house. We're going to Yugoslavia." I said, "No. We have our children and our own home. I know how it is in Yugoslavia. I wouldn't like us to return to Yugoslavia." Every morning when he went to the mine he said, "I've had enough of the mine. I have my own house and land [in Yugoslavia], and we're going there to our home." That's the way we returned.9

Many wives were reluctant participants in the return movement. Some reasons for the wives' resistance were a concern for their children's future in Yugoslavia, an unnostalgic memory of old-country life, and the lack of a strong ideological bias in favour of Yugoslavia. The lives of these women in Canada had typically been arduous. Many couples ran their homes as boarding houses, and these enterprises resulted in grueling labour demands on the wives. By the end of the war, however, many couples were finally becoming financially secure enough to dispense with boarders and even move into single-family homes away from the

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8Interview, S.L., Ontario, 16 September 1987.
9Interview, J.D., Toronto, 14 September 1987.
Slavic ghettos (which may, in turn, have been a return motive for the single men who occupied the boarding houses). Some married Croatian-Canadian women had found wartime jobs, and this income had resulted in unprecedented prosperity for their families. Thus, for many Croatian-Canadian wives, a return to Yugoslavia represented a sacrifice of hard-won gains in Canada.

Regardless of the wives' opinions, however, it was usually the husbands' views which prevailed in the decision to return. The unhappiness of some Croatian-Canadian men with life in Canada stemmed not only from immediate adverse living and working conditions, but from the painful memory of a long history of adversity as immigrants. Their experiences of having their original hope for an early return to Yugoslavia dashed, of being subjected to discrimination and unemployment during the Depression, and of working in difficult, low-paying jobs in the resource hinterland, had not been conducive to gratitude or patriotism toward Canada, but rather alienation and bitterness. As a returnee from Hamilton observed:

In this land we have had bitter experiences. During twenty and more years in Canada we worked the hardest jobs, endured unemployment, waited in lines for a plate of food, jumped trains in search of work, worked on government roads for five dollars a month, and finally were discriminated against in every job and place. The word "foreigner," which is frequently thrown in our face, could wound the dignity of every one of us. We immigrants from Europe, especially those from Slavic countries, built Canadian industry and tilled wheat fields. And after all this we are still regarded in some circles as a "lower race" that was created to labour so that others may enjoy the fruits of that labour.¹⁰

¹⁰Novosti, 12 April 1947.
The Marxists' adverse experiences in Canada, and their class-conscious interpretation of these experiences, frequently ensured that they continued to feel resentment toward Canada even after the war had brought improved conditions. The return movement proponents tapped into this resentment by denouncing the prospect of continued employment in Canadian mines and factories as only a perpetuation of the wage slavery to which they had already been subjected for too long. "Remaining in Canada," wrote Novosti, "means ... spending the days of your life in various mines for the benefit of individuals, capitalists of every stripe."11 Some pro-Communists were in complete agreement with this assessment, as indicated by a returnee from Welland:

When we were able to squeeze profits out of our blood for Canadian capitalism, then why can we not go and help our own people build industry, our own industry, which will guarantee us a happy life, and especially economic security, which the capitalist system cannot give us.12

Dissatisfaction with Canada as a motive for return raises questions about the economic status of the returnees, and how they compared to the Croatian-Canadian community as a whole. It may be suspected that the pro-Communists' allegiance to Marxism was at least partly due to a failure to achieve even the rudimentary success of other Croatian immigrants; or that their Marxism subsequently prevented them from achieving the same success as their non-Marxist countrymen. Comparing the pro-

11Novosti, 10 December 1946.

Communists and the nationalists in this regard is essentially guesswork, but it is probably safe to assume that any difference was small. Both the Yugoslav pro-Communist and Croatian nationalist organizations had secured the allegiance of the bulk of their prewar membership by the early-1930s—prior to the development of marked economic differences among interwar immigrants. Furthermore, the broadly-based character of the pro-Communist movement meant that it included many members who were not highly indoctrinated, but had joined primarily for social and—during the war—patriotic reasons. Even given the high level of wartime donations to Yugoslavia by many such "pro-Communists," their economic status at war's end was probably not very different from that of their nationalist countrymen.

While the pro-Communist community cannot be easily differentiated from the general Croatian-Canadian population in socio-economic terms, there was some stratification within the community itself. While most pro-Communists remained resource industry workers and blue-collar wage earners at war's end, some had equity in farms, fishing boats, restaurants, pool halls, hotels, and other business assets. Whether these small-businessmen were proportionately represented among the returnees is unknown, but they definitely were present. Some examples are Vancouver hotelmen who returned, and a Kirkland Lake repatriate who offered his commercial building for sale in Novosti.13

At the other end of the scale were those who had almost nothing to show for their years in Canada. It may indeed have been the case that this group was somewhat more pronounced among the pro-Communists than the general Croatian-Canadian population, and the financial demands of long-term pro-Communist membership itself were likely a contributing factor. With its ever-expanding press structure requiring continual subsidization, and its never-ending stream of fund-raising campaigns on behalf of various in-house and CPC-sponsored causes, the pro-Communist organization was constantly pressing its supporters for funds—culminating in the wartime and postwar aid to Yugoslavia. Some of the more ideologically-committed and patriotically-inspired members habitually responded to these appeals past the limits of economic self-interest. Twenty years of such fundraising may have impaired savings to the point where a number of pro-Communists—notably single men—had essentially "given everything" for the cause. For the Communist party activists, sacrifices included not only time and money, but also possibly passing over job opportunities and incurring persecution from employers in the line of duty.

There were, of course, pro-Communists who were poor at war's end for reasons that had little to do with ideology or patriotism. It might be assumed that these people were the most likely returnees; that, for the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist poor, the low price of a ticket aboard the Radnik represented an easy escape from poverty in Canada to the security of Yugoslav
socialism—or at least to the home of a relative in the Old Country. Major Vukelic assured potential repatriates without money that they were welcome in Yugoslavia. However, an early feature of the return movement, that of the occupational groups, came to be effectively barred to the poor. In October 1946, Novosti criticized the construction group for demanding that entrants lend a minimum of five hundred dollars for the purchase of equipment for the group. By December, however, this practice had apparently spread to all the groups, and Novosti had given its approval. Despite this minimum loan provision for the groups, it seems that single men of modest means—the most mobile element of the community—were heavily represented in the first group of returnees.

In surveying push motives for return, it should be recognized that the returnees were under no pressing political or economic compulsion to leave Canada, and that many were probably reasonably content with their postwar situation. Nonetheless, there were some pro-Communists who were unhappy with their living and working conditions; or they were poor and afraid; or they were haunted by memories of poverty, hunger, and humiliation as immigrants; or they were ideologues who could not stomach any further time in the service of Canadian capitalists. Despite the fact that most Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists had never had it

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1Novosti, 19 December 1946.
1Novosti, 26 October 1946.
1Novosti, 10 December 1946.
better in Canada, some of them had had enough.
CHAPTER 4
MATERIAL PULL MOTIVES FOR RETURN

Yugoslavia was one of the most devastated of the Axis-occupied countries during the Second World War, having suffered 1.7 million military and civilian casualties (10.6 percent of the total population) and property losses calculated at $46.9 billion. The nation's industry and transportation system was decimated, and one-sixth of prewar housing had been heavily damaged or destroyed. Farmers and peasants were reeling from huge losses in livestock, agricultural implements, and farm machinery—as well as from drought in 1945. As for wage labourers, despite some progress after the war toward raising real wages through price disinflation, by August 1946 the index of real wages was only 58 percent of the 1938 level. Given the fact of low prewar wages, this reflected a significant measure of hardship among the population. The cessation of aid from the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency in June 1947 meant that Yugoslavia was essentially left on its own to face its daunting postwar economic problems. Although many Yugoslavs dedicated themselves to the task of reconstruction with
enthusiasm, the massive and expensive nature of the undertaking ensured that it would be a slow and arduous process.¹

Information on life in the "new Yugoslavia" was presented to the pro-Communists by the return movement speechmakers and by Novosti. The newspaper used several sources: Yugoslav newspaper articles, reports from left-wing English-language journalists, letters from private and official Yugoslav sources, and accounts from Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communists who had travelled to Yugoslavia. This last source must have had a particularly strong impact upon the readership, and Novosti treated these accounts as irrefutable evidence in countering criticism of the return movement.² The accounts that appeared prior to the first voyage of returnees are significant in assessing the origins of the return movement.

Of the occupational-group delegation which went to Yugoslavia in August 1946 to negotiate the terms of return, Jure Saban, Mate Volaric, and Stanko Josipovic remained there and functioned as correspondents, while Stevo Serdar and Nikola Kombol returned to Canada and promoted the return movement in speeches. In an otherwise optimistic report published in November 1946, Jure Saban referred to the preceding year's


²Novosti, 5 April 1947.
drought having "badly damaged" food production: "In many villages the peasants do not have enough for themselves, never mind the sale of any surplus." However, the initial comments attributed to Serdar and Kombol after their return to Canada in late-November 1946 were more reassuring:

In Yugoslavia today no one is starving. Yugoslavia is quickly rebuilding, prices are falling, and workers' salaries are not only stabilizing but are increasing daily.4

Serdar and Kombol's impression was reinforced by the accounts of some post-war returnees who travelled to Yugoslavia privately before the first voyage of the Radnik in May 1947. One such repatriate, Djure Kecic, reported busy cafes in Belgrade, the absence of hunger throughout the country, and declared himself "one hundred percent satisfied" with life in Yugoslavia.5 Another pre-Radnik returnee, Petar Raletic, reported the signs of a coming bumper crop in the Serbian province of Vojvodina and described the great rebuilding effort underway.6 Delegation member Mate Volaric wrote from Croatia of the distribution of church and estate property to the peasants, the creation of literary programs, the building of schools and community centres in villages and towns, and of 95 percent popular support for the new regime.7

3Novosti, 9 November 1946.
4Novosti, 3 December 1946.
5Novosti, 5 April 1947.
7Novosti, 18 March 1947.
The basic message of the return movement propaganda campaign from the outset was that Yugoslavia had already achieved acceptable living standards, and that the people's lives were improving at a rapid pace. As Major Vukelic reported at a meeting in Montreal in October 1946:

The living standard for working people in Yugoslavia is permanently increasing in line with the reconstruction of the country, as witnessed by the fact that during the past sixteen months the prices of industrial and agricultural articles have decreased 20 - 45 percent, while workers' salaries have increased.  

To what degree was this glowing account accepted by the returnees? Witnesses to the return movement often describe the returnees as believing the propagandists' depiction of Yugoslav conditions with an almost-religious fervour. The many letters from future returnees to Novosti confidently predicting a better life in Yugoslavia also suggest that the propagandists' version had been accepted uncritically by many. One returnee recalled, "[the propaganda] sort of carried everyone away. Not only ourselves, but all of us believed what the newspapers were writing--we believed it, and so it drew us on." Some witnesses remembered that any attempt to warn the returnees or enlighten them as to the reality of life in Yugoslavia would be ignored or denied. A pro-Communist hotelman who returned to Yugoslavia privately in March 1947, then soon came back to Vancouver and tried to warn others of the conditions he had encountered, was

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*Novosti, 15 October 1946.*

denounced in *Novosti* as a liar and a sympathizer of the genocidal Croation quislings, the *Ustase*.

After the reality of Yugoslav postwar conditions had become clear to everyone, the returnees would be ridiculed in some quarters for their supposed gullibility. There were several deep-rooted reasons, however, for their trust in the proponents of the return movement. Stevo Serdar and Nikola Kombol—like the rest of their delegation, and like the pre-*Radnik* returnees who corresponded from Yugoslavia—were old and trusted comrades in the pro-Communist movement. The Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist press, in turn, had always been considered the font of truth by its supporters, who had been taught to reject any "bourgeois" newspapers (such as the Canadian press and the nationalist *Croatian Voice*, both of which warned the returnees they were being deceived) as full of lies and capitalist propaganda. Not only was *Novosti* a descendent of a trusted line of Serbo-Croatian "workers' newspapers" in Canada, but most of its Croatian-Canadian readership had a powerful ideological and ethnic attachment to it as their newspaper. They could no more imagine *Novosti* misleading them than they could believe that their "enemies" were telling them the truth.

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10 *Novosti*, 16 October 1947.

Another reason for the readiness of the pro-Communists to accept the propagandists' exaggerated claims regarding the achievements of Yugoslav socialism was the history of similar propaganda about the Soviet Union. Since its founding, the Serbo-Croatian pro-Communist press had followed the party line in portraying the Soviet Union as an economic dynamo, and the Soviet worker as enjoying benefits and privileges undreamed of in capitalist economies. Having long accepted this depiction of Soviet society as fact, the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists were ready to believe in the achievement of similar economic progress under Yugoslav Communism.

The final element in the effectiveness of the return movement propaganda was a "will to believe" among the pro-Communists. After twenty years of "exile" in Canada, the opportunity to return "home" to a Communist Yugoslavia was the fulfillment of a dream for many returnees. Their powerful desire for repatriation would not easily admit conflicting evidence regarding the correctness of their decision to go back. Instead, they eagerly seized upon every piece of information favouring their return.

Aside from their perception of Yugoslav living conditions, the returnees were influenced by expectations of what their role would be in the "new Yugoslavia." In this respect, there is a significant difference between the occupational groups that sailed on the first voyage of the Radnik, and the subsequent returnees. As noted, the occupational groups were supposed to
remain together in Yugoslavia. The Council of Canadian South Slavs believed that maintaining the groups overseas was important to the success of the return movement, and promised that in cases where group members had a family in Yugoslavia every effort would be made to join the family to the group. While there was never any published indication that group members would enjoy superior benefits, their role was clearly projected as that of an elite labour force. A sign that membership in the groups was somehow privileged and desirable was that supporters who contributed to the reconstruction fund but remained in Canada would have the right to nominate a relative to take their place in a group.

As for what some of the groups believed they would do in Yugoslavia, a member of the agricultural group from Vancouver recalled that organizers told them that they would be receiving land to found a commune in Slavonia, a fertile agricultural region of Croatia. The large and highly-organized construction group—which had ninety-three members and eighty thousand dollars in pledges by July 1946—announced from its headquarters in Windsor that its objective was to "build houses, schools and other buildings, as directed by the people’s government..." Construction group leaders also foresaw that the returnees might

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12 Novosti, 26 October 1946.
13 Novosti, 26 October 1946.
found factories producing doors-and-windows, plywood, and cement blocks.  

After the overseas dissolution of the occupational groups, the expectations of subsequent returnees became an individual matter. Letters by departing returnees are full of pledges to work for reconstruction, but contain no expectations of where and how. Interviews indicate that many returnees indeed had no specific plans, but were willing to live more or less wherever the state deemed them most necessary, and only expected to be employed in some capacity in which their Canadian-acquired skills would be useful. Others were influenced by the published accounts of earlier repatriates who reported that the government allowed them to live and work wherever they chose. So what did these returnees choose, or at least hope for?  

Given that almost every male immigrant to Canada had initially hoped to return to his village, it might be thought that the incidence of returnees who planned to finally fulfill this ambition would be high. Of course, for men who still had wives and children in villages, a return to the village was almost certain. For most other returnees, however, the impact of the war, their long absence from Yugoslavia, and the ideological and patriotic character of the return movement mitigated against such a return. Many Croatian villages had been razed during the war and their inhabitants decimated and dispersed. Even in cases where a village had survived, many male repatriates had

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15Novosti, 7 July, 3 August, 28 November 1946.
relinquished their interest in their parent's farm during their long absence in Canada, and consequently had nothing to return to. Others had no desire to return as middle-aged men to the subsistence agriculture and primitive conditions of their youth in any event. For most families, a return to the village was undesirable given their need for adequate educational facilities and other amenities for their children. Furthermore, the ostensible reason behind the return movement—that the returnees would bring their Canadian-acquired skills and equipment to the task of reconstruction and industrialization—implicitly argued against a return to the village.

While many returnees rejected resuming village life, most of them probably hoped to be in or nearby their region of origin and their relatives. The two largest Croatian cities of Zagreb and Rijeka were popular destinations, especially for families, who were told by return movement propagandists that their children would receive English-language instruction there.\textsuperscript{16} At the least, most of the returnees probably expected that they would settle in Croatia.

There is a common opinion among the witnesses of the return movement that many returnees went back in the expectation of obtaining high positions in industry and government. This charge of opportunism was raised by returnees themselves; as one repatriate stated, "Some guys thought they were going to be

\textsuperscript{16}The promise of English-language instruction in these cities was recalled by returnees from Schumacher and Vancouver.
somebody there." It is reasonable to assume that at least a few returnees harboured ambitions that indeed went beyond the official line of the return movement. Novosti never offered any overt encouragement for a belief that returnees could expect high positions in Yugoslavia, but stressed from the beginning that they were needed to help meet the physical demands of reconstruction. Nonetheless, pre-Radnik repatriate Petar Raletic's report that he had received a job as a manager at "one of the most modern restaurants" in the city of Novi Sad, and the letter of another early returnee indicating that he had become a supervisor at a mine, must have been noted with interest by some readers. Furthermore, the circumstances of return lent themselves to a certain amount of fantasizing on the part of anyone so inclined. The Communist returnees, for example, could point to their many years of party membership and their wartime support for Tito as unquestionable proof of their loyalty. Furthermore, they had developed political and organizational skills in Canada. Surely, they might have reasoned, the "new Yugoslavia" would need men like themselves for more than just manual labour. Other returnees might have thought that their Canadian work experience and skills would permit personal advancement overseas, and that they would be likely candidates for management positions in Yugoslavia.

18 Novosti, 12 December 1946.
Another opinion frequently heard about the returnees is that many of them expected to "live like kings" on high-paying jobs and through the greatly-expanded purchasing power of their Canadian savings. Some returnees were probably influenced to think this way by published accounts in which earlier returnees claimed to be doing very well. A correspondent from the town of Zrenjanin in Vojvodina wrote that her husband had become a manager at a woodworking factory at a monthly salary of five thousand dinars—equivalent to one hundred dollars at the official exchange rate of fifty dinars to the Canadian dollar—and added, "You can live extremely well on that." This account appeared next to a letter from a returnee in the mining town of Bor in Serbia, who stated that one could buy "a tasty soup and goulash with enough bread" for twenty-five dinars, and that the monthly rent on his apartment was only about $2.50. Return movement speechmaker Stevo Serdar also made a point of mentioning low prices in Yugoslavia, as a returnee recalled of a visit by Serdar to Schumacher:

It was a big meeting. He wore a black shirt, and said, "In Canada shirts like this cost this much, and in Yugoslavia, only ten dinars." Something like that. That's how he talked—that it was good over there. That was already when we were almost ready to go.

Notwithstanding the grander ambitions of some of their number, most returnees were probably sincere in claiming that they only wanted "to share good and bad" with their comrades in


21Interview, S.L., Ontario, 16 September 1987.
Yugoslavia, and naturally hoped that there would be more good than bad to share. What then were the attractions of the working man's life in Yugoslavia that drew them on? They were promised that the Yugoslav "workers' state" guaranteed adequate wages and job security to all its citizens, and that workers in hard labour could retire at age fifty-five, while those in lighter occupations were eligible for retirement at sixty. Novosti also ran photographs showing impressive housing developments for workers being contracted in Yugoslavia. Indicative of the new status of the proletariat in Yugoslav society were reports that former luxury hotels and spas had been converted into workers' resorts. Propagandists and returnees—who were often one and the same—described a basic set of social security benefits again and again:

> It is best for us to go to our homeland, where misery has been eliminated for all time: where everyone will be secure in the event of illness or accident—the full pay as when you worked, free doctors and hospitals; a yearly holiday of 14 to 30 days and hundreds of other benefits that we'll never have here. (returnee from Toronto)

The lure of guaranteed employment and a comprehensive social security system were powerful inducements to return. Furthermore, after the first group of returnees had arrived in Yugoslavia, their published letters appeared to substantiate the propagandists' promises. One report stated that returnees who

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22 Novosti, 22 May 1947.
23 Novosti, 22 May 1947.
24 Novosti, 28 November 1946.
want to work in the agricultural sector will be given a house and land, those who chose the public sector will receive an apartment, and those who become mineworkers are receiving "fine houses with electricity and good furnishings." Another returnee wrote that he received a job in an office and was given an apartment in the former palace of the Archbishop of Zagreb.

As the return movement progressed, published letters from pro-Communists who had gone overseas contained some less positive references to life in Yugoslavia. Some letters cited shortages in meat, certain foodstuffs, and imported articles, and otherwise had a more somber tone than the early accounts. Nonetheless, the overall depiction of Yugoslav conditions in returnees' letters remained favourable until near the end of the return movement. There were no references to the returnees already trying to return to Canada, and those who trickled back to Canada during the last months of the return movement were vilified from all quarters in Novosti as disappointed opportunists, malcontents, slackers, and fools.

Despite the relative shortage of accurate information on Yugoslav conditions from their newspaper, some repatriates had more realistic expectations of what awaited them than others.

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28Novosti, 3, 5, 12, 17, 26, 28, Feb, 2, 11, 24 March, 3 April, 6 May, 6, 23 July 1948.
Some received letters from overseas relatives warning them of deprivation and advising them to stay where they were. A younger Vancouver returnee recalled that Major Vukelic implicitly warned them of extreme shortages in Yugoslavia: "[Vukelic] got up on the stage and says, 'Even take that cracked cup that you have at home. Don't leave anything behind.' So that meant that it wasn't good there." The fact that many returnees took foodstuffs with them implies that they were anticipating shortages in this respect. Some returnees had no exceptionally negative evidence about Yugoslav conditions but perhaps analyzed the official line somewhat more critically than others, or were more aware of the fundamentals of their situation. The returnees were, after all, being asked to help rebuild a war-devastated country, and while the propagandists avoided dwelling on the graphic details of razed villages, bombed-out cities, and decimated infrastructure, Vukelic presented a synopsis of the suffering and damage:

Yugoslavia is one of the countries most devastated by the Second World War. . . . In casualties alone, we suffered about 1,700,000, which represents over ten percent of the total population. After the liberation, we did not inherit a mile of undamaged railway, hardly a bridge. Over a third of Yugoslavia was totally razed, and about 65 percent of livestock destroyed. It was the same situation with industry.

The reason why returnees who expected to suffer at least some deprivation in Yugoslavia might nonetheless return there in

30 Novosti, 15 November 1946.
search of a better living conditions can be explained in large part by the propagandists' depiction of Yugoslavia as a nation with an enormous potential under Communism. The chief instrument for the realization of this potential was the Five-Year Plan for industrialization and electrification. The plan projected 1951 targets in electricity, coal, petroleum, and steel that dwarfed prewar totals, and its fundamental objective was to transform Yugoslavia from a largely-agrarian nation into a modern industrial state. It must have appeared to many pro-Communists that the fulfillment of the plan's objectives was almost a foregone conclusion given the accounts of the tremendous reconstruction drive underway in Yugoslavia, and the progress that had reportedly already been made since the war. "Today our country is one great working collective," wrote pre-Radnik returnee Pavao Devoic, adding, "Every person must work. The country is rebuilding very quickly." In an editorial entitled "Yugoslavia builds," Novosti quoted Tito's account of material progress during 1946:

During the past year, 250,000 rural and urban houses have been repaired and built; not hundreds, but thousands of kilometers of roads repaired and reconstructed; and so on with hundreds of lesser and greater bridges; hundreds of wartime-abandoned factories and firms have been reopened and put back into action. Many coal mines and other mines have been reopened. Hundreds and hundreds of new schools and other institutions were built and opened, over 50,000

31Novosti, 29 April, 1, 13 May, 24 June 1947.
32Novosti, 5 June 1947.
families resettled from war-devastated lands to Vojvodina and Slavonia.\textsuperscript{33}

Given this state of affairs, and taking into account the exemplary new Yugoslav social security system, continued Novosti, "the question can legitimately be asked: Since the past war, what other country has done so much, healed so many wounds, repaired so much, and progressed so much as Yugoslavia?" The implicit answer was none, that Yugoslavia was unique in the pace and extent of its material and social renovation. Novosti noted that Canada--"where not a single bomb has fallen and whose industrial capacity is ten times or more greater than Yugoslavia's"--had only managed to construct 60,000 houses during 1946, compared to Yugoslavia's 250,000, and indicated that it was the same in regard to respective progress in the construction of roads, bridges, factories, and railways. The choice facing potential returnees, implied the return movement propagandists, was clear: either the dynamism and promise offered by Yugoslav Communism, or the stagnation and hardships threatened by Canadian capitalism.

A pronounced "future orientation" among the returnees would explain why they thought they need not be overly concerned with the reports of shortages and hardships in Yugoslavia: given the rapid pace of reconstruction, they could reason, such conditions were bound to be only temporary. A number of published letters contained this belief. "The returnees are aware that Yugoslavia

\textsuperscript{33}Novosti, 11 March 1947.
doesn't abound in every expedient for a comfortable life," wrote a repatriate from Port Arthur, "but, with the work and determination of the people, in a few years life will be better than in Canada..." That the returnees expected to endure some hardship is substantiated in interviews. The corollary is that they also expected to find steadily improving conditions. A returnee from Vancouver who sailed with the first group remembered, "We didn't expect any kind of [living] standard. I expected to help them build things up, to improve things." A returnee from Schumacher recalled that he knew that conditions in Yugoslavia were not good, but believed they had to get better, "for the workers [were] running the country to the fullest extent possible." This future orientation explains how the returnees could reconcile their knowledge that Yugoslavia had been through a devastating occupation and war with their expectation of a better life.

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34Novosti, 12 June 1947.
36Interview, S.L., Ontario, 16 September 1987.
It was not only the material achievements of the new order in Yugoslavia that appealed to the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists; it was the new order itself. They believed they could return to a land where the workers finally controlled the means of production, and where the old system of economic exploitation, corrupt and arrogant officialdom, and nationalist oppression was finished forever. In contrast to the strong centralism of the royal dictatorship, Yugoslavia became a federation of socialist "republics," each with its own constituent assembly and a large degree of self-rule. These economic and political changes must have impressed the pro-Communists as providing the basis for the fulfillment of the millenarian dreams of life under Communism. "We are returning to a free homeland," wrote a returnee from Chemainus, "where humanity and justice reign."¹ A returnee from Schumacher recalled the attraction of the new regime:

We resolved that there was now a different rule over there, that there was no more King, and no longer that reaction that

¹Novosti, 29 April 1947.
drove us away; that it was now a workers' government in which the worker had the right . . . that it was a workers' state.²

Reports from Yugoslavia described a new form of social relations in which personal self-interest and nationalist and class hatreds had been replaced by a sense of comradeship and a striving for the common good. While overseas with the Yugoslav-Canadian delegation to the All-Slav Congress in Belgrade, Edo Jardas sent back an account of a new spirit in Yugoslavia:

In Yugoslavia, just as you cross the border in Postojna, there are happy and proud faces, warm greetings on all sides: "Greetings, comrades, welcome home!" It is the same anywhere you travel in Yugoslavia, from mountainous Slovenia to fertile Croatia and the plains of Serbia. From the faces of the passersby, one perceives happiness and contentment, enthusiasm, concern, and some kind of haste, as if everything was on fire. All Yugoslavia gives the impression of a huge anthill of indefatigable workers, conscious that for the first time in their lives, they are spilling their sweat for the public interest of the community of free, equal and fortunate peoples.³

Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists received a first-hand look at this new spirit during an eleven-day visit of the Radnik to Vancouver in February 1947, during which the ship took on relief supplies and twenty-eight passengers to Yugoslavia, all men.⁴ The local of the Council of Canadian South Slavs held a dinner at the Croatian Hall on Campbell Avenue in honour of the ship's crew.⁵ A visitor to the Radnik described how officers and seamen

²Interview, S.L., Ontario, 16 September 1987.
⁴Novosti, 27 February 1947.
⁵Novosti, 18 February 1947. The Council's youth organization had its own dinner honouring two young Partisan veterans from the crew. Novosti, 13 March 1947.
practiced true social democracy on board—addressing each other as "Comrade," eating the same food, and arriving at decisions through frequent group discussions. Another correspondent also described the lifestyle he had witnessed aboard ship:

I am not educated and not fit for much writing, but I can say that never in my life did I meet better and more agreeable comrades. Their work and life is indeed something new, something great and truly humane; a life of comradeship, co-operation, love, and brotherhood. . . . During the three days I was aboard ship with them, I saw more justice and became more aware of the value of the new life than I knew and saw during my whole life. I was sad that they left so quickly, and even more so that I too could not depart with them at once--fortunate are they that were able to. But I expect that it will not be long before we will be in our dear homeland and--with comrades like these--be sharing good and bad, be working together, and be comradely sharing and enjoying the fruits of our toil and sweat.

In describing Yugoslav postwar reconstruction, the return movement propagandists presented the image of an entire nation united in a single will, of Yugoslavs relentlessly and selflessly labouring with joyful hearts at rebuilding their homeland, and of the profound transformation that occurred in workers and peasants when they finally had the opportunity to "work for themselves." Novosti reported Tito's remark that Yugoslavs had contributed twenty million working days of volunteer labour during 1946, of which youth brigades had contributed over fifteen million.

Judging by letters from departing returnees, the possibility of finally "working for themselves" in Yugoslavia after twenty years

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6Novosti, 27 February 1947.
7Novosti, 6 March 1947.
8Novosti, 11 March 1947.
in the service of Canadian capitalism exerted a strong appeal irrespective of any material benefits. Another attraction was the prospect of participating in the excitement and camaraderie of reconstruction--especially when contrasted with a comparatively colourless and anonymous life in Canada.

It was not only the difference between their life as immigrants in Canada, and an imagined richer, more fulfilling life in Yugoslavia that drew some pro-Communists on, but also the contrast between feeling like foreigners only grudgingly tolerated in Canada, and being welcomed back to Yugoslavia as heroes. Tito himself was reported to be looking forward to the arrival of the returnees. His image as a national liberator had given him tremendous stature among the pro-Communists, and their press reflected his cult of personality. In early 1947, the Yugoslav-Canadian delegation to the All-Slav Congress met Tito in Belgrade, and delegation member Maksim Bjelic reported that Tito read the Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communist press, that he was aware of the aid contributed by Yugoslav-Canadians, and that he welcomed the returnees.9 These themes of recognition, invitation, and gratitude were echoed by more humble representatives of socialist Yugoslavia. Speaking in Vancouver, the second mate of the Radnik told the well-wishers packed into the Croatian Hall that "today there is not a single village or person in Yugoslavia who is not aware of and does not appreciate

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9Novosti, 8 February, 25 March 1947.
your aid to the new Yugoslavia."¹⁰ Yugoslav-Canadian corres-
pondents reported how grateful the Yugoslavs were for the aid
their countrymen in Canada had sent them. "I can freely report,"
wrote pre-Radnik returnee Pavao Devcic, "that we Canadian
returnees are esteemed nothing less than the Partisan fighters
who gave their lives for the liberation of the homeland."¹¹
Official and non-official letters from Yugoslavia which appeared
in Novosti ended with ringing invitations to Yugoslav-Canadians
to return as soon as possible. On 13 January 1947, the day of
the declaration of its constitution, the assembly of the People's
Republic of Croatia issued an invitation to its emigrants to return.¹²

While their old homeland's recognition and gratitude
beckoned to the returnees, the prospect of winning even greater
honour in Yugoslavia was presented to them. "The new Yugoslavia
is a land of work. Work is the greatest honour," reported Mate
Volaric of the delegation that went to Yugoslavia to arrange
repatriation.¹³ "Work is a reason for pride here," wrote pre-
Radnik returnee Petar Raletic, "not something to be contemptuous
and ashamed of."¹⁴ Given this state of affairs, It must have
appeared to the returnees in the occupational groups that they

¹⁰Novosti, 18 February 1947.
¹¹Novosti, 5 June 1947.
¹³Novosti, 13 March 1947.
were destined for glory. This initial plan of return possessed a strong element of romance and excitement in its depiction of the returnees rebuilding the country with their Canadian-acquired skills and equipment. Novosti declared that the occupational groups would "truly be working brigades." After the abandonment of the occupational-group plan, individual returnees could still hope to distinguish themselves as worker-instructors, as the returnees were not only supposed to benefit Yugoslavia by applying their skills to the task of reconstruction, but also by teaching their Yugoslav comrades these skills. The repatriation questionnaire circulated by the Council had asked potential returnees if they would be capable of giving instruction in their trade or profession. Some returnees were strongly influenced by this anticipated duty, as indicated by the case of an excellent faller from Vancouver Island who reportedly took equipment to Yugoslavia with the expectation that he would be teaching forestry techniques.

At the same time that the reconstruction drive and the circumstances of return appeared to offer excitement, distinction, and even the prospect of glory, the concept of duty to the homeland endowed the return movement with a noble purpose. The Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists were well acquainted with duty. For twenty years, they had been inculcated with this concept as Communist party members, as pro-Communists, as members of the

15Novosti, 26 October 1946.

Canadian working class, and—especially during the war—as patriotic Yugoslavs. For many of them, self-sacrifice and struggle for a greater good had become second nature. In this context, a return to Yugoslavia appeared to be the best means of fulfilling their duty to their old homeland. As a returnee from Alberta wrote:

Before those of us who are returning to the homeland are great duties and obligations. In the first rank, these are: to work for and to pledge ourselves to the reconstruction of the peoples' economy and, together with our people, to watch over and defend the achievements of the national-liberation war. I believe that we returnees will, with awareness, fulfill our duties, which are set before us by our people and its authority, disregarding the hardships that we shall face in our work.17

Patriotism was cited by both propagandists and returnees as an important motive for return. "Our return to the homeland is of great value . . . " wrote a returnee from Vancouver, "because it is one of the greatest manifestations of love toward our land of birth . . . ."18 Another returnee wrote that efforts to stop the return movement would fail because the returnees were drawn by "true patriotism" on one hand, and a refusal to be victimized by the next economic crisis on the other.19 Novosti hailed anyone who lent money to the reconstruction fund as a "true people's patriot."

Enduring hard work and hardship during reconstruction was perceived by some pro-Communists as the least they could do given

17Novosti, 3 May 1947.
18Novosti, 10 April 1947.
19Novosti, 12 April 1947.
that they had not fought in or suffered through the war in Yugoslavia. Although the pro-Communists' campaigns to raise money and supplies for Yugoslavia might be called heroic in terms of effort and sacrifice, the return movement was still presented as an opportunity to "make up" for not having participated in the "national-liberation war." In a plea for support for the reconstruction fund, for example, a returnee from Toronto implied that it was the least they could do, given that they had sat out the war in relative comfort:

During the past liberation war we did not suffer from hunger, and there was also work of one pay or another, while our people in the old country bore the full weight of struggle during liberation. It would be comradely, brotherly, and patriotic to help our people with our contribution, as we did not participate in the liberation struggle.  

Another element in the psychology of the return movement was an "exile mentality" among many Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists. The Depression had dashed their initial hope of returning to Yugoslavia after a few years, and for those who became active in the pro-Communist movement, the difficulty of return included a political dimension: the pro-Communists assumed they would be subject to persecution if they returned to a monarchist Yugoslavia:

During my 19-year stay in Canada, I could not even think of returning to the old homeland. In the first place, because I actively participated in the working-class movement and its building. It is too much to list here what would happen to the activists of the workers' movement if they would return

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20Novosti, 29 May 1947.
Concomitant with this exile mentality, many Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists formed a perception of themselves as refugees from economic, political, and nationalist repression. Returnees would refer to the "forces" and the "reaction" which "drove" them from their homeland. To the degree that they made this transition in self-perception from being immigrants to being refugees and political exiles, return correspondingly shifted from being a choice to being the only means of fulfilling themselves.

Whether it was for economic or ideological reasons, the pro-Communists could not or would not return to Yugoslavia during the 1930s, and the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941 subsequently prevented their return until after the war. Consequently, the pro-Communists were cut off from their old homeland for some twenty years. They commonly suffered from chronic homesickness, and their long absence from Yugoslavia had been conducive to idealizing conditions there. As a second-generation Croatian-Canadian recalled of the returnees' attitudes, "The apples and the beef were never as good here as in the Old Country. The girls weren't as pretty; the whisky wasn't as good."  

The war had accentuated the longing to be reunited with family members overseas. In some cases, returnees were also

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21 Novosti, 22 May 1947.

22 Interview, D.S., Vancouver, 2 December 1987.
impelled by a sense of duty to their relatives. One woman from
Vancouver wanted to be reunited with her widowed father who had
no other children.\textsuperscript{23} A returnee from Vancouver received a
request from his family to return:

I got a letter from my brothers there. They were very poor.
They were in the war and everything was burned down and
destroyed, so they wanted help. They were much younger than
I am—about eleven years younger. Dad was killed in the war,
and Mom was pretty old, and she wanted me to come back, to
come and help. And so even the organization wanted anybody
that wanted to go, could go, if you had any trade or
anything, to go over there and help. So I decided I'm
going.\textsuperscript{24}

For some men the return movement meant being reunited with
wives and children in Croatia. Some of these children had been
Partisans and this was a source of pride for their pro-Communist
fathers in Canada. A few months before the repatriation campaign
began, \textit{Novosti} published a letter from a Partisan to his father
in Windsor:

I don’t know what you are thinking, that is, if you are
thinking of returning to the homeland. I think that you
should return to your house and your family, who await you
eagerly. Then we shall continue a peaceful life in our
homeland.\textsuperscript{25}

An inducement to return for many single men was a desire
for marriage. The shortage of Yugoslav women in Canada had
resulted in many of these men remaining bachelors into middle
age. The return movement seemed to offer them the last hope of a
Yugoslav wife.

\textsuperscript{23}Interview, A.G., Vancouver, 24 June 1987.

\textsuperscript{24}Interview, V.M., Vancouver, 21 August 1987.

\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Novosti}, 8 January 1946.
Old-country nostalgia, family reunification, and a desire for marriage were powerful inducements to return that had no ideological basis. These forces also reportedly motivated at least a few Croatian Peasant Party members to participate in the return movement. Unlike the pro-Communists, many of whom anticipated working in postwar reconstruction, the nationalists were probably more likely to return to their old homes.

A discussion of the return movement's psychology must acknowledge the impact of its momentum on the pro-Communists and even outsiders. The formation of the occupational groups, the propaganda meetings, the farewell dinners, as well as the happy and excited activity of the returnees as they wound up their affairs and made ready to return, contributed to a me-too mentality that encouraged the hesitant to join in. As a returnee from Vancouver recalled of the impact of repatriation on the community, "They sold hotels, they sold houses, they sold the-devil-knows-what. It had all risen up."^26

In summary, it may be noted that the diverse psychological, ideological, and familial motives that influenced the returnees in their decision to go back to Yugoslavia were a reflection of their own diversity: they were traditionalists and Marxists, idealists and realists, glory-seekers and humble workers, opportunists and altruists, and, finally, the victims of a crowd mentality.

The Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist return movement has enough unusual and unique features to set it well apart from other return migration from Canada. Yet, aside from the early feature of the occupational groups, the collective means of return, and the Marxist and patriotic rhetoric, were the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist returnees really much different from the many other immigrants who returned from North America to their land of birth? Yugoslav return migration from Canada was about thirty percent during 1924-39 (see table, p. 71). Given that pro-Communist participation in this migration was practically nil, can the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist return movement be interpreted mainly as a sudden release of ordinary return migration that been building for many years?

Many pro-Communist returnees were indeed influenced by such powerful "traditional" return motives as homesickness, family reunification, and the desire for marriage—any one of which could be sufficient reason for an immigrant to return. The return movement, however, had some features which ran contrary to typical return migration. Firstly, many returnees went back after some twenty years in Canada, a striking exception to the usual timing of return migration, which generally occurred within
a few years of arrival in North America. Given their long absence from Yugoslavia, it might reasonably be expected that the pro-Communists would have come to regard return more as a daydream than a practical possibility, and that they had finally resigned themselves to permanent residence in Canada. Secondly, many families went to Yugoslavia. The bearing and/or raising of children by immigrant parents in an adopted country is usually an assimilationist anchor that makes a subsequent return unlikely, yet, in the case of the return movement, it did not prevent return for many families. In some cases, the siblings were made up of, or included, children who had been born in Croatia, but there were also many Canadian-born children who were taken overseas. Finally, the pro-Communists were returning from relatively-good economic conditions to a country that had just emerged from four years of occupation and war. The propagandists' inaccurate portrayal of Yugoslavia's present and optimistic vision of her future notwithstanding, the ostensible reason for the return movement was that the returnees were needed to help rebuild a war-devastated country, and this fundamental consideration attached a measure of hardship to repatriation which is absent from most voluntary return migration.

In addition to traditional return motives, there were several long-term forces that made the pro-Communists in particular susceptible to a postwar return movement. One of these was Marxist ideology. Marxism created an anti-assimilationist refugee and exile mentality among the pro-
Communists; it conditioned them toward great collective ventures; it encouraged them to obey their leaders; and it turned them into ideologues and believers of Communist propaganda. Pro-Communist ethnic activity also increased susceptibility to return. The pro-Communist clubs were centres of language maintenance and ethnic activity, and were the centres of the ethnic islands in which their members physically and mentally dwelled. In this respect, they were similar to their nationalist counterparts in exercising an anti-assimilationist impact. ¹

The final long-term force that made the pro-Communists susceptible to repatriation was an adverse immigrant experience, particularly during the Depression. In this respect the pro-Communists may well have been different from their nationalist countrymen. As unskilled "foreign" workers in a time of extremely high unemployment, all Croatian immigrants were in a disadvantaged position. This general situation, however, did not result in a uniform immigrant experience. Some Croats were fortunate enough to be more or less steadily employed during the 1930s; some had relatives or friends who provided help in times in need. Interviews and other sources on the pro-Communists, however, indicate that a high proportion of them experienced breadlines, strikes, relief camps, police harassment, discrimination, sustained unemployment, and hunger. In other

¹For a survey of the impact of organized ethnic activity on various ethnic groups, see Henry Radecki, Ethnic Organizational Dynamics: The Polish Group in Canada (Waterloo: Sir Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), 203-26.
words, although every Croatian immigrant was adversely affected by the Depression, those who became pro-Communists had often suffered the worst. Once Croatian immigrants were attracted to Marxism, they were further differentiated from their non-Marxist countrymen in terms of their interpretation of what was happening to them. The nationalists could attribute unfortunate experiences to "bad luck" and "hard times"; and could take comfort in any small material advancements as precursors of a better future in their adopted country. The pro-Communists, however, filtered their experiences through a world-view of the exploiting and the exploited classes, and consequently viewed any improvement in living standards as potentially ephemeral given that Canadian capitalism was supposedly dedicated to the exploitation of the worker.

If it is correct that a combination of traditional return motives, Marxism, ethnic organizational activity, and adverse immigrant experiences had made the Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communists susceptible to a postwar return movement, then we might expect to find evidence of a readiness to return among Ukrainian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Slovakian, Polish, and Lithuanian pro-Communists in Canada. The paucity of secondary literature on most of these groups makes it difficult to arrive at more than tentative conclusions, but we may begin by noting
that--according to the Council--the Radnik itself repatriated about 250 Eastern Europeans, notably Czechs, Bulgarians, and Hungarians. The Polish pro-Communists were encouraged to return by their organization and newspaper, and a number did so. The most striking evidence of a readiness to return is provided by the Byelo-Russian, Russian, and--especially--Ukrainian pro-Communists. John Kolasky writes that in October 1945, "the consular branch of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa announced that all former citizens of Western Ukraine and Byelorussia living abroad, who had Polish citizenship, should . . . register as Soviet citizens no later than December 31, 1945, in embassies and consulates of the USSR." Believing that such registration was the first step in being repatriated to their former homelands,

2Novosti, 29 June, 12 November 1948. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police counted 182 persons of Hungarian, Rumanian, Czechoslovakian, Bulgarian, Finnish, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, American, and Austrian nationality who returned aboard the Radnik. It is possible, however, that this total does not include some Eastern Europeans with Canadian citizenship. See page 22 above, footnote 26.

3In regard to the Polish pro-Communists, Victor Turek writes: "A few of the Poles were contemplating return to their homeland and since the Kronika Tygodniowa [the Polish-Canadian pro-Communist newspaper] was at that time the only Polish-Canadian newspaper with wire services from the territories under Soviet army occupation, they found it a useful source of information. The editors encouraged the idea of a return, presenting a rosy picture of prosperity in a country liberated from capitalism. Those who heeded such appeals were mostly communists or sympathizers. Their departure reduced the ranks of the Kronika Tygodniowa, while the letters they wrote from Poland to their relatives revealed the untruthfulness of its reports, for instead of utopia they found poverty, chaos, and police terror." In late-1957 The Polish-Canadian pro-Communist organization admitted its error in advising immigrants to return to Poland. 126, 154, footnote 59.
many Ukrainian, Byelo-Russian, and Russian pro-Communists accepted Soviet citizenship—seven hundred in British Columbia alone. In July 1946, about 170 of these potential repatriates gathered at a banquet in Vancouver, where their spokesman—a 41-year old unemployed shipyard worker—declared that they wanted to return to build "an orchard for the people of the USSR." The group requested the assistance of the Canadian government in their repatriation, and expressed their impatience to return.  

Given this evidence of willingness to return within a number of pro-Communist ethnic groups in Canada, why did a large-scale return movement only arise among the Yugoslav-Canadians? The most obvious answer is overseas conditions. The Soviet government was chiefly interested in enticing back displaced persons in Europe, and was apparently reluctant to accept prewar immigrants from Canada. In the case of Ukrainian-Canadians, "only a group of thirty-five families was permitted to return to Ukraine in the Spring of 1948." This Soviet policy would effectively stymie any possible return "movement" among Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Russians, and Lithuanians. As regards Hungarian, Polish, Bulgarian, and Slovakian pro-Communists, their countries of origin were not sovietized until 1947-48. This delay in the Communist takeover of these countries allowed some cooling of the pro-Communists' wartime passions and their

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5Kolasky, 116.
euphoria over their former homelands' "liberation" by Soviet forces. There was also a great difference between the Communists' wartime fortunes in Yugoslavia and in these other future Soviet satellites, and this difference had an important impact on the activities of the respective ethnic pro-Communist organizations in Canada. In Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, Communist movements were either dormant or on the defensive during most of the war. Consequently, the respective pro-Communist ethnic communities had no left-wing forces to support in their native countries and had to content themselves with supplying aid to the Soviet Union and supporting the Canadian war effort. This is not to imply that the pro-Communists were not enthusiastic about these goals: the Polish-Canadian pro-Communists' war campaign, for example, which included supporting the formation of a Polish army in Canada during 1941-42, was reportedly "conducted with great enthusiasm and energy." However, the fact that Yugoslav-Canadian pro-Communists were able to raise money and supplies for Tito's Partisan army appears to have raised them to an even higher level of enthusiasm and commitment than other ethnic pro-Communists. When this wartime Yugoslavia-oriented momentum among the Yugoslav-Canadians was rechanneled into the return movement, it gave repatriation a tremendous impetus. Thus, the failure of most pro-Communist ethnic organizations in Canada to have generated large-scale return movements similar to the Yugoslav-

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^6Turek, 125.
Canadian example appears to have been basically due to overseas wartime and postwar conditions rather than to a marked difference in latent return migration among their memberships. For a sizable minority of immigrants from Eastern Europe, then, the bonds holding them to Canada remained weak even after twenty years of residence, and, given the right circumstances, could have easily given way.

The circumstances under which the bonds gave way for the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communists were a well-organized return movement with an intense propaganda campaign. The return movement organizers and propagandists both served and exploited a desire and susceptibility to return among the pro-Communists, and created a desire to return. As regards the organization of the return movement, the ease and inexpensiveness of repatriation favourably influenced participation. Furthermore, the pro-Communists were attracted by the camaraderie, romance and excitement of returning in large groups aboard a Yugoslav ship that was dedicated to bringing them back to their old homeland. The original plan to have the returnees who wanted to participate in postwar reconstruction remain together overseas was an additional inducement: given the intense group identity formed by the pro-Communists during their years together in Canada, the idea of living and working together in Yugoslavia must have been
very attractive indeed. Yet, even after the occupational-group plan of return was abandoned after the first voyage of the Radnik, an additional 1,300 Yugoslav-Canadians went overseas. The most likely explanation is that—while the occupational-group plan was a very desirable feature of the early return movement—even without it repatriation continued to exert a powerful pull, and the returnees were ultimately prepared to sacrifice their comradeship and friendships in order to go to Yugoslavia.

The propagandists depicted Yugoslavia as already offering acceptable—even attractive—living conditions, and Canada as beset by inflation, unemployment, and the forces of reaction. They presented a choice between being victimized by a coming depression in Canada and enjoying the security and benefits of the coming workers' paradise in Yugoslavia. While economic fears may not have been as widespread a return movement motive as returnees' letters to Novosti suggest, the idea of a Yugoslavia rapidly rebuilding and progressing was a powerful inducement. In the end, the improved economic conditions in Canada were not enough to hold the returnees, and the prospect of some hardship in Yugoslavia was not enough to dissuade them. Instead of concentrating on the present, some returnees were prodded by the painful memory of their past in the New World, and many were lured by an optimistic vision of their future in their old homeland.

The psychology of the return movement was a considerable part of its appeal: there was security for the fearful, honour
for the virtuous, a new society for the idealistic, excitement for the restless, and even glory for those who dreamed of it. It would be a mistake, however, to perceive the returnees mainly as emotional and material opportunists, for there was a powerful strain of altruism in their decision to return. This altruism was deeply inbred: for twenty years they had sacrificed and worked for a cause, which culminated in their tremendous outpouring of wartime and postwar aid to Yugoslavia. Most returnees were sincere in their declarations of dedication to their old homeland. Many of those who returned had been among the cream of the pro-Communist organization, had worked the hardest, had given the most, had believed the most deeply in "the workers' movement." In Novosti's parting words to the first large group of returnees, they were "the most active of the most active, the best of the best." 7 When the return movement was over, the remaining pro-Communist leaders in Canada would lament that they had gutted their organization of many of its most dedicated members.

7Novosti, 8 May 1947.
Migration between Yugoslavia and Canada in the interwar period.

According to Yugoslav statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Emigrants to Canada</th>
<th>Repatriates from Canada</th>
<th>Yugoslav racial origin</th>
<th>Yugoslav nationality</th>
<th>Born in Yugoslavia</th>
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</thead>
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<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
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<td>610</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 1926-1939

|                | 28,160 | 8,425 | 9,249 | 24,620 | 24,603 |

Notes: n.a. - data not available.
Yugoslav statistics do not distinguish between ethnic groups.
Estimates are in brackets.
In the 1920s and early 1930s Canadian statistics were available for financial years ending 31 March. Some of them were later recomputed for calendar years. For the missing data I made my own calculations based on the following formula:

$$I = \frac{1}{4} I'(t) + \frac{3}{4} I'(t+1)$$

where $I$ is the total number of immigrants in a calendar year
$I'$ is the total number of immigrants in a financial year
$t$ is the year for which calculation is made
(or if financial year - ending in a given year)

Sources:
A. Langrood 1932

SELECTED SOURCES

Primary Sources on the Return Movement

The major written source for this thesis is the Croatian-Canadian pro-Communist newspaper Novosti (News, 1940-48), which appeared tri-weekly during the time of the return movement. I also used the Yugoslav-Canadian Jedinstvo (Unity, 1948-71), which superceded Novosti and its Serbian and Slovenian counterparts as a semi-weekly. Both of these newspapers are on microfilm at the National Library of Canada.

The large number of published letters from departing returnees which appeared in these newspapers during the return movement were useful in assessing motives for return. The practice of writing letters for publication was a standard feature of the Serbo-Croatian pro-Communist press in Canada since its inception, and was strongly encouraged. Practically all of the letters from departing returnees were signed and carried a place of origin. As these letters effectively functioned as part of the propaganda campaign for return, they must be treated with discretion as sources, and I have tried to take the possibility of substantial rewriting into account when using them as evidence. Irrespective of their integrity, however, these letters are useful in deducing the motives of the return movement.
insofar as they influenced the returnees who read them, and also reveal and elaborate elements of the approved "return ideology." I should note, however, that my attributing material to correspondents in Novosti and Jedinstvo—including the returnees writing from Yugoslavia—does not mean that I am satisfied the material is authentic, but only indicates the authorship that was indicated in these newspapers.

The return movement was kept under close surveillance by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I obtained declassified RCMP documents on the return movement from the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service through the Access to Information Act. As the RCMP had infiltrated the important Windsor local of the Council of Canadian South Slavs, and obtained information on the delegate meetings of the Council executive in Toronto, its reports provide some inside information on the return movement.

I spoke to a few dozen individuals who had first-hand contact with the return movement in various capacities. This includes former executive members of the Council of Canadian South Slavs; Yugoslav-Canadians who remember, but did not participate in, the return movement; and older and younger returnees. My contacts with these individuals ranged from extensive interviews to conversations in which some memory or opinion concerning the return movement would be provided. Although not all of the respondents I quoted in this thesis requested anonymity, I chose not to identify any of them by name. This material is cited as "interview," and is identified by a set
of arbitrary and unique initials, the place of origin, and the date.

Other Sources


provides a passage on the Polish-Canadian pro-Communist return episode.