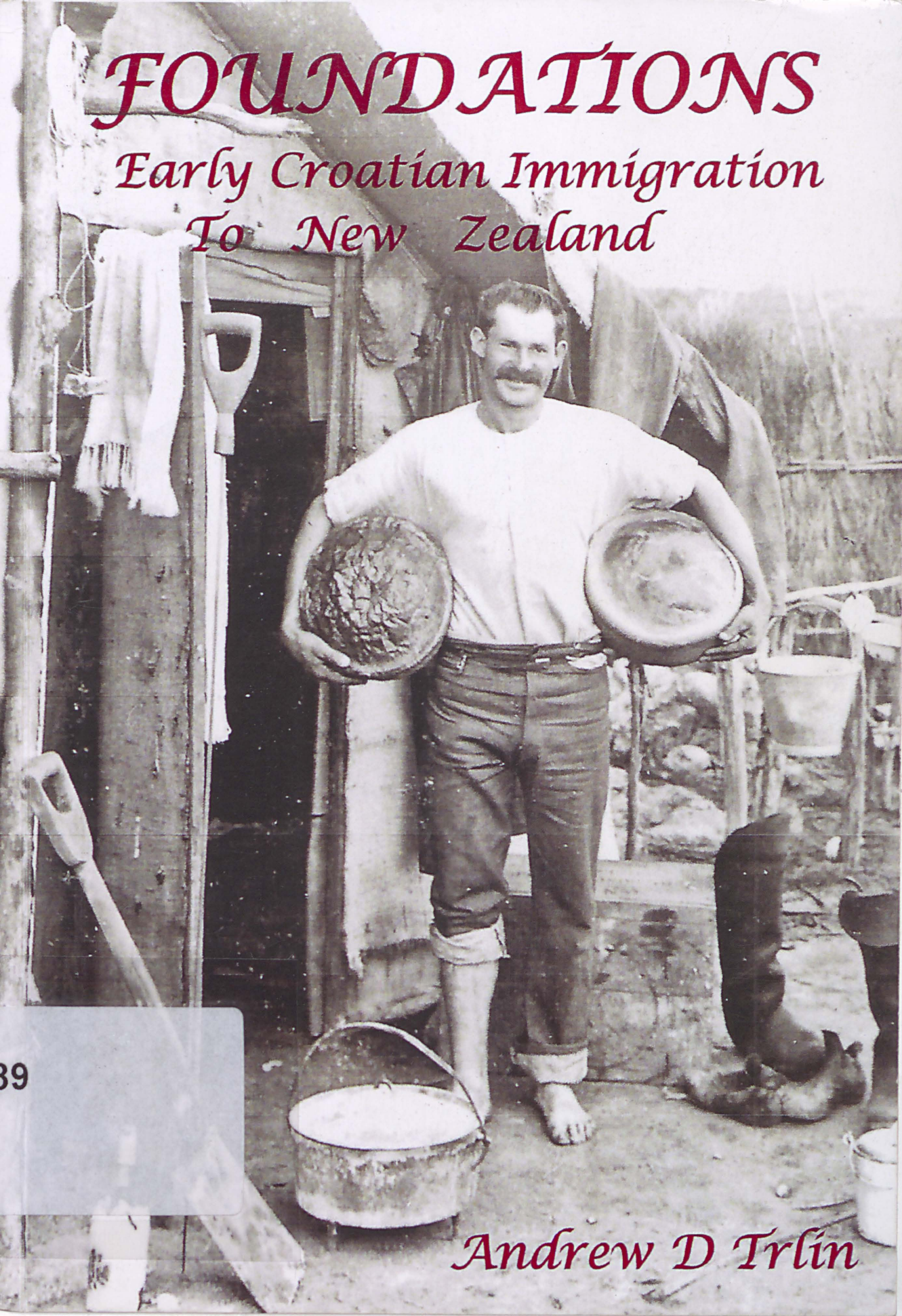
FOUNDATIONS

Early Croatian Immigration To New Zealand



39

Andrew D Trlin

Foundations

Early Croatian Immigration to NZ

Andrew Trlin

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
KNJIŽNICA
ZAGREBA
FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET

Cover photo The complete gumdigger and camp cook c.1911. Posing by the door of the "Urlich bakery" at Ahipara this digger is holding rounds of bread baked in his camp oven (at feet). Among his few household utensils were a tea-billy, a shallow basin and a bucket (at rear). The frame of the shanty was made of tea-tree poles and bits of lumber covered over with sacks sewn together. Additional shelter and privacy for the dwelling was often provided by erecting a tea-tree windbreak. *Source:* Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents
Mate Andrija Trlin, 22 October 1907 - 9 August 1980, and
Ružica Trlin (née Vegar), 29 January 1915 - 8 June 1980,
both from the village of Ravča, Vrgorac district, central Dalmatia,

and to

My children and grandchildren in the hope that they will gain
a better understanding and appreciation of the Dalmatian/Croat
part of their ancestry.

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The Author

The late Andrew Trlin is best known for research on a variety of topics about immigration and settlement. The New Zealand-born son of immigrant parents from Dalmatia on the Adriatic coast of Croatia he had a special interest in aspects of the arrival and adjustment of migrants from his parents' homeland.

During his employment at Massey University (1967-2004) he produced numerous journal articles, chapters for edited books and books on immigration. The latter have included (as author) *Now Respected Once Despised: Yugoslavs in New Zealand* and (as co-editor and contributor) *Immigrants in New Zealand* as well as a five volume series titled *New Zealand and International Migration: A Digest and Bibliography*. Andrew was the leader of the New Settlers Programme, a multi-disciplinary investigation (1998-2002) funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology that focused upon a five-year longitudinal study of skilled arrivals from China, India and South Africa, along with a range of other topics. He served as a member of the New Zealand Human Rights Review Tribunal (2004-2014) and was a Life Member of the New Zealand Population Association.

Publisher's Note

The draft chapters written by Andrew were collated and prepared for publication after his death by Des Mataga.

Information from Andrew's files needed to complete the draft book was provided with the valuable and necessary assistance of Andrew's widow, Annette.

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Completion of this book owes a great deal to help provided by many people and organisations. I therefore take this opportunity to thank the following:

- The National Library of New Zealand, for its care and attention with the maintenance and continued expansion of the public on-line service "Papers Past". This digitalised collection of early New Zealand newspapers was a crucial resource.
- Archives New Zealand, Wellington – including regional branches in Dunedin, Christchurch and Auckland – for facilitating access to naturalisation records, probate files, as well as material relevant to Home Service and internment during the First World War. I am especially grateful for the recent on-line provision of digitalised personnel files for World War 1 servicemen.
- The Dalmatian Historical and Genealogical Society (Inc.), Auckland, whose volunteer staff and committee members opened doors outside normal working hours to a treasure trove of relevant documents, articles and photographs. They couldn't have been more helpful in providing assistance with locating required material and making contacts within the Croatian community.
- The Dargaville Museum and the Far North Regional Museum, Kaitaia; staff at both museums (especially Kaitaia) were helpful in locating and sorting relevant archival material and photographs.
- Stephen (Steve) Jelicich, Auckland, has for several decades provided valuable advice, information and encouragement on all aspects of a topic close to his heart. I have been privileged to work with Steve as a mentor, fellow researcher and on one occasion as a co-author. Claiming he was now "getting too old" to do more, Steve was nevertheless helpful with comments on drafts of chapters about the pioneers and gumdiggers.
- P.D. (Des) Mataga and George Mihaljevich. By happy coincidence Des had "retired" and was working on his own projects about the Kauri gum industry and Dalmatian migrants. Des shared some of his key findings and cast a critical but constructive eye over drafts of some chapters. George, working on his own project, was another who shared his own findings, promptly answered questions and offered the much needed encouragement and support of a fellow researcher.

- Descendants of some of the pioneers who kindly shared information and especially photographs where available. In particular I am grateful to members of the Beban, Lousich, Macale, Pavletich, Poschich, Sarich, Violich and Vucetich families. I am grateful also to Alva Grant and other Covacich family members for their assistance.
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- Needless to say I am indebted to the migrants I interviewed in the 1960s (all of whom have, I believe, since passed away) and to the late Marg Clapham (née Totich) for access to her father's papers. Without their assistance the chain migrant and gumdigger chapters would have been much weaker.
- Professor Paul Spoonley, Massey University, for providing a small amount of funding to allow research trips to Auckland, Dargaville and Kaitaia, the purchase of copies of particular archive material and the reproduction of some photographs.

Finally, and most importantly, I am deeply grateful to my wife Annette (Annie) and our children (Matthew, Natasha, Alexander, Belinda and Miranda) for their unfailing love, patience, encouragement and support. As in the past, Annie once again acted as my hardworking research assistant – this time for trips to Auckland, Dargaville and Kaitaia. A researcher in her own right, Annie was a tower of strength when I fell ill with a brain tumour that required surgery and radiotherapy during the first quarter of 2013. She somehow managed to keep the family, other relations and the wider circle of friends informed, to provide me with the prolonged post-treatment love and care I needed, to complete a university teaching contract and to make progress on her own research project. I can never thank you enough Annie, but with my book out of the way I hope I can once again assist you with your own project.

Waitoa, Peka Peka Beach, Waikanae, May 2014
Andrew Trlin

Introduction

Publication in 1979 of *Now Respected, Once Despised* was groundbreaking. The first English language study of Yugoslavs (mainly Croatians) in New Zealand, it demonstrated a need among members of a small, long-established immigrant group, and especially their descendants, for a book about their history of immigration. It demonstrated also, within the official constraints of the time, the availability of information with which to begin a celebration of particular successes, an examination of some features of the settlement process, and the daunting task of challenging popular misconceptions that had arisen and injustices that had occurred in the course of settlement.

The number of published studies has increased substantially since 1979 and includes five books, a number of shorter monographs and university theses as well as a host of book chapters and articles in various academic journals and more popular magazines. Among the books there can be no doubt that Stephen Jelicich's *From Distant Villages*, spanning a hundred years of settlement, stands as a profusely illustrated signal achievement. That said, there can be no doubt also concerning the significance of: Senka Božic-Vrbančić's *Tarara: Croats and Maori in New Zealand*, a topic which had previously been elusive and shamefully neglected; *Never Lost for Words* an engaging collection of stories and personal memories by New Zealand-born author Amelia Batistich; *The Winemaker: George Fistonich and the Villa Maria Story*, a well earned biographical celebration by Kerry Tyack; and recently P.D. (Des) Mataga's *The Stayers*, a carefully compiled register and other lists of Dalmatians who arrived before 1916 and settled in New Zealand. Nor should one ignore the value of shorter items such as: *A Life Span*, a biography of Mate Glamuzina and his family by Jane Wordsworth; *The Figs and the Vines: Gumdigging in Kaipara*, produced by the Dalmatian Pioneer Trust to mark the 1997 unveiling of Dargaville's gumdigger memorial; and *Once Upon a Time There was a Maori and a Croatian* edited by Annabel Whaanga for publication by the Te Whanau o Waipareira Trust.

Finally, the numbers of theses, book chapters and articles in academic journals and popular magazines is too large to permit individual items to be mentioned here but they warrant careful attention for the often carefully researched insights they yield. Subjects covered by this diverse body of literature include: biographies of Croatian women in North Auckland, the Croatian immigrant press, studies of the fishing and wine industries, gumdigging, language change, family genealogy, immigration policy, horse

racing, modern Yugoslavia's demise and related issues during the 1990s of both individual and inter-generational ethnic and national identity.[1]

Two other developments need to be mentioned here. First, is the "Papers Past" service administered by the National Library of New Zealand. Containing (as at December 2013) more than 3,000,000 pages of digitised material from 83 newspapers and periodicals published in cities and towns throughout the country over the period 1839-1945, it can be accessed on-line and is free of charge. A simple search procedure for a family name or subject yields, within minutes, a full list of references from the entire collection with the ability to print whatever is desired. To say that "Papers Past" has revolutionised the nation's historical and genealogical research is not an exaggeration.

The second development has been the "Archway" facility offered by Archives New Zealand. Available on-line, it provides users with a listing of archival material held according to a nominated subject or topic, indicating the level of availability and conditions of access. Copies of much of this material – for example, historical probate files, bankruptcy files, etc – may be ordered at a reasonable cost. A very important recent addition to "Archway" has been the digitised version of personal military records held by Archives New Zealand for servicemen during World War I. Hailed by historians and genealogists alike, this material is also available on-line, free of charge. Coupled with the publications outlined above, these two developments leave little room for doubt about the material available for a new edition of the 1979 book in order to provide an up-to-date, comprehensive integration of original research and the diverse findings of other researchers.

With such a book as the objective, work commenced in 2008 to collect and collate the research material and resources required. This task was more or less completed by the end of 2012. It quickly became clear that the book envisaged would be a major project of about 15 chapters. This would include extensively revised and expanded sections covering the gumdiggers, enemy aliens (for military service during World War I), winemakers and orchardists, community cultural and sports clubs, the movement into towns

[1] Readers interested in tracing particular items in this body of research and other literature for the period 1980-2005 can do so via bibliographic listings under the subject index headings of "Croatians", "Dalmatians" and "Yugoslavs" in successive volumes of *New Zealand and International Migration: A Digest and Bibliography.* See: Trlin and Spoonley (1986), Trlin (1992), Trlin and Barnard (1997), Trlin (2005) and Trlin and Bedford (2010).

and cities (especially into cafes and restaurants), and social integration or assimilation. However, new chapters would be required on the pioneers (1857-1880), farming and fishing, World War II and its community consequences, Yugoslavia's demise and the repercussions during the early 1990s, the second (New Zealand-born) generation and segmented assimilation (using interviews conducted in the mid-1990s), independent sporting achievements and contemporary celebrities.

Writing began in 2010 with good progress made until the beginning of 2013 when everything ground to a halt. A rapidly developing personal health problem was diagnosed as an aggressive brain tumour. Neurosurgery was required to accurately locate and reduce the tumour before a radiotherapy programme was started. The surgery and radiotherapy were successful but the side effects of the tumour and/or medical intervention included a significant loss of hearing, a pronounced loss of the sense of physical balance, the development of double vision and bouts of physical tiredness, all of which seriously affected my ability to work. A rethink on the scope of the book was unavoidable. With the future uncertain it was necessary to be utterly pragmatic and to limit the volume to five chapters dealing with the perceived foundations of Croatian immigration and settlement as outlined below.

Chapter 1, almost completely new, focuses on Croatian pioneers who arrived from 1857 to 1880. It tackles questions the same as those which have challenged researchers investigating the immigration and settlement of pioneer Croatians in other overseas destinations. Using naturalisation records, probate files, other research material and especially the "Papers Past" resource, particular attention is given to: identifying individual pioneers by name, birthplace and date of arrival; settlement location and employment; employment difficulties; marriage and family relationships; and to problems and difficulties encountered in old age. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of pioneers in relation to subsequent immigration and settlement via the crucial process of chain migration.

Chapter 2, a completely new chapter, presents 12 pioneer biographies to capture the rich detail of individual life stories. The selection of the pioneers featured was determined by two factors: first, the quality and scope of available information; and second, to gain recognition for those who have so far been ignored, to provide more detailed accounts of those who have already gained some recognition, and to correct errors made by previous writers. In essence this chapter complements Chapter 1 and augments (with

some necessary corrections) Chapter 7 of Steven Jelicich's *From Distant Villages*.

Chapter 3, on chain migrants, is an amalgam, revision and expansion of material published in two chapters in *Now Respected, Once Despised*. This chapter is crucial to an understanding of the foundations of settlement and to an appreciation of what followed. It has three objectives: first to identify the characteristics of migrants from the 1890s to 1939 and changes that have occurred; and second to show how the flow of arrivals and their characteristics has been shaped by New Zealand's immigration restrictions and policies which have reinforced the process of chain migration. The chapter includes a detailed discussion of the causes of migration before 1914 in order to correct a persistent belief that the avoidance of military service was *the* primary cause of migration rather than a complex set of factors that included a history of foreign control, limited environmental resources, population growth and the intrusion of new socio-economic values and aspirations.

Chapter 4 focuses on the gumdiggers, the occupation early Croatian arrivals have been most closely identified with and which has been romanticised as part of the settlement saga. An extensively revised and expanded version of a previously published chapter, it has two objectives: first, to correct the romantic view of gumdigging; and second, to identify the primary sources and causes of opposition to the gumdiggers which led to the introduction and impact of the Kauri Gum Industry Act 1898. With regard to the first objective, particular attention is given to living and working conditions on the gumfields; religion, recreation and alcohol; earnings and hardships; occupational change, necessitated by the volatility of gum markets and prices; and the life of women on the gumfields. For the second objective, the primary focus is upon the causes of opposition by 'British' diggers as well as small farmers reliant on gumdigging to supplement household incomes and finance farm development, but the role of 'racial' or ethnic prejudice is another factor that cannot be overlooked. Finally, the provisions of the Kauri Gum Industry Act are identified and their impact noted as a stimulus for citizenship via naturalisation and further occupational change.

Chapter 5 focuses upon Croatians as "Austrian" enemy aliens during the First World War. Prompted by Revel Lochore's ill-informed summation of their military and Home Service,[2] this chapter – revised and expanded to incorporate previously unavailable information – aims to put the record

[2] See, Lochore (1951:43).

straight via two objectives. In pursuit of the first objective – identification of obstacles to and the actual record of military service – the chapter begins with an examination of ethnic tension on the gumfields and nationality as a barrier to enlistment. This examination concludes with a new section that reviews the military service record of two groups of recruits; namely, Croatian immigrants and the New Zealand-born sons of Croatian pioneers or close followers. For the second objective – the Home Service record – the examination starts with the continuation of gumfield tension as Croatian immigrants were believed to take advantage of the absence of servicemen to demand higher wages, buy farmland at low prices, and to pose a threat to the families of absent servicemen. With nationality persisting as an obstacle to military recruitment, attention is given to factionalism among Croatian leaders and the belated introduction of Home Service (drainage works and railway building) with the appointment of John Cullen as Commissioner in charge of "Jugoslavs". Cullen's role and performance is reviewed as is the actual record of Home Service. The chapter concludes with a look at loyalty, internments and justice, as well as the post-war repatriation of a number of those who were interned.

The book's Conclusion has three tasks. Of these, the first is the conventional provision of a concise summary of the main findings for each chapter. In the course of executing the first task the second task is to briefly note the influence of some of the main findings in relation to subsequent developments in Croatian immigration and settlement. Bearing in mind features and points arising from the first two tasks, the third task, for the benefit of readers keen to make a contribution, is to identify aspects or topics concerning the foundations and beyond which are still in need of research. It hardly needs to be said that the second and third tasks are important to a healthy understanding and appreciation of the Croatian community's history and present position, but the third task also has the potential to exercise a powerful influence upon the community's future vigor, resilience and survival in New Zealand's evolving multicultural society.

Place Names, Family Names, Dalmatians and Croatians

Place names for islands, towns and villages etc. are spelt in their proper Croatian form with diacritical marks for the letters *ć*, *č*, *š* and *ž* as in Nerežišće, Korčula and Pelješac. For family names, however, with one exception (author Senka Božić-Vrbančić), the diacritical marks have been removed – with or without the addition of an *h* – to broadly conform to the English spelling and pronunciation commonly used in New Zealand by the

person or family concerned. For example: Arnerić becomes Arnerich; Bonašić becomes Bonashic or Bonasich; and Štiglić becomes Stiglich.

Because the immigrants, be they settlers or sojourners, have at various times been referred to as "Austrians", "Dalmatians", "Croatians", "Slavs" and "Jugoslavs" it was decided to adopt the broad generic term "Croatians" where possible to simplify matters, to affirm a common cultural identity and avoid unnecessary confusion. No slight is intended to those who for one reason or another prefer to think of themselves purely and simply as "Dalmatians".

1
Pioneers

On 30 April 1857 the frigate *Novara*, refitted earlier in the year at the shipyards of Pula on the Istrian peninsula, left Trieste for the first around-the-world mission of the fledgling Austrian imperial navy. Authorised by Archduke Ferdinand Maximillian with the permission of his brother, Emperor Franz Joseph, the voyage was primarily a scientific expedition, as well as a sail-training exercise for the ship's crew and an opportunity to proclaim the Austro-Hungarian Empire's status as a world power. Commanded by Kommodore Bernhard von Wüllerstorf-Urbair, the expedition – with seven scientists and 345 officers and crew, of whom 175 were Croatians from Austro-Hungarian territory on the Adriatic coast – took two years and three months to complete its voyage which included a short visit to Auckland (22 December 1858 to 8 January 1859). During this visit, Dr Hochstetter, the expedition's geologist, examined and reported on the Drury coalfield so well that the Auckland Provincial Government persuaded him to stay on for another nine months in order to conduct mineral, geological and agricultural surveys of the Auckland and Nelson provinces.[3] The overall success of the *Novara* expedition was marked by high honours for some of the scientists, significant advances in oceanographic research and contributions to geological research, while the collections of zoological, botanical and cultural material assembled *en route* enhanced the reputation of Austria's museums.[4]

During the voyage a Croatian sailor, Djordj Radić, died of dysentery near New Zealand's Stewart Island and was buried at sea on 14 September 1858. Three and a half months later, while the *Novara* was visiting Auckland, another Croatian crewman, Mato Cergonja, died of heart failure. A letter to the editor of the *Daily Southern Cross* provides a succinct description of Cergonja's funeral:

> *On Monday, January 3rd, the boatswain of the frigate 'Novara', who died on Saturday [1st January 1859], after having received the sacraments of the Church, and all the consolations of religion, was interred in the Catholic cemetery [Grafton Gully]. The procession took*

[3] See Fleming (2010) for a concise account of Hochstetter's work in New Zealand.

[4] See Scherzer (1863) for an authoritative account of the *Novara* voyage. Modern reprints are available via the internet.

> *place from the Albert Barracks. Two of the clergy of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the chaplain of the frigate, and six sanctuary pupils of the Cathedral, composed the clergy. The commodore, officers, the usual part of musicians, and a large number of the sergeants and privates of the frigate accompanied the deceased to the burial ground. The funeral rites were performed in a most impressive and edifying manner by the chaplain of the frigate, assisted by the two curates of the Cathedral.*[5]

Although the deaths of Radić and Cergonja are poignant markers of early Croatian contact with New Zealand, the *Novara*'s visit also gave rise in later decades to beliefs that it was closely linked with the beginning of Croatian settlement here.

In particular, it was believed that: one or more Croatian sailors deserted during the ship's visit to Auckland; and that many of the ship's young Croatian sailors, on their return home, were full of praise as they spread the word about New Zealand among their kith and kin in villages along the Adriatic coast.[6] Neither belief stands up to scrutiny. Having examined the ship's crew records, Stephen Jelicich found that while desertions did occur in Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, no one deserted in Auckland.[7] As for the second belief, it has to be said that few (if any) of the Croatian sailors had a chance to see much of New Zealand and its opportunities that would induce others to come and settle. There is *no* evidence that they were welcomed ashore and hosted by unnamed fellow countrymen who could have been living in Auckland. They may, of course, have had plenty to say later about their limited shore leave experiences in pubs, the attractions of local women, celebrations of Christmas and New Year, contacts with the strange and fearsome Maori[8], and about some

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[5] *Daily Southern Cross*, 7 January 1859. p.3.

[6] Totich (1948), for example, asserted that:

> *The Dalmatians, on returning to their home ports, were full of praise for New Zealand, and of the treatment received from its people, and in succeeding years many young men resolved to go out to the new land and dig for the precious gum they had heard so much about.*

[7] Jelicich (2008:26).

[8] Two Maori – Wirimu Toetoe Tumohe (32 years old) and Hemara Te Rerehau Paraone (aged 20) – were on board the *Novara* when it departed from Auckland. It has been reported that they "were at first depressed by shipboard life, but soon became reconciled to it and fast became favourites with the crew" (Cameron, 1958:206). Te Rerehau kept a journal, hand-written in te reo Maori, that covered a substantial part of their time away. In Vienna they were placed in the Imperial-Royal Printing House and trained in the skills of printing. When they returned to New Zealand after a two-year absence, they brought with them a printing

features of interest around the port. Like sailors on all naval vessels, however, they would otherwise have been kept busy with various maintenance or cleaning activities and subject to normal military discipline during their short visit.

Other possibilities are that Croatian sailors visited New Zealand on whaling vessels during the early decades of the 1800s or deserted from Austrian lumber ships in Kaipara Harbour and other ports around Northland and the Coromandel Peninsula during the 1860s and 1870s. Once again, however, there is *no* proof, nor any prospect of unequivocal proof one way or the other. Croatian sailors may, of course, have deserted from some of the hundreds of vessels calling at ports around New Zealand at this time. Here the evidence rests upon stories handed down by descendants and others concerning a handful of men such as: Francisco Violich, Paul Lupis and Martin Macale, who are believed to have jumped ship in the South Island; and Romolo Scopinich, who is said to have deserted from a ship at Great Barrier Island. Their stories are fascinating but fail to account for the appearance of dozens of other Croatian pioneers at about the same time and (with the exception of Paul Lupis) for the evolving nature and characteristics of Croatian settlement during the decades that followed.

Bearing the above in mind, one is still left with many questions concerning the foundations of Croatian settlement in New Zealand, questions much the same as those which have challenged writers dealing with Croatian pioneers in the United States of America, Canada, southern Africa and Australia.[9] Who were the pioneers, when did they arrive and why did they come? Where did they settle, how did they earn a living and did they endure any particular hardships? What do we know of their marriages and family relationships? Did they encounter any particular problems or difficulties during the last years of their lives? And finally, how significant were the pioneers' origins and their life in New Zealand to subsequent patterns of Croatian immigration and settlement? Answers to these questions are presented, within the limits imposed by available information, in the following pages and (from a biographical perspective) in Chapter 2.

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press and type that was used to publish a Maori language newspaper for the Kingitanga (King Movement). For further details on their lives, experiences and role in printing for the Maori people, see: Scherzer (1863); Cameron (1958); and a television documentary (*The Flight of Te Hookioi*) produced by Tearapa Kahi and Alexander Behse, first screened on *Maori Television*, 21 October 2009.

[9] For example, see Prpic (1971), Eterovich (1979), Mursalo (1981), Rasporich (1982) and Šutalo (2004).

Names and Origins

The first two known pioneers – William Jacob Marsh and Nicolas Viccovich, both naturalised in New Zealand – arrived *c.*1857, a year or more before the *Novara* visited Auckland. Nicolas Viccovich (possibly Vicković, Visković or Višković – he was illiterate and unable to sign his own name) was thought to be a Montenegrin when first identified as a pioneer[10] because he was born in Cetinje, some 12km southeast of the port of Kotor on the Adriatic coast. Now, however, there are at least three reasons to believe that he *may* have been a Croat: first, until 1918, Croats accounted for about 70 percent of the Kotor region's population; second, ethnic Croats are known to have settled across the borders of neighbouring regions or countries (notably Hercegovina, Bosnia, Serbia and Austria); and third, his surname (be it Vicković, Visković or Višković) appears in a number of central Dalmatian localities (e.g. Hvar, Makarska and Tučepi).

The case of William Jacob Marsh, on the other hand, is clear cut. Like many Croatians in the United States, and some in New Zealand, he apparently changed or phonetically adapted his true name (unknown, but possibly something like Vilim Jakob Maršić) to an English equivalent. What really matters, however, is that William, for the purpose of naturalisation in 1876, declared he was born (*c.*1833) in "Ragusa" (i.e. Dubrovnik) and an "Austrian" national – contrary to a later belief that he was "Hungarian by birth".[11] Exactly why William Marsh and Nicolas Viccovich came to New Zealand is unknown, but as both identified themselves as miners they were possibly among the first to seek their fortunes on the Nelson goldfields near Collingwood (where a small gold-rush occurred in 1857) before trying their luck in the 1860s on the goldfields of Otago and Westland, respectively.

A third significant pioneer, Pavel (Paul) Lupis, generally believed to be New Zealand's first Dalmatian settler, is thought to have arrived a year after William Marsh and Nicolas Viccovich. Born at Nakovan on the Pelješac Peninsula, Paul's date of arrival and some other details are open to question. His application for naturalisation, granted in 1903, indicates that he was born *c.*1848 and arrived *c.*1866 at about 18 years of age. On the other hand, his

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[10] See Trlin (1979:34-35).

[11] Don (1936:228).

birth certificate states he was born in 1834 and it has been claimed that he went to sea at age 18, arriving in New Zealand in 1858 at age 24.[12]



William Jacob Marsh
Source: Don (1936)

These discrepancies are troubling but may perhaps be explained by the fact that Paul (like Nicolas Viccovich) was illiterate and relied on someone else to fill in the required details for his naturalisation application. In completing this application, Paul's declared duration of residence in New Zealand may have been calculated not on the basis of his date of arrival but in terms of his actual years of residence, excluding time spent abroad on three long visits to Dalmatia during the 1880s and 1890s. Paul died at Mangawhai (a small Northland settlement located northeast of Kaiwaka) in 1916, and his grave was marked with a special headstone in 2008 to celebrate 150 years of Croatian settlement in New Zealand.

[12] Jelicich (2008:35).

Another 94 pioneer arrivals have been identified for the period 1860-1880 (see Table 1). All but one of these men were identified by name, birthplace and nationality using the *Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand before 1948* and then retrieving their individual naturalisation records from among those held by Archives New Zealand in Wellington. Further information about some of them was obtained from Ilija Šutalo's book *Croatians in Australia*. The tally of 94 additional arrivals, however, needs to be treated with caution as the actual total was probably much higher. Why? Because not all of the early arrivals remained in New Zealand or had a compelling reason to bother with naturalisation, and when those who didn't become naturalised British subjects departed these shores (or died) very few left any records of their arrival and departure dates or traces of their activities while here.

Good examples to illustrate this point are Thomas Pavletich, John Pavletich Michael Bogdan and Vincent Vragnizan. John and Thomas Pavletich were either brothers or cousins, and had previously worked in Australia. Thomas arrived in Dunedin in 1862 where he remained as a successful hotelier until his death in 1877. There is no evidence that he applied for naturalisation (though he may have been naturalised in Australia), but he left ample evidence of his presence and activities (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, John Pavletich pops up and immediately drops out of sight when his partnership with Francisco Violich as co-proprietor of the Commercial Hotel at Little Grey Junction, Westland, was dissolved in March 1872.[13] There is no sign that John applied for naturalisation and no record has yet been found of when he arrived in or departed from New Zealand (perhaps returning to Australia). Much the same can be said about Michael Bogdan; on 25 October 1866 he married Caroline Alison (of Edinburgh, Scotland) in Westland and two months later gave notice that his Stafford Town hotel partnership with "Raimond Pasthick" was dissolved. It appears that Michael remained as the Welcome Hotel owner, funded improvements and an extension to the building but left his wife to manage it while he pursued interests in mining.[14] Again, like John Pavletich, there is no evidence that Michael applied for naturalisation nor any record of either his date of arrival or departure, but he

[13] *Grey River Argus*, 27 March 1872, p.3. For details on the life of Francisco Violich, see Chapter 2.

[14] See: *West Coast Times*, 30 October 1866, p.2 (re marriage); 28 December 1866, p.3 (re dissolved partnership); 12 October 1867, p.4 (re improvements to and enlargement of Welcome Hotel); and 4 October 1867, p.4 (re court case where Bogdan is successful as the plaintiff in a matter of illegal possession of a share in a mining claim).

is known to have arrived in Australia in 1873 where he lived and worked as a gold-miner in New South Wales.[15] The final example here is that of Vincent Vragnizan, a miner on the Thames goldfields during the late 1860s and early 1870s. When he arrived is unknown but in 1869 he obtained a Miners' Right licence to work in the Waikawau area and was a listed shareholder for registration of the Tapu Evening Star Gold Mining Company.[16] The last we hear of Vincent is in a public notice at the beginning of 1873. Placed by his relation Peter Vragnizan (see Chapter 2), the notice states:

> *I hereby caution all persons from negotiating a bill of exchange drawn by me and accepted by Vincent Vragnizan, the same being an accommodation bill without consideration.*[17]

In layman's terms, a written order had been made by Peter and accepted by Vincent for payment of an accommodation account. Vincent may have returned to Dalmatia or moved on to Australia, the United States or elsewhere. While there were probably a number of others like Thomas Pavletich, who stayed but were never naturalised, there were undoubtedly many sojourners like John Pavletich, Michael Bogdan and Vincent Vragnizan about whom little or nothing is known.

It must also be acknowledged here that another (probably very small) group of pioneer arrivals – about whom even less is known – consists of persons wholly or partly of Croatian descent born outside of Croatia who may likewise have had no reason or need to bother with naturalisation. A good example is that of Peter Daves Covich. Born in Malta *c.*1836, of unknown parentage but possibly the son or grandson of a Dalmatian sailor or merchant plying his trade in the Mediterranean, Peter arrived about 1864 and appears to have lived for all or most of the time in or near Christchurch. He traded as a grain merchant under the name of Peter Daves, initially in a partnership and then on his own after the partnership was dissolved in July 1878. Bankrupted in August 1879 but discharged of his debts in April 1881, Peter died of "pulmonary phthisis" (tuberculosis of the lungs) in June 1883, aged

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[15] Šutalo (2004:241). According to Šutalo, Michael Bogdan (a.k.a. Bogden) was born in Dubrovnik.

[16] See: www.KaeLewis.com "Goldminers of New Zealand 1861-1872" (re Miner's Right licence); and *Daily Southern Cross*, 2 November 1869, p.5 (re Tapu Evening Star Gold Mining Company).

[17] *Auckland Star*, 7 January 1873, p.3.

47 years. Leaving an estate valued at less than £210, he was survived by wife Sarah Daves Covich (née Buckett) and four daughters.[18]

Finally, it should be noted that although the *Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand before 1948* is invaluable for migration research it is *not* a complete catalogue of all persons naturalised prior to 1948. Missing from the *Register* are some individuals known to have been naturalised between 1900 and 1948.[19] Common sense therefore suggests that a number of persons naturalised pre-1900, and in particular between 1850 and 1880, may also have been omitted.

Table 1: The Pioneers, 1857-1880

Arrived (est.)*	Name**	Birthplace***	Naturalisation			
			Date	Age	Occupation	Residence
1857	MARSH, William Jacob	Ragusa [Dubrovnik]	1876	43	Miner	Teviot, Otago
	VICCOVICH, Nicolas	Cettinge [Cetinje nr. Boko Kotorska]	1887	53	Miner	Lyell, Westland
1860	**MIKOZ, Giaccomo**	Buccari [Bakar nr. Rijeka]	1899	53	Labourer	Greymouth, Westland
	RADOVE, Nicolo	Oulban [?Albona now Labin, Istra] nr. Trieste	1881	44	Sheep farmer	MacKenzie Country, Canterbury
	VIOLICH, Francisco	Callamotta [Koločep nr. Dubrovnik]	1877	34	Miner	Greymouth, Westland
1861	BEANOVITCH, Mark	Fiume [Rijeka]	1894	54	Settler	Auckland
	CARO, Samuel	Zara [Zadar]	1898	71	Labourer	Port Chalmers, Dunedin
	CUISS, Andrew	Lissa [Otok Vis]	1879	52	Fishmonger	Dunedin
	MARTIN, Giuseppe	Lissa [Otok Vis]	1884	48	Miner	Reefton, Westland
	ZUPPICICH, Antonio	Dalmatia n.o.s.	1898	57	Farmer	Woodend, Canterbury

[18] See: *The Press*, 27 November 1877, p.1, adverts col.5; 23 July 1878, p.1, adverts col.8; 26 August 1879, p.4, adverts col.7; 21 September 1880, p.3; and 12 March 1881, p.1, adverts col.8 (for details of Peter Daves Covich's business activities, partnership dissolution, bankruptcy and discharge of debts). Details of his birthplace, death, estate value, marriage/relationship and family are as recorded in his death certificate (registration number 1883004104) and probate file (Archives New Zealand reference: CH171, CH808/1883).

[19] For example, the author's father (Mate Trlin) who was naturalised in 1937.

Arrived (est.)*	Name**	Birthplace***	Naturalisation			
			Date	Age	Occupation	Residence
1862	BEROZ, Giovanni	Nerezy [Nerežišća, Island of Brač]	1882	54	Miner	Hokitika, Westland
	CARINA, Thomas	Portore [Kraljevica nr Rijeka]	1868	31	Publican	Whitianga, Coromandel
	JURISS, Anthony	Spalato [Split]	1906	73	Sailmaker	Christchurch
	MATHEWSON, Mathew	Comisa [Komiža, Island of Vis]	1902	58	Labourer	Port Chalmers, Dunedin
	PAVLETICH, Thomas	Buccari [Bakar nr. Rijeka]	Not applicable			
	PETRONIO, Peter	Not stated	1884	58	Miner	Maori Gully, Westland
	SARGOGNA, Giuseppe	Fiume [Rijeka]	1874	42	Ferryman	Lyell, Westland
	VITAGLICH, Simeone	Comisa [Komiža, Island of Vis]	1887	50	Labourer	Westport, Westland
	VUCETICH, Giorgio	Lesina [Island of Hvar]	1870	31	Farmer	Ashley district, Canterbury
	VUKOTA, Juan (John)	Ragusa [Dubrovnik]	1882	44	Fishmonger	Lyttelton, Canterbury
1863	COVANCEVICH, Mitchell	Dalmatia n.o.s. [poss. Island of Hvar]	1869	30	Licensed victualler	Hokitika, Westland
	HARACICH, Mark	Lussinpiccolo [Mali Lošinj, Island of Lošinj]	1899	66	Stevedore	Port Chalmers, Dunedin
	KATTA, Francis	Trieste	1900	54	Draper	Stratford, Taranaki
	MOLOSOVICH, Chris.	Cutti [?]	1902	65	Settler	Maori Creek, Westland
	PERIN, Antonio	Berbigno [Brbinj, Dugi Island]	1870	31	Butcher	Greymouth, Westland
	SUPERINA, Francis	Fiume [Rijeka]	1887	44	Goldminer	Dunganville, Westland
	TOMANOVICH, Pietro	Cattaro [Kotor, Boka Kotorska]	1909	74	Miner	Gibbston, Otago
	VRAGNIZAN, Peter	Cittavecchia [Starigrad, Island of Hvar]	1871	31	Storeman	Auckland
1864	DUIMOVICH, Vincent	Trieste	1901	72	Gumdigger	Neavesville, Coromandel
	GARGLIECEVICH, John	Vrisnich [prob. Vrisnik, Island of Hvar]	1908	69	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
	OBUGLIEN, Antonio	Ragusa [Dubrovnik]	1870	31	Settler	Onehunga, Auckland
	POPOVICH, Vincent	Dalmatia n.o.s. [prob. Island of Hvar]	1899	64	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
	SARICH, Antonio	Trieste	1899	60	Miner	Thames, Coromandel
	SENTCH, Nicolas	Fiume [Rijeka]	1902	61	Telegraph linesman	Waipu, Northland
	VINCENT, John	Dalmatia n.o.s.	1869	42	Licensed victualler	Hokitika, Westland

Arrived (est.)*	Name**	Birthplace***	Naturalisation			
			Date	Age	Occupation	Residence
1865	BARETICH, Andrew	Nace Bazio [?]	1896	58	Miner	Callaghans, Westland
	GROSSI, Braggio	Perasto [Perast, Boko Kotorska]	1899	68	Fisherman	Nelson
	ROSE, John	Fiume [Rijeka]	1903	65	Carpenter	Caversham, Dunedin
	SCOPINICH, Romolo	Lucerne [Island of Lošinj]	1894	55	Fisherman	Batley, Northland
1866	**ARNERICH, Paul**	Brazzo [Island of Brač]	1884	48	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
	DARBY, Joseph	Dalmatia n.o.s.	1904	65	Fisherman	Appleby, Nelson
	LUPIS, Paul	Nakarona [Nakovan, Pelješac]	1903	55	Gumdigger	Auckland
	RADOVINICH, Nicholas	Cittavecchia [Starigrad, Island of Hvar]	1890	53	Labourer	Lyttelton, Canterbury
	SIMOTICH, Mariano	Not spec. [prob. Opatija nr. Rijeka]	1882	44	Mariner	Lyttelton, Canterbury
	VOCASSAVICH, Andrew	Not spec. [prob. Kotor, Boko Kotorska]	1886	46	Goldminer	Goldsborough, Westland
1867	BEBAN, Stephanus	Zlarin [Island of Zlarin nr. Šibenik]	1901	69	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
	DIAMANTE, Louis	Buccari [Bakar nr. Rijeka]	1899	53	Miner	Kumara, Westland
	POSCHICH, Raymond	Volosca [Volosko nr. Rijeka]	1899	48	Miner and farmer	Canoe Creek, Westland
1868	LISA, Samuel	Ragusa [Dubrovnik]	1901	65	Fisherman	Riverton, Southland
	SCOPINICH, John	Lussin [Island of Lošinj]	1883	41	Miner	Foxes, Westland
	VISCOVICH, Joseph	Istria [prob. Labin, Istra]	1882	37	Mariner	Port Chalmers, Dunedin
	VUCASOVICH, Tripo	Cotora [Kotor, Boka Kotorska]	1891	44	Goldminer	Kumara, Westland
1869	BLASCH, Carlo	Fiume [Rijeka]	1880	37	Miner	Coromandel
	SMITHELEH, Nicholas	Ragossa [? Ragusa, Dubrovnik]	1899	66	Miner	Greymouth, Westland
	STIGLEY, Frank	Trieste	1882	38	Labourer	Ashburton, Canterbury
	TADICH, Samuel	Lissa [Island of Vis]	1881	35	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
1870	BOGDAN, Anton	Juliana [?]	1910	74	Labourer	Babylon, Northland
	SINGER, Bela	Vukovar	1874	29	Warehouseman	Dunedin
1871	GELLETY, Antony	Funie [? Fiume, Rijeka]	1883	33	Labourer	Lyttelton, Canterbury
	STIGLICH, Antonio	Buccari [Bakar nr. Rijeka]	1904	62	Dealer	Dunedin

Arrived (est.)*	Name**	Birthplace***	Naturalisation			
			Date	Age	Occupation	Residence
1872	TARABOCHIA, Thomas	Lussinpiccolo [Mali Lošinj, Island of Lošinj]	1890	38	Labourer	Wellington
1873	PUPICH, Theodore	Herzegovina n.o.s.	1896	41	Miner	Lyell, Westland
	VOCASOVITCH, Thomas	Cotaro [Kotor, Boka Kotorska]	1905	58	Labourer	Reefton, Westland
1874	ARNERICH, Simon	Brazza [Island of Brač]	1884	33	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
	DEVESCOVI, Antonio	Istria [probably Rovinj, Istra]	1887	37	Goldminer	Dillmanstown, Westland
	PARTEL, Giacomo	Ziano [?Zizano, Island of Žižanj nr. Pašman]	1903	52	Labourer	Rothesay, Dunedin
	TOKAECH, Louis	Trieste	1887	32	Mariner	Napier, Hawkes Bay
1875	BOCOY, Antony	Dalmatia n.o.s.	1887	26	Labourer	Carterton, Wairarapa
	LOUSICH, Louis	Trieste	1900	49	Storekeeper	Kumara, Westland
	RANZI, John	Dalmatia n.o.s.	1887	37	Labourer	Napier, Hawkes Bay
	SMEITH, James	Cherso [Island of Cres]	1899	54	Labourer	Balclutha, Otago
	STANICH, John	Kastua [?] nr. Trieste	1899	45	Miner	Wellington
	ZEATECH, Joseph	Lagosta [Island of Lastovo]	1885	40	Boardinghouse keeper	Eltham, Taranaki
1876	**BACOVICH, Jerome**	Nerezy [Nerežišće, Island of Brač]	1890	34	Labourer	Hunterville, Manawatu
	HARLIWICH, Matthew	Zakotorac, Pelješac	1894	37	Miner	Roxburgh, Otago
	POLLYA, George	Ragusa [Dubrovnik]	1887	39	Seaman	Greymouth, Westland
	RAGOSIN, John	Trieste	1896	60	Sailmaker	Rangiora, Canterbury
	SIMICH, Charles	Dalmatia [? Igrane or Tučepi nr. Makarska]	1894	39	Fisherman	Helensville, Northland
	STANICH, John	Gasburn [?]	1886	30	Goldminer	Foxes, Westland
	VLACH, Antonio	Dalmatia n.o.s.	1889	35	Goldminer	Dillmanstown, Westland
	VIDULICH, John	Lussin [Lošinj]	1890	37	Labourer	Lyttelton, Canterbury
1878	ARNERICH, Paolo G.	Brazza [Island of Brač]	1884	31	Miner	Goldsborough, Westland
	GEORGE, William	Zagreb	1908	52	Miner	Blackball, Westland
	GOSPODNETICH, Frank	Dol [Dol, Island of Brač]	1893	33	Miner	Westport, Westland
	MACALE, Martin	Sebenico [Šibenik]	1925	69	Farmer	Tuturau, Southland
	SEPIO, Antonio	Trieste	1891	38	Miller	Riccarton, Canterbury

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU - FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET

Arrived (est.)*	Name**	Birthplace***	Naturalisation			
			Date	Age	Occupation	Residence
	VELLA, Mariano	Macarsca [Makarska nr. Split]	1896	41	Sheepfarmer	Mana Island, Wellington
1879	BEROZ, John	Nezzi [?Knezze? poss. Kneže, Is. of Korčula]	1908	46	Miner	Hokitika, Westland
	FELICE, Duze	Lussinpiccolo [Mali Lošinj, Island of Lošinj]	1899	65	Mariner	Coromandel
	GASPARICH, Antonio	Parenzo [Poreč, Istra]	1887	29	Boatman	Dargaville, Northland
	LUPIS, Florius	Pelješac	1912	44	Fisherman	Whitianga, Coromandel
	LUSSICH, Nicholas	St. Juan [?]	1893	36	Storeman	Auckland
	MOHOVICH, Antonio	Moschenze [? Mošćenice, Istra]	1884	27	Labourer	Akaroa, Canterbury
	POBER, Joani	Fiume [Rijeka]	1908	68	Sailor	Mitchelltown, Wellington
	THIAN, Frank	Buccari [Bakar nr. Rijeka]	1890	32	Fisherman	Taumutu, Canterbury
1880	BONASICH, John	Ragusa [Dubrovnik]	1899	50	Labourer	Wellington
	STRETZ, John	Trappan [?]	1890	42	Fisherman	Taumutu, Canterbury

* The date of arrival is based upon the length of residence in New Zealand as declared in an individual's naturalisation file. Since such declarations are reliant on memory, and were often made many years after the event, they may be subject to some error and rounding off (e.g. 15½ years becoming either 15 or 16 years). The date of arrival, therefore, must be regarded as an estimate. In some cases the estimate has been corroborated by additional information included in the migrant's naturalisation file or other sources (e.g. newspaper reports, records held by descendants).

** Many of these pioneers probably had (at best) a rudimentary command of English, and some were illiterate, unable to sign their own name but made a mark witnessed by an approved person. There is therefore an obvious need for caution with regard to the correct spelling of surnames and the accurate recording of other details by persons unknown. Where possible and appropriate the spelling of a surname has been amended here to conform to the spelling commonly used in New Zealand by the person concerned (Sentsch = Sentch; Tarabachea = Tarabochia; Harlevitch = Harliwich; Simmich = Simich; and Bonashic = Bonasich). The twelve pioneers whose names are highlighted in bold type (e.g. **MIKOZ, Giaccomo**) are featured with biographic profiles in Chapter 2.

*** The strong Italian influence upon Dalmatia and Istria is reflected in the use of Italian place names by almost all of these pioneers. Where possible the modern Croatian place name has been included in parentheses.

Source: Naturalisation files held at Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington.

Names

With the above in mind, attention can now be turned to the pioneers listed in Table 1. Some of these men from central Dalmatia are well known for their role as founders of Croatian settlement in New Zealand (e.g. Paul Lupis, Paul Arnerich and Mariano Vella). Others, because of where they settled and the effects of assimilation, are probably known only by their descendants (e.g. Francisco Violich, Stephanus Beban, Antonio Zuppicich, Thomas Pavletich, Giorgio Vucetich, Raymond Poschich and Frank Thian). Sadly, there are also some who will be unknown, having left New Zealand only a decade or so after their arrival (e.g. Andrew Cuiss, Peter Vragnizan and Bela Singer), or forgotten because they died without children to carry their family name over successive generations (e.g. Nicolo Radove, Mark Beanovitch, John Garglieceviсh, Andrew Baretich, Mariano Simotich and Jerome Bacovich).

Whether known or not, questions invariably arise about the spelling of their surnames, the use of Italianate first names and the Anglicisation of both first names and surnames. The spelling or misspelling of surnames can be explained in part by a rudimentary command of English among the pioneers, even after a decade or more of residence in New Zealand, and the fact that at least a quarter of the pre-1870 arrivals and about a fifth of those who arrived during the 1870s were illiterate. Often unable to sign their name on naturalisation documents (e.g. Mark Beanovitch, Giovanni Beroz, Anthony Juriss, Nicolo Radove, Nicholas Smitheleh and Antony Bocoy), they made a mark witnessed by an approved person. A need for caution is therefore obvious with regard to the spelling used by an unrelated person seeking to capture a pioneer's pronunciation of their surname and other personal details.

Suspicions concerning the possible Italian (rather than Croatian) ethnicity of men with first names such as Braggio, Giacomo, Giorgio, Giovanni and Giuseppe are understandable but unwarranted. Such names reflect the cultural impact of a history of foreign control over Istria and most of Dalmatia by the Republic of Venice (1420-1797), and the administrative role played by an Italian ethnic minority during a century of Austrian rule (1813-1918). Indeed, Italian was the official language until 1909 when Croatian finally attained an equal status. As a result, the peasant dialects of Istria and Dalmatia were a rich mixture of both Croatian and Italian. Little wonder, therefore, that: in Dunedin, Thomas Pavletich was often called upon to act as a court interpreter or translator for cases involving either Italians or "Austrians"; and that in Auckland, Peter Vragnizan once acted as an interpreter and guide for Italian naval officers visiting the Thames goldfields

(see Chapter 2). Nor is it surprising to find Nicolo Radove's neighbour, a South Canterbury sheep station owner with a good ear for language, noting in his diaries that Nicolo's friends were Italian speakers.[20] Such an observation could help to explain a persistent but mistaken belief that Nicolo was a Sicilian.

The Anglicisation of names was probably inevitable for pioneers who were illiterate, but was otherwise a matter of convenient simplification for daily use. Hence first names such as Andrija, Ante, Franjo, Josip, Mate and Tomislav could be transformed into Andrew, Anthony, Francis or Frank, Joseph, Mathew and Thomas, respectively. More far-reaching was the removal from surnames of diacritical marks for the consonants *ć*, *č* and *š*[21] – with or without the addition of an *h* – to broadly conform to English spelling and pronunciation. Coupled with other adjustments and variations in spelling we find, for example, that: Arnerić becomes Arnerich; Bonašić, becomes Bonashic or Bonasich; Štiglić becomes Stiglich; and Vukasović becomes Vocassavich, Vucasovich or Vocasovitch. Finally, in its extreme forms Anglicisation could entail: the adoption of a new surname, possibly to conceal a person's identity (e.g. Joseph Darby); the possible shortening of a Croatian name to a more familiar English form (e.g. John Rose); construction of a phonetic English equivalent (e.g. William Jacob Marsh); and the literal translation of a Croatian name into English (e.g. Mathew Mathewson, which could have been Mate Matović).

Whatever the variations in spelling or other changes to names appearing in Table 1, it is important to remember that such variations and changes were not limited to New Zealand's Croatian pioneers. Similar features can be observed among pioneers in Australia, and have been discussed with regard to Croatians and other South Slavs in the United States of America.[22]

Origins

Another legacy of centuries of Venetian control, and the role of Italian administrators during the 1800s, was the use of Italian place-names

[20] Pinney (1971:168).

[21] The consonant *ć* (popularly called *soft ć*) in English pronunciation is between *ch* of *chalk* and *tu* of *tune*; *č* (popularly called *hard č*) in English is equivalent to *ch* as in *church*; and *š* is equivalent in English to *sh* as in *shed.*

[22] For Australia, see Šutalo (2004:239-259) and for the United States, see Govorchin (1961:195-197) and Prpic (1971:227-230).

throughout Istria in the north and southwards along the Adriatic coast. Fortunately, directories matching previous Italian and current Croatian place-names[23] facilitated the identification of birthplaces specified by 79 of the 97 known pioneers in their applications for naturalisation. Of the rest, nine were either too general (i.e. "Dalmatia") or failed to state their birthplace, and nine birthplaces could not be traced – possibly as a result of errors arising from a misplaced reliance upon others to assist with the completion of official documents.

As shown in Table 1, the birthplaces identified included towns, villages and islands along the Adriatic coast from Trieste in the north to Kotor in the south. Within this region, however, nine points of origin in three clusters accounted for 58 (73.4 percent) of the 79 pioneers with identified birthplaces. The three clusters comprised: (a) the ports of Trieste, Rijeka, Bakar and Lošinj Island in the north; (b) the islands of Vis, Brač and Hvar, plus the Pelješac Peninsula in central Dalmatia; and (c) the ports of Dubrovnik and Kotor in the south. Similar to the origins of Croatian pioneers in Australia,[24] this geographic pattern attests to the lead role of seaports and a seafaring tradition that attracted thousands of young, adventurous Croatians from successive generations to participate in Europe's voyages of discovery and commerce from the fifteenth century onwards. It is also a pattern that distinguishes the Croatian pioneer phase of migration from that of mass emigration to North and South America, southern Africa and Australasia. Beginning during the 1880s, the period of mass emigration drew heavily upon the hinterlands of Rijeka (Fiume) and Zagreb in the north, and included thousands of migrants from villages on the narrow coastal strip between Split and the Pelješac Peninsula in central Dalmatia as well as the neighbouring inland districts of Vrgorac and Imotska. The role of pioneers in shaping the subsequent flow of migrants and their settlement will be discussed later in this chapter.

Employment

"Gold! Gold! Gold!" The cry that drew thousands of men from all corners of the world to California (1848-1855) and Victoria, Australia (1850s), also drew thousands of fortune hunters to New Zealand. The majority of the

[23] The three directories employed for this task were:

- Eterovich and Spalatin (1964:369-374, Appendix C)
- http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/List of Italian place names in Dalmatia; and
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List of Italian place names in Istria.

[24] See Šulato (2004:18-19).

Croatian pioneers were among those responding to gold discoveries in Otago, Westland and on the Coromandel Peninsula, thereby playing a role in the rapid growth of settlement in these areas during the 1860s and 1870s. At least ten of these pioneers came with the benefit of experience on the Victorian goldfields.[25] Others, of course, came: to provide a service for miners as publicans; to satisfy a deep-seated desire for land as farmers; for work as contractors or labourers in timber milling, road building etc.; to take up various jobs in small settlements and especially the ports that were beginning to expand; and in some cases to pursue a traditional occupation as a fisherman, sail maker or mariner. But it was mining, initially for gold and later coal (by some die-hards), that was the occupation of choice for perhaps as many as two-thirds of the pioneers at some stage during their working lives in New Zealand.

Gold-miners

As usual, only a few of these fortune hunters were favoured by Lady Luck. Among the rest: some sooner or later gave up without any reward for their efforts; a few made just enough to get into some other enterprise (e.g. as a farmer or publican) that became a fallback position or got out of mining completely; and the remainder committed themselves to years of unremitting labour with varying degrees of success. It is worth noting here that 33 of the 97 known Croatian pioneers were still employed as miners when naturalised, in 20 cases over 19 years after their date of arrival (see Table 1).

Two of those blessed by Lady Luck, at least initially, were Antonio Obuglien from Dubrovnik and Carlo Blasch from Rijeka who arrived in New Zealand *c.*1864 and *c.*1869, respectively. Both worked on the Coromandel Peninsula. Before he went to the Thames goldfield, Antonio Obuglien is believed to have been employed in the market garden of an old Irish woman in a settlement near Auckland but was dismissed when he dared to show an interest in his employer's daughter Mary – a lass deemed to be above his station in life. Turning to gold-mining he invested in a one-sixth share in the Manakau mine, a small piece of ground not quite one acre in extent, situated near some of the richest mines in the Thames area. Reports differ as to how

[25] Using the work of Šutalo (2004), those known to have previously been miners in Australia, with an estimated/known date of arrival in New Zealand are: Mark Beanovitch (1861), Thomas Pavletich (1862), Mitchell Covancevich (1863), Pietro Tomanovich (1863), Vincent Popovich (1864), Nicolas Sentsch (a.k.a Nicholas Sentch) (1864), John Vincent (1864), Paul Arnerich (1866), Stephanus Beban (1867) and Raymond Poschich (1867).

much Antonio made but it appears that after a year or so he and a fellow shareholder sold their combined one-third share in the mine for £8,000 each. Needless to say, his former employer now had good reason to see Antonio in a different light and he married his sweetheart.[26]

Using his new found wealth, in 1871 Antonio bought a vessel, the *Royal Alfred*, employed in the Thames trade with Auckland, and in the same year was the naïve, unsuspecting victim of a confidence trickster who absconded with £750.[27] In the late 1870s and early 1880s he often figured in press reports for yields from the Old Gold Calf, Queen of Beauty and Caledonian mines. But Lady Luck proved to be fickle, deserting him later in life. When some children found him in 1898 lying in Bella Street, Thames, bleeding at the mouth, dying from a burst blood vessel, Antonio Obuglien was 61 years old, known to be suffering from "miner's complaint" (a respiratory problem), and reduced to employment as a watchman for the Thames-Hauraki Company at its new works on the Queen of Beauty mining site. Twenty years earlier the same mine had contributed to his prosperity, and yet friends and supporters now had to call a meeting to consider the best means to raise funds for the assistance of his widow and remaining dependant children.[28]

Carlo Blasch's stroke of luck was less spectacular but no less significant as a source of capital for later ventures. Examining a large tree that had been blown down in a storm, he is believed to have found gold specimens worth £1,400 embedded in its roots.[29] Being a prudent man, Carlo also made his own luck with insurance against misfortune and avoided any substantial loss

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[26] Antonio Obuglien's story is based on two reports: "The Thames Goldfield. Reminiscences of the Past. (From an old Mining Reporter's Note Book)", *Thames Star*, 17 December 1892, p.1; and "The Story of a Thames Mine", *Otago Witness*, 5 September 1874, p.6 (reprinted from the *Thames Advertiser*). As for how much he made with his lucky strike, the 1874 report states that "Messers. Cassin and Obuglien sold their [one-] third share [in the Manakau mine] for the sum of £16,000 to the old Thames Investment Company..", whereas the 1892 report states "£20,000 did he dig up…in the course of a year…"

[27] See: *Auckland Star*, 25 April 1871, p.2 (re purchase of vessel); and *Daily Southern Cross*, 16 September 1871, p.3 (re loss of £750). It seems that Antonio Obuglien was too open-handed and trusting with his new found wealth, for in 1875 he found himself having to go to court to recover (successfully) an interest free loan of £40 – see *Thames Star*, 16 April 1875, p.2.

[28] *Thames Star*, 24 January 1898, p.2 (re his death etc.), and 28 January 1898, p.2 (re assistance for his widow and children).

[29] Cited by Rhodes (1937:21) who gives no date for when the incident occurred.

in May 1886 when his boardinghouse in Grafton Road, Auckland, was destroyed by fire. The building and furniture were insured for £650.[30] Ten years later his prosperity, enterprise and continuing prudence were marked by newspaper advertisements for applications to register three businesses as non-liability companies: The Star of Tokatea Gold Mining Company (in which he had 4,168 shares of 2 shillings each, totalling £416 8s); The Waihi Welcome Gold Mining Company (with 1,000 shares of 1s each, £50); and The Trilby Gold Mining Company (9,930 shares of 1s each, £496 5s).[31]

Unlike Antonio and Carlo, all but a handful of the other miners worked hard from the outset and – aside from fleeting instances of good luck and prosperity – had little to show for three or more decades of labour. In Westland, for example, the probate files of John Scopinich, Giovanni (a.k.a. John) Beroz, and Paul Arnerich reveal that their estates and effects were valued at less than £60, £90 and £104, respectively. John Garglieceviche and Raymond Poschich were a bit more successful. Having mined in and around Goldsborough from his arrival until his death in 1916, John left an estate of less than £600, while Raymond, working near Barrytown until he died in 1912, left an estate of under £220.[32]

A similar difference was found between the estates of Peter Tomanovich and Martin Macale in Otago. Peter had mined in Australia before coming to Otago and by the late 1860s had taken up residence in Gibbston where he built a small house on a one-acre section, planted an orchard, kept bee hives, and carried on mining until late in his life. It was once rumoured he hid a cache of gold under a dead cow near his property, but when Peter died an inventory of his belongings revealed a 'fortune' consisting of little other than a tobacco tin "containing 70 gold sovereigns".[33] As for Martin Macale, it appears that he became one of the more successful miners because he had the good sense to get out while the going was good and turned his attention to farming.

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[30] *Star*, 22 May 1886, p.3.

[31] See: *Observer*, 23 May 1896, p.9; 20 June 1896, p.7; and 1 August 1896, p.16.

[32] The probate files for Giovanni Beroz (CAIF/20702/CH300/48/HK393/1890), Paul Arnerich (AAOM/6029/120/6679), John Scopinich (CAIF/20702/CH300/56/HK2180/1908), John Garglieceviche (CAIF/20702/ CH300/60/HK255/1919) and Raymond Poschich (AAOM/6029/261/16107) are held by Archives New Zealand, Wellington. Photocopies have been lodged with the Dalmatian Historical and Genealogical Society, Auckland.

[33] Cook (1985:31-32).

Born in Šibenik (1855), and a late pioneer arrival (1878), Martin Macale had previously worked as a sailor and is thought to have briefly lived in the United States of America. Before mining he is believed to have been engaged in various types of employment, including a contract for the construction of a water race, railway line construction in central Otago, and on steamships at Lake Wakitipu.[34] His success as a miner was rooted in an unrelenting commitment to the tasks in hand. In 1884, for example, he and a partner were praised for their diligence in developing the Golden Shoe, one of five claims pegged out at the head of Sandhill Creek near Macetown in Otago.

> *They are both miners of the most practical and persevering type, and they deserve to reap the richest reward for the manner in which they have stuck to their undertaking... for the work they are doing unassisted would not be thought any discredit to a company of capitalists with a nominal capital of ten or twenty thousand pounds...but in this case two men – poor working miners – without assistance, set to work to spend their all on a venture. Alas! that such men are so scarce.*[35]

Over a decade later, Martin's hard work and perseverance was noted again for another venture in Otago.

> *An arduous piece of work has been brought to a successful issue... Mr Macale, after about a twelve-months' work, has got in the waters for sluicing purposes, and the operation of gold-getting will shortly begin.*[36]

And even while he was operating the Gibbston Saddle pit during the 1890s, to obtain coal of irregular quality using a method of opencast strip extraction "without much system", a government report still conceded that he was "working hard".[37]

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[34] Welford (2000:3-5).

[35] *Otago Witness*, 2 February 1884, p.16.

[36] *Otago Daily Times*, 31 October 1896, p.6.

[37] Cook (1985:47).



Martin Macale on the farm at Tuturau in the 1920s

It was when his Saddle pit lease was passed to the Gibbston Coal Pits Co. in 1901 that Martin turned to farming, a sensible career change no doubt influenced by his marriage in 1884 to Scots-born 19 year-old Janet Gray, and the rapid growth of their family. Ten children were born between 1885 and 1906. Drawing on savings from 20 years of work, mainly in mining, he bought a property (2,563 acres of tussock grazing land) in the Hokonui district near Lumsden in 1901. Martin sold this farm in 1907 and in the following year bought three adjoining sections (totalling 1,014 acres) in an area known as the Black Swamp[38] near Balfour township where the family remained for about 14 years. After the sale of this property, he took on a farm at Tuturau in 1923 which he worked until retirement in 1929.[39] Martin's overall success as a miner and farmer was marked after his death (1938) by the grant of probate for an estate valued at £7,921, plus (as listed in his will) sums owed to him for advances amounting to £3,315 made to six

[38] See: *Tuapeka Times*, 11 September 1907, p.3 (re sale of freehold property near Lumsden); and *Otago Witness*, 13 May 1908, p.26 (re purchase of properties on the Black Swamp). See also Welford (2000:4-5 and 25-27).

[39] Welford (2000:31).

of his children "for special purposes". It was a substantial estate for the time, especially as he is believed to have lost money from a mortgage left on the Tuturau property during the depression years of the early 1930s.[40]

Whatever the outcome of their endeavours, at one time or another the miners all faced various problems, including: the frustrations of prospecting and hardships in their living and working conditions; compliance with regulations implemented to maintain law and order; legal clashes with other miners or landholders; debts arising from unsuccessful prospecting or expensive site development work (e.g. for dams and head races to obtain water for sluicing); and the ever present hazard of accidental injury in the course of tree-felling, building, tunnelling and working with explosives. Some of these matters were well illustrated by Giovanni (a.k.a. John) Beroz from Nerežišća on the Island of Brač. In May 1871 he took leave of his wife and position as proprietor of Hokitika's Swiss Hotel to lead a party up the Hokitika River with provisions for three months, intending to thoroughly prospect the area along the river. Unfortunately, floods prevented progress beyond the gorge about 25 miles (40km) from the township and impeded tests of the river bed, while examinations of a terrace and other sites (one on each side of the gorge) yielded no worthwhile traces of gold. At one stage, unable to light a fire with wet matches, they were forced to live on unleavened bread for almost a week. Disheartened by the cold, wet weather (and no doubt the privations of shelter under sheets of canvas or in tents) the party returned to Hokitika after six weeks, believing they could do better by starting earlier in the season.[41]

Giovanni and his party did do better the following year (February to May), prospecting behind Woodstock in the Kanieri district. They drove a tunnel into a terrace, struck "a lead" (source) and for some time carefully disposed of their gold without disclosing its origin or lodging a claim. Officially, their reason for secrecy and a delayed claim was a desire to "test the lead thoroughly before occasioning what might have proved a delusive rush". Unofficially, they were probably protecting themselves against interlopers – and an inevitable gold-rush – until they were sure of the claim they would apply for. Events justified their caution. When Giovanni applied successfully for a prospecting claim at the end of May 1872, a rush immediately set in. Overnight a mile (1.6km) of ground was taken up as claims were pegged out

[40] Martin Macale, probate file (DAFG/9068/101/514), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Dunedin. For loss of mortgage, see Welford (2000:31).

[41] *Otago Witness*, 24 June 1871, p.16. Note that his name here is spelt as "Berez", not Beroz.

in the dark, fuelled by a belief that there was "ground enough along the lead for two thousand men".[42]

With their claim approved, another hurdle for Beroz and party was to secure an adequate and effective water supply for sluicing, perhaps the most important and troublesome matter among miners in Westland and Otago. Their application for a head race registration was opposed and the case, Beroz and party v. J. Higgin, was heard in the Warden's Court at Kanieri in June 1872. In essence, Higgin argued that the water source was situated on the Maori Reserve. However, having admitted in another case that a dam he opposed in the same locality was not on the Maori Reserve, the Warden decided there were insufficient grounds for refusal of the application by Beroz et al. Their head race registration was therefore granted.[43] Similar cases regarding water supply and/or damage to races and sluicing operations caused by tailings and sludge from adjoining claims have been identified for a number of others, including Paul Arnerich, Andrew Baretich, Vincent Popovich, Raymond Poschich and Tripo Vucasovich.[44]

Three problems that Beroz and party seemed to avoid were those of theft, tampering with pegs marking their claim and accidental injury or death. Paolo Giovanni Arnerich, who joined relations Paul and Simon Arnerich in Goldsborough in 1878, was less fortunate. In January 1891, a local resident returning home late at night heard a noise in a tailrace on Paolo's claim at Tunnel Terrace. Waiting until dawn he saw, attacked and chased off two Chinese men busy washing black sand in their dishes.[45] No arrest was made and the amount of any gold stolen was unknown. More serious was an incident in the same area during May 1895. Appearing on remand before the Magistrate, Paolo initially faced a charge of threatening to shoot Timothy O'Brien, a charge the police replaced with a lesser one of assault. According to the evidence, O'Brien and his companion Michael Reddy were sitting

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[42] *West Coast Times*, 31 May 1872, p.2. Part of this newspaper report also appears in the *Grey River Argus*, 1 June 1872, p.2.

[43] *West Coast Times*, 26 June 1872, p.2.

[44] See: *West Coast Times*, 1 October 1875, p.2, 15 April 1876, p.2 and 29 April 1876, p.2 (re Paul Arnerich); *West Coast Times*, 15 January 1872, p.3 (re Andrew Baretich); *West Coast Times*, 9 April 1875, p.2 (re Vincent Popovich); *Grey River Argus*, 22 November 1879, p.2, 10 December 1879, p.2 and 21 December 1880, p.2 (re Raymond Poschich); and *West Coast Times*, 29 April 1876, p.2 (re Tripo Vucasovich).

[45] *West Coast Times*, 19 January 1891, p.2.

talking together at Tunnel Terrace when Paolo appeared with a double-barreled gun in hand. Reddy, indicating a bird in a dead tree, said it was a good shot but Paolo, not seeming to hear him, stated that the ground was already pegged out – apparently referring to a previous quarrel with O'Brien about pegs. O'Brien jumped up in response, used "forcible expressions" and moved forward in a threatening manner. Paolo raised his gun and threatened to shoot O'Brien if he advanced any further but had sense enough to heed Reddy's cry for restraint, lowered his gun and walked away. The case was dismissed.[46] Not all such quarrels between men determined to assert and/or defend their interests on the goldfields ended so well.

The third problem, accidental injury or death, would have lurked in the minds of all but the least experienced miners and contractors, especially in areas without emergency medical assistance. Common causes of injury, maiming or death included slides of scree or boulders, falls down open shafts or from narrow tracks, the collapse of earth or rocks loosened by digging, and drowning in rivers, water races or ponds behind dams.[47] For Croatians in Westland, two cases provided graphic reminders of the risks involved.

Details about the first case are sparse, but it involved a miner identified at different times as "Mattolick", "George Martolitch" and "Martolich" who was in fact Giorgio Matulich. Giorgio arrived in 1878 on the ship *Duke of Argyll* along with a group of four others that included Francisco (a.k.a. Frank) Gospodnetich and Paolo Giovanni Arnerich – all from the village of Dol on Brač. In January 1879, Giorgio was admitted to hospital suffering from "severe spinal injuries, caused by a fall of earth" in a claim he was working on at the Big Dam near Waimea. A newcomer to Westland, his lack of experience may have been a contributing factor. Initially he was reported to be "improving slowly" but it was noted that the case would be "a tedious one, his lower extremities being paralysed".[48] As it turned out, Giorgio was disabled for life and remained a patient at Westland Hospital, Hokitika, for three years until a public call for charitable subscriptions enabled his return to Dalmatia. Paul Arnerich, a member of the Hospital Committee, played a significant role in his repatriation.[49]

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[46] *West Coast Times*, 31 May 1895, p.2.

[47] For further details and discussion, see Eldred-Grigg (2008:313-314).

[48] *West Coast Times*, 31 January 1879, p.2 (re injury to "Mattolick").

[49] See: *West Coast Times*, 22 December 1881, p.3 (public notice "To the charitable") and 24 December 1881, p.2 (re public appeal for "George Martolitch, a native of Dalmatia"); 25

For the second case, much more information is available on the accident, the identities of those involved, their injuries and the subsequent life of one victim in particular. One morning in May 1884, brothers Louis and John Lousich, John Stanich and Carl Carlssen were working on their claim at Hayes Terrace (known as the "Austrians") near Kumara. Louis Lousich and John Stanich were preparing to blast a large stone with dynamite, but while they were putting in the cartridges and driving them home the charge exploded. Both men were severely injured. John Stanich was blinded in his right eye, had his face, neck and chest perforated by small bits of debris, and the soft parts of his right fore-arm were badly torn. Louis Lousich's injuries were more serious: he lost his right eye and could only tell light from darkness with the other; his nose was almost irreparably smashed and torn; the soft parts of his left fore-arm were badly torn; and the right fore-arm, left hanging by a sinew from below the elbow, had to be amputated.[50] With treatment provided at the Kumara Hospital, John Stanich made a steady recovery and was transferred into the convalescent ward in June. Progress was slower for Louis as he suffered:

> *... from delirium tremens, caused no doubt partly ... [by] the accident, but, in the doctor's opinion, accelerated through the excitement caused by swarms of visitors, who take no denial and slip in as opportunity occurs.*[51]

Later that year, Louis Lousich and his wife consulted leading specialists in Melbourne who were unanimous in concluding that nothing could be done to restore his sight.[52]

April 1882, p.2 and 22 May 1882, p.2 (re injury and repatriation of "Martolich"). For further details see the biography for Paul Arnerich (Chapter 2). Another incident, reported in the *Thames Star* (12 September 1899, p.2), concerned "a man named Sarich" who suffered injuries "to the lower parts of his body" while working in a mine at Karangahake south of Paeroa. It is unknown if this was Antonio Sarich or his eldest son.

[50] *Grey River Argus*, 28 May 1884, p.4 and 29 May 1884, p.2.

[51] *Grey River Argus*, 4 June 1884, p.2.

[52] *Grey River Argus*, 10 October 1884, p.2. Given this 'verdict' from experts in Melbourne, Louis and his wife were reported to be intending to go to Sydney to see if anything could be done for him there.



Louis Lousich with two sons (Rudolf and Jack) and his barrel organ
Source: **Seffano Webb Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington**

Born in Trieste, Louis arrived in New Zealand *c.*1875 and married Sarah Chisnall in 1883. Their first child, born in 1884, added weight to a key question. How could a blind, one-armed man support a wife *and* child? Aside from a limited ongoing interest in the Hayes Terrace claim, the initial solution was a store that Sarah managed with whatever help Louis could give. However, the demands placed on her by a growing family (four more children born 1885-1889) probably forced them to sell the store to Louis's brother in November 1888, less than three years before tragedy again struck

the family with Sarah's death in 1891.[53] Louis, turning to a venture reliant on public sympathy and charity, now demonstrated qualities of commitment and selfless determination to provide for his family. Often accompanied by one or two of his children at public events in Kumara and other nearby townships, he solicited donations with a barrel organ displaying a notice explaining his injuries and domestic circumstances.

Around the turn of the century he moved further afield, visiting Nelson (1897), Wellington (1899), Auckland (1901), Dunedin (1902), Christchurch and New Plymouth (both in 1903) in what had become a well organised business. A newspaper advertisement or small notice would announce his arrival in a particular area, local contacts would exhibit his photograph(s), vouch for his character, collect donations of clothing etc., and sometimes another advertisement would appear thanking members of the community for their kind treatment during his stay.[54] Naturalised in 1900, when he was again a storekeeper in Kumara, Louis Lousich died in 1912 aged 63.

Publicans

About one in ten of the pioneers listed in Table 1 (and a few sojourners) tried their hand in the hotel business. At least three of them – Thomas Carina, Thomas Pavletich and Jerome Bacovich – remained in the industry and proved to be more successful than the others (see Chapter 2). Of the rest,

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[53] See: *West Coast Times*, 18 June 1886, p.2 and 8 October 1887, p.2 (for reports concerning Louis Lousich and party re applications for renewal of water-race in 1886 and for a dam in 1887 at their Hayes Terrace claim); and *West Coast Times*, 1 December 1888, p.2 (re sale of store to J. Lousich). It may also be noted here that a concert and ball held at Kumara a few months after the accident "for the benefit of Mr Louis Lousich…[raised] about £40" (*West Coast Times*, 28 August 1884, p.2).

[54] For visits to various centres, see: *The Colonist*, 28 June 1897, p.2 (Nelson); *Evening Post*, 5 July 1899, p.6 (Wellington); *New Zealand Herald*, 16 August 1901, p.1 (Auckland); *Otago Witness*, 24 December 1902, p.29 (Dunedin); *Star*, 30 July 1903, p.3 (Christchurch); and *Taranaki Herald*, 9 December 1903, p.4 (New Plymouth). Each introductory notice was strikingly similar, suggesting a prepared statement that was used time and time again. Suspicions regarding the veracity of Louis' account of his misfortune appear to have led, in the case of a visit to Christchurch, to the inclusion of an additional concluding sentence that stated:

> *The same authority adds that inquiry of the Premier resulted in a verification of every detail of what has been stated above, and Mr Seddon states that Mr Lousich is in every way deserving of public generosity as well as sympathy* (*Star*, 30 July 1903, p.3).

For an example of his note of thanks upon leaving an area, see: *Evening Post*, 16 October 1899, p.1.

typically engaged in the business for three to five years, some (e.g. Giovanni Beroz, Francisco Violich, Tripo Vucasovich) combined their role of publican with work as a miner or contractor, leaving the hotel to be managed from time to time by their wife or a business partner. Although hotels could be very profitable – especially in ports and mining areas with rapidly growing populations dominated by young men seeking liquor, prostitutes and short-term accommodation – success could not be guaranteed. For example, the hotelkeeper careers of John Scopinich (at Fox's near Waimea, 1870-72) and Tripo Vucasovich (as owner of O'Donoghue's Hotel, Waimea, 1873-75) both ended in bankruptcy, with Tripo losing not just a fully furnished hotel but also his share in a mining claim.[55]

Hotels, like other businesses, were not without problems, all of which could quickly erode profits. These problems included bad debts when guests or lodgers failed to pay their accounts, staffing difficulties, potential clients deterred by the nature of particular "guests" whose presence tarnished a hotel's reputation, and the hurdles presented by various licensing and other local authority requirements. Faced with such difficulties, Mitchell Covancevich could be forgiven if he had doubts about the wisdom of being the proprietor of the Swiss Hotel, one of 200 hotels along Revell Street in Hokitika in the 1860s that catered, along with billiard and dancing saloons, to the needs of a fluctuating population of diggers.[56] During May 1868 he called the police and charged an employee (Catherine Beban, the wife of his fellow countryman Stephanus Beban) with the theft of wearing apparel and sheets identified as hotel property. The charge was dismissed after the hearing of evidence.[57] In January 1870 another dispute arose with an employee over the discovery and contents of a purse found under a mattress in a recently occupied room. The police were again involved and each party used a newspaper advertisement to acquaint the public with their position in the dispute.[58]

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[55] For bankruptcy notices concerning these two publicans, see: *West Coast Times*, 28 July 1871, p.1 (re John Scopinich); and *West Coast Times*, 24 February 1875, p.1 and 10 March 1875, p.3 (re Tripo Vucasovich and his assigned estate).

[56] Waratah (1998:21), who provides a useful account of Westland's early settlement and personalities.

[57] *West Coast Times*, 22 May 1868, p.4 (re case against Catherine Beban).

[58] *West Coast Times*, 11 January 1870, p.1 (re letters to the editor from Mitchell Covancevich and his former employee Bridget McCormick).

These two staffing difficulties, however, were trivial in comparison with the potential impact when the licensing authority objected in December 1869 to an annual licence renewal application on the grounds that:

> *... the premises [the Swiss Hotel] were dilapidated...the house was frequented by women of ill-fame, who were allowed to stop, and [that] more than one robbery had been committed in the house.*[59]

With 14 days to renew his application, Mitchell's lawyer organised a memorial signed by neighbours and several merchants. The memorial was presented to the next meeting of the authority when witnesses were cross-examined about a robbery, the presence of prostitutes, Mitchell's character and business conduct. With regard to a particular woman "on whom some imputation had been cast", Mitchell's lawyer stated that:

> *... his client would admit that the woman had been in the house. She was the wife of a countryman, who had sent her to the Swiss Hotel to stay, and had also sent money to keep her. The applicant, on hearing that she was of loose habits, had given her the money and turned her out.*[60]

The outcome was that a licence was granted on condition that the applicant conducted his hotel properly, kept it clean and if he failed to meet these requirements his licence would be cancelled. It seems, however, that Mitchell Covancevich had had enough. Scarcely a month later, at the end of January 1870, ownership of the Swiss Hotel passed to gold-miner Giovanni Beroz (a.k.a. Berez) who in turn sold the business in December 1873.[61]

It must be emphasised here that the example of Mitchell Covancevich and the Swiss Hotel was not unique. Another Croatian pioneer, John Vincent at the Terminus Hotel, was refused a licence at the same meeting and on the same grounds as Covancevich but failed to appear with a renewed application. Similarly, when Francisco Violich applied for a hotel at Wallsend near Brunner in 1877, the Licensing Court deplored the disreputable condition of the area's hotels and stressed the need to conduct business in a respectable manner. Why? Prostitution was not illegal, but owning or keeping a brothel was prohibited under many city and provincial

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[59] *West Coast Times*, 8 December 1869, p. 2.

[60] *West Coast Times*, 25 December 1869, p.4.

[61] See: *West Coast Times*, 24 January 1870, p.3 and 18 December 1873, p.3 (re purchase and sale of Swiss Hotel by Giovanni Beroz).

by-laws. In the face of a keen demand, however, bars were often run as fronts for brothels by hotelkeepers aware that they could make as much (if not more) money from the sale of sex as from alcohol.[62]

Finally, among the other difficulties encountered by publicans, problems with guests failing to pay their dues are known to have been dealt with by Francisco Violich and Thomas Pavletich, the latter also incurring local body charges in Dunedin for failing to keep his premises free of rubbish. In later years, Jerome Bacovich and his wife were in court for dismissing a staff member because he had joined a union, and for breaching regulations on the serving of liquor.[63] On balance, the hotel business presented an enticing opportunity for independent employment and a good return on one's investment, but anyone who expected to make a fortune without due care and attention was sadly mistaken.

Contractors, fishermen and farmers

Jerome Bacovich claimed that after working in a variety of other jobs, including gold prospecting, his big break came with two contracts; the first to supply a huge quantity of timber, and the second to build a road. Another pioneer whose later business career may have been funded by a profitable timber contract was Thomas Carina. The difficulties and bankruptcy experienced by contractors Francisco Violich, Antonio Sarich and others, however, suggest that the successes of Bacovich and Carina were exceptional.

In a young colony facing economic difficulties during the second half of the 1800s, most contract work (often for small projects) came from local government bodies with limited resources. With little other work available on the goldfields, men scrambled to submit tenders for contracts that could supplement their small mining incomes, provide funds needed to bring claims into production (e.g. with dams and water races for sluicing) or to put food on a family's table. Competition could therefore be intense and contracts were typically awarded to the lowest tender, sometimes less than half of an engineer's estimate with little chance of a profit. As such it was a system prone to disaster; many contracts were abandoned or inadequately

[62] See Eldred-Grigg (2008:383-385, 387-399) for a vivid account of prostitution and the careers of whores on the goldfields.

[63] For the hotel careers of Francisco Violich, Thomas Pavletich and Jerome Bacovich, see Chapter 2.

carried out, a contractor's employees could find themselves unpaid and local storekeepers were left to pursue bad debts.

To illustrate the pitfalls of the contract system one has only to look at the experience of Antonio Sarich who worked as a miner and sometimes a contractor in the Thames district. In 1893, he won a contract from Thames County Council for a track with a tender of £45, well below the price specified in other tenders received (£65-£87). He successfully completed this contract but ran into difficulties in 1894 when his tender of £79 10s for a contract on the Tapu Creek Road was accepted against two other tenders of £125 and £165.[64] Upon completing the contract, which turned out more difficult than expected, Antonio wrote to the County Council as follows:

> *... I was not acquainted with the intense hardness of the stone at the bluff in my contract on the Tapu Creek road. However, in spite of all difficulties, I carried out the work faithfully, but after paying the men I have not a penny left for myself, and my son only received £3 for 11 weeks work. I would therefore respectfully ask that something be allowed me to enable me to pay my store-keepers' bills, as I am a poor though I trust an honorable man.*[65]

The Council was sympathetic; its engineer declared he could find no fault with the quality of the work performed, and one councillor remarked that when the tender was accepted he had said it would be impossible to make one shilling a day out of the contract. Nevertheless, Council decided that because it would establish "a dangerous and undesirable precedent", no money could be voted over and above the original tender. To signal its appreciation of the manner in which the contract had been carried out, however, the Council instructed its engineer to give Antonio Sarich "employment when possible".[66] It was a surprising gesture, given concern about setting precedents, but offered little immediate comfort to a man struggling to provide for a family that in 1894 still included at least five dependant children. Three years later, Antonio was adjudged bankrupt[67] – a sad end to over three decades of hard work.

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[64] See: *Thames Star*, 7 December 1893, p.2 and 22 February 1894, p.4 (for 1893 and 1894 contracts).

[65] *Thames Star*, 7 June 1894, p.2.

[66] Ibid.

[67] *Thames Star*, 23 September 1897, p.3.

Other pioneers found employment as labourers, stevedores or harbour board employees while a few ventured into retailing (e.g. as fishmongers or storekeepers) and some took up or resumed traditional occupations as sail makers, mariners and especially as fishermen. Often such jobs would provide a supplementary source of income and perhaps funding for ongoing mining activities. For example, Stephanus (a.k.a. Stephen) Beban, was still a miner when naturalised in 1901 (35 years after his arrival) and became a storekeeper for an indeterminate period, no doubt assisted by his wife. "Mr Beban's Store" in Goldsborough was identified as the principal booth for the election of members of the Arahura Road Board in December 1871.[68] As a point of contact with others in the community it was a business well-suited to a man believed to have a good education and to be fluent in several languages. According to his descendants, Stephen acted as an interpreter, an unofficial lawyer for matters such as property transactions and filing gold claims, and served as a scribe for illiterate miners (presumably fellow Croatians and Italians) wishing to write to family and friends overseas.[69]

Among those who made a living as fishermen, on either a short- or long-term basis, were Joseph Darby, Samuel Lisa, Paul Lupis, Florius Lupis, Romolo Scopinich, John Stretz, Frank Thian, Mariano Vella and Simeone Vitaglich. Of these, Romolo Scopinich (from the Island of Lošinj) was the most successful. Romolo is believed to have spent a number of years engaged in milling kauri timber, working as a bushman and digging for kauri gum before turning to fishing and in the mid-1890s opened the Zealandia Canning Company at Batley on the Kaipara Harbour, where he employed a number of his compatriots.[70] Fishing could be a rewarding but also an uncertain, dangerous livelihood, constrained by regulations and sometimes difficult partnerships. Around the turn of the century, for example, over-fishing depleted mullet stocks in Kaipara Harbour with a negative impact on the local fishing fleet and canneries, including the Zealandia Canning Company. Declines also occurred in the size and quality of catches around Lake Ellesmere (in Canterbury), directly affecting the livelihood of fishermen like John Stretz and Frank Thian at Taumutu as well as leading to the introduction of net size regulations. Additional problems for Frank Thian included: a dispute in 1886/87 over the division of catches that ended a

[68] *West Coast Times*, 29 November 1871, p.3.

[69] Personal communication from Colleen Douglas, Palmerston North, who made available a draft of a history of the Beban family and descendants in New Zealand.

[70] For a fuller account of Romolo Scopinich's life, see Jelicich (2008:222-223).

partnership with an Italian fisherman; and at the end of 1897 he was fined for the use of illegal nets (let out to others in a partnership on receipts agreement) and had his nets confiscated.[71]

Farming was a less popular vocation than might have been expected for men born on the Adriatic coast where a hunger for land increased sharply from the 1850s onwards. Aside from a sometimes obsessive devotion to the dream of gold, a key factor among the pioneers would have been their initial lack of capital. In order to save enough to lease, make a deposit on or to purchase outright a block of land, a man needed to be single-minded in his determination for up to a decade or more. It might also entail: a progression from farm worker to farm owner; a shift from some other type of work (e.g. mining or fishing) into farming once savings were in hand; a transition period wherein an earlier source of income was maintained or another source found to support or facilitate the development of a new property; or some combination of these scenarios.

As noted earlier, Martin Macale did well enough in mining to eventually shift to farming. Frank Thian, on the other hand, followed a different path. Shortly after his arrival about 1879 he was a fisherman at Taumutu and in 1884 married 17 year-old, New Zealand-born Johanna (a.k.a. Joanna) Franco. By the end of 1893 they had five children, a strong incentive for Frank to think seriously about how he would provide for his growing family (three more children were born by 1901). It was a situation similar to that of Martin Macale and Mariano Vella. The solution in Frank's case was not to rely on fishing alone. In 1894 when a ballot was held for lands at Lake Ellesmere he obtained, for lease in perpetuity, a 27 acre property and in the same year took on a mail contract running a coach between Leeston, Lakeside and Taumutu. Apart from two short breaks, Frank ran the mail as well as passengers and goods on this well advertised route until 1921 when he gave up the contract due "to failing health and the demands made upon his time by his farming interests".[72] Although the mail contract over-shadowed his earlier occupation as a fisherman and his parallel farming venture, the farm would have accounted for the bulk of his estate (valued at

[71] See: *Star*, 22 March 1887, p.3 (re partnership dispute); and *Ellesmere Guardian*, 4 December 1897, p.3 (re use of illegal nets).

[72] See: *Star*, 21 September 1894, p.4 (re land ballot); and *Ellesmere Guardian*, 13 April 1921, p.3 (re mail contract and failing health). For examples of his mail coach service advertisements, see: *Ellesmere Guardian*, 5 February 1896, p.2; 31 May 1905, p.3; and 23 August 1916, p.1.

£1,085 5s) when he died in 1924.[73] Examples of other paths to farming can be seen in the biographies of Nicolo Radove, Giorgio Vucetich and Mariano Vella (see Chapter 2). Except for Nicolo Radove, who lost everything, the outcome was usually a comfortable life with the means to assist children as they reached adulthood and a sound if not substantial estate at the end of a pioneer's life.

Marriage and Family

In all but a handful of cases the pioneers were typically young, unmarried men upon arrival here, a common feature of early Croatian immigrants in the United States, Canada, Australia and southern Africa as well. Although the evidence available is far from complete, up to one fifth of these young men who settled in New Zealand remained unmarried. As for the rest, when their thoughts turned to marriage half the world away from their homeland and living in a British colony, it was only natural that they found partners who were themselves immigrants, usually from Ireland, Scotland, England and Australia. New Zealand-born partners – such as Johanna Thian (née Franco) – were rare until the late 1870s and 1880s. Even rarer, with only three identified to date, were brides either born in Croatia (Maria Lupis, née Pervančić; and Elizabetta Vella, née Tarabochia) or New Zealand-born of Croatian descent (Maria Stanich, née Arnerich). In other words, out-group rather than in-group marriages (or de facto relationships) were normal rather than exceptional, even for the New Zealand-born children of Croatian pioneers reaching adulthood during the 1880s and 1890s.

In most cases the marriages appear to have worked to the satisfaction of both partners despite differences in language and culture. The evidence available suggests that the brides generally became devoted wives and mothers, often raising large families (4-11 children), stoically enduring the grief of sometimes high infant and childhood mortality rates, and managing households while also assisting with the operation of a business or some other venture. For example, Catherine Beban (née MacDonald, born in Scotland in 1848), 18 years old when she married Stephen (aged 34), gave birth to 11 children and raised all but two of them in their home at Tunnel Terrace, Goldsborough. It is a measure of Catherine's character – perhaps during a period of hardship and/or with an eye to future opportunities for the children – that, after the birth of her seventh child, she relinquished two

[73] Frank Thian probate file (CAHX/2989/CH171/270/CH12659/1924), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch.

(George aged ten, and Mary two years old) to the care of her husband's brother (Rocco) when he returned to the United States after a visit to New Zealand.

Any doubts about Catherine's maternal devotion are dispelled by the close, supportive relationship with her first child (John a.k.a. Jack) who suffered some degree of disability (possibly intellectual), never married, lived at home all of his life and is believed to have died of grief soon after his mother's death.[74] Nor can there can be any doubt about the devotion, commitment, supportive strength and resilience of women like: Sarah Lousich (née Chisnall), whose husband – as described above – was accidentally blinded, disabled and disfigured only a year after their marriage; Mary Jane Creer, who married Jerome Bacovich in 1893, just as his failing eyesight culminated in total blindness at age 37, and played an active role in his boardinghouse and hotel businesses; Ellen Fleming, who during her 10-year marriage to Nicolo Radove coped with the loss of both of their children in infancy, her husband's loss of his sheep station (due in part to his mismanagement) and then his failing health and death from a liver disease; and Anne Pavletich (née Connell), who lost six of her nine children in infancy or childhood, but still assisted her husband Thomas in their Dunedin hotel and other business activities.[75]

As could be expected, however, some other wives proved to be less admirable and a few marriages are known to have ended with a separation or divorce. For example, during 1875 Tripo Vucasovich's wife Agnes was fined by the Magistrate in Goldsborough for using abusive and insulting language against Matteo Dedovich (a sojourner), but gained sureties of peace against Andrew Baretich for his threatening gesture with a knife and calculated use of irritating language.[76] Eliza Beroz (née Barnes) exhibited similar feistiness: in June 1876 she was fined in Hokitika for her public use of abusive and insulting language; and at the end of July was adjudged the victim of an assault in a public fight with another woman.[77] More serious was a charge of theft in 1892 against Ellen Duimovich (née Hawthorn). Ellen was placed on probation for six months for her theft of clothing, narrowly missed a gaol

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[74] Personal communication from Colleen Douglas, Palmerston North (see note 67 above).

[75] For further details concerning the wives and marriages of Jerome Bacovich, Thomas Pavletich and Nicolo Radove, see Chapter 2.

[76] *West Coast Times*, 12 March 1875, p.2.

[77] See: *West Coast Times*, 3 June 1876, p.2 and 29 July 1876, p.2.

term in 1895 for using obscene language but in 1897 was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment for her third offence of drunkenness.[78]

Two marriages ending in divorce because of the wife's misconduct were those of Clara and Charles Simich in 1907 and Ada and John Bonashic in 1916. The latter attracted more than the usual public attention given to such matters. John Bonashic (a.k.a. Bonasich) arrived in New Zealand in 1880 and at age 30 married 18 year-old Ada Bond in 1885. Ada gave birth to five children and then, around 1912, suddenly deserted the family home. A hard-working wharfie, John eventually decided that enough was enough. Sentenced to three days imprisonment in 1915 for disobeying a maintenance order, he hired a detective agency to find his wayward wife. Ada was soon traced and identified as "the principal charmeuse de serpents" of a house of ill-repute.[79]

Like the wives, all but a handful of the known married pioneers appear to have been devoted, hard-working husbands who sought to provide for growing families. In some cases they did so despite setbacks with the death of a child, unexpected failings in their personal wellbeing, employment or finances. The sudden death of a young wife could also test a man's mettle as well as the support of kith and kin, especially if he was left to raise young children, as Andrew Cuiss, Louis Lousich and Mariano Vella found. But among these men there were still those – such as Giovanni Beroz, William Jacob Marsh and Frank Stigley – whose conduct sometimes left much to be desired.

Beroz, a gold-miner and hotel proprietor, was apparently too fond of his liquor and too ready to threaten violence or use his fists when drunk. In 1870 he was fined in the Magistrate's Court, Hokitika, for being drunk and disorderly and also charged with having threatened to kill his wife Eliza. According to Eliza, when her husband "was the worse for drink, he invariably threatened to take her life" but on this occasion was more violent than usual and she therefore asked that he be bound over with sureties to keep the peace toward her until the case was heard. Eliza later decided not to

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[78] See: *Bay of Plenty Times*, 31 August 1892, p.2 (re theft of clothing); *Auckland Star*, 5 June 1895, p.2 (re use of obscene language); and *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1897, p.4 (re drunkenness).

[79] See: *Evening Post*, 8 November 1915, p.2 (re maintenance order); *Evening Post*, 19 May 1916, p.8 and *New Zealand Truth*, 27 May 1916, p.5 (re marriage history, misconduct and divorce).

press the charge.[80] As no further incidents were reported they must have resolved their differences and learned the marital arts of compromise and adjustment. Nevertheless, this particular incident illustrates quite well the kind of life that women often faced in New Zealand's rough, tough, gold-mining towns.[81]

Euphemia Marsh (née Elliott, born *c.*1825 in Scotland) had a completely different problem to deal with. William Jacob Marsh, introduced earlier as one of the first two known arrivals, married Euphemia at Teviot, Otago, in 1867. Their marriage was without issue. Working as a miner in the area, William played a part in the establishment of the Teviot Presbyterian Church, was one of two elders ordained in September 1870 and served as the first Sunday School superintendent throughout the 1870s.[82] Falling prey to mental illness in 1879/80, however, William was confined in Dunedin's lunatic asylum for eight years but when he was discharged (officially cured) Euphemia found him unbearable to live with. Perhaps under pressure from her husband, she paid for his passage to San Francisco around 1889/90.[83] Because William was never seen or heard from again (and was presumed dead in 1908 to facilitate administration of Euphemia's estate) the situation was, in effect, one where they had privately agreed to a separation. A similar separation, arising perhaps because of ongoing financial difficulties and gradual estrangement as contracting work took him away from home, seems to have been accepted by Francisco Violich and his Australian-born wife, Helen, in the late 1880s (see Chapter 2).

Married in 1871, Frank Stigley's domestic problems involved both his wife (Mary) and their six children (born 1878-1890). It was a large family to support on a labourer's wage, especially when the growing family lost

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[80] *West Coast Times*, 7 November 1870, p.2 and 8 November 1870, p.2.

[81] Eldred-Grigg (2008:367-421) provides a particularly good account of the lives of women on the goldfields, ranging from camp followers, grog sellers and whores to storekeepers, entertainers, wives and other women who took charge of their own lives in the face of daunting odds against success.

[82] Career details as reported by Don (1936:227-228).

[83] The details of William's illness, treatment etc., are as presented in a sworn statement (dated 20 March 1908) made by James Elliott (nephew of Euphemia). This statement is included in the probate file for William Jacob Marsh (DAAC/9078/878/138), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Dunedin. A short biography of Euphemia Marsh (née Elliott) can be found in Thomson (2008).

everything in a fire that destroyed their cottage in 1885.[84] Matters came to a head in 1897. Mary asked the Magistrate in Ashburton for a summary separation, and custody of three children under 16 years old, because of her husband's persistent cruelty towards her. It was reported that, unlike Frank, she was denied good bedding and furniture in her separate bedroom. When the eldest daughter bought furniture for her mother, Frank threatened to destroy it unless it was removed. More important, although not a drinker, he was reported to have had a violent temper and continually growled, nagged and used abusive language toward his wife. Because of his temper and abuse, Mary had twice left Frank and on other occasions took refuge with neighbours. Their eldest son left home on account of his father's behaviour, while another reported a fight with him. But could a separation be granted on the basis of such evidence? The Magistrate thought not and refused to do so, concluding that Frank was not a drunkard, used no personal violence toward his wife, and that his temper rather than persistent cruelty was the cause of unhappiness in the home. Less than five years later, with the support of two sons, Mary made another unsuccessful attempt to secure a separation on the grounds of persistent cruelty.[85] Mary died in 1906 and Frank in 1924 (aged 83), leaving a small estate (less than £400) to be divided between his four surviving children.[86]

Without excusing Frank Stigley's behaviour, a contributing factor should be acknowledged. Attempting to explain his position, Frank was reported to have said:

> *... he had not the bad temper attributed to him. He wanted the boys and girls all home at nine o'clock at night, and they came home just when they liked. His wife always took their part in this against him, and this was all the trouble. He had no control of his boys and girls owing to his wife's conduct.*[87]

It appeared to be a difficulty not unfamiliar among immigrants with spouses from different cultural backgrounds. Vincent Duimovich could no doubt

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[84] *Star*, 10 December 1885, p.3. According to this report "the inmates only escaped in their night dresses".

[85] See *Ashburton Guardian*, 16 September 1897, p.3 and (for Mary's second attempt with the support of son's William and Arthur) *Ashburton Guardian*, 27 March, 1902, p.3.

[86] Probate file, Francis [a.k.a. Frank] Stigley (CAHY/3155/CH145/40/TU2221/1924), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch.

[87] *Asburton Guardian*, 16 September 1897, p.3.

have argued along similar lines with regard to the poor role model that his wife (guilty of repeated drunkenness and theft) provided for their nine year-old son in 1890 and 13 year-old daughter in 1897. Guilty of theft, the boy was sentenced to a beating with a birch rod while his sister was committed to St. Mary's Industrial School, Ponsonby, as a juvenile vagrant.[88]

A child's behaviour, however, could also be affected by other factors such as the death of a parent, innate personality characteristics and peer group associates. One or more of these factors may have affected Adolphus Cuiss, eldest child of Andrew Cuiss, a Dunedin fishmonger from Vis, and his wife Catherine Cuiss (née Walsh). Married in 1863, the couple had three children (born 1864-1870) before Catherine's untimely death in 1871. Adolphus did well at school in the early 1870s despite his mother's death but came to the attention of police in 1879 when he, his brother Augustus and a companion were convicted but discharged without penalty (because of insufficient evidence) for damage to Dunedin's Pelichet Bay baths.[89] In July 1883, Adolphus was again in trouble. Arrested as a ringleader of a band of larrikins called the Skeleton Army, who assembled for a demonstration against the Salvation Army, he was charged for behaving in a manner calculated to provoke a breach of the peace as streets were blocked, pebbles thrown and a tumultuous noise created before police intervened. Adolphus was lucky to be fined just £5 (which he paid) or six weeks imprisonment.[90] One imagines his father, with another son and daughter to care for, was pleased that Adolphus had left home to live with other bachelors before his third appearance in the Police Court in 1886, this time for the theft of fruit during a drunken spree that incurred a fine of 40s plus half the value of the fruit.[91]

Fortunately, the above examples of disrupted relationships and misbehaviour appear to have been uncommon. Indeed, when children were believed to be unjustly treated, parents leapt to their defence, sometimes at a cost to themselves. In June 1902, for example, when the rights and treatment of

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[88] See: *Auckland Star*, 7 August 1890, p.4 (re son); and *Thames Star*, 1 October 1897, p.1 (re daughter).

[89] See: *Otago Daily Times*, 28 December 1872, p.5, 19 December 1873, p.2 and *Otago Witness*, 26 December 1874, p.5 (success at school); *Otago Daily Times*, 4 February 1879, p.8 (re baths damage).

[90] *Otago Daily Times*, 10 July 1883, p.4 (an extended report on the disturbance at Moray Place).

[91] *Otago Witness*, 6 March 1886, p.4 (re theft of fruit).

school pupils were of less concern than today, Martin Macale brought a charge of assault against the head teacher of a Lumsden school for allegedly striking his son Arthur on the face with a book, causing his nose to bleed. Widely reported in newspapers, the charge was dismissed (with costs) after a hearing which found that the boy had not been struck over the face and that the degree of force used by the defendant "to rouse an inattentive pupil" was justified.[92] The following month in Thames, Leo Sarich was charged for drunkenness and his father (Antonio Sarich) for obstructing a police officer. When the officer arrested Leo, Antonio objected, arguing that as he was taking his son home the police officer had no right to interfere. Not so concluded the Magistrate, who would tolerate no inference with a constable performing his duty even if Antonio, being a foreigner, was ignorant of the law. Leo was convicted and discharged for drunkenness but Antonio was fined 20s [£1] and costs or, in default, seven days imprisonment.[93]

Cases such as those involving the children of Frank Stigley, Andrew Cuiss and Vincent Duimovich were simply those that came to the public's attention. Like other parents, most of the pioneers seem to have enjoyed sound familial relationships and gave whatever support they could to their children. Fathers provided children with long-term interest free loans for special purposes such as vocational training etc. (e.g. Martin Macale), worked with sons as business partners (e.g. Raymond Poschich and sons in mining, Antonio Sarich and a son engaged in contract work), supported sons with advice or gifts for the purchase and development of properties as beginning farmers (e.g. Giorgio Vucetich) or arranged for the transfer of a farm lease to a son when the day of retirement finally arrived (e.g. Mariano Vella).[94]

At The End of Life

Like other elderly people, some pioneers encountered problems or difficulties associated with ageing. These problems included: feelings or incidents of insecurity or threats to their wellbeing when they were perceived as easy targets for the antics of larrikins or those with more serious crimes in mind; deteriorating health; and, for widowed or unmarried older men without

[92] *Southland Times*, 12 June 1902, p.4 (re the hearing on the charge of assault).

[93] *Thames Star*, 21 July 1902, p.3.

[94] For further details see biographies of Raymond Poschich, Giorgio Vucetich and Mariano Vella in Chapter 2.

close social support, the loneliness or depression that could lead to suicide. Examples of such difficulties were found for only a small number of the pioneers, but there were probably other cases that for various reasons escaped official notification and/or public attention.

Samuel Caro (born in Zadar), described as an old man living by himself, complained to the Port Chalmers police in 1894 that he was being continually annoyed by boys throwing stones onto the roof of his small house and was "*afraid of his life*". When he was pelted with snowballs, the police charged three boys with throwing missiles but because Samuel declared he was mistaken as to their identity the case was dismissed.[95] In a similar vein, Francis Superina (born in Rijeka), an old gold-miner in Westland, was greatly annoyed at various times by larrikins who stole his marble clock and hens, cut his well-rope and removed his dinner. Once, during a temporary absence from his cottage, they even drove a horse inside and closed the door. Deciding that he had put up with enough, two of his friends announced in 1902 that they would each give a £1 reward for information on anyone playing practical jokes on Francis in the future.[96] A final and far more serious example of insecurity was a case of brutal assault by two drunken miners.

At about 9pm on Saturday 16 October 1909, Vincent Duimovich and his wife Ellen were disturbed by a knock at the door of their home in Neavesville, east of Thames. When Vincent (aged 81) opened the door he was met by men demanding "a feed". Refusing the demand, he was repeatedly struck on the face, knocked to the floor and dislocated his shoulder. In the course of subsequent events, Ellen was struck on the head, fell to the floor bleeding profusely from a head wound and her assailant attempted to rape her. The affair attracted considerable attention during an initial hearing at the Thames Police Court, which determined that a prima facie case of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm had been established. On that indictment two men were committed to the Supreme Court for trial. One offender was eventually sentenced for his assault on Vincent to three months imprisonment with hard labour, and the other was sentenced to nine months with hard labour for assaulting Ellen.[97]

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[95] *Otago Daily Times*, 15 September 1894, p.7.

[96] *Grey River Argus*, 25 October 1902, p.4.

[97] See: *Thames Star*, 28 October 1909, p.2 and 29 October 1909, p.4 (for initial hearing); and *Thames Star*, 17 November 1909, p.2 (for sentences imposed).

Turning now to health, the process of ageing has always been accompanied by the onset of difficulties, some more serious than others for an individual's wellbeing and quality of life. However, decades of hard physical labour and various injuries – especially for miners, contractors and settlers developing new farms – accentuated the normal debilitating effects of osteoarthritis in old age. Nor should we ignore the long-term debilitating effects of tuberculosis, diphtheria, scarlet fever, scurvy, dysentery, diarrhoea and typhoid produced by inadequate shelter, close living conditions, poor food and primitive sanitation on the goldfields.[98] Particular occupations and individual lifestyles were also likely to be reflected in more specific diseases. As noted earlier, for example, Antonio Obuglien's price for his success as a gold-miner was the development of a respiratory problem commonly known as "miner's complaint", and for Giorgio Vucetich a history of chronic bronchitis probably stemmed from year round, all-weather outdoor activity to develop and manage a farm. Along with pneumonia, bronchitis no doubt afflicted many miners living and working in harsh conditions throughout Otago and Westland as well. On the other hand, one suspects that Nicolo Radove's lifestyle – he had a reputation for open-handed hospitality and heavy drinking – caused or contributed to his fatal liver disease.

As illustrated by Frank Thian, when he announced he was giving up his mail contract, "failing health" was often cited as a reason for retirement or a reduction in one's hours of employment. Where a man had family members who could take over a business or farm, had been reasonably prudent in saving for old age or had some other source of income (e.g. a pension), a reduction of working hours or retirement was not a problem. But not all families could afford the associated loss of income and action would sometimes be taken to secure a breadwinner's position pending a return to good health. The case of Simeone Vitaglich (born on the Island of Vis) and his son John provides an interesting but tragic example.

In November 1895, Simeone fell ill. He was then 58 years old, a long-term employee of the Westport Harbour Board, and his 19 year-old son John was engaged to act as a boatman on the harbour staff during his father's absence. All went well until the end of April 1896 when John set off in a small boat with charts for the captain of the departing barque *Coromandel*. It was reported that:

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[98] See Eldred-Grigg (2008:300-308, 314-316) for goldfield living conditions and health problems.

> *... [he] fastened his boat alongside the vessel with the object of bringing the harbour-master, Captain Leech, who was aboard the barque, ashore. When the mouth of the river was reached, half a mile inside the bar, the boat seems to have swamped, and [John] Vitaglich was thrown into the water. The accident was seen from the tug, and the crew raised the alarm, which attracted the attention of those aboard the barque... When Captain Leech looked over the side of the ship the boat was full of water, but nothing could be seen of Vitaglich.*[99]

John's body was never recovered, and no official inquiry into the circumstances of his drowning was conducted during the months that followed.

Grief stricken, John's parents and five siblings served the Westport Harbour Board with a writ in late July, claiming £500 damages for their loss on account of the negligence of Captain Leech, the Board's harbour-master. Unhappily, worse was to come. Simeone died from a complication of his illness at the end of September, and when the case came before the District Court, the judge, prompted by counsel for the Harbour Board, entered up judgment for a nonsuit. Expressing his sympathy with the family, the judge made it clear he had to administer the law which in this case stated that if two men were employed by the same employer and one was injured, the injured man had no recourse against the employer except under the Employers' Liability Act. But as notice of an intention to claim under the Act had not been given within six weeks as required, the matter rested as if the Act had not been passed into law. Despite the circumstances (John's drowning *and* Simeone's death), the omission of a notice to claim under the Act could not be excused.[100]

Without the close support of his family and friends, it is not too difficult to imagine that Simeone could have taken his own life, rather than dying from natural causes, given his illness and the tragic loss of his son. Much the same could be said for other elderly Croatian pioneers and members of the general population, especially if handicapped by a significant physical or sensory disability such as blindness. One wonders, for example, what might have happened to Andrew Cuiss, the widowed Dunedin fishmonger, blind from natural causes late in life and grieving over the unexpected death of his younger son Augustus in 1895, without the attentive aid of Lucretia, his married daughter. Living in Melbourne, Lucretia took her father into her

[99] *Timaru Herald*, 2 May 1896, p.3.

[100] For an account of the judge's decision, see *Otago Witness*, 12 November 1896, p.3.

home and attended to his personal needs and business affairs until his death (aged 78) in 1905.[101]

By way of an answer to the thought of an alternative end to Andrew Cuiss' life, we should note the sad demise of: John Scopinich (born on the Island of Lošinj) who died in December 1907, aged 65; and Mark Beanovitch (born in Rijeka) who died in March 1897, aged 57. The *Grey River Argus* reported that John Scopinich:

> *... was found dead this morning with his head in a basin of water on the floor and a heavy iron trunk on the back of his head. It was evidently a case of determined suicide. Deceased was getting gradually blind and was to be admitted during the afternoon to the Old Men's Home.*[102]

The Pacific Lodge of Freemasons No. 29 English Constitution, of which John had been an active member and office holder, was the sole beneficiary of his meagre estate[103] – a clear indication of his lack of close support by kith and kin. Mark Beanovitch, described as a gumdigger residing at Te Kao (Northland) at the time of his death, also committed suicide, hanging himself on board the *SS Clansman* while in police custody on his way to Auckland to stand trial for attempted rape. Like John Scopinich, Mark appears to have had no immediate family or other close relatives in New Zealand and in his last will and testament bequeathed what little he had to family members (his father and seven siblings) he believed to be still living in the old country.[104]

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[101] Details of Andrew Cuiss' place of residence, blindness and care-giving as presented by his daughter Lucretia Tamme in a sworn statement (dated 11 December 1906) included in her father's probate file (DAAC/9074/229/A319), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Dunedin.

[102] *Grey River Argus*, 19 December 1907, p.3.

[103] John Scopinich, probate file (CAIF/20702/CH300/56/HK2180/1908), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch. The estate was assessed to be under £60. For reports on his role in the Masons, see: *West Coast Times*, 21 March 1889, p.2; 3 June 1891, p.2; and 14 February 1895, p.4.

[104] For details of Mark Beanovitch's death etc., see his probate file (AAOM/6029/104/5657), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Auckland. Mistakenly identified in newspaper reports at the time as "Mark Bionovich" or "Mark Bionovick", it was also reported that in previous years he had sold his farm at Opotiki, returned to his homeland and then after a time had come back to New Zealand. He had been engaged in gumdigging at Kaipara and Mangonui for two years before his death. See: *Thames Star*, 19 March 1897, p.2 (re suicide and rape charge); and *Auckland Star*, 20 March 1897, p.4 (re suicide inquest and his background).

Being illiterate, Mark probably found it difficult to maintain regular contact with his birth family.

It would, of course, be foolish to assume that all of the older pioneers lacking the support of their own family or other close relatives and friends were equally at risk of suicide. Indeed, the majority of such men appear to have been quite resilient, as illustrated by John Garglievich and Andrew Baretich both of whom were early arrivals, long-term miners, unmarried and without any relatives in New Zealand. John Garglievich, living independently in Goldsborough, Westland, was 77 years old when he passed away in November 1916, leaving his estate to nieces in South America.[105] And Andrew Baretich became the oldest survivor among the Croatian pioneers; a resident of the Old People's Home in Hokitika for the last six years of his life, he was 102 years old when he died in March 1937.[106]

The Significance of the Pioneers

In an attempt to explain the distinct characteristics of immigration and settlement in New Zealand by Italians and other southern Europeans, Revel Lochore introduced the concept of "migration chains". To illustrate just how a chain could begin and develop, Lochore used the hypothetical example of an Italian seaman put ashore with a broken leg. Recovering from his injury, he found a job:

> *... and did well. He booked a return passage to Italy, had a holiday in his home village, boasted about the new land, and brought his brother back with him. When they had earned enough they financed the passage for a cousin, and then a friend, and another friend ... Then (decisive step) someone persuaded his wife to come. The second woman to come was promised a home near the first ... And so year after year people continued to move along the migration chain, until they built what was virtually an Italian village in New Zealand...*[107]

The concept was refined and successfully applied in 1963 by Charles Price in his classic study *Southern Europeans in Australia* and a year later chain migration was defined by other researchers as:

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[105] See probate file of John Garglievich (CAIF/20702/CH300/60/HK255/1919), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch.

[106] *Evening Post*, 23 March 1937, p.12.

[107] Lochore (1951:24).

> *... that movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants.*[108]

But this definition is not quite flexible enough to account for the numerous migrants who learned of opportunities through village gossip (initiated by letters, successful migrants returning home for a visit or to resettle after some years abroad), and raised passage funds by loans or mortgages. Having arrived at their destination such migrants were indeed met and helped by fellow villagers with whom they were related or previously acquainted or to whom they were recommended by other friends or relations. These 'followers' in turn informed, encouraged and/or assisted others in progressively widening pools of prospective migrants. Given this flexibility, the above definition would be quite acceptable.

Chain migration obviously has its roots in the careers of pioneer migrants who wandered about the world in search of work, wealth and adventure. Among Croatians from the Adriatic Coast this wandering was evident on the margins of the Pacific Ocean (California, Chile, Australia and New Zealand) as early as the 1850s and in some cases possibly a decade or two earlier. As shown in Table 1 and discussed above, these men were typically mariners, gold-miners, fishermen or just plain labourers, ready to turn their hands to whatever came their way. Not all of them "did well", as Lochore put it, and not all of those who were successful initiated migration chains that drew others to New Zealand. Why? Some were adventurous souls who for one reason or another left home with no intention of returning, maintaining contact or sharing their good fortune. Some were illiterate and after a decade or more abroad simply lost touch with parents, siblings and friends. Some, marrying a woman from Great Britain and raising their children as English-speaking colonials, had little incentive to maintain contact, proclaim their success or to actively encourage friends and relatives to join them. And some, though prosperous and eager enough to attract and assist other migrants, competed unsuccessfully with siblings, relatives and fellow villagers who had done well elsewhere in the world. The bottom line, therefore, was that just a few pioneers and their immediate 'followers' were likely to initiate a migration chain between a given place of origin on the Adriatic coast and a particular destination abroad.

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[108] Macdonald and Macdonald (1964:82).

Going one step further, there was no guarantee that a chain once started would continue to function with the passage of time. Consider, for example, an ephemeral chain from Kotor, at the southern end of the Dalmatian coast, possibly initiated by Peter Tomanovich (who arrived in New Zealand *c.*1863) but more likely by Andrew Vocassavich. Peter enjoyed a measure of success as a gold-miner in Otago but by the time Andrew arrived (*c.*1866) a gold-rush was underway in Westland and he settled there, to be followed (allowing for surname spelling variations) by Tripo Vucasovich (*c.*1868) and Thomas Vocasovitch (*c.*1873). On the evidence available there were no further arrivals as part of this chain, possibly because Tripo lost everything when he was bankrupted in 1875 or because their kith and kin took advantage of more attractive links to alternative destinations.

On the other hand, chains established by pioneers from central Dalmatia proved to be more enduring, with long-term effects upon settlement in New Zealand. By the end of 1880 at least 20 pioneers from the islands of Vis, Brač and Hvar had arrived along with seven others from the Pelješac Peninsula, the coastal settlements of Split, Makarska and either the village of Tučepi or Igrane (see Table 1). Two of the chains initiated by these arrivals – those of Pavel (Paul) Lupis and Mariano Vella – provide solid illustrative examples.

The Lupis Migration Chain

Although discrepancies have been noted in the information available on his date of arrival, Paul Lupis has been identified earlier in this chapter as one of the first three pioneer arrivals. Setting the discrepancies aside, it is believed that Paul: deserted from an English immigrant ship at Lyttelton in 1858; prospected for gold in the South Island; moved to Auckland during the 1860s, working initially as a boatman ferrying passengers between Wynyard Pier and ships in the harbour; was well established as a fisherman residing in Official Bay by early 1870[109]; and that during the second half of the 1870s became a gumdigger in the Northern Wairoa. In the absence of an official marriage registration, a public notice in November and December 1877, wherein Paul declared "I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by my wife, Sarah Lupis", suggests that he had also entered into a de facto

[109] In March 1870, a gold ring and money was stolen from Paul's dwelling in Official Bay. The thief was later brought before the court and sentenced (*Daily Southern Cross*, 20 June 1870, p.4).

relationship of unknown duration.[110] Overall, his life until the late 1870s was more or less unremarkable, but became much more interesting over the next two decades as revealed by Nicholas Sentch.

Born in Kostrena Sv. Lucija near Rijeka, Nicholas Sentch had been a seaman for some years before arriving in New Zealand in 1864. In the course of evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry, in which he commented on the increasing presence of "Austrians" from central Dalmatia, Nicholas stated:

> *As far as I know, there is a person out here of the name of Paul Lopez [i.e. Lupis]. I am speaking of 18 years ago [about 1880], he [Lupis] was gumdigging at Dargaville and made a little money. He went home to Austria, got married there and brought his wife back to New Zealand with him, and also some of his relations, and since then it seems to me that, by giving them the idea that money could be made in the country at gumdigging, they have been advancing money to each other to come out.*[111]

Nicholas Sentch was right, but Paul Lupis actually visited his home village, Nakovan on the Pelješac Peninsula, not once but three times and his influence soon extended beyond the Pelješac Peninsula as shown below.[112]

- Having "*made a little money*" as Sentch put it, Paul visited Nakovan for the first time in 1880. While there he married Maria Jakoba Pervančić in May 1881 and their first child, Šabo (Sebastian), was born before they returned to New Zealand in 1882, probably accompanied by Florius and John Lupis. For anyone living in the vicinity of Nakovan interested in making a better life for himself,

[110] The notices appeared in the *Auckland Star*, 30 November 1877, p.3 and 1 December 1877, p.5. What became of this "wife" is unknown as no official marriage, death or divorce records have been found.

[111] "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand", *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, vol. 3, H. 12, pp.34-35.

[112] The stages and features of the Lupis migration chain, as presented here, are based on information provided by Jelicich (2008:35-36). Additional material on the date of arrival of particular individuals and families (especially from Korčula) has been constructed from information in: the *Register of Aliens 1917*, Government Printer, Wellington; and *Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand Before 1948*, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

Paul's two-year visit was time enough to hear about New Zealand and its opportunities.

- Only a few years later Paul and his family were back in Nakovan where Maria gave birth to another son, Rajmondo (a.k.a. Rismondo or Mondo) in 1888. The family returned to New Zealand in 1889, this time probably accompanied by Antonio and Nicholas Lupis as well as friends from the village of Žrnovo on the Island of Korčula just across the narrow Pelješki Kanal. The exact identity of these friends has yet to be established but they may have been members of the Jericevich and Sale (a.k.a. Salle) families.
- With interest stimulated by Paul's visits and favourable reports from previous emigrants, at least two other Lupis family members arrived on the gumfields in the early 1890s – Sam (*c.*1892) and Sebastian Antonio Lupis (*c.*1894). Furthermore, between 1894 and 1897 'follower' arrivals from Žrnovo included: Antonio Salle and Domenik Jericevich; plus the first members of the Bakalich, Bilish, Cebalo, Segedin and Stanisich families; who were in turn followed by others from their extended families as well as the Grbin family over the years 1900-1913. News of the success enjoyed by pioneers and 'followers' from Žrnovo soon spread to neigbouring villages on Korčula. For example: Peter Batistich, Ilija Dracevich, Ivan Jurjevich, and Mark Lipanovich made their way to New Zealand from the village of Lumbarda during the 1890s; and Mate Blitvich, Jerry Farac and Jim Vlasich were early arrivals (*c.*1905) from Pupnat.
- Paul Lupis and his family made their final trip back to Nakovan in 1898, and during the voyage another son (Ljubo) was born at sea. Coupled with letters and remittances from emigrants who had either accompanied or followed him after previous visits, Paul's presence in Nakovan over the next three years (1899-1901) once more added to the allure of New Zealand's gumfields, firing the imagination and strengthening the migration intentions of families in nearby towns and villages on both the Pelješac Peninsula and Korčula. The Lupis family eventually returned to New Zealand in 1902.

No doubt the Lupis home at Mangawhai was a welcoming reception point for new arrivals and others seeking or exchanging news on the gumfields. While the flow of migrants from Pelješac was relatively small, the number of arrivals from Korčula (especially Žrnovo and nearby villages) grew quickly and became an important feature of Croatian settlement in New Zealand. For example, migrants from Korčula dominated the quarrying industry at Mt. Wellington in Auckland from the mid-1920s onwards.

The Vella Migration Chain

The Vella chain proved to be just as complex and far-reaching in its effects as the Lupis chain. A detailed account of Mariano Vella's life is provided in the next chapter so only a brief summary is needed here. Born in Makarska but probably raised in nearby Podgora village, Mariano arrived in 1878 and settled initially at Paremata, north of Wellington. It should be noted here that he was not the first from the Makarska-Podgora district to arrive in New Zealand. John Lucich is known to have been in the Hampden area of Otago, probably as a miner, where unclaimed letters were held for him in early 1864. In 1871 he was an unsuccessful defendant in a court case for board and lodging.[113] What is not known, however, is what influence (if any) John Lucich had upon the arrival of Mariano or others from the same district in Dalmatia. We are on much safer ground with Mariano Vella.

Mariano lived and worked in Paremata for a number of years as a fisherman, prospered and in January 1886 married Mary Ida Furse, born in England. A few weeks later Mariano subleased Mana Island (8km from Paremata) and embarked on the demanding task of bringing it into production as a sheep farm. All went well until Mary died suddenly in December 1889 leaving her husband with a young family of two sons and a daughter. It was against this background that the Vella chain developed with several key phases.[114]

- First, Mariano was joined (*c.*1885) by his cousin John (a.k.a. Ivan) Vella who worked with Mariano as a fisherman, maintaining the business as the Mana farm was developed, to which he also lent a hand.
- Second, *c.*1892 Mariano welcomed his brother Peter Vella, who may have been accompanied on the voyage by another young man from Podgora – Marino Pivac. Peter contributed to work on the farm and probably the fishing business as well before going out on his own as a sheep farmer.

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[113] See *Otago Daily Times*, 25 February 1864, p.6 and 17 May 1864, p.6 (re mail); and *Daily Southern Cross*, 29 July 1871, p.3 (re court case).

[114] In addition to Mariano's biography in Chapter 2, the stages and features of the Vella migration chain are based on information provided by Jelicich (2008:94-95). Additional material on the date of arrival of particular individuals and families from Podgora has been constructed from information in: the *Register of Aliens 1917*, Government Printer, Wellington; and *Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand Before 1948*, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington.



Mariano Vella
Source: **Vella Café, Plimmerton**

- About the time of Peter's arrival, Mariano's cousin John Vella returned to Podgora to marry Catherine Marinovich. Two children were born to them and several years passed before John again decided to move to New Zealand in 1899. His presence in the home village during this time allowed people in Podgora and neighbouring villages to get first-hand information about opportunities in that far away land and the success of his cousin Mariano. It comes as no surprise then that Antoni Dean and Jacob Vincent Kurta, both from Podgora, arrived in New Zealand during the mid-1890s.
- John Vella's example probably enhanced widower Mariano's sense of his own need for a wife and mother for his children. Having arranged for the care of his family and the farm, therefore, he set off for a short trip in 1894. Rather than a bride from Podgora or a nearby

village, however, he married Elizabetta Caterina Tarabochia from Mali Lošinj on the northern margins of Dalmatia. It was a match probably 'arranged' with the help of Thomas Tarabochia who resided in Wellington. For the return to New Zealand, Mariano and his bride were accompanied by two youngsters; an unnamed nephew of Elizabetta's and Antonio Tarabochia (unrelated), a nephew of pioneer gold-miner John Scopinich. On the last leg of the return trip their ship, the *S.S. Wairarapa*, was wrecked on Great Barrier Island. Mariano, his wife and Antonio survived but Elizabetta's nephew was among those who lost their lives.

- Early in 1899, Mariano's cousin John Vella returned to New Zealand with his family (wife Catherine and two children). They were possibly accompanied or closely followed by the first members of the Babich, Ban, Borich, Kokich, Letica, Marinovich, Nola, Radojkovich and Sunde families from Podgora who are known to have arrived *c.*1899. John's return was marked by a career change; instead of again working as a fisherman at Paremata and/or assisting on Mana Island, he settled at Otaki on the northern end of the Kapiti Coast and worked in a vineyard. Only a few years later in 1903 he moved his family north to Oratia, south of Henderson on Auckland's western outskirts, where he and Catherine established a vineyard and orchard. Their home soon became a transit centre for new arrivals from Podgora heading for the gumfields. These arrivals may have included: additional members of families already working in Northland; and pioneers from the Beros, Devcich, Garea, Garelja, Jakich, Juretich, Kunac, Lucijetich, Milicich, Radonich, Rosandich, Sanko, Sumich, Vodanovich and Vrsaljko families. As pioneer settlers in Oratia, the family of John and Catherine Vella inevitably attracted other Croatian settlers keen to invest money saved from their labour on the gumfields.

- In 1909 Mariano Vella 'retired', left the Mana Island farm in the care of his eldest sons, and returned to Dalmatia with Elizabetta and at least one child for a visit that lasted six years. They resided at his wife's birthplace in the north but Mariano had ample time and good reasons to visit relations and friends in Podgora. In his mid-50s he was the epitome of success; the young sailor had become a wealthy man, a man able to rest and travel while capable sons managed his land and stood ready to support him in old age. No one could fail to be impressed by this example and to hope for similar success by following in his footsteps.

By the late 1920s, thanks to the success and example of the Vella migration chain, settlers from Podgora were strongly established in the orchards and vineyards of Oratia and Henderson, in Auckland's fishing industry and as fish shop and restaurant proprietors in various North Island towns and cities.

Paul Lupis has long been perceived as the key to chain migration from much of central Dalmatia. Given the timing of Paul's visits to the Pelješac Peninsula, events during those visits and Nicholas Sentch's statement, it is an understandable but mistaken perception. It underrates the role of Mariano and John Vella (with regard to Podgora and surrounding villages), Paul Arnerich (who initiated a migration chain from the Island of Brač), and other arrivals who each played a part in establishing family-based migration chains from the islands of Hvar and Vis, from towns and villages in the Vrgorac district and along the lower reaches of the Neretva River from Metković to the sea. All of these men were, in their own way, pioneers – courageous risk-takers who paved the way for relatives and friends. Among their ranks, however, there can be no doubt that pride of place goes to Paul Lupis, Mariano Vella, Paul Arnerich and two or three others from Hvar and the Vrgorac district who have yet to be positively identified and given the recognition they so richly deserve.

2
Pioneers: Twelve Biographies

The previous chapter identified the pioneers, their origins, general features that characterised their settlement and their influence upon Croatian migration to New Zealand. To do this, however, it was necessary to step back, to illustrate points made with brief examples rather than the rich integrated detail of individual life stories. In order to capture the intrinsic human interest and insights provided by such stories, this chapter presents twelve biographies, each of which has been constructed to trace key events in the life of the pioneer as he attempted to take advantage of opportunities available to those with the vision and determination to grasp them. In one way or another some proved to be remarkable men and successful settlers. Others were less so. For quite different reasons two of the twelve eventually left New Zealand, and among those who stayed two were not survived by any children, whereas others established families with numerous descendants in later generations. Needless to say, personal circumstances and reasons were often (not always) predominant in shaping their lives and producing differences between them.

The selection of the twelve pioneers featured here was determined, in the end, by two factors. Of these, the most important was the scope and quality of information available from three sources: the National Library of New Zealand's digitalised "Papers Past" newspaper resource; Archives New Zealand, via its "Archway" facility; and descendants who granted access to private material about their pioneer ancestors. The second factor, influenced by available information, was a desire: to gain recognition for pioneers whose stories have so far been ignored (Carina, Mikoz, Pavletich, Poschich, Singer and Violich); to provide more detailed accounts of those who have already gained a measure of recognition (Arnerich, Bacovich, Vella, Vragnizan and Vucetich); and to correct errors or misconceptions (notably about Bacovich, Radove and Pavletich) arising from the work of previous writers.

There are, of course, many other pioneers whose stories still remain to be told. That said, readers are reminded that in addition to the biographies presented below, reliable accounts of the lives of Matthew Harlevitch (a.k.a. Harliwich), Paul Lupis and Nicholas Sentch can be found in Stephen Jelicich's book *From Distant Villages*.

Giaccomo (a.k.a. James) Mikoz

Born in "Buccari" (i.e. Bakar, near Rijeka) *c.*1843 according to his marriage record or 1846 as indicated in his naturalisation file, Giaccomo Mikoz was in his mid-teens when he landed in 1860. He may have been a sailor who jumped ship like others seeking their fortune in New Zealand, especially during the South Island gold rushes in the early 1860s. If he ventured into gold mining in Nelson, Otago or Westland, however, it must have had little appeal for within a few years he was working as a boatman, perhaps a more familiar occupation and less precarious source of income for a young man contemplating marriage. On 26 November 1867, Giaccomo married Sarah Ann West (born *c.*1850 in Melbourne) at her mother's home in Greymouth. The marriage was performed in the presence of two witnesses, one of whom was Simeone Vitaglich (born in Komiža on the Island of Vis).

Employment as a boatman, however, turned out to be no more profitable or secure than many other goldfield occupations; debtors had to be brought to account (e.g. Mikoz v Nelson for £3) and creditors paid (e.g. Magoffin and Fraser v Mikoz for £9 15s plus costs).[115] With expenditure exceeding income, Giaccomo was obliged to file an insolvency declaration in May 1873. As a result a leasehold section with a small newly-built cottage, his main asset, was put up for unreserved sale during the following month. Once the sale was completed and a trustee had been appointed, Giaccomo immediately applied for an order of discharge as a bankrupt. Although opposed by three creditors, his application was granted after examination by the District Court.[116] No doubt chastened by this set back, he thereafter shunned self-employment in favour of a job with the Greymouth Harbour Board, a position he held until the end of his working life.

His new job, as an assistant to the Harbour Master, was not without danger. In June 1900, when someone tampered with the mooring of a small boat used to check beacon lights, he was lucky to escape any injury. He was less fortunate in October 1901; his foot was slightly hurt when a rope accidentally fouled his leg while the Harbour Master was attempting to clear a large snag alongside the Greymouth wharf.[117] Over a period of 30 years,

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[115] *Grey River Argus*, 28 September 1871 p.2 and 14 May 1873 p.2 (re debtors and creditors).

[116] *Grey River Argus*, 12 May 1873 p.3, 19 June 1873 p.2 and 30 June 1873 p.2 (re bankruptcy, estate sale and discharge).

[117] *Grey River Argus*, 18 June 1900 p.2 and 6 November 1901 p.2 (re work dangers).

however, Giaccomo – now known as James – developed his harbour knowledge, skills and expertise. These attributes came to the fore in incidents such as the recovery of accidental drowning victims. In 1885, for example, responding to a report that a person he knew well had fallen into the Grey River, James organised a search for the body. Using an improvised grapnel he cast the line below the spot where the man was said to have fallen in, hooking and retrieving the body on the third attempt. He played a similar role in 1900, recovering the body of a seaman who tripped and fell in the dark of night from the Greymouth wharf.[118] Together with the exemplary performance of his normal duties, such incidents earned him the respect of his employer and others in the community. It is not surprising, therefore, that his request for a salary increase "to 10s a day for 7 days a week" was quickly agreed to in April 1900.[119]

James's talents were not limited to his place of work. He was a proud co-patentee of a spur-gear bicycle which he believed could "hold its own, if not outclass in many respects those in use upon the roads."[120] A public exhibition of this bicycle was held in Greymouth on 18 November 1898.

In the absence of complete birth registrations, the exact number and identity of children in the Mikoz family is open to question, but it included at least two sons (Alexander [a.k.a. Francis or Frank] and Patrick) and three daughters (Mary, Norah and Ellen). Of these children, one is known to have been troublesome and two the subjects of parental grief. Alexander was such an irresponsible spendthrift that James twice placed advertisements informing shopkeepers and other creditors that he would not be liable for his son's debts.[121] On the other hand, the deaths of Mary (1895) and Ellen (1900), both of whom had suffered from ill health, were times of parental grief. Unlike Ellen, whose death at home before her twelfth birthday could be attributed to "a severe... inflammation of the lungs", her sister's demise was unusual. A blood vessel rupture was thought to be the cause of Mary's death, but when her body was found one evening in Greymouth's Elmer

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[118] *Grey River Argus*, 11 May 1885 p.2 and *West Coast Times*, 22 May 1900 p.4 (recovery of drowning victims).

[119] *Grey River Argus*, 26 April 1900 p.2 (re salary increase).

[120] *Grey River Argus*, 18 November 1898 p.2 and p.3 (re bicycle patent).

[121] *Grey River Argus*, 7 September 1891 p.2 and 8 March 1901 p.3 (re Alexander's debts).

Lane with blood about the face and no sign of injury, public interest was naturally aroused.[122]

After a short illness, Sarah Ann Mikoz died on 19 October 1902, barely 19 months before the death of her devoted husband. In December 1903, James applied to the Harbour Board for a month's leave, his first in 17 years.[123] During this leave he felt unwell and spent time dangerously ill in Wellington Hospital, suffering from peritonitis. His return to Greymouth in April, his inability to resume work over the following six weeks, his death on 3 June 1904 (aged 58 years) and his interment in the Greymouth cemetery were monitored by *The Grey River Argus*.[124] Announcing his death, the newspaper reported that James:

> *... was in the employ of the Harbour Board ... and was a trustworthy servant. He was well known and highly respected, and the genial "Jimmy" as he was familiarly called, will be greatly missed.*[125]

Survived by (at least) three children, Giaccomo (James) Mikoz left his estate – a leasehold section with a six-roomed dwelling, household furniture and effects – in the hands of trustees to administer for the sole benefit of his daughter Norah, a spinster in Greymouth. The estate fetched almost £260 at auction but after payment of funeral expenses and debts was reduced to £97, a sum that prompted his executors to ask the Harbour Board "to make some compassionate allowance as his daughter was left rather badly off".[126]

Francisco (a.k.a. Frank) Violich [Violić]

In his oath of allegiance for naturalisation in March 1877, Francisco – commonly known as Frank – stated that he was 34 years old, born (*c.*1843) in "Callamotta" (i.e. Koločep, near Dubrovnik), and had arrived in New

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[122] *Grey River Argus*, 7 October 1895 p.2 and 24 July 1900 p.2 (re death of Mary and Ellen).

[123] *Grey River Argus*, 16 December 1903 p.3 (re leave application).

[124] *Grey River Argus*, 27 January 1904 p.3 (re illness); 13 April 1904 p.3 (re return to Greymouth); 7 May 1904 p.2 (re continued illness); 4 June 1904 p.2 (re death); 6 June 1904 p.2 (re funeral).

[125] *Grey River Argus*, 4 June 1904 p.2.

[126] Probate file, Giaccomo (James) Mikoz (CAIF/20702/CH300/Box 54/HK1123/1904), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch (for will and estate value); *Grey River Argus*, 15 June 1904 p.3 (re executors' request).

Zealand in September 1860. If these personal details are correct he was just 17 or 18 years old upon his arrival. However, there is room for doubt here because his 1877 marriage certificate states he was 40 years of age (i.e. born *c.*1837 rather than *c.*1843) and therefore about 23 years old upon arrival. Some of Frank's descendants believe that when he jumped ship he had been a ship's cooper.[127]



Francisco (Frank) Violich
Source: **Kevin Violich**

Nothing definite is known about his life and activities during the 1860s, but it is reasonable to assume that he tried his hand at mining in Nelson, Otago and/or Westland and may also have ventured into the hotel business. The end result, however, was disastrous; a creditors' meeting was called in September 1870 in Greymouth to decide if proceedings for bankruptcy could be changed to one of arrangement.[128] Apparently the latter option was approved, as Frank was able to either form or continue a partnership with John Pavletich (from Bakar near Rijeka, previously a gold-miner in Australia).

[127] Some background and other information provided by Kevin Violich, personal communications, February-March 2011.

[128] *West Coast Times*, 14 September 1870 p.1, and 19 September 1870 p.1 (re bankruptcy).

This partnership, trading under the name of Pavletich and Co., ran the Commercial Hotel at Upper Ford, Little Grey Junction, as well as a ferry service across the Grey River. It was dissolved by mutual consent in March 1872, the business thereafter being carried on by Frank with Peter Sacconi for at least another year until April 1873.[129] His activities during the next three to four years are unknown but an unclaimed letter at Greymouth's Post Office in late 1874 suggests that he remained in the region, perhaps working as a miner and/or contractor.

By early 1877 Frank was developing a relationship with Helen Bingham White (née Campbell, born *c.*1845 in Melbourne), a widow with six children. Helen and her late husband, Peter White (a.k.a. Pierre Le Blanc), had arrived in Hokitika in 1866. Ten years later in December 1876, Peter, then publican of Greymouth's Commercial Hotel, committed suicide; he and Helen were known to be living apart at the time as a result of domestic problems.[130] Barely seven months later, in July 1877, Frank married Helen at St. Patrick's Church, Greymouth, and six children were born over the next ten years – Francis John (January 1878), Alice (1879), Adelaide (1880), Albert (1881), Charlotte (1884), and Victor (1887).[131]

Helen, with Frank's assistance, continued to manage the Commercial Hotel for several months until the new licensee took possession. During this time she began to sort out her late husband's estate, but the newly married couple also considered their future options and made plans accordingly. By October 1877 they had moved to Wallsend, a rough 'frontier' coal mining town adjoining Brunner some 15km east of Greymouth. Frank opened a billiard saloon there and in December 1877 applied to the Licensing Court for a new hotel.[132] His application was approved with a proviso that if the business was not "conducted in a respectable manner" the licence would be cancelled. The Court was signalling its dissatisfaction with:

> *... the... disreputable condition of houses [i.e. hotels] in that neighbourhood, [where, with one exception]...there was not a house fit*

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[129] *Grey River Argus*, 27 March 1872 p.3, 24 April 1873 p.4, and 25 January 1875 p.4 (re partnerships with Pavletich and Sacconi).

[130] *Grey River Argus*, 22 December 1876 p.2 (re suicide inquest).

[131] The names and birthdates of children were provided by Kevin Violich, February-March 2011.

[132] *Grey River Argus*, 8 October 1877 p.3 (re Wallsend billiard saloon).

> *for respectable people to enter, or where proper and decent accommodation could be procured.*[133]

Two weeks after Frank's application was approved, a setback occurred; noting that he had failed to comply with certain licence conditions, the Court decided that it would withhold the certificate until accommodation shown upon the plan he submitted had been provided.[134] It appears Frank complied. But if he did so as the owner of the Empire Hotel, his status soon changed to that of a tenant who less than five years later was ordered by a magistrate to pay rent arrears (£15 11s) and to vacate the premises within a week so that a new owner could take possession.[135]

That said, the years in Wallsend were busy and eventful ones with the birth of the couple's first four children, Frank's discharge in 1880 from the 1870 bankruptcy arrangement[136] (an event perhaps linked to the hotel's ownership), and his employment as a contractor. Leaving Helen to manage the hotel, Frank worked either alone or in a partnership on a variety of contracts, including construction of a box culvert and road improvement for the Grey County Council (1881).[137] Such work could be quite lucrative unless the profit margin was eroded by the demands of difficult terrain, unfavourable weather, and cutthroat competition for local body contracts usually awarded to the lowest tender. Over a period of nine months in 1880/81, for example, Frank must have wondered if he could earn a living when three quarters of the tenders he submitted to the Grey County Council were unsuccessful.[138]

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[133] *Grey River Argus*, 5 December 1877 p.2 (re Wallsend hotel licence etc.).

[134] *Grey River Argus*, 19 December 1877 p.2 (re certificate being withheld).

[135] *Grey River Argus*, 3 May 1882 p.2 (re hotel tenancy termination).

[136] *Grey River Argus*, 27 July 1880 p.3 and 6 August 1880 p.3 (re bankruptcy discharge).

[137] In July 1881, Frank, in a partnership (Regan and Violich), won a tender (£152) for construction of a box culvert and improvement of the main Grey Valley Road at Rocky Island. The tender ran into difficulties that resulted in a claim to the County Council for £25 for extra work and a request for an extension of time. For details regarding this contract and the Overseer's report, see: *Grey River Argus*, 20 July 1881 p.2, 22 October 1881 p.2, 25 November 1881 p.2, and 13 December 1881 p.4.

[138] *Grey River Argus*, 7 October 1880 p.2 and 20 July 1881 p.2 (re contracting work).

Upon leaving the Empire Hotel at Wallsend in 1882 the family moved back to Greymouth, occupying a cottage in Boundary Street that Helen purchased in her name alone (probably drawing on funds from Peter White's estate). The couple's last two children were born there but the family experienced a number of difficulties and sorrows during the second half of the 1880s. In 1885, two cases in the Magistrate's Court went against Frank as the defendant; the first for more than £77 plus costs and the second for a much smaller sum of almost £8, though the Court made no order for the latter given the absence of evidence that the defendant was able to pay.[139] On the home front, the sixth child (Victor) died within four months of birth in 1887 and in 1889 Helen's eldest son (William White, aged 20) died in a coach accident.[140] With Frank engaged on contracts at some distance from Greymouth, such events and financial difficulties may have contributed to a situation where he and Helen were living apart. In June 1890, less than three months after completing and paying off his men for a sub-contract at Ahaura (halfway between Greymouth and Reefton), Frank was adjudged bankrupt for the second time.[141] Described as a bushman, his place of residence was Tawhai near Reefton.

Although this bankruptcy was closed in 1891 and the assignee released from his duties with Frank's estate at the beginning of 1892,[142] Helen set about providing for herself and the children. Working with her eldest daughters (the Misses White) she operated the Fancy Repository and Art Needle Work Depot in Tainui Street, Greymouth, from late 1891 until 1898. They stocked a variety of fancy goods and toys, performed machine knitting to order, offered lessons in artwork and served as agents for clothing patterns and homeopathic medicines.[143] Details are scarce but Frank, for his part, appears to have continued employment as a contractor wherever there was work to be found. In 1893, for example, he and a partner won a contract to supply

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[139] *Grey River Argus*, 2 April 1885 p.2 and 24 December 1885 p.2 (re defendant in court cases).

[140] *Grey River Argus*, 12 September 1887 p.2 and 29 May 1889 p.2 (death notices, Victor and William).

[141] See: *Grey River Argus*, 21 March 1890 p.4 (re Ahura contract); and *Inangahua Times*, 4 June 1890 p.2 (re second bankruptcy).

[142] *Inangahua Times*, 8 July 1891 p.2 and 8 January 1892 p.3 (re closing of bankruptcy).

[143] *Grey River Argus*, 18 December 1891 p.3 and 4 April 1894 p.3 (re Art Needle Work Depot).

bridge piles for the Seaward Bush railway extension near Invercargill. Needless to say their tender for this project was the lowest received.[144]

In late 1898/early 1899, following the sale of the leasehold business property in Tainui Street, Helen sold the cottage in Boundary Street and moved to Wellington with the children.[145] Living at 102 Molesworth Street, she and her daughters took in boarders. Exactly when Frank moved north is unknown but at the time of Helen's death, 17 September 1911, he was already residing in Dannevirke, Hawkes Bay. He died there, aged about 84 years, on 8 August 1916. Frank was survived by four of his own children (his eldest son, Francis John, died at Porirua in 1912) but made provision in his will for the division of his estate (valued at £261) between only two of these children (son Albert and daughter Charlotte, who were to receive one quarter each) and one step-daughter (Beatrice, who was bequeathed half of the estate).[146] In accord with his instructions, Frank was interred at Wellington's Karori Cemetery in the same plot as his late wife and eldest son.

Nicolo Radove [Radovi or Radović?]

Mistakenly identified as a Sicilian by the *Timaru Herald* in 1888, an error repeated by two later writers,[147] Nicolo Radove – as shown in his naturalisation documents – was actually an Austrian citizen. He declared that his birthplace (*c.*1834) was "Oulban, near Trieste", possibly a misspelling of "Albona" (known today as Labin) on the Istrian peninsula. Nicolo was illiterate, using a mark to sign his naturalisation application, and it seems that whoever filled in the papers made an error in translating his pronunciation of his birthplace's name. It may be argued that if his birthplace was Albona (Labin) it would more accurately have been described as being "near Fiume" (i.e. Rijeka) rather than "near Trieste". Under the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary, however, Fiume and its Croatian hinterland were controlled by Hungary, whereas Trieste and Istria were administered by Austria and

[144] *Evening Post*, 20 February 1893 p.2 (re Seaward Bush contract).

[145] *Grey River Argus*, 17 June 1897 p.3, 30 January 1899 p.3 and 3 February 1899 p.3 (re sales of lease property and cottage).

[146] Probate file, Frank Violich (AAOM/W3265/6029/Box 303/19644), Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington (re Frank's will, estate value and division among family members).

[147] See Vance (1980:35) and Pickering (2010:150).

therefore consistent with Nicolo's declared Austrian nationality when he applied for naturalisation (1881).

Although the details of his early life have yet to be verified, especially as it has been suggested that some aspects were concocted in "*one of [Nicolo's] imaginative moods*"[148], it does seem that he was a bit of an adventurer. According to Vance, Nicolo started off as a cabin boy in coastal shipping and by age 20 was a sailor serving in the British navy during the Crimean War (1853-1856).[149] Among the first to scale the fortress wall at the end of the siege of Sevastopol (a.k.a. Sebastopol) in 1855, he was wounded in action and nursed back to health in one of the camp hospitals set up by Florence Nightingale. He is also thought to have been a seaman on the great clipper ships over the next few years (1856-1860) and to have tried his hand at gold mining in Australia.

Nicolo arrived in New Zealand *c.*1860. Dark-haired and of powerful physique he became known throughout South Canterbury as "Big Mick". For most of the first seven years after his arrival he worked as a station hand and shearer in the Mackenzie Country on the Benmore, Ben Ohau and Balmoral sheep stations, and for a while managed Glen Lyon station. His strength, diligence, skills and good temper, together with his generosity and support for workmates, made him a favourite wherever he went. He assisted Jock Fraser, owner of Ben Ohau station, with the task of driving the first mob of sheep over 500km from Nelson to the Mackenzie Country, and gained respect as a 'gun' blade shearer who could fleece 50 Marino sheep before breakfast.[150] But life for Big Mick wasn't all work and no play; he was known to be a hard drinker when in town with workmates, and at a race meeting held on Benmore station in January 1867 was successful with two of his horses, *Phantom* and *Topsy*, the latter winning both the Shearer's Purse and Shepherd's Plate.[151]

By saving his wages and shearing cheques, and calling in loans (including one for £50, recovered via a court case[152]), Nicolo built up sufficient capital

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[148] Pinney (1971:58-59).

[149] Vance (1980:144).

[150] Details on Nicolo's early years in New Zealand are from "A Mackenzie Country Pioneer" *Timaru Herald*, 31 July 1888 p.3, and Vance (1980:54, 137 and 139).

[151] *North Otago Times*, 5 February 1867 p.2 (re the Benmore races).

[152] *Timaru Herald*, 20 May 1868 p.2 and 10 June 1868 p.2 (re court case for loan recovery).

to buy his own property. Accompanied by John Lloyd, a fellow station hand with whom he had developed a close relationship, he took possession of Birch Hill in 1868, a station of 12,000 hectares on the south bank of the Tasman River that included the southern spurs of Mt. Cook. It was here that Big Mick became a figure of legend.

Believed to be the first European on the Tasman Glacier, his mountaineering exploits – as he clambered over his rugged property seeking out and mustering sheep – were often talked about. Among the stories told by neighbours and station hands were the following: that on one trip, his boots slung about his neck, he walked barefoot to get over hillsides made like glass by an overnight frost; how he once stayed out so long that he had to eat snowgrass roots to overcome the pangs of hunger; and that Dr Julius von Haast, on an expedition up what he believed to be the "unexplored" slopes of Mt. Cook, was startled by the sudden appearance of Big Mick who announced that the area was part of his regular mustering beat.[153] Pickering suggests that the latter story – befitting a legend – is nothing more than a tall tale because Haast was exploring the area in 1862, about six years before Nicolo took possession of Birch Hill.[154] Of course it is possible that the story stems from an incident which occurred when Nicolo was working not as a station owner but as a station hand in the area. There is no denying, however, that when Sir George Bowen, Governor of New Zealand, visited the area in 1873, Nicolo provided provisions for a couple of nights, pointed out various scenic features along a section of the Tasman Valley and lent replacement mounts to some of the Governor's party for their return journey.[155]

Nicolo could never have managed all of the mustering and other work without the assistance of his close friend John Lloyd, plus other station hands and shearers as required. It must therefore have been a double blow when, after three years at Birch Hill, John's health began to deteriorate. Finding it more and more difficult to work, Lloyd consulted a Timaru doctor who diagnosed an incurable disease. Refusing to be hospitalised, he returned to Birch Hill where his care as he became weaker placed a mounting demand on Nicolo's time and energy. According to Vance:

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[153] For stories of Nicolo's exploits see: "Mount Cook exploration" *Timaru Herald*, 7 June 1871 p.5 (mistakenly identified as 'Reddoff'), 31 July 1888 p.3; and Vance (1980:144).

[154] Pickering (2010:154).

[155] *Timaru Herald*, 10 February 1873 p.2 (re Governor's visit).

> *Each evening Big Mick took care to finish his work in time to carry Lloyd up the hillock at the back of the homestead to see the sunset. ... When dusk changed the blue Mackenzie sky to violet, and a crisp wind from the Tasman Glacier gave warning of approaching nightfall, Big Mick, wrapping a blanket around his mate, carried him down to the homestead.*
>
> *... It is recorded that [when Lloyd died] Big Mick, in his grief, "lay on the corpse and tried to breathe life into the lips of his companion" ..."*[156]

Lloyd was buried on the hillock behind the Birch Hill homestead, and the grave is still marked by the original headstone which reads:

> *John Lloyd who died 16 Sept. 1872 aged 36 years. A token of respect erected by Nicolo Radove.*[157]

Because Lloyd died intestate without any known relatives, letters of administration for his estate and effects were granted to Nicolo in January 1873 by the District Court at Timaru.[158]

Thanks to his hard work, thrift and the sound advice of a neighbour (probably Andrew Burnett of Mount Cook station) Nicolo did well at Birch Hill but sold the property in 1874. Although he may have been induced to sell by "prosperous times and high prices"[159], another determinant was probably Lloyd's death. Looking for a new property, Nicolo visited the North Island, found nothing that suited him and returned to the Mackenzie Country where he purchased the Mistake station in 1875. Extending from the northwest shore of Lake Tekapo between the Cass and Godley rivers, the Mistake station (later named Godley Peaks) covered an area of over 48,000 hectares of rugged terrain that was difficult to muster and required attentive flock management.

Big Mick started well on his new venture but it ended in disaster a decade later. In 1876, to manage costs and maintain reasonable returns, he joined other station owners and managers in setting and publishing an ongoing agreement for shearing rates as well as an embargo on the employment of

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[156] Vance (1980:120).

[157] Pickering (2010:157-158).

[158] *Timaru Herald*, 10 January 1873 p.2 advert col. 4.

[159] Vance (1980:145).

shearers refusing work at the rate specified.[160] Similarly, he successfully applied to the Mt. Cook Road Board in 1877 for funding assistance to improve access to his woolshed.[161] Overall, times were good for the first three years, marked by extravagant parties that went on for a week at a time.[162] Nicolo's marriage c.1878/79 to Irish-born Ellen Fleming was believed to have brought much needed order and restraint to life at the Mistake station but the couple almost immediately faced a succession of setbacks and tragedies. Severe winters with heavy snowfalls, often as late as spring lambing, a well-known hazard in the Mackenzie Country, were particularly bad in 1879 and 1884 with significant stock losses. To add to their woes, in 1879 New Zealand was hit by the onset of a depression that lasted for over a decade. Export prices for wool and other commodities fell. The outcome of these events, coupled with shortcomings in farm management, the absence of business advice from his former neighbour at Birch Hill and the lack of friendly guidance from his new neighbour (John McGregor, Glenmore station), was that Nicolo found himself in financial difficulties.[163] Finally, in the midst of these troubles, he and Ellen lost their only children; Anna Maria in 1880 (aged three months), and Catharine in 1881 (aged four months).[164]

To resolve his financial difficulties, Nicolo took out a couple of mortgages, the first in November 1882 and another in August 1884. But this course of action only delayed the fateful day. In March 1885 the mortgagee (The British and New Zealand Land Mortgage and Agency Company) sold the property. Nicolo was enraged and stormed into the company's office demanding an explanation. Three months later, arguing that the sale was unwarranted, done in an improper manner and that it undervalued the property, he took his case to the Supreme Court, claiming £2,000 for damages. The mortgagee responded with a counter claim for £822 (the balance due on securities), asserting the plaintiff defaulted not only on

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[160] *Timaru Herald*, 16 November 1876 p.4 (re shearing rates agreement).

[161] *Timaru Herald*, 8 December 1877 p.3 (re Roads Board funding).

[162] Vance (1980:171).

[163] See: *Timaru Herald*, 31 July 1888 p.3; and Vance (1980:171) for life and setbacks on the Mistake station. Pinney (1971:92) notes that McGregor was "not on good terms with his neighbour, Nicolo Radove" and that the two men never visited each other.

[164] "Early Mackenzie Country Graves – Musterers" http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ accessed February 2011 (re death and burial of daughters).

payment demanded, but also on covenants for both the number and management of sheep on the property. In effect, Nicolo lost his case. He was awarded £1,600 damages but because of the counter claim it was decided that he was entitled to recover £840 from the mortgagee, while the latter could recover £779 7s 6d in respect of the counter claim.[165]



Nicolo Radovan and his wife Ellen (This is part of a larger photograph that is *believed* to show Nicolo (seated) with his wife Ellen (hand on his shoulder)
***Source:* South Canterbury Museum**

Given the stringent economic conditions of the times, Nicolo and Ellen were fortunate to secure employment at the Hermitage, built at Mt. Cook during the previous year. Big Mick's reputation and local knowledge were undoubtedly valued by his employer (Frank Huddleston) who was working hard to develop tourism in the area. Here, as a guide for about two years, Nicolo was reputed to be a great favourite with guests, introducing them to the wonders and surroundings of the Tasman Glacier. Big Mick, however,

[165] *Otago Daily Times*, 26 June 1885 p.3 and 29 June 1885 p.4 (re Radove vs The British and New Zealand Mortgage and Agency Company).

was ill, suffering from a liver disease that cut short what might otherwise have been a distinguished finale to his life.[166]

When the disease became worse he was brought, on medical advice, to Timaru where he died, aged 54 years, on 29 July 1888.[167] Interred in the Timaru cemetery, his obituary noted, among other points, that:

> *He was a rough diamond ... but kind of heart, and when in a position to play the host, hospitable to a notable degree, even in a region where hospitality is a sacred duty.*[168]

Survived by his wife, Nicolo died intestate. Ellen remarried five years later, but it was not until 1900 (with the consent of her new husband, James Keane of Levels station) that she applied for and was granted letters of administration for Nicolo's estate and effects, valued at less than £100.[169]

Nicolo Radove's presence and role in the history of South Canterbury's high country is today marked by various topographic features, including: Mt. Radove (2,430m), the highest point at the head of Middle Gorge on Godley Peaks; Mt. Sebastopol (1,468m), named by Nicolo in remembrance of his service during the Crimean War; the Zora (i.e. the Dawn) Glacier and nearby Zora Creek.

Thomas Henry Carina

Born in March 1837 at "Portore" (i.e. Kraljevica, near Rijeka), Thomas Carina was 25 years old and possibly accompanied by two sons – Thomas and Joseph – when he arrived in March 1862. Nothing else is known about his life and activities prior to arrival, and with two exceptions – his marriage and naturalisation – much the same can be said about his first 6 years in New Zealand. On 5 September 1867 Thomas married Catherine McLean (born 1823 in Argyleshire, Scotland) at the home of Hector McKay in Auckland.

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[166] *Timaru Herald*, 31 July 1888 p.3 (re employment at the Hermitage and liver disease).

[167] Pinney (1971:170) refers to "a painful illness", makes no mention of a liver disease, suspects that Nicolo "died of a broken heart" and notes that his death certificate stated "rupture of blood vessel in intestine".

[168] *Timaru Herald*, 31 July 1888 p.3.

[169] Probate file, Nicolo Radove (CAHX/2989/CH171/Box 112/CH4003/1900), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch (re value of estate, Ellen remarrying etc.).

Catherine had arrived in New Zealand *c.*1860.[170] A year after his marriage, Thomas applied for and was granted naturalisation, at which time he was a "settler" in Whitianga, Mercury Bay, on the Coromandel Peninsula.



Thomas Henry Carina
***Source:* Mercury Bay Museum, Whitianga**

Given his rapid rise to prominence in Mercury Bay, the lack of information about Thomas's previous life and activities gives rise to a key question. How did he get the capital required for his business ventures and other activities? Assuming that his resources were limited or non-existent upon arrival in New Zealand, there appear to be at least 3 possible answers (or some

[170] Thomas's background details provided by Janet Riddle, personal communication 14 June 2011; Catherine's details at http://ouraucklandstuff.freeservers.com/AuckDeathsC.htm accessed June 2011.

combination thereof) to this question. The first possibility is that Thomas, in partnership with Vincent Duimovich (who arrived *c.*1864), did well as a timber contractor supplying a Mercury Bay sawmill. Hearsay evidence in support of such a partnership was provided in a *Thames Star* article several decades later when Duimovich died.[171] A second possibility is that Thomas struck it lucky as a gold prospector in the Thames district or elsewhere on the Coromandel Peninsula in the mid-1860s. Finally, it is possible that he very shrewdly courted and captivated an older woman of substance; he was 30 and Catherine (Kate) 44 years old when they married in 1867. While nothing is known about Catherine's means and social position, the evidence available suggests that she had no children of her own before marrying Thomas and that their union was also without issue. For an ambitious younger man, a non-British immigrant with two sons, it might well have been an ideal marriage.

Whatever the source of his funds, Thomas established himself as a business leader in Mercury Bay with a cluster of enterprises on parts of a block of land known as Karamuramu No.235N. His first venture here was the Whitianga Hotel (built *c.*1867/68) of which he was the proprietor until 1888. By June 1871 he had also built a public hall (a.k.a. "Carina's Music Hall") that served the community as a venue for both entertainment and various social functions. Other Carina businesses or buildings in the same area eventually included two stores, stables, a blacksmith's shop, a harness room, a house and a cottage. In the last quarter of 1872 he completed (at a cost of £250) a wharf nearly 400 feet (122 metres) long to enhance the strategic location of his property and to direct trade – especially that associated with local saw mills – toward his hotel and other business ventures.[172] Via a letter to the editor of the *Daily Southern Cross*, 11 November 1872, Thomas proudly advised readers that as a service to seafarers and the general public:

> *... a bright light is shown from sunset to sunrise from the end of my wharf, at which there is 11ft [3.35 metres] of water at ordinary high tides. An early gazette notice will particularise the nautical bearings.*

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[171] *Thames Star*, 7 July 1910, cited by Isdale (1994:10). Note that July 1910 issues of the *Thames Star* were missing from the National Library of New Zealand "Papers Past" digital resource as at July 2011.

[172] *Auckland Star*, 27 August 1888 p.8 advert col.4 (re land known as Karamuramu No.235N and buildings thereon); *Daily Southern Cross*, 19 June 1871 p.3 (article on launch of cutter "Mercury" refers to "Mr Carina's new music hall"), and 3 November 1874 p.2 (re length and cost of wharf).

Like other businessmen of his time, Thomas was not immune to the attractions or potential value of both town and rural landholdings. Aside from the site noted above for his hotel and other buildings, by the mid-1880s he was the owner of 12 freehold allotments in Mercury Bay and 31 adjoining the mill of the Kauri Timber Company in the locality known as Campbell Town. He also held title to 14 freehold blocks, together amounting to about 321 acres (129.9 hectares), situated in and around Gum Town (now Coroglen).[173] As frequent visitors to Auckland, it is very likely that Thomas and Catherine had a property there as well.

A willingness to support other local ventures, further evidence of his financial resources and commercial acumen, was first demonstrated when Thomas commissioned two boats from shipwright William White who had set up a business at Ferry Landing around 1870. The first vessel, a yacht called the *Contrabandiere* (i.e. *Smuggler*), upon which "no expense or pains were spared", was launched in October 1873 and offered for sale 18 months later.[174] Better known was the second vessel, the 60 ton *Saucy Kate*, a fore-and-aft schooner launched in 1876 and employed for some years in the business of coastal shipping between Mercury Bay, Auckland and other ports.[175] No wonder, therefore, that Thomas was identified in 1884 as a provisional director, along with seven other Mercury Bay residents (including William White as secretary pro tem), in a prospectus issued to form The Mercury Bay Co-operative Steamship Company (Ltd.).[176] His willingness to assist and/or work with others no doubt accounted also for the arrival in 1883 of Marcello Carina (possibly a younger brother), who quickly became proprietor of the Mercury Bay Buffet in 1885/86 and a storekeeper when naturalised in 1887. Thomas, however, was not always amenable to the interests and needs of tradesmen; in September 1884 a claim against him for £29, for tuning and correcting a piano-forte and repairing a billiard table, was

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[173] *Auckland Star*, 24 November 1888 p.8 advert (re sale of Carina allotments and blocks of land).

[174] *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 October 1873 p.2, and 23 April 1875 p.1 adverts (re launch and sale of *Contrabandiere*).

[175] *Auckland Star*, 16 October 1876 p.2 ("Imports" re Auckland arrival of *Saucy Kate*).

[176] *Auckland Star*, 6 August 1884 p.2 advert col.1 (Prospectus of Mercury Bay Co-operative Steamship Company).

decided at Auckland's Resident Magistrate's Court in favour of the plaintiff.[177]

Despite his other activities, Thomas still found time for local government, serving as a Coromandel County Councillor representing the Mercury Bay Riding from January 1877 until November 1884[178]. The fact that he was one of three candidates returned unopposed for the Riding in 1881 suggests that he performed well, enjoyed the support of eligible voters and was respected by his peers. However, the job was not without its disappointments. In March 1877, for example, he was included in a deputation that unsuccessfully solicited Government's assistance to separate the Mercury Bay, Tairua and Whangapoua districts from the counties of Coromandel and Thames. On the other hand, Thomas would have been pleased to be a member of a deputation in 1882 that successfully brought to the Premier's attention issues affecting the County that were in need of urgent attention (e.g. charitable aid and hospital funding, the appointment of a resident JP, and trunk road maintenance).[179] But it was his performance of normal Council duties that probably yielded the greatest benefits to Coromandel County and saved him from an attempted murder.

Returning home on 3 May 1878 after a trip on Council business, Thomas was attacked and wounded with a gum spear by Patrick Noonan, a 45 year old bushman. Was it, as Noonan claimed, just a momentary act of insanity induced by excessive alcohol consumption, or an attempted murder motivated by a desire for revenge? Having previously gained a conviction against Noonan on another matter, Thomas had no doubts about his assailant's motivation, state of mind or intention.

> *The man ... was to all appearance as sober as a judge when he went through my house, searching every room to find me ... having a gum spear in his hand ... and uttering threats that he intended to kill me, and also told my wife she would be "a widow in no time". As it fortunately happened, I was away from home, looking after the road which is in course of construction from Mercury Bay to Coromandel, and had Mr Luks [a fellow councillor] as my companion. Upon my arrival at home, Mr Luks and myself, while on horseback, had a glass of beer, and while returning the glasses to the*

[177] *Auckland Star*, 11 September 1884 p.3 ("Resident Magistrate's Court" re Reed vs Carina).

[178] See Rhodes (1937:5).

[179] *Auckland Star*, 27 March 1877 p.3 and 6 February 1882 p.2 (re membership and objectives of first and second deputations, respectively).

> *barmaid, the man ... made an onslaught on me with the determination of carrying out his threat to my wife ... Happily, however, I was riding a spirited horse ... [which] swerved back, so that the gum spear only entered my clothes and glanced along my ribs, inflicting a serious wound.*[180]

In Auckland's Supreme Court two months later, Noonan pleaded guilty to the charge of attempted murder and was sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour.

Away from work in business or local government, Thomas was no less active in pursuit of other interests. A member of the Masons, he was invested as founding Treasurer for Lodge Whitianga, consecrated by the Provincial Grand Lodge, North Island of New Zealand, Scottish Constitution, when it held a meeting at Mercury Bay in December 1885.[181] One suspects, however, that he was more interested in horse racing and Mercury Bay's annual regatta.

According to Janet Riddle "races in Whitianga were held on Buffalo Beach at low tide, until Thomas Carina had a course constructed near Taputapuatea Stream ...around 1867".[182] Thomas successfully raced his horses in both public meetings and private matches, well illustrated by the steeplechaser *Whakahihi* during the first quarter of 1881. In January the horse was second in the Handicap Hurdle Race at Tauranga, won a private match for £25 in March at Coromandel racecourse, and came second in the Handicap Steeplechase at Auckland's autumn meeting in April. Similarly, as a foundation member of Mercury Bay's Jockey Club (formed in 1881), Thomas was Treasurer for the committee organising the Club's 1883 summer meeting where his horse *Kossuth* won the Maiden Plate and Ladies' Purse on the first and second days, respectively.[183] He would have been well pleased with these results when the Club held its annual ball at "Carina's Music Hall" on the evening of the second day.

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[180] "Stabbing Case at Mercury Bay" *Bay of Plenty Times*, 11 May 1878 p.3.

[181] "Masonic" *Auckland Star*, 2 January 1886 p.6.

[182] Riddle (1996:206).

[183] See: *Auckland Star*, 31 January 1881 p.2, 19 March 1881 p.2 and 19 April 1881 p.3 (re race results for *Whakahihi* a.k.a. *Whakahehe*); 11 November 1882 p.1 advert col.8 (identified as treasurer for Mercury Bay Jockey Club summer meeting 1883); *Thames Star*, 13 January 1883 p.2 (re *Kossuth* results).

Whether out of personal interest, compliance with what was expected of a successful businessman, his long friendship with shipwright William White or a combination of these and other (perhaps less flattering) reasons, Thomas was a generous supporter of the Mercury Bay Regatta on at least a couple of occasions. Of these, the first was by far the most important. In late 1881, after earlier talk of staging a New Zealand sculling championship at Mercury Bay between Hearn of Wellington and local boy Albert White (for which Thomas offered a £50 prize and gold medal) fell through, Thomas offered an unspecified inducement to get two top scullers from Australia to come and race against White. This event took place at Mercury Bay on 27 December 1881, as part of the annual regatta, over a distance of 3.5 miles (5.63km) with White competing against Australians identified as Harry Floyd and Charles Carter. White had an early lead but was over-hauled by Carter who won by several lengths. Carter also won a second race, albeit by a narrower margin, two weeks later.[184] Toward the end of January 1882, Thomas accompanied the rivals to Auckland's regatta where White easily defeated Carter in a scullers' race open to all comers for a prize of £20.[185] A fascinating twist to this episode came when it was revealed shortly afterwards that "Carter" was actually an alias for the renowned Australian oarsman Charles Messenger.[186] This revelation must have posed an interesting question for Thomas's friends and foes alike, a question for which there is still no definitive answer. Was Thomas – having offered an inducement to attract the two rowers – aware of the deception and, if so, did he make side bets or some other arrangements to recover his investment?

The second occasion on which Thomas demonstrated his largesse was when preparations were underway for the December 1885 regatta. He promised £100, a subscription lauded in the *Observer* which pointed out that it was not the first time he had given such an amount, "having contributed £100 some time ago."[187] By the standards of the day he was generous indeed, even if he stood to recoup much of his outlay as a publican and music hall owner catering to customers enjoying a day out.

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[184] *Auckland Star*, 30 December 1881 p.2 and 26 January 1882 p.2 (re White vs Carter, Mercury Bay).

[185] *Evening Post*, 31 January 1882 p.2 (re White Victory at Auckland Regatta).

[186] *Evening Post*, 10 February 1882 p.2 ("A Boating Scandal").

[187] *Observer*, 13 June 1885 p.22 (re donation for 1885 regatta).

Thomas Carina died at Whitianga in June 1888, aged 51 years. He had stated that he wished to be buried on the top of what was then called Lion Rock (now Carina Rock) in Coroglen southwest of Whitianga, but because no one could be found to carry him up there or the locals refused to do so, his family had his body taken to Auckland and interred at Mount Victoria Cemetery, Devonport.[188] Under the terms of his will, his estate (valued at under £1,000) was administered by non-family trustees instructed to pay annuities of £150 to his wife Catherine and to each of his two sons (Thomas and Joseph).[189] Catherine died at Epsom, Auckland, in June 1905, aged 82 years and was interred with her husband. Their grave at Mount Victoria Cemetery, located in row 4 plot 122, is marked by a Wesleyan/Presbyterian tombstone.[190]

Thomas Pavletich [Tomislav Pavletić]

Thomas Pavletich was born at "Buccari" (i.e. Bakar, near Rijeka) in December 1821. Arriving in Victoria, Australia, in 1853, he managed boarding-houses in Melbourne from 1856 until 1862 and was also in business as a general dealer.[191] Thomas married Anne Connell (born *c.*1834, County Kilkenny, Ireland) in Melbourne in July 1856. Recording her rank or profession as "servant" when they married, Anne undoubtedly provided considerable support in her husband's boarding-house ventures. Their first child (Jerome) was born in July 1857 but died less than two months later. Two more children, a daughter (Caseimira) and a son (Bonaventura) were born in 1859 and 1861, respectively, and accompanied their parents to New Zealand. The family arrived in Dunedin during November 1862 shortly after the Dunstan gold rush boosted Otago's economy.[192] It seems that Thomas and his wife were responding to an opportunity for economic and social advancement at a time when prospects in Melbourne, and Victoria in general, were beginning to wane.

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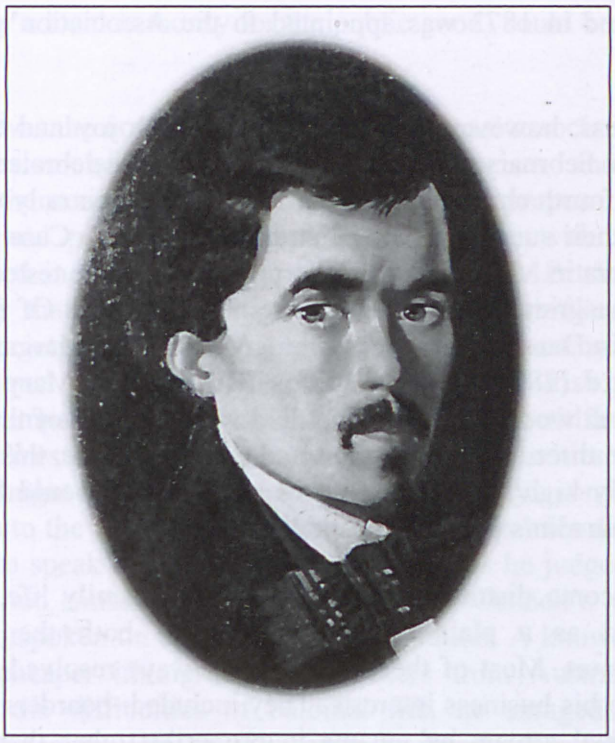
[188] Janet Riddle, personal communication 14 June 2011 (re Lion Rock burial desire etc.).

[189] Probate file, Thomas Carina (BBAE/1569/Box 11/296), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Auckland (re details of will, estate value) – full text of will later published in *Observer*, 14 September 1895, p.14 advert col.3.

[190] See http://testing.shorelibraries.govt.nz/Topics/Heritage/MtVicBurials.php#C (accessed June 2011) for burial details of Thomas and Catherine.

[191] Šutalo (2004:33).

[192] Marriage, births and other information provided in personal communication by Bernard Pavletich.



A portrait of Thomas Pavletich
***Source:* toitu Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin**

In 1863 Thomas took out a lease for 14 years on a house and land in (what was then) Walker Street, thereby qualifying for the electoral roll of Otago's Provincial Government. This property was his first New Zealand venture, "Pavletich's Boarding House", advertising "Lodgings, with wood and water…[for] 4s per week".[193] Building on its success, he leased a property (Abbeyleix House) on Maclaggan Street which became the Universal Hotel, Café and Restaurant in 1867. Claiming his hotel was unexcelled in Dunedin for comfort (and obviously seeking a better class of guest) he offered recherché suppers, a reading room with the latest periodicals, a billiard table and bowling saloon, and full board and residence for £1 per week.[194] In 1872 he was elected to membership of the Otago Licensed Victuallers'

[193] *Otago Daily Times*, 21 April 1864 p.8 and 16 July 1864 p.3 (re lease of property and advert for boarding-house, respectively).

[194] Information on the Universal Hotel and Restaurant provided by Bernard Pavletich. See also: *Stevens and Bartholomew's New Zealand Directory, 1867/68*, G. Stevens and D.H. Bartholomew, Melbourne; and adverts at various dates in *Otago Daily Times*, *Otago Witness* and *New Zealand Tablet*.

Association, and in 1873 was appointed to the Association's management committee.[195]

Business success, however, was paralleled by both joy and tragedy in his family life. In February 1864, Thomas and Anne celebrated the birth of Leander, their fourth child, but were plunged into despair only weeks later by the deaths of their surviving Australian-born children – Caseimira in April, and Bonaventura in May. It was a pattern that must have tested the fortitude and faith of the grieving parents over the next 12 years. Of five additional children born in Dunedin – Esther (1866), Mary (a.k.a. Margaret, 1867), Pia (1869), Leonard (1871) and Benedict (1873) – only Mary and Leonard survived to adulthood. Esther and Pia died within a year of their births, and Benedict at age three.[196] Even by the standards of the time, this mortality rate was abnormally high – especially for a couple who would be counted as members of Dunedin's prosperous middle class.

Perhaps a welcome distraction from the cares of family life, Thomas was often involved as a plaintiff or defendant in both the Mayor's and Magistrate's court. Most of these cases, not always resolved in his favour, were related to his business interests. They included: boarders failing to pay their dues; rental arrears by tenants in properties other than the hotel; a dispute concerning the removal of a tenant occupying leased premises; failing to meet rental payments for a horse; and charges for neglecting to sweep his chimney, keeping pigs within the city boundary, and for allowing a nuisance (heaps of rubbish) to exist on his premises. On a number of occasions he also served as an interpreter and/or translator in cases involving Austrians or Italians, a service he no doubt provided informally for foreign guests at the Universal Hotel.[197] Taken together, the above cases would have assured him of a certain reputation in Dunedin's conservative social circles, but business was business and recourse to the law in defence of one's

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[195] *Otago Daily Times*, 5 June 1872 p.4 and 4 June 1873 p.2.

[196] Information on birth and death of children provided by Bernard Pavletich, and checked against details for Thomas at website http://www.anzgenealogy.com/getperson.

[197] See: *Otago Daily Times*, 18 October 1870 p.3, 10 October 1871 p.3 and 10 January 1873 p.3 (re boarders owing dues); 1 February 1872 p.2 (horse rental); 16 May 1871 p.3, 9 October 1875 p.2, 4 March 1876 p.3 and 11 March 1876 p.5 (re tenant rental arrears); 10 July 1874 p.3 (lease termination); 22 July 1869 p.2, 20 August 1869 p.2, 25 November 1871 p.3, 13 March 1875 p.3 and 15 October 1875 p.2 (re charges re cleaning, rubbish and pigs); 21 April 1875 p.3, 21 June 1876 p.3; and *Otago Witness*, 5 February 1876 p.5 (re acting as Court interpreter or translator).

interests (or by a local authority for the public good) could be excused if not applauded.

More serious was the notoriety arising from Thomas' association with or his public expression of views on: Irish Catholicism and nationalism; immigration; the needs of the working class; and a proposal to establish a marine store and piggery. As a practicing Catholic with an Irish wife, Thomas worked in 1870 for the inauguration of a St. Patrick's Society, a benefit society that would have a national character similar to that of the Caledonian Society.[198] In 1875, possibly for similar reasons, he attended a centenary banquet in honour of Daniel O'Connell, an Irish politician who successfully campaigned for the right of Catholics to sit in the House of Commons at Westminster. Both were reasonable activities, though some Presbyterians might have had cause to object, especially upon reading a letter Thomas wrote to the *Otago Daily Times*. He made clear his displeasure with being unable to speak at the banquet, particularly as he judged the speakers selected to be too conservative to do justice to O'Connell's memory.[199] He was no less outspoken on the matter of immigration. A known advocate for the quicker, cheaper immigration of workers from Australia who were familiar with the difficulties of colonial life, he enraged a meeting at Dunedin's Temperance Hall in 1875 when he dismissed many of the recent assisted immigrants from Britain as "rotten stuff".[200] On the needs of the working class, Thomas: supported a petition in 1873 from workingmen to the Provincial Assembly seeking to compel contractors to pay their employees weekly wages in order to provide a measure of protection against fraud by absconding or insolvent employers; lamented an increase in the price of meat in 1874 which pressed "most severely upon the working classes"; and in 1876 spoke on behalf of the poor unemployed during a meeting at the Universal Hotel of firemen and seamen who gathered to protest against a proposed reduction of wages.[201] Such views with regard to the working class would have been accepted as the liberal sentiments of a champion for the less fortunate, were it not for both his pecuniary interests as an hotelier and landlord and his voluble promotion of a marine store and piggery.

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[198] *Otago Daily Times*, 30 May 1870 p.2 (re St. Patrick's Society).

[199] *Otago Daily Times*, 27 August 1875 p.3 (re O'Connell centenary).

[200] *Otago Daily Times*, 27 October 1875 p.2.

[201] On Thomas's views re working class needs, see: *New Zealand Tablet*, 24 May 1873 p.7; *Otago Daily Times*, 9 October 1874 p.2; and *Otago Witness*, 4 March 1876 p.18.

Proposed at meetings called by Thomas and held at the Universal Hotel in September and October 1874, the marine store and piggery was envisaged as a source of income and employment for the poor, who could collect discarded clothing and other material from the streets for processing abroad. Organic waste would also be collected and converted into quality meat at a piggery, rather than being left to rot in the streets or deposited elsewhere. An additional benefit was that the collection of wastes would clean up the city. Despite some initial interest among those attending meetings, and support from the *Otago Daily Times* – which anticipated savings on waste collection costs, as well as the removal of hazards to the health and comfort of citizens – the venture as originally proposed (with a capital value of £2,000 in shares of £1 each) came to nothing. Regarded by many as a noisome project, it aroused public debate for several weeks, and fostered ridicule by larrikins intent on "taking a rise out of old Pavletich". The last meeting ended in uproar and confusion, with Thomas standing on a table trying to restore order when someone turned off the gas, leaving those present in total darkness.[202]

Thomas Pavletich died, aged 53 years, at his place of residence (the Universal Hotel) on 30 January 1877. The cause of death was peritonitis. He was interred in the Roman Catholic area of Dunedin's Southern Cemetery, in a plot among the last line of headstones along the start of Eglinton Road.[203] Overall, the picture that emerges from available records is of a man who was energetic, enterprising, politically liberal and generally respected in the community. Often wearing a distinctive fur cap, he was an exotic source of interest and sometimes amusement to journalists observing his unguarded public behaviour and enthusiasm. Thomas was survived by his wife Anne and three children (Leander, Mary/Margaret and Leonard). As the sole beneficiary of his estate (estimated net value of £1,500), Anne took over her husband's business interests, including the Universal Hotel (rebuilt in 1880/81 in response to a threatened loss of licence because of its dilapidated condition)[204] which she managed until 1890. When Anne died, aged 84

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[202] For newspaper coverage of the Marine Store and Piggery proposal and debate, see: *Otago Daily Times*, 18 September 1874 p.3, 21 September 1874 p.2, 22 September 1874 p.2 and 5 December 1874 p.5; *Otago Witness*, 3 October 1874 p.13; and *Tuapeka Times*, 10 October 1874 p.3.

[203] *Otago Daily Times*, 31 January 1877 p.2, and information from Bernard Pavletich (re cause of death and location of grave).

[204] Probate file, Thomas Pavletich (DAAC/9073/D239/Box 28/553), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Dunedin (for will and estate value); *Otago Daily Times*, 4 June 1879 p.5

years, in July 1917, she was residing with the Little Sisters of the Poor (Andersons Bay, Dunedin), a Catholic religious order which catered for the frail and unfortunate.

Giorgio (a.k.a. George) Vucetich [Vucetič][205]

Born in May 1836 at "Lesina" (i.e. Island of Hvar), Giorgio had been a seafarer before his arrival in Lyttelton in 1862. He was apparently accompanied to New Zealand by his brother Nicolo who left shortly afterwards to take up residence and make his fortune in Yokahama, Japan.[206] Nothing certain is known about Giorgio's early life, but we can assume that he followed the tradition of other young Dalmatians who found berths on ships plying their trade around the world. A bush worker in the Rangiora district during his first three years after arriving, Giorgio accepted a position with Mrs Sarah O'Connell, Mount Grey station, in 1865. Exhibiting a desire for independence – plus the energy and drive he became known for in later years – Giorgio went out on his own in 1866, selecting a 50 acre (20.23 hectare) holding in the Cust Valley. Finding the property too limited for a living, he supplemented his income on some occasions by driving cattle for Sarah O'Connell across the Southern Alps to the goldfields of Westland via the Teremakau Saddle. Giorgio is thought to have been the second man to drive cattle on this difficult and risky route; good returns apparently provided the incentive and encouragement needed. He was naturalised in 1869.

In 1870 Giorgio married Annie Peebles (born 1843 in Perthshire, Scotland), the second daughter of Peter and Rebecca Peebles who had a property just north of the Cust Valley. The evidence available suggests that he may have met the Peebles family during his voyage to New Zealand. If so, this could explain his attraction to a holding in the Cust Valley. Within seven years

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(re dilapidated state of Universal Hotel), and *New Zealand Tablet*, 15 April 1881 p.11 (for description of new/rebuilt hotel).

[205] A key source for this biography was a clipping titled "Mr George Vucetich, Farmer of Chertsey", dated 23 May 1902 from an unidentified newspaper. Efforts to trace this item via "Papers Past" have been unsuccessful. This item, provided by John and Shona Vucetich, was clearly written by someone who had interviewed Giorgio or knew him well. It includes a photo of Giorgio, information on his background as a seafarer, bush worker, employment with Mrs O'Connell, his purchase of a property in the Cust Valley, marriage to Annie Pebbles and his subsequent land purchases. The article has been used here as a skeleton on which to hang and flesh out details of Giorgio's life using material from other sources.

[206] Personal communication from George Mihaljevich, Auckland.

Giorgio and Annie had four children – Matteo (born 1870), Peter (1872), Francesca (1875) and Margaret (1876) – no doubt responsibilities that further fuelled a desire to better his position with the purchase of 400 acres (161.9 hectares) of government land on the Rakaia River plains in 1877. While it is not clear if he was accompanied by his wife and family, Giorgio and a couple of other young men (Peter Doig and John Gardiner) are believed to have lived in a whare for some time on this land. With two more children – Ambrosia (a.k.a. Ambrose, born 1879) and Jessie (1882) – added to his duties as a provider, he completed the purchase of another property of about 249 acres (100.7 hectares) near Chertsey township in 1885. Barely a decade later, Giorgio's wife Annie passed away (aged 51 years) in March 1894, leaving a well-established family[207] with Jessie the youngest aged 12.

Giorgio was successful and innovative in mixed farming, and active in various local organisations. For example, as a breeder he won awards in November 1903 from the Ashburton Agricultural and Pastoral Association for his exhibits of Shropshire sheep, a flock he maintained to a very high standard with imported sires.[208] During the following year he applied (via P. and D. Duncan Ltd., Christchurch) for a patent for an improved turnip-puller, and supported a move to establish the Chertsey Co-operative Machine Shearing Shed of which he became a director.[209] He was also attentive to the needs of young farmers. In 1884, no doubt conscious of the assistance he would need to give to his sons, he strongly supported a proposal for the reduction of mortgage interest rates for young men struggling to make ends meet as they developed their farms.[210] These attitudes, values and activities echoed the communal spirit of villagers in his homeland. Beyond ongoing work or other activities related to his properties, Giorgio also served as an elected member of the Rakaia Road Board, the Pendarves School

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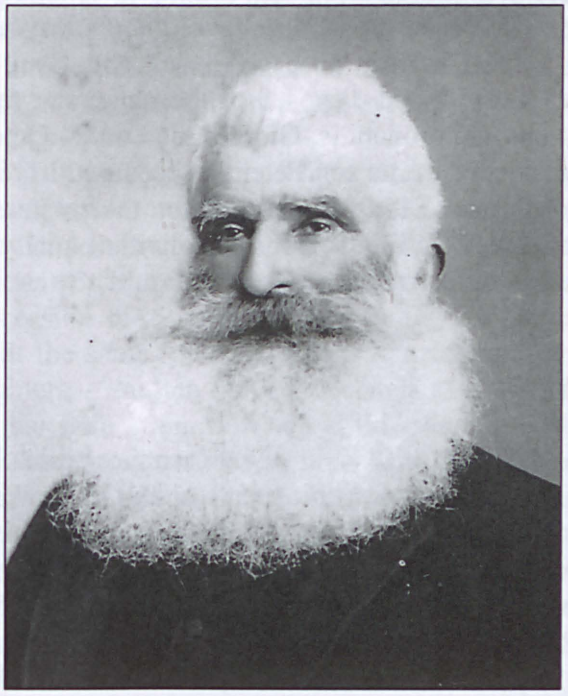
[207] Information on the birth and names of children, and Annie's death, was provided by John and Shona Vucetich, October 2010.

[208] *Ashburton Guardian*, 5 November 1903 p.2 and p.3 (re sheep).

[209] See: *Evening Post*, 8 November 1904 p.2 (re invention); and *Ashburton Guardian*, 18 March 1904 p.3 and 11 October 1904 p.4 (re machine shearing shed).

[210] *Star*, 30 July 1884 p.3 (assistance to young farmers).

Committee, the Chertsey Cemetery Board, and was a member or an elected officer of the Chertsey Sports and Racing Club for a number of years.[211]



Giorgio (George) Vucetich
Source: **Vucetich family**

At his prime during the 1880s and early 1890s Giorgio would have been an imposing figure and taskmaster to his eldest sons as he tended to his sheep and other stock, harnessed and guided draught horses hitched to various farm implements, coped with weather-related crop damage or losses, managed his accounts and still found time for off-farm activities. But he taught his sons well, and mindful of their future settled Matteo and Peter on farms of their own at Willowbridge and Studholme Junction, respectively, before the end of the 1890s. Young Ambrose was probably given similar assistance during the following decade. Emulating their father's eye for good farm land and prospects, Matteo and Peter bought a 175-acre (70.82-hectare) property at

[211] See: *Ashburton Guardian*, 14 June 1890 p.2 and 5 March 1892 p.2 (re Roads Board); 13 May 1890 p.3 (re school committee); 12 May 1897 p.2 (re cemetery board); 18 January 1904 p.2 and 29 March 1910 p.4 (re sports and racing club).

£15 5s per acre in May 1900 and disposed of it for a tidy profit just three years later at £20 per acre.[212]

Nine years after Annie's death, with his four oldest children already married and having celebrated the birth of his first two or three grandchildren, Giorgio (at age 67) began to scale down his endeavours. He sold a substantial part of the Chertsey property, stock and farm implements for satisfactory prices in 1903 and disposed of the remainder ten years later.[213] With a history of chronic bronchitis, Giorgio died on 24 October 1918, aged 82 years, at the residence of his son Peter. As recorded in his probate file, a substantial estate of over £15,000 was left for the trustees (sons Matteo, Ambrose and son-in-law William Hood) to divide equally among his six children.[214] Like his wife Annie, Giorgio was laid to rest in the Chertsey Cemetery.

Peter Vragnizan

Peter Vragnizan was born *c.*1840 at "Cittavecchia, Lesina" (i.e. Starigrad, Island of Hvar). He was a transient pioneer, resident in New Zealand for only ten years but long enough to warrant attention given his activities and achievements. Nothing definite is known about his background but it is possible that he was a sailor like other pioneers.

Peter was about 23 years of age when he arrived in 1863, a tumultuous time in the history of the North Island as an increasing demand for land south of Auckland strained relations with Maori tribes and led to an outbreak of war in the Waikato region. He was sworn into the Auckland Volunteer Militia as a private in 1863 and, along with 219 other militiamen, selected by the Imperial Transport Corps for service in the Commissariat Transport Corps. Between January and April 1864, perhaps because of some maritime experience, he served on the gunboat *Koheroa.* A gunboat pre-fabricated in Australia and assembled in New Zealand, the *Koheroa* was a highly manoeuvrable, iron stern-wheeler with a shallow draught, ideal for service on rivers in the Waikato region. Like other gunboats, the *Koheroa* was used for reconnaissance and to tow barges loaded with troops and provisions.

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[212] *Timaru Herald*, 1 May 1900 p.2 and *Ashburton Guardian*, 27 April 1903 p.3.

[213] *Ashburton Guardian*, 26 May 1903 p.2, 20 June 1903 p.3, 27 June 1903 p.2, 30 June 1903 p.2, 15 July 1913 p.8 and 18 July 1913 p.7 (re sale of property in 1903 and 1913).

[214] Probate file, Giorgio Vucetich (CAHX/2989/CH171/Box 231/CH10143/1918), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Christchurch.

These boats played a decisive role in the Waikato campaign, enabling the commander of British forces to more easily feed and equip his men, to move them quickly through difficult terrain and to outflank Maori positions.[215] It was in the course of service on the *Koheroa* that Peter came under fire from Maori in engagements at Piko Piko and Pukerimu, thereby meeting the criteria – as a member of a colonial military force – for the New Zealand War Medal. He had left the Auckland Volunteer Militia when he applied for the medal in 1869, and it was duly awarded in May 1871.[216]

Peter's career path from 1865 until 1872 is intriguing, and poses a question for which there is (as yet) no definitive answer. A brief newspaper item in May 1867 places him in Auckland, reporting that he was co-superintendent for ornamentation of the reception-room at the Brunswick Hall, Queen Street, on the occasion of a major public banquet for Governor Sir George Grey.[217] At about the same time, Peter was married and over the following years three daughters – Paulina (1868), Clorinda (1869) and Annetta (1872) – were born to his wife Anna.[218] Each child was baptised at St. Patrick's Cathedral. When he was naturalised in June 1871, Peter identified himself as a "storeman" residing in Albert Street, Auckland, but he was also the owner of a farm "at the Hot Springs" (probably near Helensville) and four allotments at Riverhead.[219] A year later, however, he became "Signor Pietro Vragnizan", the new lessee of the Prince of Wales Theatre (previously known as Brunswick Hall), a position he held until April 1873. Extensively altered and renovated in 1868/69, this theatre was the equal of and in direct competition with the Theatre Royal, Auckland's other leading venue for dramatic and musical performances. Given the resources and experience required to be a credible theatre lessee, the obvious question is how could a young private in Auckland's Volunteer Militia become a theatrical entrepreneur within 8 years?

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[215] For full details on the gunboats, see Cowan (1922:Vol. 1, Chapter 33).

[216] Military personnel file, Peter Vragnizan (AD/32/Box 31/1537), Archives New Zealand, Head Office, Wellington (for details of military service and medal application).

[217] *Daily Southern Cross*, 21 May 1867 p.5 (re public banquet) and 22 May 1867 p.4 (re Brunswick Hall ornamentation).

[218] Recorded in the New Zealand Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington. See https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz

[219] *Auckland Star*, 17 April 1873 p.2 (for details of farm, other property and their sale).

The evidence currently available permits no more than a tentative answer to this question. Bearing this in mind, it appears that Peter was lured by the call of the Thames goldfields and that he worked there in the Karaka locality (May 1868-May 1869, and August 1869-August 1870) and with a relation, Vincent Vragnizan, at Waikawau.[220] By late 1869, Vincent had become a listed shareholder for registration of the Tapu Evening Star Gold Mining Company.[221] It was not until May 1871, however, that Peter appeared as a listed shareholder (50 shares worth £125) in an application to register the Eureka Hill Gold-Mining Company, operating at the Kuranui Spur near Thames.[222] Further evidence of Peter's experience and familiarity with the Thames goldfields was provided in March 1873 when the Italian steam corvette *Vettor Pisani* called into Auckland. A party of the ship's officers visited the Thames goldfields "*accompanied by Mr. P. Vragnizan who acted as guide and interpreter*". A guide would, at the very least, have to know his way around and have contacts in the area to ensure a successful visit. And successful it was; the officers "*visited several of the principal mines...were very courteously received at each ... [and were] highly pleased with their visit*".[223] Had Peter made his fortune and returned to Auckland where he became a farmer and storeman? Did he develop his theatrical interests and skills via contact with the Prince of Wales Theatre or a group of amateurs, whilst maintaining a stake in gold-mining? This seems to have been the case, but definitive answers to these questions depend on more evidence coming to light.

Peter was a success as lessee of the Prince of Wales Theatre. Overcoming the causes of poor ticket sales experienced by his predecessor, he was complimented in Auckland's newspapers for: introducing "*new dramas and farces never before placed on the Auckland stage*"; engaging "*the best possible talent*" as well as "*a good and full orchestra*"; and for his investment in "*new scenery and mountings*" for plays and other entertainments. Even the troublesome issues of ventilation and female

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[220] The locations and dates cited here are based on records for Miners Rights obtained by Peter on 15 May 1868 and 5 August 1869 (for Karaka) and 11 August 1869 (for Waikawau). A Miner's Right was a licence, costing £1, effective for one year from the date of issue, that every miner had to obtain before he could begin work in a given area.

[221] *Daily Southern Cross*, 2 November 1869 p.5 (re Vincent Vragnizan's shareholding).

[222] *Daily Southern Cross*, 29 May 1871 p.4 (re Peter's shareholding).

[223] *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1873 p.2 and 31 March 1873 p.2 (re *Vettor Pisani* and visit of officers to Thames goldfields).

comfort were addressed with "*a special constable...engaged to prevent smoking in the theatre*".[224]

Well known for his urbanity and willingness to oblige, Peter was a talented amateur singer. His first public performances took place while lessee of the Prince of Wales, and he quickly became popular as demonstrated in August 1872 during a benefit evening:

> *Between the plays Signor Vragnizan sang "Il Balen" from "Il Trovatore". His vocalisation is extremely good. He was encored, and after responding to the call was loudly applauded.*[225]

Two months later he sang the same piece in a concert held at the City Hall in aid of improvements to All Saints Church. Encouraged by loud calls for an encore, he:

> *... came forward to the satisfaction of the listeners with the exquisite Tu che Dio Spiegasti from the Lucia di Lammermoor, which was effectively rendered. The singer's mellow tender voice rang sweetly through the hall, and elicited loud approval.*[226]

However, in spite of his enterprise and talent, Peter found that theatrical lesseeship did not pay in Auckland, and "that an outlay of [£500 or £600] per annum as rental for the Prince of Wales Theatre [was] not a profitable investment".[227] He therefore decided to withdraw, sell his assets and move abroad. It is a measure of his popularity and the respect of peers that a complimentary benefit was held at the Prince of Wales on the eve of his departure. During this event Peter sang in Auckland for the last time:

> *... judging from the applause with which Signor Vragnizan was greeted on coming forward to sing "Her bright smile haunts me still," the playgoers of Auckland are taking leave of him with regret.*[228]

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[224] For details on Peter as lessee and his innovations, see: *Daily Southern Cross*, 21 September 1872 p.2, 17 October 1872 p.1 and 4 November 1872 p.2; *Auckland Star*, 16 October 1872 p.2.

[225] *Daily Southern Cross*, 24 August 1872 p.2.

[226] *Auckland Star*, 20 December 1872 p.2.

[227] *Auckland Star*, 16 April 1873 p.2.

[228] *Daily Southern Cross*, 19 April 1873 p.2.

Responding to loud calls at the end of the evening, he appeared with a graceful bow and was reported to have spoken as follows:

> *Ladies, gentlemen, and brother minstrels, I am grateful to you all for this practical expression of your sympathy. I shall leave your city with some regret in connection with memories of the past few years, and when I reach the scene of my future labours I hope to be able to sing of my Auckland supporters "Your bright smiles haunt me still". And when in Chicago, a city brimful of vices and demoralization, I am told, I shall often revert with pleasurable feelings to the Prince of Wales Theatre ... I have disposed of my country farm, with its happy family of sheep, pigs, and cows. I have sold my household effects ... to the best advantage, but it's of no use, ladies and gentlemen, talking of these things, the thought touches my heart and brings tears into my eyes. I can say no more. Farewell! Farewell!*[229]

With his wife Anna and daughters, Peter Vragnizan departed from Auckland on 19 April 1873, bound for Chicago via San Francisco, on the vessel *Nebraska*.[230]

Paul Arnerich [Pavao Arnerić]

Born in 1835 in Dol, "Brazza" (i.e. Island of Brač), Paul Arnerich was 31 years old when he arrived in Westland during 1866. He had previously spent six years working on the goldfields of Victoria, mainly in the Woods Point area northeast of Melbourne. During his time there he was a member of the No.1 East Champion Quartz Mining Company, and in 1864 formed the Austrians' Amalgamated Gold Mining Company of which he was the largest shareholder. In 1864 also, Paul bought land in the area and built the Miners' Hotel.[231] Exactly why he chose to leave Australia is unknown, but his decision may have been prompted by declining prospects in Victoria and the death of a daughter.[232]

Shortly after his arrival in New Zealand, Paul married Catherine Munster (née McManus, born 1827 in Ireland) on 25 July 1867 at Hokitika. Catherine, previously married with two daughters, had resided in Victoria,

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[229] *Auckland Star*, 19 April 1873 p.2.

[230] *Daily Southern Cross*, 21 April 1873 p.2.

[231] Šutalo (2004:51-52, 142).

[232] Šutalo (2004:66).

Australia, before moving to New Zealand in 1860. Their only child, Maria Antoniette, was born at Goldsborough in April 1868.[233]

Most of Paul's time in Westland was spent in and around the gold-mining settlement of Goldsborough, 17km northwest of Hokitika. With claims pegged on the areas known as Tunnel Terrace and Austrian Terrace (suggesting the presence of fellow Croatian miners) his working life – either on his own or in partnerships – was typically one of applying for claim site development rights, hard labour and appearing in Court to defend his interests or actions in relation to miners on adjoining claims. In 1876, Moretti and Tomasi complained in the Warden's Court, Goldsborough, that Paul had for several weeks "*run sludge and tail water into...[their] dam...and head race*". Paul's counter complaint, that Moretti and party "*were in illegal occupation and possession" of the dam concerned, was judged to have "no merits at all".*" [234] Such disputes were not uncommon between goldfield miners who also had to cope with often fatal accidental injuries, rudimentary living conditions, mounting debts and other hazards.

Two other aspects of Paul's life merit attention: first, he took an active interest in his community and the welfare of residents; and second, he provided opportunities for relatives abroad. More specifically, in the early 1880s he served on the Hokitika Hospital Committee and as a member of this body called attention in 1882 to a need for additional funds "*to convey a patient named Martolich [Giorgio Matulich, from Brač] to his home in Europe*". The Committee "*agreed to subsidise the amount raised by private subscription...£1 for £1*". "Martolich", disabled with spinal injuries in a mining accident in 1879, left a month later.[235] With regard to relatives abroad, Paul's success as a miner attracted and facilitated the immigration of Simon Arnerich (1874) and Paolo Giovanni Arnerich (1878), both of whom may have had previous mining experience in New South Wales and Alaska's Yukon Territory, respectively.[236] All three of them (Paul, Simon and Paolo)

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[233] Details of Paul's marriage, Catherine's background and the birth of their daughter have been drawn from information compiled in 1989 by Mrs L. Pivac for the *West Coast Pioneer Family Register: 1990 Project*, Grey District Library, Greymouth.

[234] *West Coast Times*, 29 April 1876 p.2.

[235] *West Coast Times*, 25 April 1882 p.2 (re Paul's request to Hospital Committee) and 22 May 1882 p.2 (re patient's departure for Dalmatia). For further details see Chapter 1.

[236] Included in information on Paolo and Simon compiled by Mrs L. Pivac in 1989 for the *West Coast Pioneer Family Register: 1990 Project*, Grey District Library, Greymouth.

were miners resident in Goldsborough when naturalised in August 1884, working together before the younger men went out on their own.

Paul was 52 years old when his daughter Maria Antoniette married John Stanich on 7 February 1887. Residing initially in Goldsborough, Maria and John moved to Kumara (where Simon Arnerich lived and worked) within three years and by June 1895 had completed their family of five children (four daughters and one son).[237] It was at Kumara, employed as a "water ganger", that Paul died intestate on 18 August 1899 in his 64th year. His estate, administered by the Public Trustee, was valued at just £104.[238] Although the Trustee's document (filed 13 October 1899) makes no reference to Paul's family members, he was survived by his wife Catherine (who died on 9 May 1900) and their daughter Maria Antoniette.

Raymond Poschich [Rajmund Poščić]

Born in 1825 at "Volosca" (i.e. Volosko, near Rijeka), Raymond was 28 years old when he and Fortunato Poschich deserted the ship *Europa* in Sydney in 1853 and headed for the goldfields of Victoria.[239] He made a living there until news of good returns on the goldfields of Westland lured him across the Tasman Sea in 1867. Then about 42 years of age, Raymond was one of the oldest pioneer arrivals.

Within a year or so of landing, Raymond entered into what was probably a de facto relationship with a much younger woman called Anastatsia (a.k.a. Anastasia, born 1841, possibly in or near Barrytown, New Zealand). Over the next 11 years either six or seven children were born – four sons (Anthony [a.k.a. Antonio], *c.*1869; John [a.k.a. Giovanni], *c.*1870; Raymond William [a.k.a. Ranie], 1875; and Michael Thomas, 1878) and three daughters (Catharina Anna, *c.*1867; Joanne, *c.*1870; Mary, *c.*1873).[240] Because the birth and baptismal records are neither complete nor entirely consistent, it is

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[237] Details on Maria Antoniette's marriage to John Stanich and their children have been drawn from information compiled in 1989 by Mrs L. Pivac for the *West Coast Pioneer Family Register: 1990 Project*, Grey District Library, Greymouth.

[238] Probate file, Paul Arnerich (AAOM/W3265/6029/Box 120/6679), Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington (for details of Paul's death and his estate).

[239] Šutalo (2004:171).

[240] Details of Raymond's marriage, the names and birthdates of children were provided in personal communications by Bernie Poschich.

possible that John (a.k.a. Giovanni) and Joanne, each born *c.*1870, are either twins or one and the same person.

In November 1878 Raymond was on the electoral role for the Brunnerton Riding as a resident of Canoe Creek, and less than two years later in July 1880 he was elected a member of a school committee for the Seventeen-Mile Beach district near Barrytown.[241] We can therefore assume that he was not only reasonably successful, but well known and respected in the area. Raymond's community interests and activities extended also to local and national politics: in 1881 he was among those who put up a candidate for the Cobden Riding of Grey County; and in 1908 he was appointed to a supporters' committee at a meeting called to secure the re-election of Westland's sitting MP.[242] On a lighter note, it appears that Raymond shared an interest in horse racing with his sons. In March 1899, for example, a private match was arranged between Mr. W. Frankpitts's *Waiwhero* and the Poschich's *Lady* to be run on the Barrytown Beach over a distance of 1½ miles (2.4km) for £5 a side.[243] The race winner has not been identified.

Throughout his working life in Westland, Raymond was self-employed as a miner. By late 1879, if not earlier, he had staked a claim not far from the Canoe Creek Terrace at Seventeen-Mile Beach. A report in the *Grey River Argus* described the Poschich and Sons claim as:

> *... one of [those] ... showing large boulders anywhere that the surface is broken. As he [Poschich] puts a high value on his claim he must be fully aware of the payable nature of it.*[244]

Over the next few years Poschich and Sons were engaged in the development of their claim and related litigation. First, despite an objection lodged by another party, a successful application was made in the Warden's Court for a head race to bring water to the claim. Second, in December 1880, Raymond and his eldest son Antonio were successful as plaintiffs against the owners of an adjoining claim. Consequently, under a warrant issued from the Warden's Court, all the right, title and interest of the defendants in and to the claim adjoining that of the Poschich's was put up for sale by auction. Finally, in

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[241] *Grey River Argus*, 2 November 1878 p.2 (re electoral roll) and *West Coast Times*, 13 July 1880 p.2 (re school committee).

[242] *Grey River Argus*, 15 October 1881 p.3 and 26 October 1908 p.1.

[243] *Grey River Argus*, 15 March 1899 p.2.

[244] *Grey River Argus*, 22 November 1879 p.2.

April 1884, they were granted rights for a dam and water race, the dam being necessary for both water security and the volume required for effective sluicing.[245] A newspaper article in 1885 noted that construction of a water race entailed a considerable outlay of money and that the claims of Poschich and others were all on ground that required "*a good deal of labour before success is ensured or otherwise*".[246] By the mid-1880s the boom days of the 1860s had clearly passed, the population of Barrytown and its district had declined considerably (just two hotels, two stores and several small businesses were sufficient to meet the needs of local residents), but a living could still be made with hard work.

Naturalised in 1899, Raymond passed away on 18 September 1912, aged 87 years, and was laid to rest in the Barrytown cemetery. He was survived by Anastatsia and (at least) five of their children. Named the sole beneficiary of three freehold sections (valued at £220) in Raymond's will, Anastatsia died during her 76th year in February 1917 at the home of one of her daughters in Barrytown.[247]

Bela Singer

Bela's background characteristics set him apart from other Croatian pioneers featured here. Born *c.*1845 at Vukovar on the northeastern border of Croatia, his birthplace was far removed from the usual places of origin along the Adriatic coast, and his parents were probably of Hungarian ethnic origin and members of Vukovar's Jewish community. About 25 years old upon arrival in 1870, he wasted no time gaining citizenship via naturalisation in August 1874. Clearly a fellow with an eye to the future, Bela moved quickly from employment as a warehouseman to a middle-class position as a grocer with a small chain of retail outlets before a widely reported bankruptcy put an end to his career in New Zealand.

Beginning with £200, Bela commenced his grocery business with the Co-operative Store on George Street, Dunedin. Recognising the need to cater for a broad range of customers, even if it meant alienating some supporters, he

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[245] For details on their claim development and litigation, see: *Grey River Argus*, 10 December 1879 p.2, 21 December 1880 p.2 advert., and 1 April 1884 p.2.

[246] *Grey River Argus*, 13 January 1885 p.4.

[247] Probate file, Raymond Poschich (AAOM/W3265/6029/Box 261/16107), Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington (re details of Raymond's death and estate value); *Grey River Argus*, 22 February 1917 p.2 (re Anastatsia's death).

successfully applied for a bottle licence in March 1876. Backing for his venture was provided by a silent partner – Bendix Hallenstein.[248] A leader of the Jewish community, Hallenstein was a prominent businessman respected for his experience and success in retail activity, manufacturing and farming.[249] Thanks to Hallenstein's backing, Bela seemed to be above reproach and his prospects bright.

When Hallenstein bowed out in May 1878 he lent Bela £500, and his place was taken by a new partner, William Dickson, who put in another £500. The firm's value at that point was about £2,400 and it began a three-year period of expansion.[250] Apart from a small hiccup in October 1878, when Bela was fined for having had unstamped (i.e. illegal) weights in his possession for several months, the firm seemed to prosper. Indeed, by the time the partnership with Dickson was dissolved in January 1881 (Bela thereafter trading on his own), the firm had branches in Dunedin, Oamaru, Timaru and Waimate.[251] Taken at face value, such growth would have encouraged the firm's creditors rather than giving them any cause for concern.

Behind the scenes, however, the firm's financial position was becoming ever more difficult. When matters eventually came to a head, Bela asserted that: he had worked at a loss since commencing business in Dunedin; Dickson left with £250 when the partnership was dissolved in January 1881, while the balance of his initial £500 investment was written off (by Bela) as lost; and finally, as a measure of the firm's difficulties, that he had offered Dickson £250 just to take the business off his hands. Dickson declined the offer. Balance sheets dated May 1881, October 1881 and February 1882 revealed further losses of £1,482, £1,789 and £2,886, respectively. Seeking to remedy the situation, he sold the original George Street store for £1,400 in June 1882. Unfortunately this sale failed to relieve, much less resolve, the firm's financial problems. In November 1882, estimating his overall loss at £4,575,

[248] *Otago Daily Times*, 8 March 1876 p.3 (re bottle licence application); *Otago Witness*, 18 November 1882 p.2 (re Bela's start-up capital and backing by Hallenstein).

[249] Parry (2010).

[250] *Otago Witness*, 18 November 1882 p.2 (re Hallenstein leaving, Dickson joining and the firm's capital value).

[251] *Otago Daily Times*, 5 January 1881 p.3 (notice re partnership dissolution and list of branches).

Bela finally called a meeting of creditors, presenting a statement indicating debts of almost £15,000 and assets of £7,000.[252]

About 30-40 creditors attended the first and subsequent meetings. Responding to Bela's statement, they requested he file his schedule for insolvency and appointed members of their group as interim trustees, instructing them to examine the books and accounts for a report to the next meeting.[253] Acting on legal advice, Bela declined to file for insolvency until after the second meeting of creditors, but he did give up his property and assisted the trustees with their investigation.

The trustees' findings failed to ease creditor concerns and exposed major shortcomings in Bela's business skills and practices. In particular, a balance sheet prepared by the trustees revealed assets of £4,809 divisible among unsecured creditors to the extent of 8s in the £1. How this situation arose could not be determined because the trustees were:

> *... [un]able to find any books dealing with the accounts for the first few years Mr Singer was in business ;... [moreover] when books were kept they were not kept by double entry, and although Mr Singer's position was stated from time to time...the statement merely consisted of a jotting of assets and liabilities, and failed to record the causes of his losses.*[254]

It was also found that Bela had made no private settlements or asset transfers and, contrary to a belief that he "*had a finely-furnished house*", he lived in his brother-in-law's house with only the bedroom furniture being his own.

Rather than accept an implicit settlement of 8s in the £1, Bela's unsecured creditors supported a motion for 10s in the £1 (to be arranged within a few days), failing which bankruptcy proceedings would be initiated and Singer prosecuted for fraud. However, Hyam Hart, a friend of Bela's, persuaded a later meeting of his fellow creditors to accept the original proposal of 8s in the £1 – half to be paid in cash and half in bills guaranteed by persons that

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[252] *Otago Witness*, 18 November 1882 p.2 (for all details on Bela's financial situation); *Evening Post*, 3 November 1882 p.3 (re Bela's call for meeting of creditors).

[253] *Otago Witness*, 11 November 1882 p.15 (re first meeting of creditors).

[254] "Meeting of creditors" *Otago Witness*, 18 November 1882 p.2, presents a very detailed account of the trustees' findings, as presented at the second meeting of creditors, discussion of the findings and actions proposed by the creditors. A similar, lengthy report was also published in the *Otago Daily Times*, 11 November 1882 p.2.

the trustees approved.[255] On 12 December 1882 the *Otago Daily Times* reported that the Supreme Court had granted an application to annul bankruptcy proceedings, and for declaration of the complete execution of a deed of bankruptcy.[256]

The speed with which the matter was resolved could be attributed to a desire to avoid the costs and further delay that a court case would entail. That said, an *Otago Witness* columnist – under the *nom de plume* "Civis" – claimed, without rebuke, that the creditors themselves were not without fault and would do well to repent. These merchants and other creditors, according to "Civis", used Bela's firm to dispose of surplus stock (at a profit or to avoid a heavy loss), and did so without regard to the livelihood of other traders (some of whom were their customers) who complained that Bela was then able to sell goods at prices below those at which they themselves could obtain them.[257] From this perspective, Bela was less the culprit and more of an accessory to a practice which reflected poorly upon the business acumen, perspicacity and virtues of men who wished to be regarded as business and community leaders. Would they welcome the publicity associated with a court case? Probably not.

No doubt some of his former creditors welcomed the news, in October 1885, that Bela had left the Colony. He arrived in Australia in the same year and took up residence as a merchant in Sydney.[258]

Jerome Bacovich [Jero Baković][259]

Born *c.*1856 at Nerežišće on the Island of Brač, Jerome Bacovich told journalist Mathew Ferri (during a meeting in Wellington) that he was 18 years old when he left home in 1874. Eventually landing in Auckland

[255] *Tuapeka Times*, 2 December 1882 p.2.

[256] Bankruptcy file, Bela Singer (DAAC/18118/D256/Box 557/1137), Archives New Zealand, Regional Office, Dunedin.

[257] "The slaughter of the innocents" *Otago Witness*, 25 November 1882 p.18 (a critique by 'Civis').

[258] Šutalo (2004:255).

[259] Jerome identified himself in his naturalisation documents and signed his last will and testament as 'Bacovich'. In newspaper reports he and his wife usually appeared as 'Bacovich' and sometimes as 'Bacovitch', but journalist Matthew Ferri (in *Napredak*, 22 April 1908) mistakenly identified him as 'Bakotich'.

*c.*1876, unable to read or write, not knowing anybody and with only 3s 6d in his pocket, Jerome found his first job on the Coromandel Peninsula working in a swamp for 30s a week. He moved from one place to another, steadily adding to his savings. At Hokitika he had "luck gold prospecting" but was "most successful as a contractor" working on his own account. His big break came via two contracts; the first "for 22,000,000 feet of timber" and then another "to build 40 miles of road". This, he claimed, was how "I accumulated £17,000."[260] Despite his success Jerome identified himself as just a "labourer", resident in Hunterville, when naturalised in 1890. Pointing out that he had no schooling, he took pride in being a self-taught man who learned to make his own way to success.

A major setback for this remarkable pioneer occurred between 1891 and 1893 when his eyesight deteriorated, culminating in total blindness by the time he was 37 years old. It was probably no coincidence, therefore, that in 1893 he married Mary Jane Creer (born *c.*1838, Adelaide, South Australia) who was 18 years older. Although the marriage produced no children, Mary not only provided the personal care and attention that her blind husband needed but also took an active role in his business activities.[261]

Although Jerome told Ferri that he had built and sold three Wellington hotels and another in Masterton, he had actually been rather more enterprising than he was prepared to admit. In 1895 Jerome and his wife were the popular proprietors of a new boarding-house in Mangaweka, and between 1896 and 1908 he acquired and/or disposed of the ownership or lease and furniture of at least nine hotels throughout the southern half of the North Island. These properties included: the Temperance Hotel (Mangaweka); the Marine Parade Hotel (Napier); the Eltham Hotel (Eltham); the Central Hotel (Masterton); the Empire Hotel (Hawera); the Levin Hotel (Levin); the Club Hotel (Carterton); and (in Wellington) the Nags Head Hotel and the Zealandia Private Hotel.[262] The quality of these hotels was by no means uniform;

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[260] Jerome's background details were recorded by Matthew Ferri and published in an article in *Napredak*, 22 April 1908. The article has been translated and reproduced by Jelicich (2008:36).

[261] Probate file, Jerome Bacovich (AAOG/W3559/Box 700/1917/63), Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington (for Mary Jane's birthplace, declaration of a marriage without issue).

[262] See: *Wanganui Herald*, 5 November 1895 p.4 (re Mangaweka boarding-house); *Fielding Star*, 28 July 1897 p.2 (re Temperance Hotel); *Wanganui Herald*, 20 November 1897 p.2 (re Eltham Hotel) and 16 August 1898 p.2 (re Central Hotel and Marine Parade Hotel); *Evening*

whereas Masterton's Central Hotel was advertised (1899) by its proud proprietor as "*one of the largest and most elaborately furnished hotels in the colonies*", the Nags Head in Wellington was assessed by the Licensing Committee (1903) as being in need of "thorough repairs to keep it up to the required standard".[263]

Jerome later ventured into the cinema business with Biograph machines for silent films in Devonport and Grey Lynn. Unfortunately, the Devonport theatre, located in the Parish Hall on Church Street, came to an end in March 1912 when a fire – accidentally ignited by highly inflammable film – destroyed the projection room. While the Parish Hall (leased) was fully insured for the fire, smoke and water damage, Jerome estimated his loss at £200 for a projector, film, lenses and other uninsured accessories.[264] This experience may explain why he decided, in September of that year, to sell the Grey Lynn Biograph plant and hall lease[265] before returning to the more familiar business of a boarding-house keeper in Wanganui.

An obvious question in relation to the above ventures concerns Jerome's ability, being totally blind, to perform effectively as a working proprietor rather than being a mere figurehead. The evidence suggests that he was not inclined to take a back seat, and if guilty of mistakes (intentional or otherwise) in the execution of his responsibilities he accepted the consequences. For example, in May 1900, as the licensee of Masterton's Central Hotel, Jerome decided (no doubt as much in his own interests as those of patrons) to breach the sale of liquor laws in order to facilitate celebrations on the night of the relief of Mafeking during the Boer War. When he appeared in the Magistrate's Court he readily accepted fines and endorsement of the licence for: serving liquor and allowing a barmaid in the bar after hours; and for being open during prohibited hours. On the other

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Post, 13 November 1901 p.7 (re Empire Hotel, Hawera) and 21 March 1902 p.2 (re Nags Head Hotel); *New Zealand Truth*, 8 February 1908 p.6 (re Zealandia Private Hotel).

[263] *Evening Post*, 15 September 1899 p.8 (re Central Hotel quality) and 8 June 1903 p.5 (re assessment of Nags Head Hotel).

[264] *Poverty Bay Herald*, 4 March 1912 p.7 (re Devonport theatre fire).

[265] *Evening Post*, 14 September 1912 p.1 (advertisement re sale of Biograph plant).

hand, in 1902, as licensee of the Nags Head Hotel in Wellington, Jerome successfully defended similar charges laid by the police.[266]

These examples, of course, do not mean that he worked without the assistance of his wife. Following common practice in owner-operated businesses, she probably took charge of particular staff (e.g. barmaids, cooks) and related services. Capable of running her own business (e.g. a drapery and household furniture store in Petone[267]), Mary Jane Bacovich was a formidable co-proprietor. During their time at the Zealandia Private Hotel (1908-1911), she was fined by the Arbitration Court for dismissing a kitchen hand because he had joined a union, but was successful in another case as the defendant for a claim against her relating to business operating costs and with her counter-claim for rent arrears.[268]

Without children and with Mary attending to their businesses, Jerome had time to pursue interests in sport and recreation. A member of the Working Committee for a Caledonian Sports meeting in Hunterville during 1892, a decade later he was elected a Vice-President of Wellington's Empire City Athletic and Cycling Club.[269] It seems that despite his disability and frequent moves from one place to another, he was still able to participate in the activities of community sports organisations. Like other pioneers, Jerome also had an interest in horse racing. Although his pleasure was marred by a dispute concerning the lease of his horse *Lissa*, over the period 1901-1909 he enjoyed success at race meetings in the Manawatu, Wairarapa, Wellington and Marlborough with four horses, three of them as the owner (*Lissa*, *Fireball* and *Flintgun*) and one as a lessee (*Warnote*).[270]

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[266] *Evening Post*, 28 May 1900 p.6 (re Central Hotel liquor law breach), and 11 August 1902 p.6 (re Nags Head Hotel charges laid).

[267] *Evening Post*, 1 October 1907 p.10 (re sale of Mary's store in Petone).

[268] *Evening Post*, 4 September 1908 p.2, 12 September 1908 p.9 (re Mary's dismissal of unionist), and 22 December 1910 p.8 (re her victory on claim and counter-claim).

[269] *Wanganui Herald*, 16 January 1892 p.4 (re Hunterville sports event); and *Evening Post*, 30 September 1902 p.4 (re Empire City Athletic and Cycling Club).

[270] See: *Otago Witness*, 9 January 1901 p.42, and 27 March 1901 p.45 (re *Warnote* race results and leases of *Warnote* and *Fireball*); *Colonist*, 18 March 1901 p.3 (results for *Warnote* and *Fireball*); *Evening Post*, 11 November 1901 p.6 (re race result for *Lissa*); *Fielding Star*, 5 April 1904 p.2, and 6 April 1904 p.2 (race results for *Lissa*); *Marlborough Express*, 5 May 1909 p.8 (result for *Flintgun*); and *Evening Post*, 18 December 1902 p.5 (re court case concerning *Lissa*).

Jerome Bacovich died at Porirua in June 1917, aged 61 years, and was interred at the Karori Cemetery, Wellington. His wife Mary, the sole beneficiary of his estate (valued at about £850[271]), passed away in 1922, aged 84 years.

Mariano Vella [Vela]

Although born 15 February 1855 at "Macarska" (Makarska), Mariano was probably raised in the coastal village of Podgora about 7km away. His father, Andreas Vela, was a peasant farmer and is believed to have also been engaged in coastal trade (possibly legal and illegal), an occupation that allowed Mariano to learn from an early age the skills of sailing a small open boat.[272] Like many others of his generation he became a sailor, and after a number of years arrived in Wellington in 1878, aged 23 years, as a crewman on the *Rakaia*.[273]

Mariano settled initially at Paremata, on the coast north of Wellington, where he worked as a fisherman, doing well enough to buy his own small boat within a couple of years. As his prosperity increased and the years passed, Mariano's thoughts turned to finding some land, farming and marriage. On 4 January 1886, at age 30, he married Mary Ida Furse (born *c.*1869 in England), whose father was a fellow fisherman at Paremata. Mary and Mariano had four children; William (born 1886), Andrew (1887?), Joseph (1888, who died aged three months) and Ida (1889).[274] Like other pioneers who invited family members and/or relations to join them, Mariano welcomed the arrival of first a cousin (John, a.k.a. Ivan, *c.*1885) and then a brother (Peter, *c.*1892), both of whom worked with him for a while before going out on their own.

In February 1886, a few weeks after his marriage, Mariano subleased Mana Island (8km offshore from Paremata) from John Wright, who had taken up

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[271] Probate file, Jerome Bacovich (AAOG/W3559/Box 700/1917/63), Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington (re Jerome's death and estate value).

[272] "Vella of Mana Island", typed manuscript, dated 6 October 1959, Vertical Files 30/207, Porirua Public Library, Porirua. This reference, probably based on an interview with Elizabeth (Mariano's wife), is hereafter cited as Anon. (1959).

[273] Brodie (2007).

[274] Anon. (1959) and Brodie (2007).

the lease from the Crown in 1873. Recognising that he had much to learn with regard to sheep husbandry and farming practice, Mariano arranged tuition with Harry Harris, a farmer at nearby Pauatahanui. Applying his acquired knowledge, he gradually built up his stock until he was wintering 1,000 breeding ewes and fattening 150 head of cattle on a property of 525 acres (212.46 hectares). Getting stock to and from the island was initially difficult in the absence of wharves but was accomplished by floating six cattle at a time with three securely strapped to each side of a 30-foot boat and laying up to 45 sheep with bound legs on the boat's floor. Fence posts and a sheep-pen were fashioned from local resources, typically totara logs washed up on the island's beaches after storms, and a woolshed with a two-stand shearing board was built in 1887 using some of this timber together with corrugated iron from an abandoned lighthouse.[275]

While Mariano sailed to and from the island and used (when required) a small shepherd's hut left by the previous tenant, his family lived in Station Road, Paremata. It was not a convenient arrangement. Mariano's solution was to purchase the former lighthouse-keeper's residence on the island's northwest headland, to dismantle it piece by piece, shift it by horse and dray to the more sheltered southeast side of the island and to reassemble it there almost single-handed. Just a bricklayer was hired to rebuild the chimneys.

By the beginning of summer in 1889, after almost four years of work, Mariano had good cause to be pleased. With the assistance of his young wife and his cousin John (who maintained the fishing business and lent a hand on the island) the farm was doing well as he tackled a list of development tasks, and apart from the death in infancy of his third son (Joseph) the family was growing with the birth of his first daughter (Ida). Any sense of satisfaction, however, was dealt a cruel blow three days before Christmas when his wife, Mary, died of a heart attack.

Exhibiting the stoicism and fortitude typical of successful pioneers, Mariano arranged for the care of his children and continued with the farm's development. In 1890 wharves were built at Paremata and Mana Island, making the loading and unloading of stores, wool bales, farm equipment and especially sheep much easier, though cattle were still floated to and from the island as before.[276] Another potential setback occurred in 1891 when John

[275] This account of Mariano's initial lease and development of Mana combines information drawn from Anon. (1959), Brodie (2007) and Maysmor (2009).

[276] Anon. (1959).

Wright, holder of the head-lease for Mana, passed away. Mariano had no real option but to bide his time and to continue farming until the existing head-lease expired, reverted to the Crown and once more became available at auction. When the lease was duly auctioned on 27 November 1893, Mariano made the successful bid and took up a 14-year lease with an annual rental of £75.[277] He was successful again in both 1908 (sole bid, annual rental of £165)[278] and 1922.

With the children in care, the lease secure and a shepherd (Batista Maestri) to manage the farm in his absence, Mariano set off on a trip to Dalmatia. He was reported to have visited the Chicago Exhibition *en route* and to have taken *"£30 to Maestri's wife and family [who lived] in the Tyrol"*.[279] A desire to catch up with kith and kin was no doubt a compelling reason for the trip, but Mariano, it seems, had a more important objective in mind – marriage. The surprise, however, was that rather than finding a partner in his home village (Podgora) or one of the other nearby villages, he courted and married (September 1894) Elizabetta Caterina Tarabochia (i.e. Tarabokija) from Lussinpiccolo (Mali Lošinj) on Lussin Island (Lošinj) almost 200kms to the north. Why? Could the marriage have been 'arranged' with the assistance of another pioneer migrant? One such pioneer from Lošinj was Thomas Tarabochia, who had arrived *c.*1872 and was naturalised in 1890, at which time he was living in Wellington where he remained with his wife and family until his death in 1917. Probably a relation of Elizabetta's, Thomas certainly resided close enough to be known by Mariano and for a friendship to develop between them during the 1880s and early 1890s.

Within days of their wedding, Mariano and Elizabeth (as she was later known) set off for New Zealand, accompanied by a couple of youngsters; a nephew of Elizabeth's, and Antonio Tarabochia (unrelated), a nephew of John Scopinch who was a pioneer Westland miner. Arriving at Sydney from Naples, the Vella party secured berths on the ill-fated *S.S. Wairarapa* bound for Auckland. Shortly after midnight on 29 October 1894, the steamer, having gone off-course in a storm and dense fog, ran at full speed into a steep cliff on the northern edge of Great Barrier Island and was wrecked with the loss of 121 lives. Mariano suffered a slight injury to his left arm, but

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[277] Maysmor (2009:60).

[278] "Pastoral leases" *Evening Post*, 29 February 1908 p.2.

[279] *Evening Post*, 6 November 1894 p.2 (re Chicago Exhibition visit), and *Fielding Star*, 19 November 1894 p.3 (re money to Maestri family).

survived the ordeal along with his wife and 16 year-old Antonio, thanks in part to their ability as strong swimmers. Unfortunately, Elizabeth's nephew was among those lost.

Two weeks after the wreck, Antonio was warmly welcomed by his uncle and sympathetic Westlanders eager to hear the lucky young fellow's story.[280] For Mariano and Elizabeth, however, the joy of their homecoming was overtaken by yet another death. Batista Maestri, the farm caretaker, perhaps concerned that his employer had not returned around the time agreed upon, was presumed to have drowned in a sudden squall on his way to Paremata seeking news of Mariano's expected arrival. The wreckage of Mariano's 30-foot boat was found on the rocks at Titahi Bay, but Maestri's body was never recovered.[281]

Putting their recent misfortunes behind them, the family loaded Mariano's smaller boat (the *Tam O Shanter*) with furniture, bedding and other chattels from the Paremata residence and moved to the house on Mana Island. The next 16 years were generally happy and prosperous. Four children were born – Mattea (1895), Giovanni (a.k.a. Jack, 1897), Antonia (a.k.a. Anne, 1899) and Mariano jnr. (1901) – but the growing family's happiness was disrupted in 1907 by the death of 18 year old Ida, Mariano's first daughter.[282] Parallel with the growth and maturing of the family, the farm continued to yield good returns, especially with the increasing contribution of family members at shearing time. William and Andrew helped with the mustering and learned to take a turn on the machine-shearing stand, while Elizabeth assisted with 'picking' and sorting wool, operating the wool press and sewing bale covers.[283]

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[280] For all details concerning the wreck, the survival of Mariano, Elizabeth and Antonio, and the loss of Elizabeth's nephew, see: *Evening Post*, 6 November 1894 p.2; *Marlborough Express*, 12 November 1894 p.3; *West Coast Times*, 16 November 1894 p.2; and *Otago Daily Times*, 1 December 1894 p.2. Elizabeth's account of the efforts she and Mariano made to survive the wreck was published a year before her death in the *Auckland Star*, 20 October 1959.

[281] Anon. (1959) and *Fielding Star*, 19 November 1894 p.3.

[282] New Zealand Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, available at: https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz (for details of births of children and Ida's death).

[283] Anon. (1959).

Mariano's endeavours, however, were not limited to the farm. Naturalised in October 1896, he was gaining respect in the community and used his position to actively represent countrymen caught up in immigration restrictions applied in response to an outcry from the northern gumfields over the "influx of Austrians". On one occasion in 1900 he arranged for Premier Richard Seddon to meet with a group of these immigrants and to find a viable solution for the difficulty they faced.[284]



Mariano Vella, his wife Elizabeth and family members, c. 1906
Source: **Vella Café, Plimmerton**

Mariano decided to retire in 1909 and returned to Dalmatia with Elizabeth and a child (Mattea) for a visit that lasted six years.[285] Mana Island was left in the care of Andrew and William, who proved to be capable managers. When Mariano and Elizabeth returned in 1915, the family moved to a seaside property with a large two-storeyed house and boat shed in Steyne Avenue, Plimmerton. With the country at war and attitudes toward enemy aliens becoming more hostile (see Chapter 5), it was not surprising that suspicions arose concerning the Vellas. In July 1918 a Plimmerton resident reported that someone was signaling with a light from Mana Island, and in

[284] Jelicich (2008:33).

[285] Brodie (2007).

September the Defence Minister received a letter from a doctor outlining his wife's concerns about a possible spy cell with a radio transmitter based on the island. The authorities could not ignore such reports and suspicions, but a police investigation found nothing more than well respected citizens going about their daily business.[286]

Although Andrew and William continued to work the farm, William spent an increasing amount of time engaged in shearing contracts in the East Coast region of the North Island and elsewhere. He was credited with setting three successive world records over the years 1917-1919 for nine hours of machine shearing with personal tallies of 339, 347 and 361 Romneys.[287] As the management of Mana was more or less left to Andrew, Mariano eventually transferred the lease to him in 1929. Andrew held the lease until his death in 1951 and his widow remained on the island until 1953, at which time the lease was transferred to John Gault.[288]

Mariano Vella died on 5 September 1929, aged 74 years, and was interred in the graveyard of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Pauatahanui. Elizabeth died in 1960 and was interred alongside her husband.

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[286] Maysmor (2009:58).

[287] See: *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10 June 1919 p.6, and *Ashburton Guardian*, 27 November 1919 p.4.

[288] Brodie (2007).

3
Migrants

The inflow of Croatian immigrants since the 1890s has varied over time, largely because of political and economic conditions in both the country of origin and New Zealand during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most arrived during the years 1897-1914 (44-47 percent) and 1919-1939 (17-20 percent), with periods of war (1914-1918) and economic depression (1930-1935) reducing the inflow or for brief periods halting it altogether. Changes in migrant aspirations and restrictions or policies to regulate immigration had a significant impact as well, especially after the mid 1920s.

With the above in mind, three broad questions now arise. First, what were the underlying causes of their motivations for migration, especially before 1914? Second,what have been the key characteristics of these immigrants and what changes have occurred between the 1890s and 1939? Finally, how has the flow of arrivals (and their characteristics) been affected by New Zealand's introduction of particular restrictions or policies? These questions are tackled in the following pages with special attention to: the central Dalmatian area of origin; the initial prevalence of temporary migration; social control; an increase in female arrivals after 1918; and the effects of immigration restrictions and policies.

An underlying theme of the chapter is that Croatian immigration has not been haphazard or erratic but a process marked by a high degree of selectivity, a feature reinforced by New Zealand's history of immigration restrictions and policies.

Causes of Emigration

One of the most persistent beliefs about the peak period of Croatian migration to New Zealand (1890-1914) is that the migrants, opposed to Austrian oppression in their homeland, were simply avoiding military service. Stemming in part from enforcement of military conscription in the early 1880s, this belief was sustained by writers[289] who cited as evidence that hundreds of the new arrivals were men aged 16-19 and 20-29 years –

[289] For example, see Lochore (1951) and R. Gilmore "New Zealand's Slavs" *Auckland Star*, 7 June 1956.

precisely the age groups liable for military training and service, respectively. That *some* of these teenagers and young men were consciously evading military service is not disputed. However, the idea that the emigration of *all* of them could be attributed almost exclusively to oppression and military conscription can be traced to efforts to ease tensions on the gumfields, and especially to "pro-Jugoslav" propaganda during World War I (see Chapter 5). Croatians from central Dalmatia were Austrian citizens and in the eyes of many loyal British New Zealanders all Austrians belonged to the ranks of the enemy. The purpose of the propaganda, therefore, was to win sympathy, tolerance and support for these Dalmatians by emphasising their Croatian ethnic identity, their desire for freedom and their support for the Serbian cause in the Balkans. Nowhere was this more evident than in the pages of *Zora* (The Dawn) a newspaper usually edited by George Scansie and produced in Auckland by the Croatian Publishing Company (see Appendix 2).

Does this mean that Austrian oppression and military service can be dismissed as causes of emigration? No. What it does mean is that attention should be focused instead on understanding the web of social, economic and political problems along the whole of the Adriatic coast from Istria in the north to Kotor in the south during the 50-60 years before World War I. Do this, and what quickly emerges is a picture of young (and some older) men who were driven to emigrate in order to fulfill their family obligations and/or to achieve new personal aspirations arising from massive social and economic changes throughout Europe during the nineteenth century.

The argument here, therefore, may be summarised as follows. First, Dalmatia should be seen as a peasant society that by 1890 was heavily committed to subsistence agriculture in an environment with very limited natural resources. Second, it was an agrarian society subjected in the nineteenth century to foreign control with various restrictions on fishing, agricultural and industrial activities that allowed few opportunities for ongoing economic development. Third, life under these conditions may possibly have been endured if basic problems posed by the physical environment and foreign control had not been aggravated by an increase in the population, which placed mounting pressure on available land and other resources. Fourth, living conditions were further aggravated by the concurrent penetration of capitalism, which produced major changes in the agrarian economy as well as the culture and aspirations of the peasantry. Fifth, a socio-political solution to increasing poverty and misery in Croatia and the province of Dalmatia failed to materialise because indigenous political movements were unable to bring about much needed social and economic reforms. Finally, it

is necessary to recognise also the importance of an increase in overseas migration during the second half of the 1800s as a source of money (remittances from emigrants) and news about opportunities abroad that fuelled both the further development of new socio-economic aspirations and a 'fever' of interest in migration as a means to fulfil such aspirations.

In essence, the peasantry along the Dalmatian coast was forced to confront its problems and to consider at least two possible solutions. First, since some problems could be attributed to foreign control, they and/or their 'urban' counterparts could organise political movements to bring about necessary social reforms and to facilitate economic development. Second, failing the appearance or success of such movements, they could attempt to alter the prevailing population trends and patterns. It could be argued that possible courses of action to check population growth included celibacy, the postponement of marriage, abortion, contraception and migration.[290] The evidence available, however, suggests that while marriage postponement was socially acceptable (and could be linked to a man's attainment of land tenure), neither abortion nor contraception were effective or acceptable as pregnancy control measures within the existing set of social values and religious beliefs.[291] Accordingly, given the chance to at least maintain the status quo, plus the attractive employment and income opportunities offered by overseas destinations, the choice in favour of migration (temporary migration in particular during the period 1890-1914) was only to be expected.

The array of problems facing Dalmatia's population around the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s were serious to say the least. At the time, 80-85 percent of its people were supported by agriculture, but crop yields were poor. For the period 1909-1913, although potato yields were good, only Bosnia-Hercegovina had a worse record of yields per hectare for wheat, rye, barley and maize. Moreover, the margin was very narrow between gross income and regular production costs involved in the utilisation of arable land, gardens and orchards, vineyards, meadows or pastures, and during 1897 daily farm labourer wage rates for both summer and winter in

[290] The possible courses of action identified here are in a theory of demographic change and response by Davis (1963), that contributed significantly to my perception of the issues facing Dalmatia and hence the causes of migration.

[291] For a discussion of pregnancy control measures in relation to existing social values and beliefs, bearing in mind Dalmatia's identity as a Catholic peasant society, see Lodge (1942:299-302) and St. Erlich (1966:287-305).

Dalmatia were significantly lower than those for Croatia-Slovenia. A major contributor to low living standards, and a key feature of Dalmatian agriculture, was the fragmentation of farm holdings that had its origins in Austrian inheritance laws. In 1902, properties up to five hectares in size accounted for 87.4 percent of all holdings, with 37 percent being less than one hectare. Overall, a total of 83,455 farm holdings accounted for 1.28 million hectares of land, of which slightly less than 21 percent was arable, vineyards, meadows and gardens – the remainder consisting of pasture and forest. The low proportion of arable land was due to its natural scarcity rather than to a land tenure system which kept potentially arable land out of cultivation. Finally, illiteracy was commonplace; in 1910 about 73 percent of the population aged six years and over was illiterate.[292]

The Physical Environment

Its geology and topography characterised by intensive folding and movement along fault lines, the Dalmatian coastline forms the eastern boundary of the down-warped Adriatic Basin. This accounts for the abruptness with which coastal mountain ranges rise to altitudes of 600-1,500 metres above sea level, hampering easy access to the interior. The up-folded off-shore islands of Hvar, Brač and Korčula reflect an east-west trend in relief characteristic of the mainland to the northwest. These islands consist of relatively infertile Cretaceous era limestone while the lower slopes and foothills of the adjacent central Dalmatian coast consist of Tertiary era rock that has yielded fertile soil.

Over a period of more than 2,000 years the fertile section of the central Dalmatian coast became an almost continuous zone of terraced vineyards, olive groves and orchards, densely settled with numerous villages. Set in the total picture of a predominantly karst landscape, however, this coastal zone appears as a narrow ribbon of fertility rivaled only by the fertile floor and reliable water supply of the Neretva River valley. Elsewhere, cup-shaped depressions, caused by surface water dissolving limestone and filtering through to subterranean watercourses, are filled with cultivable soil. Usually no larger than small gardens, these 'sinkholes' stand in sharp contrast to the 'poljes' or valleys through which streams flow intermittently with small lakes formed by rain and snow in winter that evaporate in summer. Both

[292] See: Lukas (1922:93) re crop yields; Tomasevich (1955:207, 304) re fragmentation of farm holdings, proportion of arable vs pastoral land and the margin between income and production costs; Colakovic (1973:21) re daily farm labourer wage rates; and Wallis (1918:58-59) re illiteracy.

'poljes' and 'sinkholes' are common features of the Vrgorac district located behind the coastal mountain range. The effect on human settlement at the end of the nineteenth century was immediately apparent; in contrast to the larger, more compact villages on the coast, those inland were often scattered clusters of hamlets taking advantage of available soil and water.

Variations of climate and vegetation, over relatively short distances, were also significant. For example, the Vrgorac district, exhibiting features of a continental climate, has clearly defined seasons with hot summers and frequent droughts, bitterly cold winters and heavy snowfalls. To an observer on the walls of the old fort above Vrgorac, the landscape is in some respects similar to another (more northern) part of Dalmatia that moved Rebecca West, a celebrated English journalist and literary critic, to remark that the:

> *... dreariness is so extreme that it ... gluts the mind with excess of deprivation. The hills are naked ... Tracks lead over this naked rock ... it seems probable that they are traced by desperate men fleeing from barrenness ...*[293]

In contrast, less than 30km away, the island of Hvar, with a Mediterranean climate (moderate rainfall during mild winters, and warm dry summers) has often been referred to as the Madeira of the Adriatic. But even here, as on other islands, the *bura* (a cold 'wind' or down-draught from the mountains along the coast) is a hazard to both farmers and fishermen.

Within this environment the peasant seemed fated to live a life of hardship and poverty. Apart from asphalt deposits on Brač and near Vrgorac, and the stone-quarrying industry on the islands of Korčula and Brač, the lack of other natural resources severely limited employment opportunities outside of agriculture and fishing along the coast. In addition, the peasant's primitive agro-technology gave him little chance of overcoming immediate environmental constraints. In the mid-1800s, an English traveller berated the Austrian administration for its failure to improve the agricultural knowledge and practice of Dalmatian peasants:

> *...who are left in entire ignorance of any system of agriculture, and know as little about the...improvement of land as their ancestors in the days of medieval darkness.*[294]

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[293] West (1955:115-116) based her book on three trips to Yugoslavia, 1936-1938.

[294] Wilkinson (1848:215).

A century later, another traveller reported that in the vicinity of Metkovič and Gabela, on the Neretva River, old fashioned hand ploughs with small wooden coulters were still in use.[295] Almost unchanging, therefore, the life of the peasant went on.



The coastal mountain range behind the town of Makarska
Source: **The Totich papers**

When rainfall swept down bare rocky slopes and carried away the thin soil the peasant family would patiently collect what they could and pack it into terraces. Every fertile rocky crevice was carefully cultivated. Every patch of soil was laboriously contained by stone walls. Acknowledging the strenuous efforts of past generations, villagers on the island of Brač have claimed that the walls of their terraced fields and limestone mounds contain more stone than any other island.[296] Villagers on Vis, Korčula, Hvar, the Pelješac Peninsula and elsewhere would no doubt challenge this claim. Aside from what could be learned from local folktales and yarns in village taverns, few of these farmers would have been aware that before Venice and Ragusa (Dubrovnik) started building their great timber ships, the hills of the larger islands and adjacent coast had been covered by forests that held the water and protected the soil. Unfortunately, the farmers and their families were

[295] Ingram (1953:34).

[296] Bennett (1979:75).

themselves at least partly responsible for the continued barrenness of the land. In the mid-1890s a visiting English camper astutely observed that:

> *The Venetians are long since gone, but the young growing trees are cut down all the same for the more prosaic purpose of firewood, or, worse still, destroyed by the animals pastured on the hills.*[297]

Foreign Control

With the exception of Ragusa, Venice managed to maintain almost complete control of Dalmatia between 1420 and 1797. It was during this period – marked by wars with Turkey, frequent incursions across the border with Bosnia-Hercegovina, and fierce commercial rivalry with Ragusa, Spain and Portugal – that large scale exploitation of Dalmatia's forests took place. The quantities of timber delivered to the Venetian dockyards were, at times, so far beyond all naval needs that much was left to rot where it lay. Similarly, the bustling, prosperous and powerful Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) claimed and exploited the forests of the Pelješac Peninsula.[298]

Economic exploitation was the keynote of Venetian rule. A monopoly on salt restricted expansion of the Dalmatian fishing industry, and a deliberate attempt was made to ruin the olive oil and silk industries by cutting down olive and mulberry trees. Restrictions were also placed on shipbuilding, and almost all Dalmatian goods had to be sold at fixed prices in Venice. On the other hand, any power that Venice wanted to appease (e.g. Austria, Naples) "*could...sell its goods on the Dalmatian coast*".[299] In essence, Venice attempted to influence the commercial stature and power of Ragusa, its main commercial rival in the Adriatic, by keeping Dalmatia poor and dependent.

From 1797 until 1814 control of Dalmatia was subject to almost continuous change as a mere pawn in the hands of the great powers. Napoleon brought an end to the Venetian republic in 1797, and its territory – including Dalmatia – was ceded to Austria by the Treaty of Campio Formio. Following Austria's defeat at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, however, Dalmatia was ceded to France by the Treaty of Pressburg and incorporated in Napoleon's short-lived Kingdom of Italy. Ragusa was also seized by Napoleon in 1805 but was not decreed as having ceased to exist as a republic until 1808. France

[297] 'Snaffle' (1897:17).

[298] See Carter (1972) for an account of the Republic of Ragusa.

[299] West (1955:136) and Darby (1966:51) for details of Venetian exploitation.

gained further territories from Austria in 1809 and it was during that year that the new possessions of Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, part of Croatia, Dalmatia and Ragusa were reconstituted into one territorial unit – the Illyrian Provinces – and incorporated as an integral part of the French Empire. But most of Illyria remained under French control for less than five years. The island of Vis was occupied by an English naval force in 1811, and soon joined by the islands of Korčula, Hvar and Lastovo, all of which were briefly used to smuggle various English goods into Dalmatia.[300] Finally, Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign in 1812 enabled Austria to regain her lost provinces and territories (including Dalmatia) before the end of 1813, and they were formally assigned to her by the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815).

Austria's desire for naval power and a commercial outlet to the Mediterranean were the main motivations behind her renewed control of Dalmatia. Later Italian claims to territory underline the geo-political value of the area. Nevertheless, the place assigned to Croatia and Dalmatia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire was to all intents and purposes at the bottom of the imperial table, denied even salt by the continuation of a salt monopoly. Expansion of the fishing industry was again retarded, a situation which Dalmatia's fishermen justifiably complained about, and other development plans were also stymied. For example, in the village of Zablaće near Šibenik, the outcome of an idea to restore the Venetian salt-producing industry was described as follows:

> *... [the] Government sanctioned the undertaking, provided the salt produced was not sold in Austria nor in any country supplied by Austria, so as not to interfere with the Government monopoly. This, of course, was prohibitive.*[301]

The effects of the salt monopoly, however, were relatively trivial in comparison with the commercial disruption caused by new transport and trade routes.

As far as Austria was concerned the port of Trieste was ideal for the purposes of foreign trade, and was therefore developed as a railway terminal and its outlet to the Mediterranean and the world. To this end, and to capture and divert Croatian trade from Fiume (Rijeka), a railway line from Sisak to Trieste via Zagreb was completed in 1862. But the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867 complicated matters; Austrian control of Croatia-Slavonia

[300] Darby (1966:54).

[301] 'Snaffle' (1897:58).

(1849-1868) was ended, Croatia (excluding Dalmatia) was tied to Hungary and an interior railway link between Budapest and Karlovac was extended to Rijeka in 1873. Because this line took over the transport of freight to the coast, it displaced wagon drivers, merchants and others who had made their living from the movement of goods along this route.[302] The ports of Trieste and Rijeka, with their interior connections, symbolised not only the rivalry between the Dual Monarchy's two members but also their mutual desire to avoid any moves that could promote Slav unity. So Dalmatia, now separated from other Austrian controlled areas, remained subordinate to Vienna, and in keeping with Hungarian railway policy any project to connect the Dalmatian seaboard south of Rijeka with its hinterland was opposed. Consequently, Split was denied a railway connection with Bosnia and Hercegovina.

The effect of these policies and developments on the Dalmatian economy was profound. With trade deliberately directed through the northern ports of Trieste and Rijeka, Dalmatian merchants and shippers between Rijeka and Kotor were deprived of their traditional role in handling the bulk of all trade between the central Balkan areas and the West. They were starved of business and ultimately lacked the capital required for the transition from sail to steam shipping between 1860 and 1900. It was *not* a case of owners and shipbuilders who were too conservative in their thinking and investments as times changed. Granted, the decline of the once famous merchant fleets of Ragusa and Boka Kotorska can be traced back to competition with Venice and to huge losses sustained during the Napoleonic wars, but there is no doubt that a long process of gradual decay was accelerated by the Dual Monarchy.

Dalmatian shipping did enjoy a brief period of prosperity between 1850 and 1880. Boka Kotorska gradually recovered from its earlier wartime losses, and shipping based on the Pelješac Peninsula was boosted by the establishment of the Pelješac Shipping Company (Inc.) in 1865. When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869 the Adriatic regained some of its earlier importance for trade between the East and the West. It was during the next 30 years, however, that competition from steamships pushed sailing vessels further and further into the background so that in 1888 even the Pelješac Shipping Company shut down.[303] Dubrovnik somehow managed to survive and was still the home of six shipping companies in 1910. Nevertheless,

[302] Prpic (1971:92).

[303] Matković (1964:184). See also Subotic (1935) re shipping and sailors along the Adriatic coast.

coastal (rather than ocean) shipping was now predominant and the proud international reputation of Dalmatian shipyards – such as those of Kotor, Split, Trogir, Šibenik, Korčula and Hvar – passed fairly quickly into memory and then into history.

Industrial development during the period of Austrian rule was also severely restricted. Although 70 new factories were established between 1859 and 1918, individual craftsmen were the typical units of production.[304] The more successful of them (producing barrels, agricultural tools, sails, furniture and other household goods) possibly had one or two journeymen and three or four apprentices in their workshops. Some of these men, their children or staff proved to be innovative, entrepreneurial, and managed to adapt to developments in technology and shifts in commerce. But changes in Dalmatia's inability to compete in industries such as shipbuilding, together with the advent of factory production, spelt doom for many traditional handicrafts.

Viticulture and Tobacco Cultivation

With industrial development restricted, with expansion of the fishing industry denied, and witnessing the decline of merchant shipping and shipbuilding, Dalmatians were left with little other than their traditional agrarian activities. And here the expansion of their vineyards as well as tobacco production appeared to offer a chance of prosperity. Vineyard expansion over the period 1870-1890 was certainly favoured by the ravages of *phylloxera* in France and later in Italy, Portugal and Spain. But again the prosperity was short-lived. It was struck by three developments: first, by vineyard renewal in France and elsewhere; second, by a clause in a commercial treaty between Austria and Italy which permitted from 1 February 1892 the duty-free import of Italian wines, thereby depressing the price of Dalmatian wines and causing the collapse of commercial viticulture; and finally, by the inevitable arrival of *phylloxera* in Dalmatia itself. Contrary to the views of some writers, Dalmatia was actually among the last of the wine producing regions to be affected by *phylloxera*. An excellent study of this blight reports that although it was present in Croatia in 1881, it did not spread to northern Dalmatia until 1897, to central Dalmatia until 1912 and to southern Dalmatia until 1920.[305] Nevertheless, the combined effect of these developments – West European renewals, the 1892 wine

[304] Tomasevich (1955:172).

[305] Ordish (1972:179).

clause and the arrival of *phylloxera* – was a rapid decline in hectares devoted to viticulture and hence to revenues from wine. The impact at village level is well recorded in a study of Sutivan on the island of Brač.[306]

Tobacco cultivation, well established in Croatia with factories in Fiume (Rijeka) and other cities by the beginning of the 1800s, appears to have been more successful. A report presented in 1894 to a symposium on agriculture and forestry in Austria-Hungary claimed that:

> *In Imotska and Vrgorac districts tobacco cultivation is now exemplary; but as a result of the laudable efforts of the officials of the [State Tobacco] Monopoly, progress has also been made in other regions, such as Ragusa, Cattaro [Kotor], Trau [Trogir] and Sinj...*
>
> *Tobacco cultivation is a source of great prosperity for Dalmatia. The author of these lines, who has inspected the districts of Imotska, Sinj and Vrgorac, can testify that the past six years [c.1888-1893] there has been a complete revolution in economic conditions in all the districts where the peasants are diligently growing tobacco. Where previously there were dirty wretched huts, there are now pretty one- and two-storeyed houses. The peasants have paid off all their debts, and are free from anxiety, while the money-lenders – the vampires who live on the poor in these parts – have completely disappeared.*[307]

Although this account provides a fascinating glimpse of rural life in certain areas the report's enthusiasm must be treated with caution. Why?

There are two reasons. First, by 1890 emigration from the Kotor, Trogir, Sinj, Imotska and Vrgorac districts was well under way to the United States and other overseas destinations. Many of these migrants were already sending money home to assist their families, and increasing numbers were returning with modest savings to clear debts, to improve or build new housing, to purchase land, to marry without further delay and to establish their own families. It seems possible, therefore, that the author of the above report was (mistakenly or otherwise) exaggerating the benefits of tobacco cultivation. Second, emigration from these areas actually increased substantially between 1890 and 1910. This surge in departures suggests: that the benefits of tobacco cultivation, coupled with the significant inflow of money from emigrants and returning migrants, came too late; that existing problems associated with the environment and foreign control were

[306] Bennett (1978).

[307] Anon. (1894) in Warriner (1965:365-366).

intractable; that new problems were emerging; and/or that the benefits of tobacco cultivation, plus the receipt of remittances, actually facilitated emigration by reducing the need to borrow from money-lenders to pay for passage costs.

Attention has so far been focused upon two basic factors underlying Dalmatia's social and economic problems – an environment characterised by a scarcity of cultivable soil and water, and generations of foreign control. Between them these two factors effectively restricted agricultural, industrial and commercial development. Life for Dalmatia's peasantry was probably tolerable under these conditions but became more and more difficult as four other factors – population growth, the penetration of capitalism, the failure of indigenous political movements and migration 'fever' – took their toll.

Population Growth

Between 1840 and 1914, Dalmatia's population rose from 399,000 to 665,000, an increase of 266,000 or 66.7 percent. The bulk of this increase came between 1880 and 1910 with a gain of 170,000 or 35.7 percent. During the same 30 year period much higher gains of 63.9 and 71.3 percent were recorded for Bosnia-Hercegovina and Serbia, respectively. Aside from some postponement of marriage (and therefore family formation) the key factor behind Dalmatia's lower population increase was a long history of small but steady emigration which accelerated sharply during the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. The annual number heading for the USA alone jumped from 367 in 1899 to 4,812 in 1910, a total more than matched by those setting off for all other destinations.

In the absence of reliable information on fertility, mortality and morbidity trends, a precise explanation for Dalmatia's population growth cannot be provided. The conditions necessary for growth, however, can probably be attributed to a trio of developments. First, small improvements in education, sanitation and household living conditions, which were reflected in the decline of infant mortality to about 170 per 1,000 live births in 1910, a rate slightly better than the average of 200 per 1,000 live births for the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[308] Second, living conditions would have improved during the brief bursts of prosperity from shipping and shipbuilding (1850-1880), the expansion of vineyards (1870-1890) and tobacco cultivation (late 1880s onwards). And finally, there was the boost provided by remittances from migrants in the USA and elsewhere, together with the return of successful

[308] Wallis (1918:59).

migrants investing in land, small businesses and housing (1880-1914). At the level of individual families, the net result of these developments was that fewer women were dying in childbirth, and an increasing proportion of live births survived to childhood and adulthood. The impact of this general stimulus to the rate of natural population increase was clearly evident during the years 1880-1910.

Despite the relief gained from emigration, population growth inevitably led to agricultural overpopulation. By 1921 the agricultural population per 100 hectares of cultivated land was 235 for Dalmatia (Banovina Primorje), while 80 per 100 hectares was regarded as the level "which would assure the peasant population a decent plane of living".[309] Of necessity, crops such as corn (used as black bread and/or corn meal mush), potatoes and other legumes, and especially cabbage among the leafy vegetables, became the staples of the peasant diet. These crops had no particular merit other than a high yield per unit area cultivated. Naturally, in the face of pressure upon land suitable for cultivation, more extensive pastoral forms of land use (for sheep and goats) were left to the extreme margins of settlement. The demand for and pressure on land also explains why, in 1902, only 57.4 percent of the farm units in Dalmatia were utilised exclusively by their owners, while the balance was worked in some form of tenancy, mostly in colonate whereby the landlord received 25-66 percent of the gross product.[310]

The Penetration of Capitalism

Population growth was paralleled by the penetration of capitalism beyond the major coastal ports. Money and the market economy undermined the traditional subsistence economic order while individualism disrupted the communal way of life. And as the rural society was transformed, the fusion of old and new values into a new peasant personality produced a distinctive motivation for migration.

By the early 1800s a significant proportion of Dalmatia's land was worked by the proprietors themselves. It was not surprising, therefore, that the new economic system and values had little effect upon land tenure relationships

[309] Tomasevich (1955:315-323). Nejašmić and Mišetić (2007:116) report that in 1931 the agricultural population density on the Island of Vis was 240 per 100ha of cultivable soil, while in the developed parts of Europe the shared opinion was that the optimal density was 35-45 per 100ha of cultivable soil.

[310] Tomasevich (1955:118).

until the second half of the 1800s. Indeed, the colonate system remained virtually undisturbed until 1918. On the other hand, serfdom and a 50:50 sharecropping system in the former territory of the Republic of Ragusa were abolished in 1878. The main casualty of capitalism, however, was the *zadruga*.

Although experts disagree over its precise origins and mode of operation, the *zadruga* is usually defined as a joint family involving two or more small families related by blood or adoption, with communal ownership of the means of production and regulation of resources, production activities and consumption. It was subsistence oriented, directed by a designated or elected household head (often the most able married man) and the basis of a tradition of cooperation and mutual aid, essential in the life of peasant communities.

There are various schools of thought concerning the *zadruga's* demise. The introduction of laws or civil codes, embodying the principles of individual ownership, individual inheritance, the dominance of the father in the family and his power to dispose of family property, has been stressed as a key factor. In Dalmatia, a new civil code (based on Code Napoleon) was introduced by Austria in 1816. The abolition of serfdom added to the pace of change, as did a shift from taxation by hearths or chimneys to taxation by heads and property which negated an incentive for communal living. Nor should one ignore the affects upon traditional attitudes and values of: increasing participation in the market economy (e.g. shipbuilding, viticulture and tobacco cultivation) during the second half of the 1800s; the receipt of remittances from kin overseas; and the day-to-day example provided by returning migrants. However, while each of these factors contributed to its demise, Tomasevich lays the blame squarely upon the money and market economy which exposed critical weaknesses in the *zadruga* as a social and economic unit.

Tomasevich[311] offers three reasons in support of his argument. First, the tax load was increased and a move was begun to assess and collect all taxes in money rather than in kind or the provision of services. Second, consumption patterns were enlarged and altered by the demand for factory products such as textiles, footwear, household utensils, and foods and beverages such as sugar and coffee. Because the *zadruga* could not supply these goods directly it was forced to enter the market to sell some of its agricultural products, using the money gained to purchase goods and to pay taxes. Third, if the revenue from sales was insufficient to meet the *zadruga's* needs, credit had

[311] Tomasevich (1955).

to be obtained and paid for at high interest rates. To repay this debt and interest more money was needed, increasing the strain upon the resources, capabilities and products of the *zadruga*. Under these circumstances, with unsatisfied consumption demands, with debt and a consequent loss of land, many peasant families saw the division of their *zadruga* as the ultimate solution. And so the communal spirit gave way to the rule that each family should pursue its own interests and aspirations.

With population growth increasing the pressure upon land resources, and contributing to indebtedness and property fragmentation (almost synonymous with uneconomic subdivision and under-employment), survival was the prime concern for most families. The number with insufficient land for their needs, or no land at all, increased quickly after 1880. Both land and employment became more and more difficult to obtain. Consequently, as in Poland and elsewhere in Europe, a mounting desire for self-sufficiency and independent landholder status emerged as the prime goals of family life.

A useful distinction, based on the degree of penetration by capitalism, has been made between "pure" and "mixed" peasant societies. In the "pure" peasant society the household unit was materially self-sufficient, and outside economic and social relations were relatively insignificant. The peasant's world was the village, the members of which were known intimately and with whom there was an exchange of services and mutual aid. Inter-village contact for social and economic purposes was restricted by poor communications to an area of a few miles. Life was largely regulated by tradition, and self-education (in a generally pre-literate society) was by word of mouth, a method sufficient for the transmission of customs, special rural skills and crafts. In the "mixed" peasant society, on the other hand, outside contacts are constant, for the peasants are not only cultivators but traders as well. As such they come into contact with craftsmen, intellectuals and administrators from the towns. Significantly there is a ready acceptance of elementary education as peasants realise that townsmen are often in a position to take advantage of them because of their superior knowledge.[312]

With the expansion of viticulture (1870-1890) and tobacco cultivation (1880s onwards) the transition from a "pure" to a "mixed" peasant society was well underway in Dalmatia by 1900, occurring earlier and more quickly in some areas than in others. Over the next two decades major advances were recorded in elementary education, and illiteracy dropped among those aged

[312] The distinction between "pure" and "mixed" peasant societies was made by Trouton (1952:3-8).

ten years and over to about 50 percent in 1921. On the islands of Hvar, Korčula and Brač, and on the coast from Split to the Pelješac Peninsula, the establishment of a village school was a significant event proclaimed by villagers as clear evidence of their progressiveness, especially in comparison with villages in the hinterland districts of Vrgorac and Imotska. However, although most of the larger villages had elementary schools by 1920, not every school-aged child could attend on a regular daily basis, much less advance to higher levels. With many families living on the margins of subsistence, it was taken for granted that a seven year-old was able to participate in some capacity as a productive worker, if only to off-set to some degree the loss of older siblings and young adults departing overseas. It should be borne in mind that it was during this period of major change (1880-1920) that large scale 35emigration took place.

Indigenous Political Movements

> *... if we become free, then it may no longer be necessary to go across the sea to America, for we shall have our own America here, a land in which a man may work hard and honestly and live well and freely.*[313]

This passage from *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andric captures well the thoughts and beliefs that gained popularity not only in Bosnia-Hercegovina, but also in Dalmatia and Croatia-Slovenia during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Sadly it was a goal that eluded its champions until after World War I.

The seeds of modern nationalism were sown in Croatia and especially along the Dalmatian coast during the brief life of Napoleon's Illyrian Provinces (1809-1813). With its ideal of a union of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes, the 'Illyrian' movement developed first as a cultural and literary movement but in 1841 achieved a political form in Croatia when a liberal party was launched and led by intellectuals. A Dalmatian equivalent was founded in Zara (Zadar) in 1849 but suppressed the following year. Over the following decades, as the movement's spirit was sustained by an ongoing cultural revival, Dalmatia played an important role in the development of the South Slav (Jugoslav) movement for the union of Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia.[314]

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[313] Andrić (1959:281-282).

[314] See Voinovitch (1920) for Dalmatia's role in the development of the Jugoslav movement.

Political representation was severely restricted until the last decade of Austrian rule. In 1822 Dalmatia's administration was reorganised and the political privileges of the nobility were replaced by a bureaucracy completely dependant on Vienna. The situation improved a little in 1861 under a new Austrian constitution but even then the franchise was incredibly distorted. While 15,700 Italian speakers were represented in the Dalmatian Diet by 26 deputies, only 15 deputies represented about 140,000 Slav speakers.[315] The Italian minority played an important role in the administration of Dalmatia, and it was not until 1909 that Croatian was made equal with Italian as an official language. Despite the representation handicap, however, the period 1861-1870 was marked by a spirited 'parliamentary' clash between Dalmatian autonomists (inclined toward sympathy with Italian culture) and Illyrian unionists (Slavs who sought union with Croatia). It was a clash that the unionists clearly won, gaining a substantial majority of 25 to 16 deputies in the 1870 election.

Nevertheless, the prospects for actual union, irrespective of promises made by Austria and Hungary, were negated by the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867. Both Austria and Hungary maintained a firm hand on their subjects, as illustrated by military responses to revolts in the Cattaro (Kotor) region in 1869 and Rakovica (in Croatia) during 1871. It appears that the Cattaro revolt was the outcome of an order depriving the inhabitants of special privileges and subjecting them to compulsory military service from which they had previously been exempt. The insurgents only laid down their arms when given assurances that conscription would not be applied, and that they would be amnestied.[316]

Under the terms of the Dual Monarchy created in 1867, Croatia-Slovenia sent delegates to the Upper House and deputies to the Lower House of the Diet in Budapest, while Dalmatia and Istria sent their representatives to the Reichstag in Vienna. A strategy of divide and rule was plainly evident. Against hopeless odds, Dalmatians still kept the unionist ideal alive and in 1903 unsuccessfully petitioned their head of state (Francis Joseph) to intervene against the Hungarian regime's oppression of Croatians. Other moves, again unsuccessful, included the Resolution of Fiume (Rijeka) in 1905, demanding the union of Dalmatia with Croatia, and the Resolution of Zara (Zadar) which conveyed the Serbian community's support for the proposal.

[315] Darby (1966:55).

[316] May (1960:58) and Macartney (1969:577).

Political representation improved in Dalmatia when manhood suffrage was introduced in 1907. Until then, politics was very much the domain of townspeople, a small middle class, intellectuals and what was left of the aristocracy. Despite this improvement, foreign travellers remarked upon both the lack of proportionate representation in the Austrian parliament and "the gagging of the newspapers".[317] The latter measure was part of actions taken by Austria in 1912 against the press and some town councils in response to demonstrations prompted by Serbian victories in the Balkan War.

As far as the ordinary people of Dalmatia were concerned, the political gains of the early 1900s came far too late to be effective in terms of their social and economic problems. Economic enterprise and responsibility had long since passed to the individual and his family and with the exception of the Catholic Church there was no institutional problem of excessively large landowners which required a major social revolution. Social and economic reforms of a much simpler kind were required; notably, better education, new agrarian skills, credit at low interest rates, and new industries to provide alternative avenues of employment. It was these things that the politicians either failed to provide or in some cases provided too late. For example, in 1896 the first credit co-operative was begun in Dalmatia by farmers as a self-help measure, and two years later the provincial government belatedly set up a special mortgage administration. Although the latter institution granted long-term loans at 5.5 percent interest, money-lenders and rural storekeepers remained the major sources of credit – for consumption (rather than production) and for overseas migration.

Although it need hardly be said, it should be clearly understood that the knot of social and economic problems besetting Dalmatia was not undone by independence from Austria and the formation after World War I of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (officially known as Jugoslavia after 1929). The effects of foreign rule, limited natural resources, population growth and emigration were too deep-seated and complex to be readily resolved by a new nation facing initial frontier disputes with Italy, short of financial resources and beset by ethnic divisions that defied political unity and stability during the 1920s and 1930s. To illustrate this point one needs only to consider the example of fishing, crucial to the livelihood of people on the Island of Vis. Hit by a decline in hauls of sardines and other fish during World War I, the industry was severely affected by the Brijuni Convention in 1923 which limited the right of Vis fishermen to operate in the waters of

[317] See, for example, Goldring (1951:34).

Palagruža, an island that fell under Italy's rule. In 1924 there were 745 fishermen on Vis with 149 boats, but by 1926 there were just 365 fishermen and 69 boats.[318]

Migration 'Fever'

Imbued with a mounting desire for self-sufficiency and independent landholder status, but faced with increasing hardships, restrictions and dwindling future prospects that seemed to be impossible to resolve, the Dalmatian peasantry was ripe by the end of the 1880s for (initially temporary) migration as a solution. It was a situation they shared with peasants elsewhere in southern and eastern Europe. But where could they go, what opportunities were there overseas and how could they afford the costs involved?

The answer to this complex question lies in the activities and influence of the pioneer migrants, many of whom were sailors and restless adventurers from the early 1850s onwards, and the steady trickle of family members or friends who joined them until the early 1880s. Most of these courageous young men, and their early followers from Dalmatia and Croatia proper, landed and remained in America but others found their way directly or indirectly to Australia, southern Africa, Canada, Chile, Argentina and New Zealand. The role of such pioneers – in particular men like Paul Lupis, Paul Arnerich, Mariano Vella and his cousin John (a.k.a. Ivan) Vella in New Zealand and their counterparts elsewhere – in promoting and often facilitating the migration of family members, friends and others from their villages and neighbouring communities is one of the most important findings of twentieth century research on international migration.

Because the pioneer's role has already been discussed and illustrated in Chapters 1 and 2, it is sufficient here to simply reiterate two points already made. First, the pioneers and their early followers (pre-1880s) often provided news about their successes and opportunities overseas. They did this via letters (if literate), photographs, oral messages conveyed by returning compatriots or when they in turn came home for a visit or to settle down with their savings. Their news – especially from "Amerika" – of goldfields, plentiful work, an abundance of fertile land and other opportunities was sometimes exaggerated in tavern yarns. However, nobody could deny the expenditure on housing and land purchases by returnees or the signs of success (clothing, other personal possessions, gifts and entertainment

[318] Nejašmić and Mišetić (2007:116).

expenditure) exhibited by such men and visitors. Among land-hungry peasants, reliant on the tenuous fruits of subsistence farming, the effect of these displays of wealth and news of opportunities was obvious. An American migration 'fever' developed and embraced other destinations, including New Zealand when news of gumdigging elevated this far-away country to the status of "Mala Amerika" (Little America). This fever was sustained if not enhanced during the 1880s and 1890s by remittances and letters from the first waves of temporary migrants and especially by the embodied success of returnees. But there was still the problem of passage costs, and here the second point about the role of pioneers, early followers and later temporary migrants comes to the fore. Their remittances plus gifts and loans upon their return or during visits, often covered or at least contributed greatly toward the passage costs of those they inspired. The demonstrable success and good credit rating of earlier migrants could also induce storekeepers and other money-lenders to assist, albeit at high interest rates.

So pervasive and intense was the migration 'fever' that it became a much debated issue of social, economic and political concern. In Zagreb, Ante Radić, one of the founders of the Croatian People's Peasant Party in 1904, published many articles in the newspaper *Dom* (The Home) expressing his concerns about the extent and implications of mass emigration, suggesting on one occasion that soon there would not be not enough men left to bury the dead in certain localities. Writers with similar views appeared in other newspapers in Croatia and Dalmatia. Like *Dom* these papers also published emigrant letters and articles warning readers of the hardships they would endure overseas, but such items appear to have been ignored or outnumbered by those extolling the virtues of life abroad, especially in America. Initially, the emigrant required no passport or exit permit but as the number of departures escalated, passports and other measures (such as an ordinance to control the activities of steamship agents) were introduced in an attempt to stem or regulate the flow of migrants.

Such measures, however, along with the views of Radić and like-minded intellectuals, proved to be of no avail. During the period 1899 to 1910 a total of 331,154 migrants from Croatia and Slovenia and 31,047 from Dalmatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina arrived in the United States,[319] while many thousands more found their way to other overseas destinations such as New Zealand.

[319] Govorchin (1961:47).

Migrant Voices

Not all of the factors causing migration applied equally to all of the migrants, at all times and/or from all parts of the Adriatic coast. This needs to be borne in mind, most notably when thinking of the pioneers (late 1850s to 1880) as opposed to arrivals in New Zealand from the late 1880s onwards. Nor were individual migrants necessarily aware of or able to explain their departure in relation to the full range of underlying factors examined and discussed above; more immediate personal or familial issues and concerns would usually be uppermost in their minds.

Nevertheless, the limitations of the physical environment, the legacy of foreign control, and the failure of indigenous political movements were (to varying degrees) undoubtedly factors common to all of them.

However, the impact of population growth, far-reaching changes wrought by the penetration of capitalism (e.g. the transition to a "mixed" peasant society), military service (1880-1914) and developments such as the growth of tobacco cultivation, the advent of *phylloxera* or changes in the viability of the wine industry, shipping and shipbuilding, were all interacting factors more relevant to migrants from the late 1880s onwards than to those in earlier decades.

With the above points in mind, a simple question remains to be tackled here. Do the causes of migration discussed in the previous pages match up with the views of the migrants themselves?

In response to this question the personal views and other relevant information offered by some migrants are presented below. The quotations have been drawn from two sources: the report of the 1898 Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand; and personal interviews conducted with a small number of elderly migrants in 1964 and 1965.

Although the primary focus here is upon the views, opinions and experiences of men who arrived in New Zealand between 1880 and 1914, extracts from interviews with four later arrivals (Paul Yovich, Frank Ostoja, Mate Trlin and Ivan Vegar) have been included to illustrate the persistence of particular features, factors or causes of migration from one generation to another. For each of the quotations presented, the name and (if available) other relevant details of the person concerned are provided.

Evidence Presented in the 1898 Report of the Royal Commission[320]

Luka Jurmovich

> *I speak of my own immediate neighbourhood [near Dubrovnik]. The people generally pay one-fourth of their produce for rent. That is what they did sixteen years ago. The wages were about 1s. 10d. a day and 'tucker' on farms.*

Peter Covecich [Covacich], of Trpanj (Pelješac Peninsula).

> *At home I was a stonemason, at which I could earn 3s. a day and 'tucker'. For digging on a farm a man could get 1s. 10d. or 2s. a day and 'tucker'... The work at home is not constant, and the people often have very hard times in winter, which is often very severe.*

Jacob Radatich, of Novi-Vinodol, speaking for Peter and Nicholas Skokandich, of Žrnovo (Korčula).

> *Peter and Nicholas...have fourteen people dependent on them, counting their parents and sisters. It would take about £400 to bring them out. It is the custom in Dalmatia to divide the land equally between all the children on the death of the parents. Thus the land is cut up into very small sections …*

Nicholas Seutch [Sentch], of Fiume [Rijeka]; arrived c.1864.

> *It is difficult to arrive exactly at the causes which led to the influx of my countrymen ... Some of the younger ones objected to the military service and that acted as an inducement for them to emigrate to New Zealand ... In Austria [i.e. Dalmatia], of late years, the crops have failed considerably with disease in the vines, and money has been exceedingly scarce; therefore it became necessary for some of them to go abroad to get money, in order to remit it Home to enable the others to exist through the bad times …*

Mathew A. Ferri, of Trpanj (Pelješac Peninsula).

> *… the province of Dalmatia ... has made no progress ... and has, under several rulers and Governments, had to fight for freedom and [its] national language. They are heavily taxed and greatly imposed*

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[320] "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand". *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1898, H.12*. For the individual extracts presented here, see: p.23 (Luka Jurmovich and Peter Covecich [Covacich]); pp.23-24 (Jacob Radatich on behalf of Peter and Nicholas Skokandich); p.34 (Nicolas Seutch [Sentch]); pp.57-60 (Mathew Ferri); and p.60 (Louis Kinkella).

upon, and are kept down by the capitalists, landlords, storekeepers etc., for their own object and purpose. Austria has never had, or attempted to form, any colonisation. Her subjects (Slavonic origin) have been compelled through poverty and lack of opportunity at Home to seek their fortunes abroad ... After a time spent in hard and ungrateful labour, they manage to save a few pounds, with which they return home, in reality no better off than when they started ...

Ferri also comments on the case of a fellow migrant about to return home.

His native district is well known to me, and consists of little else but rocks. No person could live on the land unless he had other means of support, and he is a lucky man who contrives to keep out of debt ...

Louis Kinkella, of Lovran (near Trieste); arrived c.1883.

Some of them emigrate to escape military service... Many of those who go Home take considerable amounts of money with them. I have had an opportunity of knowing this, because I go with them to the bank and help to arrange matters for them. There have been hard times in Dalmatia, the vines having failed.

Interviews, 1964-1965[321]

Joze Veža, of Živogošće (central Dalmatia, coastal zone); arrived 1896.

I was ... one of eight children in our family. I left home when I was 20 years old, the first of our family to go overseas ... News of New Zealand reached our village by way of other migrants; I heard about the gumdigging and the money to be made. My parents and the rest of the family also needed help, and this seemed the best way.

Sylvester Delich, of Drvenik (central Dalmatia, coastal zone); arrived 1904.

When I arrived [here]... I was only about 16 years old ... if I had waited any longer I would not have been granted a passport because of the compulsory military service at 18 years of age. It's very hard to say exactly why I came out here... there are a number of reasons. First, times were not the best back home and being old enough to work I had to try and help the family. If I stayed at home the army pay would only be enough for boot polish ... I could earn much more out here.

[321] These interviews were conducted as part of the author's MA thesis research (Trlin, 1967) and are included in that thesis. The extracts presented can be found in the appendices to the thesis as follows: p.256 (Joze Veža); pp.275-276 (Sylvester Delich); pp.287-288 (Paul Yovich); pp.235, 237-238 and 239-240 (Frank Ostoja); pp.295-296 (Mate Trlin); and p.305 (Ivan Vegar).

[Second] an uncle of mine had come out here before me...he made at least two trips home so we knew about New Zealand [and] he was here when I arrived. Also I guess I just followed other boys who were then going overseas ... My father got the passage money from a chap who was out here before and had returned home.

Paul Yovich, of Dragljane (Vrgorac district); arrived 1924.

... my uncle George Yovich came to New Zealand in 1904 and later went to America ... Why did I leave Dalmatia? Well things were simply too tough at home. Including those who had died, there were eight of us children in the family. We lived on the small holdings of my father – our scattered bits of land totalled about 10 acres. We grew vines, figs, wheat, maize, potatoes and other vegetables. Wine was the main commercial crop – it was the source of cash for goods that could not be grown on the land.

Frank Ostoja, of Dol (Island of Brač); arrived 1924.

My father [who also ran a butchery shop] owned several pieces of land scattered around the place, and my bothers and sisters and myself worked on that land. Others would lease some land from the Church if they did not have enough, paying rent in kind; for example, if you produced six gallons of wine from the area leased you gave the priest in the village one gallon ... Many people with not enough land did this (often due to large families).

The village school was paid for by the Government which also appointed the teacher and paid him. Older people in the village such as my parents ... could neither read nor write, but the younger generation could read and write...

Before the First World War there was a natural interest in the rule by Austria – a rule that was resented ... My father and many others in the village depended on a wealthy Italian for work etc ... and they followed his lines of political thinking – probably because they had little idea as to other politics in the country at large.

Mate Trlin, of Ravča (Vrgorac district); arrived 1924.

I left home ... at the age of 17. My reasons for leaving ... [were] the low standard of living... also the parents of most families had more children than they were capable of providing for. When I left home I was one of six children in the family [two more sisters were born later]. Large families posed problems of inheritance of land...

The land owned by the family was fragmented into many small bits, together totalling about 4-5 acres – but in very stony country. On the land we grew figs, cherries, wheat, potatoes and tobacco as well as

having grape vines. We often sold tobacco for the purchase of other goods (for example, salt).

Every now and again small groups of six or more left the village for overseas. Why overseas? Because there was very little work at home or in surrounding districts... My family went into debt to pay for my passage, using the land held by the family as security on the loan. Interest on the loan was up to 35 percent. Passage and clothing cost about £60.

When I left Dalmatia my destination was originally Australia. My father had been [there] during the late 1890s when he was single. He stayed I think for five or six years and then returned home and got married. He used the money he brought back to recondition the house.

Ivan Vegar, of Ravča (Vrgorac district); arrived 1925.

... there were five brothers and two sisters in my family, therefore including my parents there were nine of us dependent on the land owned by my father.

Two of my brothers emigrated to New Zealand before me ... my brother Tome [Thomas] Vegar came out about here about 1904 and Luke my other brother arrived here about 1912. ... after I left home, one sister went to Argentina in 1927 and one other brother went to Australia in 1926 ...

The Area of Origin: Central Dalmatia

The first formal identification of the predominant area of origin of New Zealand's Croatians was made by Revel Lochore who defined it as:

... the districts of Makarska and Vrgorac, which are two smallish coastal towns between Split (Spalato) and Dubrovnik; the adjoining peninsula of Peljesac (Sabbioncello); and the islands of Korcula and Hvar (Curzola and Lesina).[322]

Though reasonably good, the description of Vrgorac as a coastal town and the omission of two islands (Brač and Vis) immediately indicated the need for a more accurate definition. This task was first undertaken in the 1960s, then expanded and refined in the 1970s.[323] A few minor amendments and

[322] Lochore (1951:36-37).

[323] For earlier versions of this exercise, see Trlin (1967:60-66) and Trlin (1979:28-32).

additions have since been made and are included in the results presented here.

Following the example of Charles Price, who pioneered the use of naturalisation records in Australia,[324] birthplace data was obtained from the *Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand Before 1948*. A total of 2,561 immigrants naturalised between 1890 and 1939 were identified using this source and their birthplace locations are shown in Figure 1 with a statistical summary in Table 2. Since the number naturalised accounts for less than half of the estimated arrivals over the same period, interpretation of the results in Table 2 is based upon three assumptions, namely that:

- all Croatian immigrants, upon completing the required duration of residence in New Zealand, were free to apply for naturalisation if they so desired;
- immigrants from all islands, districts, towns and villages were equally likely to seek naturalisation at any given time; and therefore
- the number of naturalisations for each island, district, town or village may be taken as proportionately representative of their overall contribution to the flow of migrants.

Two technical problems concerning the results presented should be noted.

First, in the case of persons naturalised around the turn of the century, the birthplace was often stated in general terms – e.g. "Austria", "Dalmatia" – with the result that for Table 2 sizeable numbers had to be included in the residual category 'Other Dalmatia'.

Second, a number of immigrants chose to state their birthplace in terms of a district or island, often making it difficult if not impossible to distinguish between a town and district bearing the same name (i.e. Vrgorac, Makarska) or an island and a town with the same name (i.e. Korčula, Hvar). Accordingly, cases where a clear distinction could not be drawn between a town as opposed to an island or district have also been assigned in Table 2 to the residual category ('Other') for the island or district concerned.

[324] See Price (1963a, 1963b).

Three significant features emerged from the results obtained.

First, only one birthplace of any enduring importance was identified beyond central Dalmatia; namely, the coastal township of Novi, located about 35kms south of Rijeka. A small flow of arrivals from this source was initiated in 1885 or 1886 by Anton Sokolich and Ivan Maricich, who heard about New Zealand's opportunities while in Melbourne. Over the next three decades they were followed by small groups of mainly temporary migrants, some visiting New Zealand more than once, with a switch to permanent settlement after 1918. Prominent among settlers from Novi were members of the Sokolich, Dobrec (a.k.a. Dobrich) and Kriskovich families who accounted for half of the migrants from this township naturalised between 1918 and 1939.

The second and third features identified concern the territorial extent of the central Dalmatian area of origin and the dominance of specific birthplaces within it. Using Lochore's initial definition as a reference point, it is now clear that the area of origin needs to be enlarged to encompass the islands of Brač and Vis, but may also be restricted to embrace just the contributing villages on the eastern halves of Korčula and Hvar, along with the western half of the Pelješac Peninsula (see Figure 1).

Within this area it is also clear that specific towns or villages dominated the flow of migrants from their island or district (see Table 2). On Korčula, three villages (Žrnovo, Pupnat and Račišće) together accounted for about 65 percent of the island's migrants naturalised, while Sućuraj alone dominated naturalisations (42 percent) for Hvar. Similarly, Podgora was pre-eminent in the coastal zone (with 33.4 percent of naturalisations) followed by Drašnice and Živogošće. Towns and villages on the lower reaches of the Neretva River (e.g. Metković, Komin, Opuzen) made only a small contribution to the total. Finally, the flow from the hinterland was initially dominated by Vrgorac with half of the naturalisations, though a few of them might properly be included in the hinterland 'Other' category.

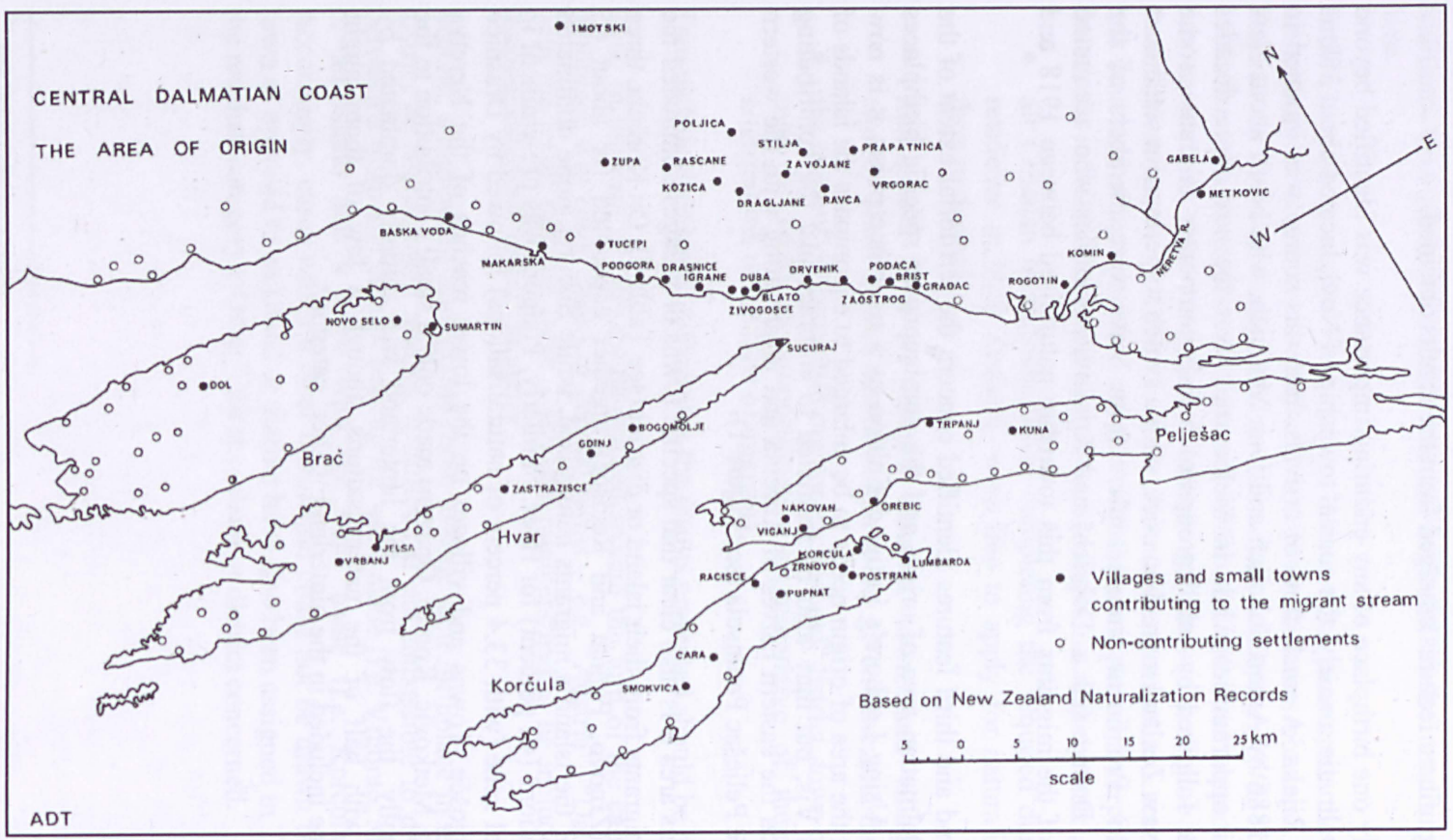

CENTRAL DALMATIAN COAST
THE AREA OF ORIGIN
IMOTSKI
POLJICA
STILJA
PRAPATNICA
ZUPA
RASCANE
ZAVOJANE
VRGORAC
KOZICA
DRAGLJANE
RAVCA
GABELA
METKOVIC
BASKA VODA
TUCEPI
MAKARSKA
PODGORA
DRASNICE
IGRANE
DUBA
ORVENIK
PODACA
BRIST
GRADAC
BLATO
ZIVOGOSCE
ZAOSTROG
ROGOTIN
KOMIN
NERETVA R.
NOVO SELO
SUMARTIN
SUCURAJ
DOL
Brač
BOGOMOLJE
GDINJ
ZASTRAZISCE
TRPANJ
KUNA
Pelješac
NAKOVAN
OREBIC
VIGANJ
JELSA
VRBANJ
Hvar
KORČULA
LUMBARDA
ZRNOVO
POSTRANA
RACISCE
PUPNAT
CARA
SMOKVICA
Korčula
N
E
W
Villages and small towns contributing to the migrant stream
Non-contributing settlements
Based on New Zealand Naturalization Records
5 0 5 10 15 20 25 km
scale
ADT

Table 2: Birthplaces of Croatian Immigrants, naturalised 1890-1914 and 1918-1939, born on the Adriatic Coast.

Birthplaces		No. 1890-1914	No. 1918-1939	% 1890-1939
Northern Origins				
Novi		9	24	1.28
Other (Rijeka, Istria, etc.)		38	7	1.75
Central Dalmatia				
Korčula Island – Lumbarda		15	28	1.68
	Pupnat	21	69	3.51
	Račišće	59	34	3.63
	Žrnovo	18	69	3.39
	Other	67	38	4.10
Hvar Island	- Gdinj	13	9	0.86
	Sućuraj	19	61	3.12
	Other	36	52	3.43
Brač Island		39	39	3.04
Vis Island		14	11	0.97
Pelješac Peninsula		47	22	2.69
Coastal zone	- Drašnice	52	58	4.29
	Drvenik	40	40	3.12
	Igrane	38	20	2.26
	Makarska	66	18	3.28
	Podgora	139	158	11.59
	Zaostrog	37	12	1.91
	Živogošće	52	49	3.94
	Other	73	36	4.25
Neretva River (Metković etc.)		23	38	2.38
Hinterland	- Imotski	23	3	1.01
	Kozica	22	32	2.10
	Orah	21	12	1.28
	Rašćane	25	10	1.36
	Vrgorac	179	106	11.12
	Other	78	60	5.38
Other Dalmatia				
Village not specified, unable to be located, remainder		140	43	7.14
Totals *		**1,403**	**1,158**	**100.00**

* The totals exclude 13 migrants naturalised 1890-1914 and 21 naturalised 1918-1939, born beyond the coastal strip (Dalmatia) that is part of Croatia. *Source: Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand Before 1948.*

Migrants from this relatively small area on the Adriatic coast moved not only to New Zealand but to Australia, the United States of America, Canada, Chile, Argentina and southern Africa. For example, in the United States: they were strongly represented among Croatian settlers in Louisiana; and migrants from Korčula, Vis, Hvar, Brač and Split dominated Croatian settlement in San Pedro, California. In Chile some estimates suggest that migrants from Brač accounted for 90 percent of Croatian arrivals, with the balance drawn from Hvar, Vis and the areas around Omiš and Dubrovnik. And in Australia, 84 percent of all naturalisations up to 1939 came from the area defined as "central Dalmatia and off-shore islands".[325]

An important outcome of this distribution was the creation of a transnational network which enabled villages in Dalmatia and migrants abroad to receive and respond to information (gained via letters or reports from returning migrants) about opportunities and prospects in various overseas destinations. This flow of information and its effect is well illustrated by Joseph Segetin, Joze Veža, Sylvester Delich and Ivan Veža who arrived in New Zealand in 1894, 1896, 1904 and 1908, respectively.[326]

> *While I was in San Jose [California] I received a letter from my father, from home [Vručica, Pelješac Peninsula], telling me that my brother Charlie [Vlaho] had gone to New Zealand ... he wanted me to leave California and go to New Zealand to join my brother Charlie. On my father's advice and to please him I left California for New Zealand... (Joseph Segetin)*
>
> *I left home when I was 20 years old, the first of our family to go overseas ... news of New Zealand reached our village [Živogošće] by way of other migrants; I heard about the gumdigging and the money to be made. (Joze Veža)*
>
> *An uncle of mine had come out here [to New Zealand] before me in 1900 ... he made at least two trips home [to the village of Drvenik] ... so we knew about New Zealand ... (Sylvester Delich)*

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[325] For further details on the international distribution of migrants from central Dalmatia, see: Vujnovich (1974) and Niland (1941) re Louisiana and San Pedro in the USA; Perić-Kaselj and Kuti (2007:97) for Chile; Price (1963b) and more recently Šutalo (2004) for Australia; and Mursalo (1981) for southern Africa.

[326] The quotations presented here were drawn from: a letter to John Totich by Joseph Segetin in January 1949 (see Trlin, 1967:244-250); and personal interviews with Joze Veža, Sylvester Delich and Ivan Veža in January 1965 (see Trlin, 1967: 256-260, 275-278 and 279-282).

I stayed in America for two years... I had no relations in America that I could contact ... I didn't particularly like this situation. I heard from my two brothers in Herekino, New Zealand; they seemed to be doing all right so I thought I would join them. My brother Joze helped pay for my passage to Herekino. (Ivan Veža)

Chain Migration

As suggested at the end of Chapter 1, the emergence of a relatively small, well-defined area of origin in central Dalmatia was rooted in the process of chain migration which can be traced back to a small number of successful pioneers (e.g. Paul Lupis, Paul Arnerich, Mariano Vella) and the family members, relatives and friends who either followed in their footsteps or elected to accompany them on their return journey if they visited the homeland. It is important to stress the role of pioneers and their immediate followers, for it was their example that helped other potential migrants move from mere dissatisfaction with conditions at home to a decision to emigrate. In effect, the successful pioneer and/or follower was therefore an 'attraction' – a pathfinder, a source of remittances, a fund of information – perhaps of more significance than any single 'push' factor operating in the place of origin.

Sometimes mere chance as well as back-breaking hard work played a part in the success of a pioneer or his followers and the development of migration chains. For example, a group of 9 or 10 'Austrians' from Dalmatia were reported to have shared a Tattersall's sweepstake win of £9,000 in 1892.[327] Accounts vary as to how many of these men retired to their home country with their winnings, but at least one was believed to have sent his share of the money home. The sudden arrival of large numbers of Dalmatians on the gumfields of Northland over the next two years was attributed by some commentators to this stroke of luck.[328]

By 1880 the pioneer era had more or less drawn to a close and during the next 20 years relatives and friends following the more successful pioneers were contributing to a flow of information eagerly consumed in their homeland. With few exceptions, families or villages throughout central

[327] For a newspaper report concerning this event, see *Timaru Herald*, 1 June 1893, p.4.

[328] "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand", *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, pp.61-62 (Evidence of Hon. Edwin Mitchelson M.P.).

Dalmatia had by 1900 established their contacts abroad, acquired a comprehensive body of knowledge about possible destinations and reached various stages in the development of their migration chains. It may therefore be concluded, with regard to Figure 1 and Table 2, that islands, districts and villages absent from or with only small contributions to the stream of migrants by 1939 had either relatively unsuccessful pioneers and/or early followers in New Zealand or that their pioneers and early followers had been more successful in the United States, Australia and elsewhere.

Temporary Migration

As the trickle of pioneers and early followers developed into a well organised flow it became obvious that aspirations and desires crystallizing in Dalmatia toward the end of the nineteenth century were producing a distinctive type of migrant and pattern of migration. Although married men were part of the initial mix, young single men dominated the outward flow as it gathered pace and volume in the from the early 1900s. With few exceptions these men left home thinking of themselves as temporary migrants, instilled with the clear intention of remitting funds to support families adversely affected by various social, economic and political factors before returning to Dalmatia with further funds or accumulated savings to fulfill underlying aspirations and desires that motivated them and were endorsed by their families.

In the absence of official New Zealand statistics for both permanent and temporary arrivals and departures prior to 1920 it is necessary to estimate the prevalence of temporary migration by one or the other of two alternative methods. The first method is to compare New Zealand's 1921 Census statistics on birthplace ("Jugoslavia") by duration of residence for a given period of time with official statistics on total arrivals by birthplace ("Austria" or "Austria-Hungary" prior to 1914) during the same time period, and to interpret the difference between the two sets of statistics (a population loss) as a crude indicator of the prevalence of temporary migration. Using this method the results indicate that temporary migration was a major feature of arrivals in New Zealand until World War I with population losses by 1921 of about: 86 percent of arrivals for the period 1897-1901; 80 percent for 1902-1906; 56 percent for 1907-1911; and about 55 percent for the period 1912-1916. If it were possible to adjust the figures for total arrivals to eliminate migrants returning to New Zealand after visits (of varying duration) to Dalmatia, the percentage loss for each time period could be reduced. As it stands, however, this adjustment cannot be made and the potential reduction in losses can be no more than a matter of speculation.

The second method has been employed by Des Mataga. Using trans-Tasman shipping passenger lists from vessels arriving in and departing from New Zealand, lists that were often incomplete and marred by misspelling of names, he was nevertheless able to identify three surges in the arrival of Croatian "transients" (i.e. sojourners or temporary migrants). In essence his findings support the estimates presented above, including a higher average age of about 30 for arrivals pre-1900 (suggesting the presence of many married males and/or men who had postponed marriage) with higher proportions of younger men thereafter (that Mataga attributes to increasing avoidance of military service, especially during the years before World War I as Austria developed its navy).[329]

Comparisons with Australia and the United States show marked similarities. In Australia about 45 percent of all Jugoslav (primarily Croatian) adult males arriving between 1922 and 1940 later left and did not return, the percentage prior to 1920 being even higher, and in the United States an estimated 44 percent of all arrivals before 1930 returned to their homeland.[330] Why did they return home? For some the reasons could be simply homesickness, a dislike of the work available abroad, a debilitating injury or the death of a parent (especially the father). The latter could trigger a claim for one's inheritance and/or invoke a sense of responsibility for a surviving parent and younger siblings.

Consider, for example, the Mataga brothers from Opuzen on the Neretva River. Stanko Mataga, the eldest of six children in the family of Petar and Pera Mataga, came to New Zealand c.1900 to earn money at gumdigging. By early 1904 Stanko had been joined by brothers Ivan and Peter. Ivan found life on the gumfields too hard and pleading homesickness returned home within a couple of years. After the death of their father in 1905, Stanko also returned, shouldering the duty of caring for his mother and three youngest siblings. Of the three brothers who came to New Zealand, therefore, only Peter stayed on, eventually deciding to become a permanent settler.[331]

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[329] See Mataga (2014:23-42) for a full discussion of the three surges, their characteristics and the likely causes of migration. For details of transients trapped in New Zealand by war and their repatriation see Mataga (2014:43-46).

[330] Price (1963a:101-102) for Australia; and Roucek (1948) for the United States.

[331] Details provided by Des Mataga, Kohimarama, Auckland, February 2012.



(left to right) Peter, Stanko and Ivan Mataga in New Zealand c.1904
Source: **Des Mataga, Auckland**

The reasons for returning to Dalmatia by migrants like the Mataga brothers are interesting and important but a more universal reason, indeed for emigration in the first place, was rooted in social changes sweeping through Europe. It will be shown later in this chapter that during the second half of the nineteenth century new ideas and values from urban, industrial centres in western Europe were penetrating and altering the pre-industrial, peasant societies of eastern and southern Europe, including the Dalmatian coast.

Just one of the many changes brought about was the gradual breakdown of a traditional, collective way of life and its replacement with a more individualistic desire for self-sufficiency and independent landholder status. This desire was closely linked with a young Croatian's attainment of adulthood, marriage, the birth of children and an aspiration to improve, consolidate or enlarge a property for future generations. The same phenomenon, at about the same time, was noted among Polish peasants migrating to the United States:

> *... there are many in the community ... [who] want a better future "if not for ourselves at least for our children" ... This is the essential change of attitude which accounts for the simultaneous appearance and enormous development both of emigration and land hunger...*

> *When a peasant emigrates it is usually with the desire to earn ready money and return home and buy land.*[332]

For married men coming to New Zealand before World War I there was also a financial barrier to permanent migration – passage costs of up to £200 for a family of five or six, a sum which could maintain such a family at home for a number of years. Such considerations make it easier to understand why both young single and older married migrants tried to amass a small "fortune" of £200-£300 as quickly as possible before returning home where they "*could live upon it as well as a man with £3,000 in New Zealand.*"[333]

As an indication of the post-World War I shift from temporary to permanent settlement in New Zealand, the population loss for the period 1921-1939 was much lower, being approximately 15-20 percent of total arrivals. Over the same period there were only 180 permanent departures (i.e. persons *not* intending to return to New Zealand) as compared with 782 temporary departures (i.e. persons intending to return within 12 months or less). Return migration was, of course, delayed by the adversities of economic depression during the early 1930s.

Social Control

The continuity of control exercised by the home community over its members abroad, especially temporary migrants, is an important and often neglected feature of chain migration. Social control over the pioneers was relatively loose, if it existed at all. It was in the interests of their families and home communities to allow these 'adventurers' the freedom to search for the success and wealth desired by them all. Besides, it was practically impossible to keep in regular contact with men who were often illiterate and had no fixed residence as they plied their trade as sailors moving from ship to ship or joined the rush to goldfields and cheap farm land on wilderness frontiers with makeshift settlements.

Later migrants, however, following in the footsteps of the pioneers, were subject to often rigid parental control. Sometimes, as John Kabalin

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[332] Thomas and Znaniecki (1958:191).

[333] "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand", *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, pp.19-20 (Evidence of William Reynolds).

discovered, a parent's directive could have unfortunate consequences for a young migrant.

> *I first came to New Zealand as a young lad of 18 years shortly after 1 June 1896 and occupied myself with gumdigging...until 1901 mostly around Dargaville, Babylon etc ... After five years I returned [to my home town, Novi] at the summons of my father ... [he assured me] that I worry about no-one, that I will not be called up as a soldier, and that he has many friends. But the moment I arrived home they [the authorities] put me immediately into the Austrian infantry ... and when I had finished with the army he [my father] made me get married.*[334]



John Totich (left) with Marin Selak
Source: **Stephen Jelicich papers**

[334] Extract from a letter dated 4 December 1948 from John (a.k.a. Ivan) Kabalin to John Totich. For an English translation of this letter, see Trlin (1967:251-255).

Once a migration chain was established, control was even easier to maintain as migrants moved to a definite destination often under the sponsorship of close relatives or friends from the same birthplace. In effect, the position of migrants, especially temporary migrants, was defined as being a distant territorial extension of the family or village in Europe, an extension developed to carry out certain functions.

Letters included in the private papers of John Mark Totich[335] (a.k.a. Ivan Marko Totić), born in May 1882 in Kuna (on the Pelješac Peninsula), make it possible to illustrate a migrant's functions, duties and obligations, as well as the nature of social control exercised by the home community over one of its sons abroad. John left home with his father's permission to join second cousin Vlaho (Charles) Segetin, a gumdigger in New Zealand. Travelling with a group of others from the surrounding district, John arrived in Auckland in November 1898. It is acknowledged that not too much weight can be placed on an incomplete set of letters to one migrant. However, interviews and informal conversations with many others have revealed that their letters from relations throughout central Dalmatia were very similar to those of John Totich.

As expected, economic obligations and functions appear to have been the most frequently invoked or implied in correspondence with close relations even when John had been abroad for more than 20 years.

> *Something has happened to us – our sister Mare got married to Ferlanov's son but they haven't got a house ... For this reason she and her husband are living with me. But it is hard to live like this, so if there is any chance I would be very pleased if you would pay the passage for them and get a permit to bring them over to you ...* (sister Kate, 8 October 1920)

> *If you can, as I have written, send that money [for stamps for my business]. But try to send it by cable as they are now sending from America... see that by any means you send something to your mother, she always thinks of you... If you see Ante Cezarovica tell him to send something to his mother for she needs it. She is living in a poor state with her daughter...* (cousin Don Lovro, 23 October 1920)

[335] When examined in 1965, all of the letters referred to here were included in the private papers of the late John Totich and held by his daughter Mrs M. Clapham, Auckland. Written in Croatian, the letters were translated by Andrew Trlin with the assistance of Mrs Marusich in late 1965 and early 1966. The translated versions of the 12 letters are included in Trlin (1967:208-233).

> *I have finished the fourth grade in the high school with good results, but they have been bad years as I have been living away from home on board ... My dear uncle, I would like to go next year to study further in Split but it is difficult to live over here ... it is hard to keep a student in his own home but it is harder when he is away from home, therefore please help me with something if you can. I think you can because over here I have heard well of you. Do not forget us, because others have not forgotten their relations and every now and again write and send something to their relations.* (nephew Vjerko, 12 December [1920?])

> *Now I beg you to send me a raincoat ... [gives specifications – E.L. Roy Green Canvas Feather Weight Coat, size 6] ... I beg you to do this for me and send it to me before the winter.* (cousin Stjepan, 16 July 1924)

> *Some time ago I sent you a letter that Dr S----- was looking at my debts and other things. On 4 September a commission is to come from the lawyer to value your share of the inheritance because the lawyer will not wait any longer. I went to him and begged him to extend the date of payment because you had sent me a telegram to send you the figure of the debt, and that you will fix it up ... So I ask you to deal with this. I would if I could and it would be a shame and a pity that someone else were to buy our father's land for a couple of hundred dinars. Over here it is bad and getting worse every day, the hail hit the vineyards in such a way that many will not have anything to drink for themselves, and none can get any more credit even for a bag of flour.* (cousin Stipe, 3 September 1930)

In general, living as cheaply as possible and working long hours, the emigrant dutifully responded to such calls for help with remittances and one-off 'gifts' for special needs. If sometimes unable to fulfill his obligations – because of a decline in business conditions, unemployment, illness or war – he made known his plight and reaffirmed his initial commitment to assist when possible. This is well illustrated in a letter written by John to his mother in August 1914, a letter returned undelivered as mail services were disrupted by war.

> *...it has started to be hard here because business has very nearly stopped, especially for the [kauri] 'gum'. Nobody wants it for anything. But while it is hard because of this for me I know that it will be much worse for you people over there. I am sorry that I cannot give you help for the time being ... [but when this war] is finished and things get better ... I will help you as much as I can.*

Responding to a call for assistance was rarely thought of as proper behaviour and was performed with little (if any) consideration of its propriety or effect upon either the respondent or recipient. While such unreflective behaviour indicates that the migrant is relatively free of individualistic desires, it also reveals a deep-seated belief that someday he would return home.

But a change in values and behaviour became evident after some years away, increasing in intensity if the emigrant suffered hardship, a lack of security and especially if a decision was made to settle abroad. When such changes occurred the migrant noticed an exasperating sameness in the on-going requests for assistance and complaints of hard times at home. For John Totich the transition from sojourner to settler was marked by a number of milestones, including naturalisation (1903), disregard of calls to return home after his father's death and (most decisively) by his marriage to Ethel May Fry in July 1917.[336]

Despite his progressive integration into New Zealand society, John would nevertheless have found it difficult to deny his mother's pleas to return.

> *I am wanting for nothing, everything is satisfactory, all the joy is spoiling me but you are my one sorrow... My son do not be so hard hearted that I too die like your late father without first seeing you. Plainly I tell you to come home ...* (Marija Totich, 26 October 1911)

> *My dear son, I understood everything that you said in your letter, everything is all right, but not for me because I am worrying about you and I want to see you ... I am too old and not in the best of health. God knows how long I have left to live ... it is time for you to come home so that I can see you, then I wouldn't worry even if you went back again.* (Marija Totich, 9 March 1913)

Nor would he have welcomed negative reactions to his marriage. Prompted by a relation in Dalmatia, John wrote to cousin Vlaho (Charles) Segetin in Wellington to determine his plans for the future. John had come to New Zealand to join his cousin a couple of decades earlier. Vlaho would have expected a letter asking about his future but John made the mistake of encouraging him to follow his own example by marrying a local girl and settling in New Zealand. Vlaho's response was unequivocal. He would have none of it:

> *About the home country and marriage and somewhere to settle, it is true as you have written that the years are moving past and I am getting older without any prospects but anyway I have prepared to go*

[336] For an account of Totich's life in New Zealand, see Jelicich (2008:131-133).

> *home – if God will let it be – in a year and a half and no more. ...As for getting married...it is not on my mind. ... It would be better to drown than marry in this country, and to one of this country's girls, because you would not suffer any more. If I am to get married I would rather one from home ... If I wasn't in debt to my parents and if I was free I wouldn't get married here and I wouldn't stay here. Because these girls I believe are not faithful or loyal to their husbands. ... And another thing, they are no good as housewives ...* (Vlaho, 28 July 1920)

After more than 20 years abroad, Vlaho was still locked into a sojourner mindset.

A restrained letter from John's sister, taking the opportunity to remind him of his obligations, reported that the marriage was also greeted with dismay by his mother:

> *Mother received your letter today and it made us very happy to find out that you are still alive and well, but mother was very sorry to hear that you are married because she was always thinking of you more than of anyone else. ... it would be good of you to write to her at least once a month and to send her something to help.* (Kate, 8 October 1920)

Four years later, faced with undeniable evidence of the change in her brother's attitudes and behaviour, Kate abandoned her restraint:

> *I am very surprised that we receive no letters from you ... Everyone asks me what has happened with your brother and I cannot through shame tell them that you are not writing to us. Others have relations overseas and even if they are at the ends of the earth all at least write and send something. But you never write now or send anything.* (Kate, 17 November 1924)

Her feeling of "shame" under the eyes of relatives and neighbours would undoubtedly have been irritating, but she may also have been motivated by a feeling of resentment at being left to care for an aged parent. John, however, was now more concerned with providing for the needs and future of his own family.

The bottom line is that the young Dalmatian, especially a temporary migrant pre-1914, was not 'uprooted' from his family and home community. Letters kept him in contact with the homeland, informed him of his family's fortunes and misfortunes, passed on village gossip, news of friends at home or elsewhere, and reminded him of his obligations. Only the renouncement of his obligations could truly define him as 'uprooted'. Even then, he was tied

to his ethnic group by a network of relationships built up and sustained by migration chains of kith and kin from the home villages.

Female Arrivals

Along with the shift toward permanent migration, another important change occurred – an increase in female arrivals, especially after World War I. As explained above, arrivals before 1914 were typically young men in search of work and wealth with little or no intention of settling. Most were unmarried and the wives of those who were married did not accompany husbands to New Zealand until a clear decision had been made in favour of permanent settlement. For example, at least 20 years passed on the gumfields before Karlo Klinac made up his mind, returning to Dalmatia in 1923 to collect his patient, long-suffering wife as well as a fiancée (Eva Kosovich[337] from Zaostrog) for his son Mate who remained in New Zealand.

The hardships and stresses experienced by wives left behind, as well as the effect of a long separation upon marital relationships, were well known and often acutely sensitive topics for the men concerned. It would have been no surprise to Mathew Ferri, therefore, aspiring to be a community leader when he spoke up on the subject in 1897, that some of his compatriots took exception to his view that "*where the wife is, there also should be the husband.*" Accosted and harassed by seven of these men on Victoria and Queen streets in Auckland, Ferri was showered with flour and peppered with eggs.[338] Sadly, there were some men who *did* abandon their wives and children, never returning home or attempting a reunion abroad.

Fortunately, abandonment was the exception rather the rule. Sometimes the married men were previous temporary migrants who had returned home, married and started a family before deciding once again to emigrate but this time to settle permanently overseas. However, passage costs and/or a need to prepare for the family by finding suitable employment and accommodation usually meant a delay before the arrival of a wife and children. Martin Bilich (a.k.a. Martin Bilich-White), for instance, returned home in 1893 after five years in New Zealand to marry Maria Bradanovich. Several years then passed before Martin decided where his future lay, once again setting out for New Zealand *c.*1901. It was not until he was naturalised in 1905 that his wife

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[337] For an account of Eva's marriage and life in New Zealand, see Klinac (1994:51-56).

[338] *Auckland Star*, 18 September 1897, p.5 (re the flour and eggs incident), and 17 September 1897, p.3 (re lecture at St. Patrick's Hall).

and children joined him.[339] Similar cases in later years were those of Ivan Yukich and Mijo (a.k.a. Mick) Brajkovich, both from Živogošće and destined to play significant roles in New Zealand's wine industry. Ivan Yukich was only 15 years old when he first arrived in 1909. He returned home in 1921, married Manda Ivankovich (from Bogomolje, Hvar) and four children were born over the period 1926-1931. A growing family and unfavourable conditions in Jugoslavia appear to have persuaded Ivan that his future was overseas. In 1931 he returned to New Zealand but his wife and family were unable to join him until 1934.[340] Likewise, Mick Brajkovich spent 15 years on the gumfields before he returned home and a few years later, in 1925, married Kate Lozina (from Selo near Živogošće). Six children were born over the years 1925 to 1935 (though only three survived), and the couple ran a general store in the village of Strn on the main road above Živogošće. Hard times and misfortune (the store failed) forced Mick to return to New Zealand for good in 1937. Thanks to a loan from a relation to cover passage costs, his wife and children followed soon after, arriving in Auckland in February 1938.[341]

For unmarried temporary immigrants who experienced a change of heart and decided to remain in New Zealand, the associated desire to establish their own family often resulted in a brief visit to Dalmatia in search of a suitable wife. Frank Nola, for example, hurried back to Podgora after 12 years away to marry Jaka Vodanovich in 1910, returning to a public works cottage south of Taumaranui with his bride in 1911 before moving on to join Jaka's brothers in Dargaville.[342] As the shift in thinking from temporary to permanent migration gained pace there were many such cases, especially in the period 1920-1939 when 717 young Croatian men left New Zealand for less than a year, and 589 females arrived intending permanent residence.

Other men, rather than visit their homeland, opted to pay for the passage of a 'proxy bride' or 'letter bride' to join them or struck it lucky by finding a wife among women coming to join family members in New Zealand. Kleme Milich, for example, betrothed in Podgora to a girl about eight years old when he was little more than a boy departing for New Zealand, was married

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[339] Jelicich (2008:97).

[340] Jelicich (2008:118-119).

[341] Michael Brajkovich (2000:303-304), in a eulogy to his grandmother Kate Brajkovich (née Lozina).

[342] Jelicich (2008:166-167).

by proxy in 1932 and met his bride for the first time in over two decades when she arrived in Auckland on the *Maunganui*.[343] A rather different approach was used by Ivan Belich from Žrnovo on Korčula. He entrusted an acquaintance returning to Dalmatia with his photo and the task of finding a suitable wife. At some point upon arriving back in Dalmatia this acquaintance met Stipan Ilich who agreed to an exchange of photos between his six daughters and the overseas suitor. Ivan chose Antica Ilich, born in 1900 on the island of Vis, to be his bride. To get to know each other they corresponded for nearly a year before Antica (trying to forget a local boyfriend) was satisfied and embarked for New Zealand and marriage in 1926 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland.[344] Their marriage was a success, but stories are told of some 'letter brides' who for one reason or another were dissatisfied with their intended spouse and declined to proceed to marriage. Finally, Stephen Yelas, Mate Matich and Steve Yelavich are examples of men who found their wives among women arriving to join family members. More specifically: Stephen Yelas, a farmer and beginning viticulturalist near Henderson, married Maria Devcich in 1912, his wife coming from Podgora to join brothers in the Puriri area near Thames; while Mate Matich, a farmer at Waipapakauri near Awanui, courted and married Anka Klinac in 1926, two years after she joined her father at Waipapa; and Steve Yelavich, a gumdigger, wasted no time in 1930 getting to know and marrying Perina Juretich who came to live with her brother in Auckland before finding work with an aunt running a boarding-house in Whangarei.[345]

Not all of the women arriving to join their husbands, fiancées or other family members were eager migrants wholeheartedly committed to spending the rest of their lives far from families and friends in Dalmatia. Indeed, some were reluctant migrants, tormented by homesickness for several years after their arrival. For various reasons, few have been willing to reflect on their initial feelings but a rare example has been provided by Nevenka Batistich (née Stula) about events in her life in 1929.

> *My father was sick – far away in New Zealand. He was living with my older sister Gene, and her husband Mate on their dairy farm on the*

[343] The novel nature of this marriage attracted the attention of newspapers (e.g. *Evening Post*, 15 August 1932, p.11).

[344] For an account of Antica Belich's life, see Keene (1987: 7-10).

[345] Details reported by: Jelicich (2008:105) for Stephen and Maria Yelas (married in 1912, according to official records, not 1908 as stated by Jelicich); Keene (1984a:107) for Anka and Mate Matich; and Keene (1984b:169) for Steve Yelavich and his wife Perina.

> *Hauraki plains ... But there only a one-roomed house for her and her husband, and their new baby – just a small room with a bed, a table and a tiny kitchen in the corner – so my father lived in a tent next to the house, with Mate's brother, Steve ... My sister was pregnant again. She was sick and had to stay in bed. Someone had to go and help. But why me? I was only 14. [My sister] Stefani didn't want to go – she was going to be a nun. It had to be me ...*
>
> *On my last day I went around to all my relations in the village to say goodbye. I didn't know when I would be back to see them again. I didn't think of anything. I didn't know what was going to happen. But if I had a choice – if anybody had asked me what I wanted to do – of course I would have stayed [at home]... All my luggage fitted into one small case my mother gave me. I knew nothing about New Zealand – whether it would be hot or cold – I didn't know what I would need there. All I knew about New Zealand was that my sister had been there for two years and that times were very hard ...*
>
> *So it was in the middle of winter that I finally arrived at my new home. I had to sleep in the tent with my father. The weather seemed always rainy and cold – I would wake up every morning and see the frost on the ground outside the tent. If I could have walked home to Dalmatia I would have. It was very hard for me. ...*
>
> *So many sad things happened in those first few years ... So many times I wished I could go home.*[346]

To sum up, the increasing number of female arrivals was the first important change in the composition of immigration from central Dalmatia, confirming the ongoing transition from temporary to permanent migration. Females accounted for less than 4 percent of all arrivals before 1920 and just over 34 percent for the period 1920-1939. To some extent their arrival corrected the grossly unbalanced male-female ratio for the resident Croatian population (91 males to 9 females in 1901, compared with 81:19 in 1936). To some extent also their arrival served to reduce the percentage of out-group marriages. Roughly 70 percent of the men known to have married in New Zealand between 1898 and 1916 chose a non-Croatian spouse, while for the period 1917-1931 mixed marriages accounted for about 59 percent of those known to have been performed.[347] More importantly the women – wives,

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[346] Nevenka Batistich "My trip to New Zealand," an unpublished 6 page essay in *Writing Competition 2002*, Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society, Auckland (reference FAM 635 DAL).

[347] Personal communication from Des Mataga, Auckland. The percentages must be treated as preliminary estimates, as Des acknowledged he could not guarantee that he had found

proxy brides, letter brides, fiancées – drawn from the same islands, districts or villages as the men, strengthened the links of chain migration and reinforced the territorial configuration of a small area of origin.

Immigration Restrictions and Policies

For reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 4, the Kauri Gum Industry Act 1898 created gumfield reserves that were to be exploited by British subjects alone. Accordingly, aliens (i.e. non-British citizens) were allowed to dig on these reserves only after becoming naturalised British subjects. Even outside the reserves, aliens wanting to dig for gum on land other than private property required a licence which could be obtained only upon completion of a three-month residential qualification. The 1898 Act, therefore, was more than just a measure to aid British citizens facing stiff competition from aliens – it was an attempt to stem an increasing flow of temporary immigrants from the central Dalmatian coast heading for the gumfields of Auckland Province. As Premier Richard Seddon later put it, the residential requirement "*was a gentle intimation by the legislature that we would not have them here.*"[348] Further restrictive measures were passed in the Kauri Gum Industry Act 1908 and Amendment Act 1910.

Underlying all of these Acts (1898, 1908 and 1910) were the occupational and economic fears of other gumdiggers, farmers on small holdings and businessmen who saw the Croatians as "birds of passage" whose labours and monetary gains on the gumfields were of no benefit to New Zealand. There is no evidence, however, that the restrictions halted or significantly curbed the inflow of temporary migrants. But what the restrictions did achieve was to accelerate a fledgling settlement transition, prompting an increasing number of sojourners to take up means of employment other than gumdigging and to seriously consider permanent residence by encouraging them to become landowners and British subjects. By 1917 less than half of the male Croatians in the 21 counties of Auckland Province were employed as gumdiggers.

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every single marriage occurring during the time periods specified. See also Mataga (2013:Appendix D and Appendix E).

[348] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* 1900, Vol.112, p.328. For further details of actions during this period, see file titled "Seddon 20/1 and 20/2 Memoranda for His Excellency the Governor and Copies of Minutes, Letters…relating to influx of Austrians into the Colony for the purpose of becoming gumdiggers, 1898-1902", Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

Early Immigration Policy Developments

Restrictions outside the occupational sphere were at first almost insignificant. An education test introduced as part of the Immigration Restriction Act 1899 was largely ineffective as Premier Seddon himself admitted in 1903:

> *175 Austrians [Croatians] have arrived during the six months ending 30th September 1903. Only one of these failed to pass the education test.*[349]

Jure Bulog and Nikola Radalj were two of the few arrivals who failed to pass the test during the years 1900-1910.

Using the assumed name of "Thomas Robson" in an attempt to gain entry as an Englishman, Jure Bulog was caught out upon arrival in 1900 because he was unable to complete the usual papers set before him or to comply with the test for such cases set forth in the 1899 Act. Seven years later Nikola Radalj was arrested and charged with being an undesirable immigrant when he landed in Auckland. Claiming he had not been given a fair chance to pass the education test, he was given another opportunity but was equally unsuccessful. Identified by police and government officers as a serial offender under the Act, Nikola was ordered back to Sydney.[350]

The introduction of the Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1920 marked the first step toward much tighter control. Persons of non-British parentage were now required to submit an application form to obtain an entry permit. Although daunting in its implications, the permit system proved to be a formality for arrivals from the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later known as the Kingdom of Jugoslavia), provided they were literate, of good health and character.

Unfortunately their success (like that of Italians and Greeks) in gaining entry aroused public dissatisfaction and provoked a policy review. Southern Europeans, especially Jugoslav nationals, were now becoming *persona non grata*. On the 18 January 1926 Cabinet decided to continue admitting Jugoslavs until their numbers reached 3,500 and thereafter only the wives,

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[349] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* 1903, Vol.126, p.649.

[350] *Evening Post*, 3 September 1900, p.5 (Bulog), and *Auckland Star*, 15 January 1907, p.4 (Radalj).

fiancées, fiancés and minor children of permanent residents.[351] It was felt that they formed settlements of their own, did not assimilate into the population and were therefore undesirable immigrants. This policy, which in effect enforced chain migration, appears to have remained in force until at least 1953 when the Director of Employment, replying to an inquiry for the entry of a young Jugoslav girl, stated:

> *There are ... many of these applications for one or two children out of a family group...* The Department's view is that if the Government's policy to bring Jugoslav immigration to an end is to be effected, applications of this nature must be declined. *Such applications start off a new family and there is certain to be pressure brought to bear ... for other members of the family to follow ...*[352] [emphasis added].

In hindsight, whatever its merits or shortcomings, the 1926 decision may have accelerated the transition from temporary to permanent immigration, and thereby contributed to an increase in female arrivals from the mid 1920s onwards.

While entry conditions became more difficult the behaviour of some arrivals did nothing for their cause in the eyes of officials responsible for administering the regulations. Abuse of the "fiancée concession" in particular prompted the Comptroller of Customs in 1930 to write fairly strong letters of complaint to John Totich, then Jugoslav Consul, pointing out that:

> *... [the women] are not complying with the terms of their permits if they marry persons other than those whose names were shown in their permits ...*[353]
>
> *Between 1/7/1929 and 12/6/1930 there were 14 cases of young girls arriving... supposedly engaged to Jugoslav residents ... but at date of writing had still failed to comply with regulations of marriage within thirty days after arrival...*[354]

[351] Ponton (1946:76-77).

[352] Letter dated 16 December 1953, File H.O. 91670, Department of Labour and Immigration, Wellington.

[353] Letter to J.M. Totich (included in Totich paers) dated 12 June 1930.

[354] Letter to J.M. Totich (included in Totich papers) dated 30 April 1930.

The position of the Comptroller was quite understandable, especially in light of a newspaper advertisement stating:

> *Dalmatian girl 22, just arrived from home, wishes correspond with Dalmatian, view marriage.*[355]

It could have been a quite innocent case of a young woman who had come to join her parent(s) or sibling(s), but it is little wonder that proxy marriages were soon perceived to be a more reliable way to regulate entry.

Assimilation, Chain Migration and Discrimination

New Zealand was not alone in developing and implementing immigration restrictions. In 1901, Australia prohibited the entry of persons likely to become a charge on public funds and in 1924 prohibited any alien not possessing a sponsor's written guarantee of employment or £40 of his own. The most significant feature of legislation enacted in the USA between 1917 and 1924 was the distinction made between immigrants from northern and western Europe on the one hand, and those from southern and eastern Europe on the other. Oscar Handlin, a distinguished historian of Russian parentage, explained the distinction as follows:

> *One fundamental premise lay behind the immigration legislation... Embodied in the quota system this premise held that the national origin of an immigrant was a reliable indication of his capacity for Americanization. It was averred and science seemed to show that some people, because of their racial or national constitution, were more capable of becoming Americans than others. Furthermore it was argued that the 'old immigrants' who came to the United States before 1880 were drawn from the superior stocks of northern and western Europe... The Act of 1924 which pushed the base quota year back to 1890 and consolidated the theory of national origins was motivated by ... convictions as to the inferiority of the 'new immigrants'* [from southern and eastern Europe].[356]

Views similar to those underlying US legislation undoubtedly influenced New Zealand's immigration policy at about the same time and continued to do so for the next 60 years. However, where the "capacity for Americanization" referred to the eventual emergence of a cultural hybrid from the great American melting pot, in New Zealand the desired goal was a

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[355] *New Zealand Herald*, 8 April 1930.

[356] Handlin (1957:75-76).

one-way process of assimilation. For example, bearing in mind the substance of and rationale for the 1926 Cabinet decision, it has been reported that:

> *In 1937 the demands of the Jugoslavs for admission to New Zealand became very insistent (Report of Comptroller to Minister 11/1/1940, C33/24). However it was considered that they were not a suitable type of immigrant* for they seldom became fully absorbed into the population.[357] [emphasis added]

This negative perception stemmed in part from the mechanics of chain migration and its effect upon the composition and character of immigrant settlement in the host society. Coupled with innate cultural differences between the immigrant and host populations, the effect of chain migration continued to disadvantage Croatians and other non-British groups well into the 1970s when the "great question of assimilation and integration" was cited as being second only to economic considerations in the formulation of policy and entry restrictions. Past experience, it was claimed, indicated that:

> *The greater and more obvious the differences between the immigrant and the average New Zealander, the longer and more difficult the period of assimilation and [the] greater the tendency of immigrants to hive off into little colonies which become self-sufficient and resistant to the process of assimilation. This tendency is present not only in groups of non-European origin, but also in people from some European countries whose social and cultural heritage differ[s] widely from our own.*[358]

[357] Ponton (1946:121-122).

[358] Department of Labour (1970:3).

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Gumdiggers

What is kauri gum and where was it found? Kauri gum is formed when resin oozes from cracks or damage to the bark, branches and trunk of the kauri tree, hardening on exposure to air. There were two types of kauri gum: tree gum, which could only be obtained from living trees by deliberate 'bleeding'; and fossil gum, which could be dug up in areas north of latitude 38° where great kauri forests had once flourished. It was upon the extraction of fossil gum that New Zealand's kauri gum industry was based.

Found under lake beds, swamps, sand dunes and on higher ground as well, the best quality fossil gum came from the open fern lands of Northland, while swamps and lake beds generally yielded gum of a lower quality. In the early 1890s the main gumdigging area was the Northern Wairoa on fields near Dargaville such as those of Babylon, Aratapu, Te Kopuru and Ruawai. Twenty years later the most productive area was north of Kaitaia on the Aupouri Peninsula, with gum recovered from the sandy hills and flats around Parengarenga habour and the extensive swamplands of Houhora, Kaimaumau, Waipapakauri and Sweetwater.[359] Other significant fields near Kaitaia were those of Awanui, Lake Ohia and Ahipara, the latter (15km to the southwest) being one of the last areas worked in the 1920s and 1930s. Kauri gum was also recovered from various parts of the Coromandel Peninsula. At the height of the boom period in the late 1890s the gumfields of New Zealand were estimated to cover a total of 814,000 acres of which 435,000 acres were Crown lands, 213,000 acres were private lands held by Maori or Europeans and 166,000 acres were Maori lands that had yet to be adjudicated upon by the Native Land Court.[360]

The industry developed rapidly once kauri gum was recognised as a resin suitable for the manufacture of varnish and later for linoleum. Despite often sharp fluctuations the boom period was from about 1890 to 1914, with the greatest export tonnage for any one year being reached in 1899 with 11,116 tons valued at about £60 per ton. For the years 1901-1910 kauri gum ranked third in value after wool and gold for exports from Auckland Province. Gumdigging helped to sustain small village settlements, contributed to the

[359] For a concise account of the northward movement of gumdigging and population changes on the gumfields, see Ryburn (1999:224-227).

[360] "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand." *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, p.3.

expansion of some towns (notably Dargaville, Mangawhare and Kaitaia) and was a key factor behind the rapid population growth of various Northland counties from 1890 to 1910. It was also a basic income source during periods of economic adversity. In 1892, for example, it was reported that at Kaitaia:

> *Depression alone rules. Gumdigging is the order here, settlers finding it hard to make both ends meet. Missionaries, farmers, storekeepers and their assistants have gone to the gumfields.*[361]

Even under normal conditions, settlers on small holdings throughout Northland and parts of the Coromandel Peninsula relied on gumdigging (on their own properties or Crown land) as a source of capital for property development and extra money when work on their farms was slack. For a great many of these settlers it made the difference between failure and success, between poverty and prosperity.

To suggest, however, that only benefits accrued from gumdigging would be untrue. Because gum usually fetched a fair price, and because its extraction allowed more freedom for individual work habits, required less start up capital and long-term effort than breaking in land for farming, gumdigging may have retarded the process of permanent land settlement. According to a brief note in the 1903 annual report of the Department of Lands and Survey, the men of Herekino were busy on the gumfields and had consequently neglected their sections.[362] And when gum prices fell, as they did in May 1894, the business interests and prosperity of towns and settlements such as Dargaville and Mangawhare, largely dependent on the supply of goods and services to gumdiggers, suffered accordingly.[363]

Settlers, especially on small holdings, repeatedly charged those solely engaged as gumdiggers with the destruction of vegetation and soil, the reckless creation of fire hazards, lawlessness and major damage to roads. Though undoubtedly motivated by self-interest, many of these charges were upheld by official inquiries. The 1893 Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry, for example, reported that:

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[361] *New Zealand Herald*, 26 July 1892, p.6.

[362] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1903, C.1, p.10.

[363] *New Zealand Herald*, 3 May 1894, p.6.

> *... [the] desperate condition of the northern roads is due chiefly to the gum traffic, including under that term the cartage of stores to the fields, as well as gum from them.*[364]

Likewise, on the burning of vegetation to clear land for gumdigging, the 1898 Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry reported areas throughout Northland:

> *... where repeated burnings have caused every vestige of soil to disappear and where there is nothing but the bare white pipeclay left.*[365]

Moreover, in the process of digging the soil was upturned, great mounds of clay were often left on the surface covering what fertile soil there was, while the holes created were a hazard to man and stock.

It is scarcely surprising therefore that in the eyes of hard-working smallholders and many town dwellers the full-time gumdigger was not just destructive but also a crude, irreligious, lawless nomad who shirked regular work at any other calling, had little respect for the property of others, was frequently guilty of trespass and theft and given to drunkenness. The gumdigging population was depicted as consisting of vagrants, dissipated remittance men, deserters from ships, the physically and mentally handicapped, bankrupt speculators, ex-convicts, out-of-collar clerks, Maori and the like. Primitive living conditions on the gumfields reinforced this image and confirmed the digger's position, along with other flotsam and jetsam, at the bottom of Auckland Province's social ladder.

For the good citizens of Auckland, Henderson and travellers along the road to Helensville, proof of the gumdigger's distasteful reputation could be found in a camp beside the Swanson Stream at Birdwood, about three miles north of Henderson on what is today known as Glen Road, Massey. It was set up in the 1890s by Francisco Rodriquez Figuero (a.k.a. "Don Buck"), a Portugese immigrant. Identified in various reports as a gumdigger, storekeeper and farmer, he maintained a personal reputation as a hard but honest man who stood aloof from his camp's notoriety for its unruly residents and squalid whares. Tales and court reports of theft, sly-grog sales, drunken orgies and brawling were not uncommon. Attracting the down-and-

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[364] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1893, H.24, p.5.

[365] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, p.5.

out and ex-convicts, the camp was also the scene of at least one murder.[366] It has been claimed that Police Magistrates were persuaded by its founder, perhaps as a service to the wider community and no doubt to his profit, to sentence drunks and petty thieves to "two weeks in Mt. Eden prison or the same [as gumdiggers] at Don Buck's Camp."[367]

With the benefit of hindsight, Buck's Camp appears to have been an extreme case. A more balanced (but definitely sympathetic) assessment of the gumdigger's character by Alfred Reed several decades later led him to conclude that the great majority of diggers were honest, sober and industrious.[368] At the time, however, other than people with a vested interest in the gum industry's growth, there were few willing to acknowledge the digger's contribution to exports and the prosperity of large landowners, rural storekeepers and merchants. Above all else, the full-time digger was perceived as a threat to the livelihood of smallholders who feared that the fossil gum would be worked out and with it would disappear any hope of economically viable holdings. It was against this background that increasing numbers of young men from central Dalmatia arrived on the gumfields during the 1890s and early 1900s.

Croatians on the Gumfields

Attracted by stories of quickly acquired wealth, his passage paid with a loan raised in Dalmatia or by relatives and friends in New Zealand, the young Croatian arrived with high hopes, plenty of energy and courage but little if anything in the way of personal financial resources to draw upon. For such men, digging for kauri gum (like goldmining in Westland in the 1860s) seemed to be the ideal occupation. From bitter experience, however, most of these wide-eyed young men quickly learned that: gumdigging was far from easy; the initial outlay for tools and clothing, plus an ever increasing food account with storekeepers, would take months to pay off; and that

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[366] For examples of court reports referring to "Buck's Camp" in the *Auckland Star*, see: 23 February 1906, p.5 ("Police Court"); 18 November 1912, p.5 and 19 November 1912, p.7 (re death of Harry Whiteside); 15 January 1913, p.7 (re sale of wine); 18 January 1913, p.11 (re shanties condemned); and 22 May 1914, p.5 (re sly-grog selling). For a useful retrospective account of "Don Buck's" life and wild times at his camp, see *Auckland Star*, 10 August 1926, p.9.

[367] Flude (1977:59).

[368] Reed (2006:39-46).

remunerative quantities of gum were dependant upon market prices, hard-bargaining gum-buyers and the whim of Lady Luck.

For some new arrivals entry into gumdigging was involuntary. Charlie Segetin (from Vručica, Pelješac Peninsula) left home as a seaman, spent several years in the Louisiana oyster business and, after a brief return home, came to New Zealand in 1892 or 1893. Although "*well acquainted with the English language*" he was driven to life as a digger by the shortage of other employment opportunities.[369] The prospects for those with trade skills were usually no better, as young Ivan Vegar (from Ravča, near Vrgorac) discovered when he arrived in 1925 to join his brother Luka:

> *... I tried to get a job as a bootmaker in Kaitaia with my brother's help. In Jugoslavia I had served my apprenticeship as a bootmaker and got my diploma. But it wasn't any use ... there was no opening for me ... and besides I was obviously more skilled at my job than the bootmaker then operating in Kaitaia ... Therefore, like everyone else, I went into gumdigging.*[370]

Men like Charlie and Ivan, of course, were not the only ones forced into such work. Along with small numbers of other continental Europeans, there were also the unemployed from Auckland and northern provincial towns, and hundreds of Maori families seeking to supplement their meagre farm incomes or other resources.

Entry into gumdigging, whether from choice or necessity, confined Croatian immigrants to Auckland Province, and within this area they tended to concentrate in Hobson and Mangonui counties. In 1906 they accounted for 10 percent of the Hobson County and 8.6 percent of the Mangonui County populations, while Parengarenga (at the northern end of the Aupouri Peninsula) was described in 1896 as "*a little Vienna in respect to the Austrian nationality.*"[371] Such concentrations, however, convey a false impression, implying population stability within particular areas or localities when the real situation was quite different.

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[369] Reported by his brother Joze (Joseph) Segetin in a letter to John Totich, January 1949. For full text of letter, see Trlin (1967:244-250).

[370] Personal interview with Ivan Vegar, Kaitaia, January 1965 (Trlin, 1967:305-306).

[371] *New Zealand Herald* (Supplement) 19 September 1896, p.1. Percentages for 1906 derived from the *New Zealand Census of Population 1906*.

Young, energetic and highly motivated, Croatian diggers quickly responded to the discovery and exploitation of new gumfields – behaviour sometimes resulting in rapid changes in their distribution throughout the northern counties. Recalling those days, Clem Jurlina (from Živogošće) said:

> *If you were a gumdigger you had to move about a fair bit, from field to field, depending on the type of gum discovered, gum prices for different types...also once you had worked over a certain gumfield you just had to move on if you expected to earn money and to go on living.*[372]

In evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry, one informant illustrated the intensity of this movement as follows:

> *There were only a few Austrians* [Croatians] *here three years ago and now there are about forty ... between Houhoura and Te Kao, but there were about two hundred at Te Kao twelve months ago. Most of the Austrians that were at Te Kao migrated to Mangawhai.*[373]

Their sudden appearance in large numbers, their thorough exploitation of a field and equally sudden departure inevitably led to complaints by local settlers. One claimed that at Mangawhai, Hakaru and Tikinui, where the "*Austrians [had] passed over like locusts*," it was impossible to earn a living.[374]

Gumfield Shanties, Camps, Work and Hazards

The nature and quality of gumfield accommodation reflected the digger's limited resources and the building materials available. A framework of tea tree poles cut from the local scrub was set up with side walls about 1.3m high and a steeply pitched roof to ensure quick shedding of rainwater. Jute grain-sacks (that tightened up when wet), were unpicked, opened lengthwise, sewn together with string and then stretched taut over the framework. In some cases the roof might be made of other materials such as a tent fly, a thatch of raupo or nikau leaves or corrugated iron for a more permanent dwelling. A door made of the same materials as the walls was held in place with makeshift hinges. The floor space, possibly covered with sacks or reed

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[372] Personal interview with Kleme (Clem) Jurlina, Sweetwater, January 1965 (Trlin, 1967:262).

[373] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, p.42 (evidence of Albion Walter Cheesman).

[374] *New Zealand Herald*, 29 April 1898, p.3.

mats but usually just beaten earth, varied according to the number of men sharing the shanty. Cooking could be done outside or in an inside fireplace with a chimney fashioned out of either corrugated iron or squared turf sods cut with a spade, supported with heavy stakes and shaped with a flue that rose up above the ridge of the shanty's roof. A shallow trench to carry off rain water surrounded the structure. Finally, the furniture consisted of little more than bunks, seats, a table and cupboard. Bunks were made of tea tree poles threaded through sacking or sacking nailed to poles and supported on forked tea tree stakes, with a sack mattress stuffed with fern and perhaps a flour bag filled with fern for a pillow. Empty boxes or crates could serve as seats, a table and cupboards for cutlery, plates and cooking utensils. A suitcase or trunk was used for clothing storage and more valuable possessions.

Observers on the gumfields often noted that the Croatians camped in groups of 20 or more persons. For example, in his account of a journey through Northland as a commercial traveller in 1899, Joseph Segetin reported that:

> *... I passed through a place called Waihopo and Ohara and I find our Dalmatian diggers in several camps around there. There were at least 200 of them in these camps. Around these camps were several camps of English people and the others of Maori gumdiggers working on the same gumfields but living separately in different camps of their own ... All of them were living in sack-ware shanties in groups of four or five in each shanty and an average of about ten or twenty in the camp.*[375]

He noted the same feature for camps around Kaikohe and implied it for a number of other localities.

There were strong social reasons for segregation into ethnically homogeneous camps. In 1908, in his collection of poems titled *Dalmatinac iz Tudjine* (From a Dalmatian in Exile), Ante Kosovich captured the insidious homesickness and loneliness of a stranger in a foreign land. One can readily imagine, therefore, that for Ante and hundreds of others the company of their fellow countrymen was not only desirable but fulfilled a basic social need. Then too the process of chain migration drew together relations and friends who shared the same shanty or lived in the same camp. To take just one example, for the period 1896-1901 about half of the migrants from Novi

[375] Joze (Joseph) Segetin, letter to John Totich, January 1949, in Trlin (1967: 246).

(south of Rijeka) were on the Mitchelson gumfield near Dargaville and the rest were in camps around Kaikohe and Poroti.[376]

Economic reasons were also important, especially once fossil gum on or near the surface had been cleared and it was necessary to go deeper using a method that Croatians developed called "face-digging". Putting aside the steel spears usually employed to probe the ground in search of lumps of gum, a team or 'gang' would dig a trench two to four metres deep along one edge of a given area and then systematically work their way across a field to that depth. Larger pieces of gum were removed as they went while the huge heaps of soil dug up were in due course shovelled by the 'gang' into a washing machine to recover even the small gum chips used in the manufacture of linoleum.

Comparing digger work methods at the beginning of the 1920s, Raymond Firth (later a famous anthropologist), noted that:

> *Among the British diggers to this day as a result of their individualistic tradition, there is little attempt to co-operate except where the work is impossible for one man alone ... The Dalmatians however introduced the system [of co-operative team work] and by their methods have succeeded in raising to a considerable degree the amount of gum that the digger can produce.*[377]

Many young Croatians actually preferred to work on their own but recognised the need for cooperative team work and its benefits under certain conditions. Describing the situation on Ahipara Hill in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Ivan Vegar said:

> *... there were about nine 'gangs' in the camp on Ahipara Hill and each gang consisted of five or six men who formed a 'company' and they shared whatever they earned in common. These 'gangs' ... were made necessary by the type of work we were doing. On other gumfields one man could manage to dig by himself ... the ground was easier to work. But on Ahipara Hill we had to work a 'face' and the work simply couldn't be managed by one man alone ...*[378]

Furthermore, when the 'gang' shifted to Ahipara they needed to overcome a problem of access to get a cumbersome gum washing machine on site and to

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[376] John Kabalin, letter to John Totich, 4 December 1948, in Trlin (1967:251-255).

[377] Firth (1922:87).

[378] Personal interview with Ivan Vegar, Kaitaia, January 1965 (Trlin, 1967:306-307).

transport their gum to market by bullock cart. Passage across Maori land was expensive, so the 'gang' constructed a road which made access less expensive and easier.

The difficulties experienced by Ivan Vegar and others on Ahipara Hill were formidable but more than matched by those faced in drainage projects using the cooperative method in earlier decades. In the Northern Wairoa during the late 1890s, brothers Edwin and Richard Mitchelson wanted to drain swamps on their leasehold land and bring it into productive use. They signed long-term contracts for the work with Croatian diggers, who were entitled to all the gum found. Two drains, each 2.4kms long and up to 2.4 metres deep, were successfully constructed by teams of 20 men on each site. Likewise a group of 25 men led by Mate Franich forged an agreement with landowner Arthur Harding and in February 1900 commenced work on draining a large swamp at Aoroa near Aratapu. It has been claimed that under the terms of this agreement all the gum recovered would be retained by one or other of the parties depending on whether or not a target completion date was met. Unfortunately the contracted diggers were slowed down by the large amounts of buried timber encountered, over ran the target date and the gum went to Harding. This may explain why the project became known as the "Notorious Drain." Nevertheless, the Aoroa project is said to have inspired a large group to recover gum by draining the Omamari swamp in 1908. Led by Visko Matulovich and George Franich they cut a deep canal from the swamp to a beach outfall in a venture that is also believed to have fallen short of being financially successful. Finally, another project in which Croatian diggers played a significant role was in operations to lower the level of Lake Ohia.[379]

There was at least one unfortunate side effect from such projects. As George Campbell noted, reminiscing about his "golden years of … boyhood" (1890-1905), swamp drainage in the Northern Wairoa had a devastating impact upon the abundant birds and eels in what Maori regarded as their natural larders.[380] Nevertheless, these and other less spectacular drainage schemes,

[379] Details for the Mitchelson, Harding and Omamari projects were drawn from Fordyce (1998:135, 158-159), Jelicich (2008:59) for the Omamari project, and from an unpublished article written in 1998 by Dick Martinovich titled "Dabbling in drains near Dargaville" (Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society, Auckland, Box 10/20) for the Aoroa and Omamari projects as well. Fordyce and Jelicich disagree about the numbers employed at Omamari; Fordyce states 50 men and Jelicich 100 split into two gangs of 50 each. For Lake Ohia, see Keene (1977:125). For further information on gumdigging at Omamari and subsequent settlement of the area, see Coates (1993).

[380] Campbell (1963:41-44).

together with numerous examples of face-digging on gumfields throughout Northland, helped to prepare land for future farming activities. The Croatian's readiness to cooperate in this work as and when required was a familiar part of the peasant villager's way of life. On the gumfields, 14,000kms from home, it was sustained not just by the difficulties of gumdigging and/or the presence of kith and kin, but reinforced by a collective desire among sojourners to pay off debts, accumulate savings and return home as soon as possible.

But to save enough to return home (or to buy land in the case of men aspiring to be self-employed settlers) there was work to be done. Whether on his own or more frequently in a 'gang,' the daily routine for each man was much the same according to poet Ante Kosovich, digger Peter Yelavich, New Zealand-born digger Jack Matijevich and Nicola Puharich.[381] He rises at dawn, dresses, makes a quick breakfast with tea and slices of bread and butter or jam and checks the equipment needed for the day. About 8am he sets off with his prepared lunch, a water bottle (or possibly some wine) and tea billy, humping a collection of tools or equipment that could include a gum spear, shovel, a pick, an axe, a bucket, and a pikau backpack or sack for the gum. Arriving at his work site he:

> *... begins to dig, merciless,*
> *Ignoring rivers of sweat, head bent to the ground,*
> *No time to squint up to the sun, hardly time to stretch,*
> *Doggedly grouts himself six feet down into the dirt,*
> *Endures his pain, takes his spade and digs further*
> *Till he's thigh deep in swamp-muck –*
> *What life could be harder than that?*
> *And when it rains there's water above him also,*
> *Till he could drown just standing there –*
> *A gumdigger's lot: resignation, dreams of rich strikes.*[382]

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[381] For Peter Yelavich's account, see Jelicich (2008:52-53). Jack Matijevich, born in Helensville in 1905, was taken back to Dalmatia by his parents when just five years old. His father started a small farm back home but Jack eventually returned to New Zealand in 1923, working as a full-time gumdigger until 1942 when he started farming. For an interview with Jack, in which he describes phases in a typical day as a gumdigger, see Hingley (1980:35-36). Nicola Puharich (1997:6-10), in her story "A day in the life..." draws on the recollections of Mary Radich, Ivan Yakas and Nick Puharich.

[382] This extract (translated by Amelia Batistich and Ian Wedde) from Ante Kosovich's *Dalmatinac iz Tudjine*, is in Wedde and McQueen (1985:132).

When lunchtime approaches one of the 'gang' stops a bit earlier, lights a small camp fire, puts the billy on and yells when the tea is ready. Hearing the call he clambers wearily out of the hole or trench, stretches a sore back, relaxes tired arms and legs, wipes his hands clean and devours slabs of camp oven bread smeared with butter, sometimes jam and cheap tinned meat. Mouthfuls of tea, water or beer wash the food down as he feels the warm summer sun or cold winter wind on sweaty limbs and damp clothes. Then back to work, each of the 'gang' aware of who is setting the pace or falling behind, with barely a break until 5 or 6pm. The man on dinner duty heads back to the camp ahead of the 'gang,' lugging his tools and pikau backpack or sack of gum, to begin preparing the evening meal. He lights the fire, gets the billy going, cooks the meat, potatoes, other vegetables or macaroni, cleans himself up and begins to dry out his sodden clothes and boots. No woman here to fuss over you, prepare the food and attend to the domestic chores. After dinner and cleaning dishes he scrapes the day's hard-won gum clean of dirt, taking care with this tiresome job in order to get the best return from the local storekeeper or gum buyer. If no gum waits to be scraped, he checks his clothes and tools for the next day's toil, chats or plays a few hands of cards with his mates and then goes to bed. And so it went on, six days a week until a man had saved enough to 'escape' or found more profitable work.

Every morning, the gumdigger, no matter how experienced, also needed to be alert to life-threatening hazards as he submitted to yet another day of labour or set out to find and assess a new field. Once easy pickings had gone and it was necessary to dig deeper, the danger, especially in soft peat, was that the sides of a pit (up to 8m deep) or trench (up to 4m in depth) could be undermined and collapse as pieces of gum were extracted. Safety precautions included a man watching for cracks on the ground above and a fixed rope to his mates at the bottom of a pit that they could use to scramble clear. Despite such precautions, Mate Borich (from Podgora), just a teenager in the late 1920s, claimed to have seen friends killed by collapsing pit sides.[383] Other examples of accidental death, with the victim's name often miss-spelt in newspaper reports, included: "an Austrian gumdigger named Marko Surjan," killed in 1904 when he fell from a horse, striking his head on a post; three gumdiggers ("Pasko Prelenda, Nikola Cvitanovich and Ivan Simich") drowned when their camp on Great Barrier Island was washed away by a fast rising creek during heavy rain in 1907; "an Austrian named Nicholas Saultwitch," burned to death in a gumfield shanty at Albany in 1907; Steve

[383] Hingley (1980:32-33).

Pervan, drowned in 1909 while attempting to swim across a lagoon; and "Joze Izotich," aged 18 years, who left his father's whare to search for gum in 1931 and died as a result of severe injuries when he fell from a high cliff. Non-fatal but serious injuries were also sustained from falls into old diggings, working with an ax and even in the course of an otherwise routine task such as shifting camp as "Peter Brajkovich, Jack Matusich, V[iktor] Sokolich and J.O. Komozich" found on the Babylon gumfield in 1923. Moving in single file from their old camp site to a new one, the group was led by Sokolich with Komozich in the rear carrying a loaded double-barreled gun that was accidentally discharged when he slipped and fell. Jack Matusich was seriously injured, receiving the full charge in the head and back, and Peter Brajkovich was slightly wounded.[384] Overall, the daily hazards for gumdiggers were really no different to those faced by pioneer goldminers in Westland. Nor was medical aid any easier to reach as a "gumdigger named Savitch" learned in 1901 when his right leg was broken below the knee by a dislodged boulder as he worked on a hillside at Puketiko. He was brought on a stretcher to the hospital at Thames by his comrades more than a day later after "*a long and trying journey across the ranges*."[385]

Hazards of a different kind concerned the vulnerability of Croatian diggers, storekeepers and gum-buyers to crimes ranging from theft or attempted theft. Thefts of gum or other items, not always reported or solved and on a number of occasions committed by one of their own countrymen, usually occurred from unattended camps during the working day, as burglaries at night from stores and gum-buyer premises or from diggers visiting town.[386]

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[384] These examples were reported in: *Auckland Star*, 13 December 1904, p.5 (re Marko Surjan); *Poverty Bay Herald*, 21 February 1907, p.2 (re Pasko Prelenda et al. on Great Barrier Island); *Bush Advocate*, 4 July 1907, p.5 (re "Nicholas Saultwitch"); *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 30 July 1909, p.5 (re Steve Pervan); *Auckland Star*, 22 July 1931, p.10. (re "Joze Izotich"); and *Auckland Star*, 14 July 1923, p.6 (re Brajkovich et al.).

[385] *Thames Star*, 5 September 1901, p.4.

[386] For examples of thefts of gum and other valuables, see: Campbell (1963:48-49); *Auckland Star*, 7 March 1898, p.4; *Thames Star*, 13 October 1905, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 24 April 1913, p.4 and 25 April 1913, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 18 April 1916, p.7; *Northern Advocate*, 22 May 1918, p.2 and 23 May 1918, p.1; and *Auckland Star*, 11 September 1925, p.6. A sequel to the latter case involved a licenced Dalmatian gum-buyer who was fined: 20s plus costs of 7s on each of four charges of purchasing kauri gum from the thief who did not have a selling licence; and a further 20s and 7s costs for failing to have the regulation purchase book. Joze Letica was found guilty of the same offences a few years earlier (*Auckland Star*, 8 October 1919, p.7). For thefts by a Dalmatian from other Dalmatians, see: *Auckland Star*, 24 April 1913, p.4 and 25 April 1913, p.2 (re Ivan Cvitanovich); *Auckland*

Religion, Recreation and Alcohol

Sunday was a welcome break after six days of heavy labour but rarely a time for religious observance. Even if a man wanted to, the gumfields were often too far from established settlements to attend church. As poet Ante Kosovich put it there were "No bells, no bell towers" on the gumfields so a man desiring confession and communion had to patiently wait for a camp service conducted by a roving priest. In 1903 a circular letter signed by Croatians in Northland was received by the Bishop in Auckland. Seeking a priest who could speak Croatian, each of the letter's signatories promised to pay an annual sum of ten shillings toward the priest's maintenance. The Bishop replied that although he couldn't promise a Dalmatian-born priest, arrangements were being made to appoint one who spoke Croatian.[387]

Appointed by the Mill Hill Fathers to care for the "shifting camp" diggers, Father Joseph Zanna performed his duties to the best of his ability from 1903 until 1910. Because his 'parish' extended roughly from Auckland to Parengarenga in the far north and east to include the Coromandel Peninsula, his visits to a particular area or camp by coastal shipping, horseback and walking were few and far between. Born in Innsbruck, Austria, Father Joseph Zanna would recall years later that he was initially suspected of being an Austrian spy, "*sent here by Vienna to find ... [those] who had defaulted from their conscription for the army or navy.*" As a German speaker competent in Italian he was at first handicapped by his lack of Croatian fluency but by November 1906 was able to celebrate the first marriage (of Barbara Gojak and Andrew Sinkovich) in the Croatian language at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland. A more serious problem was criticism by Mathew Ferri, editor of the Croatian newspaper *Napredak*. According to Father Joseph:

> *... Ferri's paper began publishing nasty things against me, especially as regards my support which had never been overdone; barely enough to keep me going, and nothing to spare.*

Worse was to come. When Ferri attacked him for warning young parishioners to steer clear of certain disreputable Auckland boardinghouses (known for gambling, alcohol and possibly prostitution), Father Joseph "lashed out" in a personal letter to Ferri, a letter which Ferri:

Star, 18 April 1916, p.7 (re Jack Dragovich); and *Northern Advocate*, 22 May 1918, p.2 and 23 May 1918, p.1 (re Vladimir Carevich).

[387] *New Zealand Tablet*, 10 December 1903, p.4.

> *... maliciously published ... and so many (not knowing the full question) turned against me. In 1910 my income was not £50 and my health was gone.*

After recovering from his illness, Father Joseph was unable to resume his gumfields circuit and, although he continued working in Dargaville and Whangarei, attention to the scattered Croatian gumdiggers of Northland lapsed until the arrival of the Rev. Milan Pavlinovich in 1928.[388]

Aside from religious observance, Sunday was a day for tackling chores, some of which could be shared or undertaken on a roster agreed to with mates in the same shanty. If there was gum to be scraped it had to be done along with collecting firewood for the next week, cleaning the shanty, changing the bedding, washing and mending clothing, repairing tools as required, attending to matters of hygiene such as the latrine, a bath and personal grooming with a shave and haircut. Only then, time and weather permitting, could a man enjoy the freedom of real rest and recreation with fishing and hunting (to supplement food provisions), catch up with friends or new arrivals, and sports activities.

Poet Ante Kosovich,[389] known to be interested in sport, is believed to have played a role in organising an athletics day at Houhora in 1905 and in helping to set up a Croatian rugby team at Waiharara in 1915. In the same year, John Totich was captain and organiser of the Slavonian Football Club established in Dargaville.[390] Many also welcomed the opportunity to catch up with friends, new arrivals and news from home at a nearby store, billiard room or gumfield wine shop owned and operated by compatriots. In the Lake Ohia vicinity during the 1920s, for example, they could meet at Botica's billiard saloon, Bakalich's store and John Urlich's store and gum-buying business. During long holiday periods (Christmas and Easter) and whenever it was too wet to work, a great deal of time and money was spent in gambling and drinking.

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[388] The details of Father Joseph Zanna's background and experiences were drawn from his letter to John Totich, 17 October 1948, (Trlin, 1967:264-271). Jelicich (2008:195-196) includes an incomplete copy of the letter as part of his biography of Father Joseph Zanna. The Croatian language marriage ceremony at St. Patrick's Cathedral was reported in the *Auckland Star*, 27 November 1906, p.4.

[389] See biographical note on Kosovich in Appendix 3 Two Strong Voices

[390] Jelicich (2008:250).



A fully equipped Dalmatian gumdigger.
With his pikau backpack full of gum, Matijac Lupis (from Donja Nakovana, Peljesac peninsula) returns to camp carrying his gum-spear, spade, axe, tea billy and bucket
Source: **Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington**



Digging on a "face" was a significant innovation by Dalmatian diggers. Pooling their resources a "gang" would work on a "face" and progressively turn over a large plot of land. ***Source:*** **Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington**



Washing gum over a screen using a water pump, 1911. This enabled large volumes of low grade gum to be washed by the "gangs". ***Source:*** **Northwood Brothers**



Gumfield life. Antonio and Sabo Lupis in their sack and sod accommodation at Waihopo. *Source:* Unknown



Pay Day. When the gum collected by a "gang" had been cleaned it was sorted by size and quality for the inspection of a gum buyer who periodically visited each camp. *Source:* Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington



Sunday – time for rest and various chores. Here camp members act as barbers, providing a shave and haircut for others in the same shanty and their neighbours
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Alcohol consumption and drunkenness were rife on the gumfields, just as they had been on the goldfields. The usual reasons applied; a high concentration of young single men, the hardships they endured in a desolate environment, the lack of other diversions and especially the absence of women (girlfriends, fiancées, wives and mothers) to exercise a measure of control. More often than not liquor was identified as the major factor contributing to anti-social or criminal behaviour. In November 1901, after drinking freely at a hotel in Aratapu, a number of Croatian diggers were convicted for assaulting half a dozen men in a brawl described as "*the most disgraceful riot yet witnessed on the Wairoa.*" Five years later in December 1906 a drunken quarrel erupted among Croatian diggers in Dargaville and resulted in 20 charges being heard for rioting, assault, firearms threats and damaging property with axes.[391] Similar charges were laid and convictions secured for riotous, threatening behaviour and assault in Kaitaia in November 1900 and again in August 1903. The keeping and sale of liquor without a licence was not uncommon. In Dargaville, for example,

[391] *New Zealand Herald*, 12 November 1901, p.7 and 19 January 1907, p.5.

boardinghouse keepers Mate Gilich and Ivan Erceg, claiming that a dray load of liquor found on their premises (and confiscated) had been bought and stored for their countrymen, were each fined £25 and costs for this offence in 1924.[392]

Of particular concern to settlers and other citizens in the far north was the impact of wine produced by Croatians in the Herekino district and on small holdings elsewhere such as the Sulenta brothers' property at Waiharara. By 1906/1907 there were some 14 vineyards established at Herekino producing about 2,000 gallons of wine per year which was sold at 10s a gallon.[393] This wine was often sold on the gumfields from a temporary wine shanty or shop, a structure usually no bigger than necessary to house a large barrel mounted on skids, all of which could be moved from one place to another depending on demand. The only published pictorial record, derived from three glass negatives, is for a permanent structure showing one exterior and two interior views of the Babich Brothers wine-shop at Kaikino, about 10kms north of Awanui, in 1916. Set about 200 metres from the Babich homestead, the wine-shop was a windowless tin shed surrounded in part by thick scrub. Inside were a stack of barrels (some marked "Babich"), copper jugs, syphon tubing, a bottle-cleaning brush hanging from a nail, a funnel and a number of bottles.[394] It was from this shop (and horseback deliveries to some customers) that Joseph Babich and his brother Stepan sold wine produced from their own locally grown grapes.

By law the wine-shop owner had to have a licence to sell his product in quantities of not less than two gallons but if the thirsty digger or another customer couldn't afford the price, usually in gum, it was claimed "*that mine host of the peripatetic hostelry will not disdain to sell a bottle of wine, or even a glass.*"[395] With gum accepted in payment for this wine a strong community of interest was created embracing the wine-shop owner, the digger and the storekeeper/gum-buyer, so much so that the police found it difficult to check breaches of wine-selling licences. A charge against Joseph Babich for selling a couple of bottles to a Maori customer was dismissed when it came to court because the police witness's account concerning the

[392] *Northern Advocate*, 5 September 1924, p.4.

[393] See: *Weekly News*, 7 March 1907, p.17; and *New Zealand Herald*, 18 February 1907, p.7.

[394] The photographs appear in an article by Scott (1970:20-23).

[395] *Auckland Star*, 4 July 1914, p.9.

purchase differed from his original statement. Whether or not Joseph and other retailers breached their licences, the product sold by various wine-shops (some of it said to have been adulterated with a cheap raw spirit) found its way into the hands of European and Maori diggers as well as Maori women, allegedly resulting in frequent drunken orgies and immorality. Maori school-aged children were also reported to be among the buyers and drinkers.[396]

The effect of this wine upon the behaviour and wellbeing of Maori and others on the gumfields inevitably attracted attention and condemnation from all quarters, including the Young Maori Party, church leaders, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the House of Representatives. Florence Harsant, a European who spoke Maori fluently, was in her early twenties when she was appointed Maori Organiser for the WCTU and visited the far north in 1913. An extract from her field-diary for 21 January, at Sweetwater (Waireka), makes interesting reading.

> *We had a lengthy meeting in the hall tonight and a good many Austrians attended. My blood is still boiling over some of their misdoings – over the doctored wine some of them sell; over the fearful orgies they cause among the men and women who are drunk. Some of the women here become so maddened with wine that they leave their children by the roadside while they return for still more ... Full of these things I stood there, exhorting in Maori these foolish people to cease making the fortunes of the Austrians, and to make their own instead. I didn't learn until after the meeting that the Austrians understood every word I said! But I simply spoke the truth and they knew it.*[397]

Florence returned to Sweetwater a few days later, the need for her work driven home "*by the sight of young children hopelessly drunk on wine.*"

In July 1914, during the second reading of a Licensing Amendment Bill, Prime Minister William Massey asked the House of Representatives to agree to an amendment to deal with the sale of Austrian wine. He had previously admitted that he had "never seen the stuff" but went on to add:

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[396] See: *Evening Post*, 13 July 1914, p.2; *Dominion*, 22 July 1914, p.8; and *Northern Advocate*, 29 July 1914, p.6.

[397] Harsant (1979:122-123).

... I believe it to be one of the vilest decoctions which can possibly be imagined. ... and from what I have learned it is a degrading, demoralizing and sometimes madding drink to many who use it.[398]



The Lunjevich winery, Herekino. Young Marin Juretich is on the left
Source: **Far North Regional Museum, Kaitaia**

Earnings and Hardships

When passed into law Massey's amendment proved to be the first in a series of set-backs to the development of viticulture and winemaking in subsequent decades.

As expected, Dalmatian gumdiggers and winemakers had a different view. Marin Juretich (from Podgora), for example, only 12 years old when he arrived in 1908, worked in the Herekino vineyards of his Lunjevich relations until he was old enough to cope with the hard labour of gumdigging. Marin acknowledged the "terrific scandal" over "our Dally plonk" but argued that:

... these people [Maori and non-Croat Europeans] just didn't know how to drink the stuff. Yes, we did sell wine on the gumfields ... but our boys who were gumdiggers didn't treat the wine as booze the way beer

[398] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1914, Vol.168, pp.829-830.

is treated among the New Zealanders ... no, the wine was part of the old way of life.[399]

Was gumdigging profitable? Were temporary migrants able to save small fortunes of £200 to £400 from a few years of work? The answer is simply that those able to work collectively, in experienced groups of gumdiggers found it possible, and indeed save "small fortunes". Why else would the Sokolichs from Novi continue to send over 45 family members to the New Zealand gumfields from prior to 1890 to 1914, or the Belichs from Zrnovo, at least 26 from 1892 to 1914 if it was not profitable.[400] They were free to emigrate to many other countries. It is difficult to believe that for the two families mentioned, as well as many others, that there was not a continuity of working groups who became very experienced at mining gum.

The mining of gum from 1890 when Croatians first became seriously involved in gumdigging through to World War 1 changed dramatically. From mining shallow deposits of high grade gum to deep deposits of low grade gum left inexperienced single diggers with little chance of making good earnings. There were many diggers' submissions made to Commissions of enquiry, but few appear to come from those associated with experienced groups. It is perhaps notable that John Kabalin (see below) states that *"... apart from Anton Sokolich who made £100 per year... the rest of us made £35-40."* The vast majority of Sokolich, Belich and other sojourners returned to Croatia with what they had saved. Virtually all Croatians had started their work life in New Zealand as gumdiggers but by 1916 significant numbers of those settled in New Zealand could describe themselves as farmers or other property owners.

For those who came to New Zealand and could not become members of an experienced gumdigging group, the situation could be markedly different.

As early as 1894 and 1895, a couple of letters to the editor of *Pucki List*, a newspaper published in Split, provided clear warnings to intending migrants in central Dalmatia that all was not well in far-off New Zealand.[401] In the

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[399] Personal interview with Marin Juretich, Kaitaia, January 1965 (Trlin, 1967:283-286).

[400] Passenger Lists Sydney to Auckland 1892 to 1914

[401] The letters, in both original and translated forms, are included in Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society (2008:81-84).

first letter, dated 3 April 1894, Peter Milovcich (from the Pelješac Peninsula) painted a bleak picture of a hand-to- mouth survival:

> *Many come here to make their fortunes but it is hard to even scratch a living and things are getting even worse. Most work on the gumfields, and the prices for gum have dropped considerably. Last year 100 pounds of gum (50 kilos) was worth £2 10s (30 forints in our money), today 100 pounds of gum gets you 12 shillings (6 forints). Food is very expensive, you need no less than 6 forints just to live on and the best worker would be lucky to dig 100 pounds of gum in a week. So you can see you can barely exist.*

Similarly, the second letter, dated 12 September 1895, reported that four gumdiggers (Steve and Paul Jelicich, Anton Serventich and Michael Silich) received just £40 between them for gum collected during three months of work; that is, about £3 7s per week for the group or about 17 shillings per man. They concluded – presumably after deductions for food, clothing and equipment – that "*we worked ... for nothing.*" Despite these warnings the numbers of young men still coming to the gumfields were such that the Government of New Zealand, pressured by local diggers and settlers, found it necessary in 1897 to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate and report on the kauri gum industry.

It was noted in the Commission's 1898 report that from one gumfield store alone a total of £1,277 was sent to "Austria" through the clerk over a period of 4½ months – a sum which did not include Post Office orders or remittances forwarded directly by diggers themselves. Assuming that the average savings per man were, at the lowest, £1 per week, it was calculated that an "Austrian" digger in 1898 would save £52 per year, that an estimated 1,500 diggers would save £1,500 per week or a total of £78,000 per year.[402] On the basis of this assumption it would obviously take the average digger about four years to save £200 and as much as eight years to save £400. The problem with such an assumption, however, was that it assumed: favourable market prices when they were known to fluctuate according to quality and overseas demand; good luck in terms of the quantity of gum found and extracted from fields of varying yield; a reasonable balance between the costs of living, notably for equipment and provisions advanced by storekeepers, and the prices offered by gum-buyers who were often

[402] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, p.8. Premier Richard Seddon likewise stated that information from 11 Post Offices in Dalmatia showed that "in the course of a few years" Dalmatians had sent about £20,000 from New Zealand (*New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* 1899, vol.109, p.466).

storekeepers as well; an ability to work for 52 weeks per year without regard to weather conditions (especially in winter months) and a man's need for rest; and the digger's continuing good health under difficult living and working conditions for prolonged periods.

In support of the £1 per week savings assumption, evidence was provided by Richard Mitchelson (storekeeper and gumfield leasehold manager for the Mitchelson brothers) with respect to the earnings of "P. Pericic and D. Salle" during 1897. Over a period of 33 weeks, Pericic (from Novi) earned £57 8s 2d and after the deduction of £24 10s 3d for goods advanced he received in cash £32 17s 11d or almost exactly £1 per week. For Salle (from Korčula) the outcome was better; over a period of 13 weeks he earned £29 13s 7d and after deductions for goods advanced was left with £20 14s 9d or an average of about £1 12s per week.[403]

Against the figures provided by Mitchelson, however, there is the testimony of men such as John Kabalin, Jack Matijevich, Mate Trlin and Ivan Vegar. Engaged in gumdigging from 1896 to 1901, John Kabalin (from Novi) reported that, apart from Anton Sokolich who earned £100 a year, "*the rest of us made from £35-£40 per year. Few made £50...*"[404] Jack Matijevich recalled working with two mates in the mid 1920s, digging on hard ground with a pick and spade. After paying for their food and other goods, Jack thought he earned £3 clear for five weeks' work.[405] When 17 year-old Mate Trlin (from Ravča) arrived in 1924 he spent only 18 days on the Waiharara gumfields:

> *... I soon found that being young and inexperienced the future there would be very difficult, so I enquired about [other] work ... [hearing that farm hands were needed] I went to Herekino and took on milking cows for Mate Pivac ... [who was] a sharemilker on the farm of the Lunjevich brothers ... I stayed one season. ... I was sure of £1 5s a week on that job – I might get more or less at gumdigging, one just couldn't be sure.*[406]

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[403] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, p.27 (evidence of Richard Mitchelson, storekeeper).

[404] John Kabalin, letter to John Totich, 4 December 1948 (Trlin, 1967:251-255).

[405] Hingley (1980:35-36).

[406] Personal interview with Mate Trlin, Lower Hutt, August 1964 (Trlin, 1967:296-297).

Mate subsequently spent two years gumdigging on the 90 mile beach, endured bad living conditions and went barefoot to save a few shillings but did better than Ivan Vegar. By the late 1920s the gumdigging industry was clearly on the path toward a long drawn out end, and after a year's work on Ahipara Hill in 1928/1929 Ivan Vegar's 'gang' ended up with:

> *... only £6 profit between a group of five of us. This life was much worse than that in Jugoslavia; we had never experienced such hard work before. In Jugoslavia we lived a much better life than we did here for many years.*[407]

He would have been delighted to make as much as John Kabalin did 30 years earlier, albeit less than £1 a week clear! With a narrow margin between expenditure and income that could be eroded by bad luck or illness, bankruptcy was not uncommon among gumdiggers.[408]

With the above examples in mind it is easier to understand why some men sought loans to pay their return passage and others never returned home, abandoning wives and children or in a few cases remained single and died as isolated, lonely men living in poverty. Niko Kostich (born in Kotor), for example, worked for some years on the Suez Canal and in the United States before arriving on the gumfields in 1889. When he died in 1929, aged 92, cared for by Mick Pavlovich during a long illness, Niko was survived by a wife and family still living in Dalmatia.[409] Toma Raos (from Vrgorac), on the other hand, died alone in 1939, aged 65, at his isolated shack on the Poroti gumfields near Whangarei. The coroner's verdict was heart failure induced by debility, lack of food and clothing.[410]

Others, overpowered by a sense of failure, despondency or ill health, tried to find solace in alcohol while a few either took or attempted to take their own lives. Suicide cases included: an unidentified "Austrian" found dead near his hut at Waipu in 1904, with a revolver in his hand and a bullet wound under his chin; an "Austrian" identified as "Marin Marijan," a single man living

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[407] Personal interview with Ivan Vegar, Kaitaia, January 1965 (Trlin, 1967:306).

[408] For examples of bankrupt diggers, see *Auckland Star*: 1 March 1912, p.5 (Visko Matulovich); 8 June 1917, p.2 (Luigi Mateljan); 25 June 1923, p.14 (Andrew Jovich); 29 February 1924, p.7 (Michael Pavlovich); 11 June 1926, p.5 (Vincent Matulovich); and 27 September 1935, p.8 (Louis Covich).

[409] *Auckland Star*, 5 June 1929, p.5.

[410] *Evening Post*, 14 August 1939, p.11.

alone at Kaitara, found in 1909 about 5 days after he cut his throat with a razor; and in 1924, Ivan Lulich (from Igrane), single and ill for some time, who shot himself with a double-barrelled gun.[411] There are two more cases, both occurring in 1907, that should be noted here. First, an unnamed "Austrian gumdigger" from Kerikeri, having recently lost all his possessions in a fire, was arrested in the act of seeking a knife to cut his throat and sent to Auckland Mental Hospital. Second, Luke Lulich (from Igrane), suffering from a delusion that food was unnecessary, was sent to the same institution after refusing food for several days.[412] By 1917 a total of 14 Croatians were listed as inmates of Auckland Mental Hospital.[413] With roughly one inmate for every 130 Croatians resident in New Zealand at the time, this is perhaps the most sensitive indicator of the hardships and stresses experienced by those who came half way around the world in the hope of gaining a small fortune of £200-£400.

Following the lead of compatriots in North America, at least three attempts, all unsuccessful, were made to provide for themselves in the event of financial need or illness. Unfortunately, existing accounts of these attempts are fragmentary and often conflicting. In July 1902 it was reported that a group of 40 "Austrians" met in Auckland, for the purpose of forming a "Dalmatian Croatian Benevolent Society." Eugen Langguth (Austrian Consul) presided and was elected president together with a committee that included Mathew Ferri, Joseph Franich and Lui Kinkella. Although an annual subscription (ten shillings) was set with 44 members enrolled, it appears that nothing more came of this venture. A similar fate seems to have befallen a "Croatian Benefit Society" formed by a large meeting of gumdiggers at Dargaville in December 1907. Finally, as editor and publisher of *Napredak*, Mathew Ferri wrote a series of articles beginning in May 1907 appealing for public subscriptions to endow beds for Croatian patients in Auckland Hospital. About £56 was received by Ferri and paid into the bank but, having indicated that £300 had to be subscribed before the money would be paid over to the Hospital, he took no further action. In May 1908 Langguth wrote requesting a receipt for his £1 subscription and threatened legal action unless he received a list (signed by the Hospital) of all

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[411] See: *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 2 February 1904, p.3; *Taranaki Herald*, 3 April 1909, p.2; and *Northern Advocate*, 18 November 1924, p.5.

[412] *Auckland Star*, 7 October 1907, p.4 (re unnamed "Austrian"), and 31 August 1907, p.4 (re Lulich).

[413] *Register of Aliens 1917* (pp.70-84, "Eden County").

subscriptions for the full amount collected. The case was subsequently heard in the Supreme Court in May 1910 with a decision against Ferri.[414]

Occupational Change

Having experienced the precarious livelihood and hazards of gumdigging, a small but increasing number of temporary migrants sought alternative employment on either a short- or long-term basis. A few found their way into jobs in towns but until the late 1920s the majority worked as rural labourers, farm workers, railway construction workers, scrub cutters and bushmen. Others, becoming more familiar with New Zealand's opportunities, opted for permanent settlement and found employment at higher levels in the kauri gum industry as storekeepers, gum-buyers, merchants and entrepreneurs. More importantly, an increasing number broke out of the gum industry altogether and turned to occupations such as: farming (including viticulture and horticulture); rural contracting for drainage and road works; quarrying (e.g. Mark Ciprian near Dargaville); flax milling (e.g. the Sulenta brothers at Waipapakauri); boardinghouse proprietors; publicans (e.g. Ilija Mandich at Waiwera); service workers (e.g. barmen, billiard saloon owners or markers); and as entertainers (e.g. the Kulus brothers' travelling picture theatre set up in the far north in 1915). A few diggers also managed to return to their pre-migration jobs as bootmakers and carpenters.

Stimulated by kauri gum industry restrictions imposed from 1898 onwards, and enhanced by the collapse of gum markets and prices during the early years of World War I along with new job opportunities in the absence of New Zealand citizens as enlistments and casualties mounted, this changing occupational pattern was clearly evident by 1917. Of 375 Dalmatian males registered as aliens in the combined far north counties of Mangonui, Whangaroa and Hokianga, 73 percent were engaged as gumdiggers with the bulk of the remainder working as labourers, farm assistants and bushmen (12.8 percent), farmers (7.7 percent) and storekeepers, gum-buyers and other self-employed persons (5.3 percent). For 394 registered males residing in Dargaville and Hobson County, the original gumdigging heartland, the pattern was very similar; most worked as gumdiggers (64.2 percent), followed by labourers, farm assistants and bushmen (18.7 percent), farmers

[414] These details were drawn from reports in: *Auckland Star*, 29 July 1902, p.3 (the "Dalmatian Croatian Benevolent Society"); *Evening Post*, 16 December 1907, p.7 ("Croatian Benefit Society"); and *Auckland Star*, 31 May 1910, p.6 (the hospital beds subscription case). For a different account of these or similar events at about the same time, see Jelicich (2008:171).

(9.6 percent) and self-employed storekeepers, gum- buyers etc. (6.1 percent).[415] Much the same pattern prevailed in other territorial authorities throughout Northland. Gumdigging was still pre-eminent but a process of occupational diversification was well established.

In general, those who moved into higher levels of the kauri gum industry did well, provided they: had firsthand gumdigging experience; understood the operation of gum markets and price fluctuations; kept an eye on extensions of credit; combined gum-buying with another source of income; were trusted by their compatriots or business partners; had the good sense to withdraw when the industry went into decline; and enjoyed a measure of good luck. Among those who exhibited two or more of these features and prospered were brothers Joseph and Andro Dragicevich, Kleme (Clem) Jurlina, Visko Matich and Mate Glamuzina.

The Dragicevich brothers (from Kozica, Vrgorac district) followed their father Grgo (George) to New Zealand; Joseph arrived in 1890 and Andro in 1901. They worked together as gumdiggers and identified themselves as "settlers" when naturalised at Waipapakauri in 1906. Joseph visited Dalmatia about 1909, intending to return with his mother Frana, and while there he married Marija Dominkovich. As things turned out, however, Joseph came back alone; his mother was ill and unable to travel so his pregnant wife was obliged to stay and care for her. Twelve years passed before Marija, her first child (a daughter) and Joseph were reunited. Back in New Zealand, Joseph joined Andro and their father at Ahipara, farming on one of several blocks of land that Grgo had bought there and at Awanui. Following common practice, work on the farm was supplemented with gumdigging but a small, temporary trading store was also set up as they moved around the Ahipara and other gumfields. The opportunity for the brothers to act independently, to take stock and plan for their own futures, came in 1913 when Grgo returned to live in Dalmatia.

Drawing on their experience, and recognising the advantages of Awanui's location, over the next nine years they moved from farming and gumdigging into full-time work as traders. They eventually settled in Awanui and in 1922 employed a craftsman to build a general goods and gum trading store on land Grgo had bought in earlier years. Opened in September 1923, the business prospered, meeting the needs not just of Croatians but of other gumdiggers

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[415] Occupational summaries for male Dalmatians in the Mangonui, Whangaroa, Hokianga and Hobson counties, plus Dargaville Borough, were produced using the *Register of Aliens, 1917* (pp.2-19, 36-51 and 337-339).

and settlers in surrounding areas as well. The successful launch of their store, coupled with the arrival of Joseph's wife and daughter a few months later, appeared to prompt Andro to think of marriage and he set off for the homeland, leaving Joseph to run the business.

Andro married "Zorka Turdejic"[416] from Žrnovo (Korčula Island), and returned in 1930. To accommodate the two families, a new home was built on a section next to the store. Unfortunately, with both wives under one roof all was not well. The store continued to prosper, but by 1940 the partnership had suffered a rift and the brothers went their own ways; Andro, the younger of the brothers, took over the store while Joseph had the house and some land.[417]

Clem Jurlina, from the village of Živogošće, was just 12 years old upon arrival in 1903. His first job was cooking for an uncle in a camp at Lake Ohia, but using savings accumulated from later work as a scrub-cutter and gumdigger he bought a bullock team and wagon to supply provisions to diggers around Sweetwater. In 1908 Clem and his brother Nikola opened a general store, gum trading business and billiard saloon. The initial location of this enterprise is a matter of debate (either Sweetwater or Waipuna) as the office – if not the business as a whole – was mounted on skids and moved from place to place several times before eventually settling at Sweetwater. In 1925 Clem married Karmela Lozina (also from Živogošće) who had come to join her brothers in New Zealand, and a couple of years later Clem's brother Nikola (who apparently left the business sometime earlier) returned to Dalmatia.

Clem never made a return trip home, choosing to remain in Sweetwater where he continued as a storekeeper and gum-buyer trading directly to the Auckland market and in 1928 started up his own gum exporting business as well. Crucial to his long-term success was his willingness to sponsor relatives, to assist new arrivals from his home village with tools and credit as they set up camps, to take an active role in the social life of his community and his ability to establish and maintain cordial relationships with his employees and local Maori residents. Described by his son Milan as "*a born wheeler and dealer*," fluent in Maori, Clem was also a prudent man. He saw out the lean years of low prices and depression but was back in business

[416] "Turdejic," as reported by Dragicevich (2011:38), maybe a misspelling of "Tvrdich."

[417] See Dragicevich (2011:37-46) for these and additional details about the lives of Joseph and Andro as well as their father Grgo.

when prices rose with the approach of World War II. Although a fire in March 1943 caused huge losses (estimated at £20,000 for kauri gum and £1,100 for buildings), he was still able to rebuild and start again.[418]

Born at Račišće (Korčula Island), Visko Matich was 16 years old when he arrived with his brother Mate in 1906. Along with 40 others he worked on a group contract to drain the Magatara swamp and extract gum. When gum prices collapsed with the outbreak of war, and credit for provisions was difficult to obtain, he saw it was time to move on. In 1915 he was with a group of 15 others who contracted to clean 30 miles of drains at Ruawai, and in 1916 the group entered into a contract to dig four miles of the new Craven Road drain.

Keeping an eye on the gum market, Visko saw that prices were on the rise in 1918 because of wartime supply shortages. Responding to the rise, he went into partnership with Auckland lawyers Webb and Ross in 1919 to take over the Melbourne Lease for ten years – 4,333 hectares of land from Tangaihi to Pouto – for which they paid a royalty of 7.5 percent of the value of gum taken to the Auckland Maori Land Board. In 1921 he formed the Melbourne Lease Gum Co. Ltd with five partners (including his brother Mate, Clifton Webb and Marin Kumrich) and capital of £6,000. Visko ran the business, employing 25 men with gum washing machines mounted on sledges, and settled his family at Matich's Bay (near Beacon Point on the Pouto Peninsula) where he and his brother built a house with a general store attached. Here Matich Bros. bought gum from Maori and Croatian diggers, provided them with provisions, barged the gum out to a vessel running from Dargaville to Helensville, and operated a post office. The business prospered while the boom lasted but from 1922 gum began its downward slide and the Melbourne Lease Gum Co. Ltd was voluntarily liquidated in 1928. Aware of the industry's decline, Visko had moved his family to Dargaville in 1925 and about a year later followed suit, leaving his brother to carry on the diminishing gum business while he turned his attention to other successful endeavours as a land developer and restaurateur.[419]

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[418] For these and other details about Clem Jurlina's life, see: Orwin (2004:143-145); Ramsey (2007:64-66); Jelicich (2008:207-209); *Auckland Star*, 13 March 1943, p.6 (re the fire); and a personal interview with Clem Jurlina, in January 1965 (Trlin, 1967:261-263). There are some discrepancies between the accounts provided by Ramsey, Jelicich and the personal interview with respect to various aspects of Clem's life.

[419] For these and other details of Visko Matich's career, see Jelicich (2008:162-165) and an article titled "Gumdigging and the Melbourne Lease: Haynes on Thursday," *Northland Times*, 5 June 1997.

Mate Glamuzina (from Stilja, in the Vrgorac district) set out in 1909 to join his father Marko and brother Tony who had arrived in New Zealand in 1903. Working initially as a gumdigger with his father, in the Red Hill-Te Kopuru district near Dargaville, Mate's career eventually embraced other activities. With land in the district being opened up for farming, he tried his hand at ploughing before acquiring, clearing and ploughing some land of his own. Drainage work followed; hard, soul destroying work on the Northern Wairoa flats. Looking for a better way to earn a living, Mate and two non-Croatian friends set up a small gum washing company with half the shares in Mate's hands and the rest divided equally between his two partners. Allowing for difficulties of cartage to the Auckland market and generally low gum prices, the venture was modestly successful.

In 1924 Mate married 16-year old, New Zealand-born Zorka Silich and with the first four (of six) children born between 1925 and 1928 he quickly became aware of the need to augment the family income. In order to expand his gum-buying business a shed was acquired in Dargaville to handle the larger quantities of gum. According to his biography:

> *It was a busy time, even though the venture was undertaken just to keep going. ... So small a margin was Mate working on that his bank manager had often to ask when the money would be available to meet cheques. It always arrived safely, but the waiting time was an anxious period.*[420]

His luck varied considerably during this time and the gum market remained uncertain during the depression years so he cut and sold firewood, but he continued with gum-buying and once again added gum washing to his activities in several partnerships. It was a measure of his determination not to be beaten that, finding the washing of gum could be improved upon, he set about developing a new plant that included getting water out of the trench that the men worked in. Nevertheless, with prices remaining low and the gum industry in decline it was time to think of the future. In 1932, therefore, Mate bought a 52ha property at Aratapu and became a cow-cocky, with a related side-line in raising pigs, even though the family knew nothing about milking machines and separators. Undaunted Mate and the family pressed on, and when the time came to build farm sheds and pigsties a small timber mill was developed using radiata pine from land owned by the family. Another learning curve to grapple with, but the mill, initially worked for the Glamuzina's own use, unexpectedly took off as local demand for timber

[420] Wordsworth (1986:42).

increased and a tanalising treatment process was added to the family's activities. Staff were hired to handle all the work involved in felling trees, milling, tanalising and retailing. Mate and Zorka retired in 1954 and moved to Auckland, leaving the mill to be carried on by their sons until 1974 when it was sold to Carter Holt.[421]

A contrast to the above successes is provided by bankrupt storekeepers and gum-buyers such as John Delich, Marino Glavash, George Steven Urlich and Mick Yovich. As illustrated in the following examples, their reasons for bankruptcy were many and varied in nature. John Delich, unable to read or write, kept no books but was primarily handicapped by insufficient experience when he started gum-buying in 1915 at Waihopo. Often the gum John bought was wet, and lost up to 28lb (12.7 kilos) per sack by drying before it reached the Auckland market. Such losses, together with bad luck with two horses and on one occasion being robbed of £6 while in town, quickly eroded his initial capital (£50) and ended in unmanageable debt. Marino Glavash had borrowed money to start business as a gum-buyer, a venture he described as a "poor speculation" that failed when a falling market for gum landed him in financial difficulties. The amount owed to unsecured creditors in 1908 was £161, while his assets consisted of £59 in book debts and 14s in cash. George Steven Urlich traced his business difficulty at Kaiwaka back to an expensive and unsuccessful legal case, but his statement to the official assignee indicates that he was also financially over-extended. In meeting creditor demands, he was left with insufficient funds to replenish stock and his customers quickly dwindled in number. Finally, Mick Yovich, a gum-buyer at Ruakaka, attributed his insolvency to a collapse of the gum market, and to his broker holding the gum too long and losing the market. However, Mick's statement to the deputy official assignee indicates a more complex explanation going back over several years. It included: involuntary closure of his business as a storekeeper at Ahipara during the First World War; failure to recover substantial book debts (£300) owed by diggers who took advantage of his absence and status as an enemy alien; and an unsuccessful court case to recover his store's accounting records, allegedly entrusted to a business rival.[422]

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[421] All of the key details concerning Mate Glamuzina's career have been drawn from his comprehensive biography by Jane Wordsworth (1986).

[422] See: *Auckland Star*, 22 January 1916, p.9 (John Delich); *Auckland Star*, 21 October 1908, p.3 (Marino Glavash); *Auckland Star*, 9 August 1913, p.9 (George Steven Urlich); and *Northern Advocate*, 1 November 1922, p.4 (Mick Yovich).

Further up the kauri gum industry ladder, various proposals or attempts were made to establish companies for gum cleaning and/or kauri gum oil extraction. For various reasons such schemes ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. One example was Parenga Gumfields Ltd, registered in 1913 with 40,000 £1 shares to extract oil from thousands of acres of kauri swamp owned by the company in the far north. From the start this venture was handicapped by the onset of World War I, the need for research and feasibility trials, time to design machinery and the construction of a processing plant, additional capital for further development and conflicting facts and figures from critics responding to statements by the company's managing director. Although progress was marked with the satisfactory completion and trial of a new plant and machinery at Red Hill south of Dargaville in 1919, and the floating and registration of a new company (Parenga Kauri Oils Ltd) with an enlarged capital to take over the business of Parenga Gumfields Ltd in 1920, the venture ended with the liquidation of assets in 1925.[423] Jack Ujdur (a.k.a. Jack Wydur or Wyder), Ante Miosich and James Sutich were among those known to have been heavily involved in the company.

Much more straightforward was the fate of the New Zealand Gum Cleaning Company Ltd. (NZGCC). Attended by some 200 shareholders, the majority of whom were Croatians, the first statutory meeting of the NZGCC was held at Dargaville in March 1914. Registered with capital of £30,000 in £1 shares, the Company's aim was to acquire the sole right to make, license and use an invention for sand-blast cleaning kauri gum in New Zealand and other countries where patents had been applied for. It was claimed the machine cleaned gum at just 10 percent of the cost of hand scraping and cut waste by 50 percent, features that would appeal to participants familiar with the gum industry. Two of the elected directors, Ilija (a.k.a. Elias) Mandich and John Totich, were local businessmen known and respected by their shareholding compatriots. Operating factories at Auckland and Dargaville, the NZGCC seemed to be assured of success but was severely affected by the advent and impact of war. When the European market closed, prices dropped and

[423] Among the relevant newspaper items on this company were: *Evening Post*, 16 October 1913, p.8 (company registration); *New Zealand Truth*, 7 September 1918, p.5 (views of critics etc); *Evening Post*, 2 July 1919, p.10 (circular to shareholders); *Evening Post*, 28 August 1919, p.7 (completion of plant at Red Hill); *Evening Post*, 10 November 1919, p.8 (enthusiastic views of managing director); *Evening Post*, 15 January 1920, p.2 (notice to shareholders re flotation/registration of new company); *Auckland Star*, 16 November 1920, p.4 (fire at Red Hill plant); and *Auckland Star*, 12 August 1925, p.5 (notice of liquidation sale of company assets). For further discussion of this project, see Fordyce (1998:140-144).

gumdigging activity declined as Croatian diggers sought other work or were directed (as enemy aliens) to Home Service projects. By 1918, if not earlier, the NZGCC had gone into liquidation.[424]

Women on the Gumfields

The gumfields, like the goldfields of earlier decades, were essentially a man's world. Opportunities for female companionship, marriage and sexual relations were few and far between, limited not just by the primitive living conditions but by the low social standing of full-time diggers and Croatians in particular. Accordingly their options were more or less restricted to young Maori women of similar social standing, unless a man attracted a letter bride by making the shift to developing a gumfield farm with part-time digging to provide an income and cover establishment costs. In the latter case a British-born wife or one who was New Zealand-born of British stock was possible but was often a choice restricted to town or city dwellers employing their skills and digger earnings in other endeavours. This was well illustrated by the case of John Nicholas Erceg and his wife Mary Annie Erceg. Mary had been seriously ill in Auckland and Nicholas had asked her to live with him on the gumfields in the far north. She went with him on the train to Whangarei but they quarrelled when told she would have to live in a whare. Mary decided to return to Auckland and her husband went on alone, in effect accepting a separation. Four years later they were granted a divorce.[425]

Prostitutes were typically used when on holiday in Auckland or another urban settlement and often associated with certain boardinghouses such as those attacked by Father Joseph Zanna. Were there Croatians who had a hand in the prostitution business? Undoubtably! One such may have been Mathew Ferri, the newspaper editor, journalist, interpreter, translator and business agent whose livelihood depended on his fellow countrymen. It must be noted, however, that evidence collected by the police, including statements from women who claimed they had rebuffed his alleged recruitment attempts, was never the subject of formal charges.[426] Less fortunate was Joe Bakalich, 26 years old, arrested in 1916 for immoral

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[424] See: *Auckland Star*, 2 March 1914, p.2 and 9 March 1914, p.7; *Northern Advocate*, 8 June 1918, p.2.

[425] *Auckland Star*, 4 December 1934, p.8.

[426] See "Mathew Ferri" file AAAB 482 51/e Record No.519, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

conduct and charged also "with assisting, counselling and procuring" services for a house of ill-fame in Hobson Street.[427]

The first marriage recorded between a Croatian and a Maori was at the beginning of the 1890s between Andrija Kleskovic and Erina (Ellen) Kaka of the Aupouri tribe. Over the next four decades many others followed, including those of couples such as Lovro Petricevic and Markareta Raharuhi in the early 1900s, Nicholas Covich and Anataia Peri (a.k.a. Polly Ann Peri) in the following decade, and Mijo Susich and Te Aue Rewi Aperahama in 1935.[428] De facto unions and more ephemeral relationships may have occurred before the early 1890s but were certainly commonplace thereafter. For example, Bill Manga was born without the knowledge of his father (Mike Bebich) after a brief affair with mother Lucy Hayward. Lucy died shortly after Bill's birth, leading to his adoption.[429]

Sometimes the Croatian husband became a totally integrated and valued member of his wife's community; Andrija Kleskovic, changed his name to Tuna Anderson, helped with the sale of gum and served as an interpreter in the Maori Land Court while Lovro Petricevic (a.k.a. Rorana Tarara) learned the language, culture and became a respected kaumatua whose passing was mourned by the Te Aupouri and Te Arawa iwi. As might be expected in such cases and many others the children and grandchildren acknowledged their Croatian heritage but their upbringing, language and schooling inclined them to identify primarily as Maori and/or New Zealanders.[430]

Of course not all of the marriages and relationships were to prove successful. Divorces and breakups occurred for reasons of adultery or desertion[431] on both sides, cruelty by the husband or more serious reasons. An example of the latter concerned the relationship of Paul Lendich (aged 46), a digger at Kauri Flat near Kaitaia, and his much younger partner Rosie Tewhiu (aged

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[427] *Auckland Star*, 29 January 1916, p.6.

[428] See: Božić-Vrbančić and Vrbančić (1999); and Jelicich (2008:58).

[429] Manga, B. 2007: "Bill Manga: Life Story". Reference A400, Far North Regional Museum, Kaitaia.

[430] Božić-Vrbančić (2005). Two well known examples are Dame Mira Szaszy (daughter of Lovro Petricevic) and former Labour MP Shane Jones (descendant of Andrija Kleskovic). For a discussion of the Maori-Croatian experience, see Božić-Vrbančić (2008).

[431] For examples, see: *New Zealand Truth*, 3 March 1923, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1926, p.9.

19). Charged with murdering Rosie's newly-born child and concealment of the birth, Paul was found not guilty.[432]

Although the real surge of Croatian female arrivals occurred in the 1920s and 1930s, the *Register of Aliens, 1917* (based on the 1914 Census), while flawed with the misspelling of names and missing details, is nevertheless useful as it indicates that a small number of Croatian women (45) were already well established in the northern counties of Mangonui (10), Hokianga (4), Bay of Islands (3), Whangarei (7) and especially Hobson (21) – excluding the boroughs of Whangarei and Dargaville.[433] Their duration of residence ranged from two to 18 years, with an average of seven years, and they were typically in their late teens and twenties upon arrival. About half were married to men who cited their occupation as "gumdigger".



Jerolima (Jurka) Erceg, husband Andrija and two of their children
Source: **Stephen Jelicich Papers**

[432] See: *Auckland Star*, 27 October 1927, p.9; 28 October 1927, p.9; 29 October 1927, p.9; and *New Zealand Truth*, 10 November 1927, p.5.

[433] New Zealand Census and Statistics Office (1917:2-51).

One of these women was Jerolima (aka Jurka) Erceg, from the village of Rašćane, who arrived in 1907 to join her husband Andrija. Her story, as told by Megan Hutching, is used below to illustrate the experiences of such women.[434] The bulk of the remaining women were married to farmers, men who had made the transition from gumdigging and temporary residence to settler but still returned to gumdigging as required for extra income and farm development funds.

Several differences were evident between the Maori and Croatian women, two of which warrant comment. First, the Maori wives or partners worked alongside their men on the gumfields, unlike their Croatian counterparts who as a general rule were limited to "domestic duties". There were, of course, exceptions to the rule especially when a farm was being developed and digging was carried out on the property close to home. Jerolima (Jurka) Erceg was a case in point, working closely with husband Andrija on their farm at Tatarariki with the children confined to a playpen or later looked after at home by an older female sibling. Antica Belich went a step further, working for five days a week on the gumfields as well as attending to her domestic tasks.[435] The latter duties otherwise kept a woman fully occupied. For Jurka Erceg these included: fetching water from a nearby spring or stream; baking bread in a camp oven; household cleaning and laundry; preparation of family meals (and sometimes for a husband's single workmates as both Antica Belich and Perina Yelavich discovered); mending work clothes; knitting and sewing garments for the family; establishing and caring for a large household garden; fishing and collecting shellfish if living close to the coast; taking responsibility for milking the household cow and later the dairy herd; assisting a husband with the scraping and cleaning of gum; and tending to the daily needs of a family that eventually involved 12 children. Jurka was exceptionally capable!

The second difference, perhaps rather more important, could account in part for the first difference. While the Maori women often had whanau (family) close to hand who could pitch in as required with household duties, babysitting and childrearing, the Croatian wives were usually isolated from the comfort, support and daily assistance of their kith and kin unless they had the good fortune to have others married to diggers or farmers in the local area. In this respect, the *Aliens Register 1917* indicates that those living in the vicinity of Waiharara and Waipapakauri (Mangonui County) or Red Hill

[434] Hutching (2008:276-300).

[435] Keene (1987:8-9).

and Te Kopuru (Hobson County) were particularly lucky to have another Dalmatian woman with whom they could share their personal feelings or worries about the many hardships and difficulties they endured.

These hardships and difficulties included housing, homesickness, language, family health, illness or death. Jurka Erceg considered herself lucky to have a sturdy first home built of wood by her husband, but others were less fortunate, some sharing accommodation with friends or more commonly occupying a typical gumfield shanty of sacks or corrugated iron. A rare first-hand description of such a home has been provided by a Salvation Army worker who spent a night with members of Nicholas Covich's family at Ahipara in the 1930s. Nicholas, a successful digger with a big sluicing plant for washing out the gum was also the owner of the Sokol Hall at Ahipara. Their home:

> *... consisted only of a living room and a bedroom which also served as a storeroom for the sacks of gum that had been washed from the soil. The building was made of corrugated iron walls and roof, and the first thing that impressed itself upon me as I stepped inside was the quality of the drapes that hung in unbroken line right round the walls from roof to floor. They were made of sacks opened up and when sewn together had the double effect of keeping out the draughts and keeping in the warmth.*[436]

The quality of housing aside, the most common problem was homesickness, a feeling arising from physical differences between the old and new environments, the absence of kith and kin, isolation and an inability to learn or master English. For many women, like Antica Belich and Perina Yelavich, homesickness persisted for years if not for their whole life. Other health and welfare concerns that figured prominently concerned the birth of children on the gumfields in the absence of local doctors or midwives and a subsequent reliance on traditional (Croatian and Maori) remedies for various illnesses. Loss of life was not uncommon. Jurka Erceg lost two of her 12 children, while Perina Yelavich lost two of her four gumfield-born children (because of a domestic accident and diphtheria). Typhoid fever also took its toll as did influenza[437] which affected whole families at the end of World War I, especially in Maori communities. Less serious but still a source of anxiety

[436] Ojala (1993:83-84).

[437] See a report on the death from typhoid fever of Nellie Millich, the eldest of four children in her family (*Northland Age*, 22 May 1922, p.7) and Wordsworth (1981:122-123) on the effect of influenza upon the family of Mary Matutinovich.

for an attentive parent, were childhood illnesses such as measles, mumps and whooping cough.

All of these hardships and difficulties, as well as domestic labour and work on the gumfield or farm, became part of what have been described as "narratives of sacrifice."[438] That is, stories of sacrifices made and endured by hardworking women for their children and grandchildren. A familiar narrative among immigrants everywhere, it has been superbly captured by Amelia Batistich in her short story of a Dalmatian woman. Worn out by working with her husband on the development of their gumfield farm during the day, she was too tired to talk or listen to his plans at night. But as time passed:

> *... she was soon used to it all. ... The hard days and the harder nights on the sack bed. The old country faded from her thoughts. She began to feel herself part of something in the making. ... and when their first child was born and she brought it home from the hospital, she held it up to the land and said "See what we are making for you!"*[439]

Opposition to Croatian Gumdiggers

The first significant signs of opposition to the presence and activities of diggers from the Austro-Hungarian territories appeared during the election year of 1893. A Commission was set up to investigate the industry, evidence was collected and a report was produced but nothing was done in relation to the findings. Describing the episode as a "*minor artificial flurry*," Brian Marshall, in his analysis of sectional and ethnic tensions in the gumdigging industry, notes that the lead was taken by two newspapers (*New Zealand Observer* and *Northern Advertiser*) and suggests that the whole issue may well have been seized upon and exploited as an election year gimmick to divert attention throughout Northland from other important social and economic issues such as Maori land ownership and poor communications.[440] Gimmick or not, the stage had been set for the drama to develop. The dissatisfaction of settlers on small holdings and 'British' diggers increased, came to a head in 1897 (marked by the appointment of a second

[438] Božić-Vrbančić (2003:84-85).

[439] Batistich (1963:107-108).

[440] See Marshall (1968:218-225) for his discussion of the 1893 "flurry" of interest and opposition.

Commission) and was sustained by various factors during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Opposition was solidly based upon the understandable fears of people whose livelihood depended, directly or indirectly, upon kauri gum as a source of income. As W.C. Walker, a member of the Legislative Council, put it:

> *Their very virtues, their industrial habits, make them [the Croatians] a greater danger than they otherwise might be. They have systematised their work ...*[441]

It was feared that by working methodically in cooperative groups they would remove all the gum from an area and thus deprive small holders of what was often claimed to make the difference between economic success and ruin. Hence the description of Croatian diggers as "locust-like" in their behaviour, a description applied earlier to the passage of Maori diggers.[442] Then too it was believed that Croatian work patterns would glut the gum market, prices would fall and thereafter only Croatians could manage to eke out an existence on the lower prices paid. Moreover, it was feared that being unable to speak or learn English (because they were closeted in homogeneous camps), Croatian diggers would be cheated by storekeepers who would then refuse to buy gum from 'British' diggers except at the same low prices. The problem of rapacious gum-buyers was thought to be most acute on private gumfields if the owner or lessee was also the storekeeper who insisted on a contract with a royalty for the right to dig on his land as well as requiring all gum to be sold to and all provisions to be brought from his own store(s). The effect of this 'truck system' was that a digger "*could be forced to sell gum at low prices and buy stores at inflated prices.*"[443] But if storekeepers wanted to play fair in the interests of good business and placed Croatians in charge of gum-buying or Croatians set themselves up as gum-buyers, then the objection was that their compatriots were attracted to a particular store or locality to the detriment of a struggling 'British' settler or digger. And to cap it all there was evidence of large sums of money being remitted back to Dalmatia so that the young colony – soon to become a Dominion – gained nothing from these temporary migrants or "birds of passage."

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[441] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1898, vol.104, p.631.

[442] *Weekly News*, 19 May 1888, p.14 (letter to editor).

[443] See Fordyce (1998:126-131) for a discussion of aspects concerning gumdigging contracts, storekeepers and gum-buying.

At a more personal level considerable antagonism was aroused by an alleged disregard for the unwritten 'laws' of gumdigging. Generally observed by 'British' diggers, these laws included: no digging without an invitation on another digger's patch or strike; and no digging on land cleared or prepared by fire or drainage unless one had contributed to such preparation. Evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission, letters to newspapers and parliamentary debates include many *claims* of instances when these 'laws' were broken. In evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission, for example, two diggers stated that:[444]

> *I struck a bit of gum, and fourteen Austrians came right round me working towards me, and worked me clean out of it in a ring.* (Frank Urwyn)
>
> *Where I left my gum-spear and spade in the evening I found Austrians at work in the morning, within 8ft. or 9ft.* [about 2.5m] *from the very spot where I was digging. Amongst the Britishers there is an understood code of honour that no one should come within say, 50ft. or 60ft.* [about 18m] *of another gumdigger's workings.* (Albion Cheeseman)

In effect, Croatian diggers were portrayed as men without respect for the work or 'rights' of others, men who lacked a sense of common justice and fair play. This jaundiced view was not confined to the lowly, self-interested 'British' digger. When Maori gumdiggers proposed to lower the level of Lake Ohia in 1898, they were opposed by the Auckland Crown Lands Board, partly out of fear "that Austrians would swoop down on the place by the hundreds." The Board resolved that no one should be allowed to lower the lake level.[445]

What would happen once the gumfields were exhausted? Responses to this question reveal the deeply rooted economic fears of settlers, diggers and labourers. If the immigrant decided to settle and followed the example of small farmers throughout Auckland Province all would probably be well. But what if he didn't? It was feared that they would be willing to work for low wages, would gain work with low tenders on local government contracts and that others would consequently become or remain unemployed. For example, as early as July 1894 the Central Wairoa Gumdiggers Union drew the

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[444] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, pp.42-43. For other examples or claims, see: *New Zealand Herald*, 18 February 1899, p.3; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1899, vol.109, p.467.

[445] *Auckland Star*, 22 March 1898, p.2, 26 March 1898, p2 and 16 April 1898, p.2.

attention of the Hobson County Council to the fact that Dalmatians had won several County contracts and that they were employing fellow countrymen to the exclusion of British labourers. The County Council chairman responded sympathetically, promising to introduce a resolution to the Council's next meeting to the effect that in future all contracts would be let to British subjects only.[446] Such fears and opposition persisted for 30 or 40 years. In 1930, for example, with local families suffering during the great depression, the Whangarei County Council, having debated the recent success of "Dalmatians", decided that in future it would not consider tenders from unnaturalised foreigners when there was competition from others.[447]

Another factor contributing to dissatisfaction and opposition was the belief that gumfield owners, storekeepers and merchants were enticing Austrians to come to New Zealand under some form of contract. First voiced by the *Auckland Star* in 1893, this belief gained strength during the next few years. In evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission, Joseph Franich (from Vrgorac) stated that in Dalmatia he had seen a newspaper advertisement signed by a Mr E. Mitchelson in which "*he* [Mitchelson] *notified that any person coming to his gumfields could make 10 shillings a day.*"[448] Naturally the Hon. Edwin Mitchelson M.P., owner of extensive gumlands in the Northern Wairoa valley, denied that he was in any way connected with a system of contract labour. Undeniable proof was required but Eugen Langguth, the Austrian Consul, was unable to provide evidence to prove the case one way or the other. Though both the 1893 and 1898 Commissions found insufficient evidence concerning the existence of a contract system there was a lingering distrust and suspicion on the part of settlers and diggers who saw themselves being overwhelmed by an influx of "Austrian" labour.

Arrivals from central Dalmatia did increase significantly during the years 1894-1899 and more followed until 1914, but the number of both actual and expected arrivals was sometimes exaggerated. When an alarming report in December 1898 that no less than 200 "Austrians" were "expected" to arrive from Sydney[449] proved to be true it was followed by a wave of newspaper

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[446] *New Zealand Herald*, 30 July 1894, p.6 and 30 August 1894, p.6.

[447] *Auckland Star*, 13 December 1930, p.9.

[448] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, pp.60-61 for Mitchelson's denial of Franich's allegation. See also *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1900, vol.112, p.328.

[449] *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1898, p.4.

reports throughout the country dealing with the possible size and consequences of the "Austrian influx," the government's response, the position and obligations of shipping companies, the actual number of arrivals, their reception and eventual destination. Even in Paeroa a local newspaper correspondent, well away from the tensions on Northland's gumfields, reported in May 1899 that:

> *The first sign of the Austrian invasion of these mining fields occurred today, when twelve Austrians passed through Paeroa for Waihi, where I understand they have obtained employment on one of the coal leases recently acquired here.*[450]

It was a classic case of what is known as a "moral panic"; that is, an intense public feeling about an issue and/or group (i.e. an "Austrian influx" or "invasion") that appears to threaten social order, values and interests. Culturally distinctive, primarily engaged in one occupation and geographically concentrated, the Croatian immigrant was conspicuous within an essentially British colony. Given also the digger's low status and disreputable (stereotyped) character, opposition was virtually inevitable.

By the end of 1903, however, public concern had apparently abated somewhat, a change wryly noted in a *New Zealand Observer* cartoon (see over) which drew attention to a statement made at a Wellington banquet by Premier Richard Seddon:

> *There was a time when the Auckland people were afraid of the Austrian influx and the Government introduced legislation to deal with the question, but now we find that the Austrians make good citizens and become enamoured of our institutions. Let 'em all come.*[451]

The final factor underlying opposition to the Croatian immigrant was (in the terminology of the times) 'racial' prejudice. From 1893 until 1914 numerous letters, articles and editorials advancing 'racial' arguments for the exclusion of Austrians from Dalmatia appeared in newspapers such as the *New Zealand Observer*, *Auckland Star* and *New Zealand Herald*.[452] His views coloured by economic fears, one writer to the *Herald* in 1893 said:

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[450] *Auckland Star*, 26 May 1899, p.4.

[451] *Observer*, 5 December 1903, p.13.

[452] For detailed discussion of this matter, see Marshall (1968:199-207).

> *There is surely a screw loose somewhere in our political economy when foreigners are allowed to step in and reap all the fruits of treaties and hard fought battles of the Anglo-Saxon.*[453]



"We prohibit foreign goods and welcome foreign labour"
New Zealand (presumably Premier Richard Seddon) welcomes an Austrian from Dalmatia. The new arrival's luggage identifies him as "Karl Diggumvitch"
Source: **New Zealand Observer, 5 December 1903, p.13**

This view was echoed in 1898 by another *Herald* correspondent. Acknowledging that everyone was entitled to improve his position if the opportunity arose, he still found it "*very annoying*" to discover so many Austrians from Dalmatia entering the country after "*many of our own race shed their blood fighting against barbarism to gain the country.*"[454] On another tack the Herald editor raised the threat to democracy, asking:

> *How will it be with New Zealand...if we lose to any appreciable extent that comparative purity of race which is our strength and pride, and find ourselves weighted, in our honest effort to make democratic government a success, by the presence in local dominance of alien peoples who are unfit to be entrusted with the ballot?*[455]

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[453] *New Zealand Herald*, 13 February 1893, p.3.

[454] *New Zealand Herald*, 10 October 1898, p.7.

[455] *New Zealand Herald*, 14 July 1900, p.4.

The same editorial suggested that in the United States a breakdown of democratic government could be attributed to the swamping effect of "non-Teutonic elements," clearly implying that New Zealand now faced the same threat.

So pervasive was this prejudice that even the most learned were tainted. Dr. Guy Scholefield, historian and author of a series of articles about New Zealand's immigrants, found:

> *... the Slav, rude and scarcely cultured above the plane of the Huns and Goths ... [but] more hopeful of rejuvenating usefulness than the derelicts of the Latin and Greek civilisations.*[456]

Nevertheless, Croatians were deemed to be temperamentally unsuited for absorption in Teutonic nations and, described by Scholefield as "*the untamed advance guard of barbarism*," unable to understand either ambition for individual betterment or "*the spirit of colonisation which can found worthy colonies*." Sadly, even the most sceptical could be converted upon reading or hearing such learned opinion, especially when acquainted with solid evidence of Slav lawlessness such as the drunken and riotous behaviour, assaults and property damage at Kaitaia (November 1900, August 1903), Aratapu (November 1901) and Dargaville (December 1906). No wonder, therefore, that when the *Elingamite* was wrecked in 1902 the survival of all of the "Austrians" among the passengers aroused suspicions and claims of conduct contrary to that which could be expected of men of the "English race" (see Appendix 1).

The Kauri Gum Industry Act 1898 and its Impact

In the face of the fears and prejudice noted above it is nothing short of amazing that the 1898 Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry in New Zealand, having toured the gumfields and towns of Northland and heard evidence from a broad range of people directly involved in the industry, found the "Austrians" to be "*a hardy, sober, industrious, law-abiding people*" who "*would make admirable settlers*." Nevertheless, the Commission, convinced that the supply of gum and land was not inexhaustible, suggested that "means must be adopted to prevent the spread of such further immigration" and advised:

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[456] *New Zealand Herald*, Supplement, 20 April 1907, p.1.

> *... that due notice be given that after a certain date – say six months hence – no person excepting a settler will be allowed to hold a gum-diggers licence in New Zealand till after a twelve months' residence in the colony. In such a case, an immigrant on arrival must either at once take up land, or find some other employment than gum-digging, until qualified by a year's residence ...*[457]

This and other recommendations of the Commission were incorporated in a modified form in the Kauri Gum Industry Bill, the provisions of which were widely but not universally supported.

In October 1898 the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, reflecting its sectional interests, voiced its concern and forwarded suggested amendments for the Bill to each of those in the House of Representatives from the Auckland provincial district.[458] More bluntly, while accepting the need for legislation to discourage the influx of sojourners who "rob the [gum]fields of all their wealth and send it to Europe," the *Northern Advocate* described the Bill as "*blundering*", was "*doubtful of its honesty of intention*" and dismissed it as "*a mere sop to the dweller in tents.*"[459] Despite such dissent the Bill's fundamental thrust and provisions were retained and enacted in the Kauri Gum Industry Act 1898.

The Act had four key provisions with regard to gumdigging by aliens. First, a local authority empowered to issue gumdigging licences could refuse a licence to any alien arriving in New Zealand after the Act's date of implementation (1 January 1899). Second, that no person was entitled to dig gum on a kauri gum reserve (created to protect the interests of smallholders who were Crown tenants) unless he was a British subject by birth or naturalisation and was the holder of a special licence (annual fee of five

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[457] *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1898, H.12, p.9.

[458] *Auckland Star*, 27 October 1898, p.2. The amendments were formulated by a committee of kauri gum merchants.

[459] *Northern Advocate*, 5 November 1898, p.4. The "dweller in tents" referred to was the "British" digger. The *Advocate*, serving readers in the northern counties, declared that:

> It must be remembered that a very considerable percentage of British gumdiggers consists of elderly and feeble men, of men given to drink, and of fellows who do not mean to work harder than they can help. None of these men are likely to get the best that the gumfields can give; but the strenuous, steady, patient Austrian gets it all the time. And for this we are invited to curse him and kick him out, though he pays his way well, and gives no trouble to any one.

shillings) which covered such a reserve and other Crown lands. Third, an alien could not receive a special licence to dig on Crown lands outside reserves unless he owned land in New Zealand (either in fee simple or under lease for a term of at least three years) or had been lawfully engaged in gumdigging for at least three months before 1 January 1899. Finally, no alien could receive or hold an ordinary licence (annual fee £1) to dig on Crown lands other than kauri gum reserves unless he had resided in New Zealand for at least three months immediately prior to application for such a licence. These provisions for reserves and other Crown lands excluded aliens for a minimum of three months from vast tracts of the northern gumfields, but the Act also required private landowners to license employees to dig gum on their properties. The Kauri Gum Industry Amendment Act 1899 subsequently allowed private landowners to authorise, in writing, any person employed to dig for gum on the property without the employee being required to take out a licence.

The Act's introduction had immediate repercussions. Claiming insufficient time had been given for notification of its provisions, the Austrian Consul, Eugen Langguth, met with Premier Richard Seddon and the Minister of Justice. Pointing out that many recent arrivals were unable to get a licence until they complied with the residential requirement and that others already en route to New Zealand were unaware of the provisions, Langguth argued they would become a burden on the state unless they found alternative means of support.[460] Rejecting Langguth's claim of insufficient notification, but conscious of public anxiety over the anticipated arrival of an indeterminate number of Austrians already en route, Seddon informed shipping companies that aliens intending to dig for kauri gum would not be allowed to land unless the companies guaranteed their maintenance. Matters came to a head in January 1899 with incidents involving Union Steamship Company vessels from Sydney. First, two "Austrians" were detained on the s.s. *Waihora* until it was established, as per advice received from the Collector of Customs, that each man had £10 – presumably a sum judged by Government officials to be sufficient for three months personal maintenance. Second, following considerable advance publicity, 88 "Austrians" arriving on the s.s. *Mokoia* were landed quietly under the cover of night once they had been briefed by Langguth and 60 had agreed to take up farm or drainage work in the Waikato. The rest were allowed to engage in gumdigging on private land at

[460] See: "The Austrian influx: deputation to the Premier" *Auckland Star*, 8 December 1898, p.3.

Waipu.[461] Together, these incidents seemed to provide acceptable solutions to an otherwise thorny issue and a template for future arrivals. But this was not the end of the matter.

Believing the Act did not go quite far enough, the *New Zealand Observer*, like other newspapers and many of their readers, still saw and accepted it as a move to "*check the influx of Austrians*."[462] The Premier himself later acknowledged it to be "*a gentle intimation by the legislature that we would not have them here*."[463] News of the Act and its implications was accordingly passed to the Austro-Hungarian authorities by the Consul, and to both the Governor of Dalmatia and the Bishop of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in letters from journalist/interpreter Mathew Ferri. In February 1900, Ferri also made known his views during a private visit to the Governor (Lord Ranfurly) in Auckland at Government House. Acknowledging that most of his compatriots had no intention of settling, Ferri argued that those who did wish to settle and become British subjects were debarred from doing so as they could not get naturalised.[464] Both the Austro-Hungarian and British imperial authorities responded relatively slowly to the whole matter but by July 1901, Premier Seddon and his Ministers were embroiled in a minor international relations crisis because the Act's provisions and operation appeared to discriminate against "Austrian" nationals. In a carefully worded memorandum to the Governor of New Zealand, dated 19 July 1901, Seddon set out the Act's four main provisions (summarised above) which applied to gumdigging by *all* alien arrivals or residents and *not* "Austrians" alone.[465]

Though not directed against "Austrian" nationals by name, the intent of the Act was nonetheless plain. Austria's Croatian subjects from the Province of Dalmatia were *the* predominant alien group on the gumfields, and the Act's provisions clearly aimed to stem the "*influx*" of these "*birds of passage*", to

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[461] For details, see: *Evening Post*, 7 January 1899, p.5 (s.s. *Waihora*); *Evening Post*, 14 January 1899, p.5 (for an interview in Sydney with a group of the immigrants); *Auckland Star*, 16 January 1899, p.4; and *Otago Witness*, 26 January 1899, p.18 (for interview with boarding-house owner John Bilich on the characteristics of the immigrants).

[462] *New Zealand Observer*, 17 June 1899, p.2.

[463] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1900, vol. 112, p.328.

[464] *Thames Star*, 27 February 1900, p.2.

[465] For full details, consult documents in the Seddon Collection (20/1 and 20/2), Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

restrict their freedom of movement between and activity on certain gumfields, and to encourage them (given the privileged position of British subjects and landowners) to become permanent settlers.

Did the Act succeed?

To a large extent the Act was ineffectual. The number of Croatians in New Zealand had doubled in the year prior to the Act coming into effect[466] so most of these arrivals could claim to have been gumdiggers for three months prior to the Act coming into force. Experienced groups were favoured by private landholders where there was no restriction on new arrivals digging on private land for three months after arrival; established groups could buy rough land and so pass the fee simple criteria; Counties received little for issuing licences and were not interested in funding their enforcement; naturalization was not controlled by the Act so Croatians should have been treated on equal terms with other alien immigrants.

Production of gum soared to over 11,000 tons in 1901.[467]

Prime Minister Seddon was obliged to use the Restriction of Aliens Act 1899 to bully shipping companies into refusing to carry Austrians and successfully reduced total Croatian immigrant numbers to 300 from January 1899 to October 1902.[468] The Kauri Gum Industry Act was also supposed to give an incentive for immigrants to become naturalized, but in fact it became very difficult for Croatians to become naturalized in the early 1900s. Only 17 became naturalized in the years 1900 to 1902 inclusive[469]

The restrictions were lifted late in 1902[470]almost certainly after pressure from Austria on the British Government who then applied pressure on Seddon

The effectiveness of the three-month residential requirement for new arrivals and restraints imposed upon the activities and mobility of other diggers by provisions for gum reserves and Crown lands are also open to question. When Seddon's opposition ceased in October 1902 scores of later arrivals – assisted by kith and kin – either worked on private land or took up other employment until they fulfilled the residential requirement. Likewise, the

[466] See "The Transients" P.D.Mataga, Table 4
[467] See "The Stayers" P.D.Mataga, Table 4
[468] See "The Transients" P.D. Mataga, Table 4
[469] See "The Transients" P.D. Mataga, Table 6
[470] Ibid.

relatively small number of cases reported where an "Austrian" or "Dalmatian" was charged and fined for a breach of the regulations[471] indicates that licences were readily obtained and/or that evasion of the law was an option in remote areas with lax or limited enforcement. On the latter point, for example, it was claimed that the Thames County Ranger energetically enforced the 1898 Act in the County's southern end but not its northern (Tapu district) end.[472]

More serious by far, however, were suspicions and claims that many young "Austrians" were overcoming the Act's obstacles by opting, as a simple matter of convenience, for British citizenship via naturalisation as and when they were eligible to do so. Responding in 1901 to criticism about this alleged loop-hole, Seddon noted the legal requirements of good character and intention to settle permanently, pointing out that the majority of "Dalmatians" were recent arrivals, had no intention of settling, were unable to speak English and unable to obtain a certificate as to their character.[473] But criticism persisted, as illustrated by delegates at the third conference of the Auckland Gumdiggers Industrial Union of Workers in 1909. Among resolutions passed by delegates, it was recommended that: aliens applying for naturalisation be required to prove residence in New Zealand for not less than two years; and that the language test be applied before an application was granted.[474] Supporting the Union's concern, the *Auckland Star* pointed out that the number of "Austrian" males granted naturalisation in 1907 was 100 out of 282 foreigners applying, and concluded (on the basis of

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[471] Bearing in mind that offenders' names were sometimes not given or miss-spelt, see: *Auckland Star*, 10 May 1900, p.4 (Botica a.k.a. Matich a.k.a. "Gagevich"); *Thames Star*, 28 May 1900, p.3 (unnamed "Austrian" offender) and 16 July 1900, p.2 (Duzevich and "Barbovich"); *Auckland Star*, 20 October 1900, p.4 (three unnamed "Austrian" offenders); *Thames Star*, 22 October 1900, p.2 ("Urancich" and "Kostinach") and 6 March 1901, p.2 (three "Austrians" identified as the "Bulat" brothers). In the *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1899, vol.110, p.509, reference is made to a case where seven Dalmatians were convicted for trespassing on a kauri gum reserve and fined five shillings each plus costs which were considerable so that each man paid almost £8. Cases where naturalised Croatians were charged with digging or searching for gum on Crown Lands without a licence were more common and persisted for over 20 years (see, for example, *Northern Advocate*, 21 July 1924, p.4).

[472] *Thames Star*, 22 October 1900, p.2.

[473] Memorandum for His Excellency the Governor, 8 July 1901, the Seddon Collection (20/1 and 20/2), Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

[474] *Auckland Star*, 5 April 1909, p.2.

naturalisations during the previous 25 years) that the rate at which they "*are seeking naturalization ... is increasing rapidly.*"[475]

Although some strident opponents of the "Austrian" diggers believed it to be fairly common, only a single case has been identified where naturalisation was obtained by fraud. When charged by police, it was reported that Jure Kostanich (age 29) had arrived in November 1913, gone to the gumfields at Waihopo and shortly after applied for naturalisation, signing a false declaration before a local Justice of the Peace that he had been in New Zealand for six years. The application was successful. Jure claimed he been told he could buy a farm if he said he had been resident for five years, but in the Supreme Court the Crown Prosecutor thought "*the prisoner's object was to obtain the benefits given to British subjects under the* [Kauri Gum Industry Act]." Whatever his motive, Jure, pleading guilty, was fortunate to be fined £40 for an offence punishable with imprisonment. The leniency of the Court stemmed primarily from the fact that a lax JP had been a willing party to the fraud, signing a declaration that he had known Jure for years.[476]

Ironically, an increase in naturalisations signalled the primary achievement of the 1898 Act in relation to the "*Austrian influx*." Naturalisation and landownership (both bestowing gumdigging privileges), plus the diversion of many new arrivals into initial short-term jobs other than gumdigging, also encouraged temporary migrants to consider their current options and future goals. In this respect the Kauri Gum Industry Act 1898, together with its subsequent amendments and successors, served to accelerate a fledgling transition from sojourner to settler. As shown earlier in this chapter, the hardships and limitations of gumdigging and life on the gumfields were such that a small but growing number of men aware of the opportunities offered by this new country had, of their own volition, decided to settle, marry and to raise a family as New Zealand citizens. Such role models were an important influence (as the pressures of gumdigging legislation came to bear) on the thinking of their relations, friends and others already in New Zealand or arriving between 1899 and 1914.

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[475] *Auckland Star*, 5 April 1909, p.4.

[476] See *Auckland Star*, 4 July 1921, p.6 and 20 July 1921, p.4. It should be noted here that the official *Register of Persons Naturalised in New Zealand Before 1948* includes no record of naturalisation for a person named Jure Kostanich, but it does record the naturalisation on 15 May 1914 of a person (Ante Kostanich) whose place of residence (Waihopu, not Waihopo), occupation (gumdigger) age (30 years) and birthplace (Drvenik) are a close match.

In a letter to Seddon in 1901, concerning the plans of "Anton Pirovich" and "Rafaelle Clarich" who wished to visit Dalmatia to sell property and return with their capital to become settlers, Eugen Langguth declared that:

> *The Austrians being practically barred from digging gum are now leaving this Colony in large numbers and the much discussed 'Austrian question' will soon be a thing of the past.*[477]

With the benefit of hindsight we know that Langguth overstated the 1898 Act's occupational restriction; misinterpreted the departure of temporary migrants either returning home or trying their luck at another destination; missed the opportunity to comment on the potential role model significance of "Pirovich" and "Clarich"; and was unfortunately proved wrong with regard to the "Austrian question" which reappeared in a new guise only 14 years later.

[477] Letter from Langguth to Seddon, 28 May 1901, the Seddon Collection (20/1 and 20/2), Archives New Zealand, Wellington. The fate of "Anton Pirovich" and "Rafaelle Clarich" is unknown; neither appears to have been naturalised in New Zealand and neither are listed in the *Register of Aliens, 1917*.

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Enemy Aliens

On 28 July 1914, a month after Archduke Francis Ferdinand's assassination at Sarajevo, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Excited by this news, Croatians in Auckland held a crowded, lively meeting at a Federal Street boardinghouse on 30 July, presumably under the auspices of a newly-formed Croatian-Slavonian League of Independence (C.S.L.I.). Many of those present, despite the efforts of leaders to restrain their more impetuous compatriots, advocated and gained support for a demonstration that would include the burning of a flag outside the Austrian Consul's office in Customs Street. A proposal to obtain volunteers for the Serbian army was also well received, the names of eight or nine recruits were enrolled, and a spirited proclamation of independence from Austria-Hungary was endorsed.

Informed of the plan to burn a flag, the police next morning called on George Scansie[478] (from Sumartin, Island of Brač), editor of the newspaper *Zora (The Dawn)* and the League's President. He was advised that the demonstration would not be allowed. Scansie informed his countrymen of the view taken by the police, but they were still in favour of going ahead. A copy of the Austrian Field Marshal's flag had been prepared to order for the event. Shortly before 2pm that day about 100 demonstrators gathered outside the Consul's office. The police intervened. In the resulting scuffle the demonstrators found it impossible to burn the flag and had to satisfy themselves by hooting it, trampling it and tearing it into shreds. Forming a procession they then walked through Queen Street, singing and cheering for Serbia.[479] Four days later, on 4 August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany. On 6 August both Serbia and Montenegro followed suit, and finally on 12 August war against Austria-Hungary was declared by Britain.

So began a five-year period the events of which affected the life and reputation of Croatians in New Zealand. Looking back at that period, Revel Lochore offered the following account of what happened.

> *In 1914 the Dalmatians became technically enemy aliens. In the earlier war years the Government left them very much to themselves, and apart from a vague sympathy with the Serbian cause they took little*

[478] See biographical note on Scansie in Appendix 3 Two Stong Voices

[479] See *Auckland Star*, 1 August 1914, p.6, for a detailed account of the initial meeting and subsequent demonstration.

> *interest in the struggle. But late in 1917 notices were posted in the Northland requiring aliens to register for national service. Without knowing what national service meant, the Dalmatians remembered that conscription into the Austrian Army had begun with just such innocuous filling-in of forms. No official statement could reassure them, for they disbelieved officials on principle. In the end a dozen men refused to perform national service and were in due course interned as 'pro-Austrian'.*[480]

Rejected without reservation by those involved in the events concerned, Lochore's statement was nevertheless widely accepted as authoritative. Examination of records available since the early 1970s, however, reveals Lochore was appallingly short on fact and liberal in his use of imagination. To date only a couple of attempts have been made to examine and clarify the matter.[481] The overall aim of this chapter, based on the author's earlier attempt but expanded to incorporate new material, is therefore to set the record straight – warts and all – via two objectives. To this end, attention is first directed, within the context of tension on the gumfields (1914-1916), to the matter of military service, beginning with a discussion of the nationality issue as the main obstacle to enlistment and then a review of the actual military service record. For the second objective, identifying the actual Home Service record, the discussion is set within the context of increasing gumfield tensions (the "Slavs" were not seen to be fully contributing to the war effort), consequent public pressures for Home Service conscription (nationality remained an obstacle to military recruitment) and the problem of Croatian community factions that finally prompted Government to take the initiative. Against this background the role and performance of John Cullen as Commissioner for "Jugoslav" Home Service is examined along with the actual Home Service record and the vexed issues of internment, loyalty and justice.

It should be noted that during this wartime period in particular the men concerned were variously referred to as "Austrians", "Dalmatians", "Croatians", "Slavs" and finally "Jugoslavs" (i.e. South Slavs) once the creation of a new allied state lead by Serbia was mooted and finally realised. Except in direct quotes, therefore, they will here be referred to primarily as Croatians, to simplify matters and to acknowledge their unifying Croat ethnicity.

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[480] Lochore (1951:43).

[481] See Trlin (1979:99-133) and Bassett (1999).

Tension on the Gumfields, 1914-1916

Antagonism toward the Croatians was initially based not upon their status as "Austrian" enemy aliens but primarily upon their potential as an economic threat and a generous measure of ethnic prejudice. The war had an immediate adverse effect upon the kauri gum industry; the important German market was closed and shipping space for alternative markets in Britain and North America was in short supply, thus merchants and storekeepers were very reluctant to buy. What would the gumdiggers do? Obviously they had to find alternative employment elsewhere as rural labourers engaged in scrub cutting, drainage, road construction and railway work, accelerating a process of occupational diversification that had begun before the war. It was on this point that fears grew over the ability and willingness of Croatians to compete for rural contracts, especially for local government road construction contracts, at low rates. The attitudes of "British" workmen were hostile and in one case at least their behaviour was violent. In 1914, Frank Pavlovich (from Gabela, near Metković) won a £1,000 county road contract with a compatriot as partner but then withdrew his tender fearing harm to himself and his workmen because of the bitterness of "British" labourers. His fear was not unwarranted as he and his partner were physically and verbally attacked. Frank felt he was near death during the attack and less than a week later committed suicide.[482] Because this is an extreme example, it should be noted that the fears and responses of non-Croatians varied widely according to a contract's timing, geographic location and size. In early 1917, for example, when Ivan Nikolich told the Papakura (later the Manukau County) Roads Board that he would donate £5 towards the formation of 43 chains of road adjacent to his farm, other local farmers chipped in. Ivan tendered successfully for the work for £160.[483] Finally, employment of Croatians on railway extension works also aroused some ill-feeling, especially when it was reported that a third of the labour force engaged on such works was alien-born.[484]

Antagonism increased during the second half of 1915 and early 1916. The Croatians were accused of depleting the gumfields, of hoarding gum in anticipation of better prices, of abusing wine licences and of promoting

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[482] See: *Colonist*, 1 December 1914, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 1 December 1914, p.7 and 2 December 1914, p.7; and *Auckland Star*, 1 December 1914, p.7.

[483] Personal communication from Des Mataga, Auckland, November 2013.

[484] *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1915, p.4.

immoral behaviour via an illicit wine trade. Coupled with these fears and prejudices (some long-standing) was a growing public sense of injustice and consciousness of the Croatian's status as an enemy alien, both of which were fuelled by mounting military casualties. Before their arrival in France (May 1916), the New Zealanders had suffered heavy losses (April to December 1915) in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. Accustomed to remitting money to families back home, Croatians were now accused of sending money to enemy countries. Moreover, rumour had it that they were armed, being trained by enemy officers and awaiting the signal to revolt.



Young Croatians engaged in military drill on the gumfields near Dargaville
Source: **Far North Regional Museum, Kaitaia**

The latter rumour was based on evidence of a sort as Father Joseph Zanna explained some years later.

> *... when the war broke out ... some wardogs in Dargaville reported to Wellington that Father Zanna is no priest at all, but he is an Austrian army officer in mufti who has been drilling secretly the 'Austrians' in the gumfields to be ready to attack ... I remembered then that on some Sundays after Mass to amuse themselves the young fellows used to do drilling like it is done in the Austrian army (many...had served in it) and the Dargaville people who used to ride out to the coast on Sundays*

must have seen me or my creamy horse at Peter Nola's camp and so the rumour was set going.[485]

Clearly what was perceived was not what it seemed, and it stands as an example of how a rumour can arise and be sustained by misinterpreted observations.

Two events during May 1916 illustrate the intensity of feeling reached. First, in Dargaville, a group of young men assaulted restaurant-keeper Mladen Jankovich, breaking a bottle over his head. His assailants were either unaware of or disregarded the fact that Jankovich, born in Smederevo, was Serbian-born, not an Austrian subject, and naturalised in New Zealand. Pro-Serbian sympathies and support for the allied cause were demonstrated by his active role in collecting contributions from Croatians on behalf of the Mayor of Dargaville for the Mayor of Auckland's Serbian War Relief Fund. Three men were subsequently arrested by police for the assault and fined in the Magistrate's Court.[486] Second, a public meeting at Kaihu passed resolutions the substance of which was as follows: (a) that the Government be informed that this district has sent or is sending away practically all the single eligible men to do battle for the country; (b) that "Austrians" are taking the places of men who have gone to the front and are reaping the benefits which rightly belong to (returned) servicemen; (c) that there is evidence that some of these aliens have in their possession firearms; (d) that it is unfair to women and children that their men are called-up for service while the aliens left behind are a possible menace to their safety; and (e) that the Government be asked to grant facilities to subjects of British allies to return to their countries to fight for their own people; and (f) that all enemy aliens in the Dominion be interned. With respect to the last resolution, there was wide public discussion of a proposal, eventually abandoned, to intern all Croatians – both aliens and naturalised British subjects – at Parengarenga in the far north.[487]

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[485] Extract from Father Joseph Zanna's letter to John Totich, 17 October 1948, in Trlin (1967:265-266).

[486] See: *Te Puke Times*, 19 May 1916, p.2 and *Otago Daily Times*, 23 May 1916, p.10 (re the assault, arrest and court fine); *New Zealand Herald*, 24 May 1916, p.6 (Jankovich asserts his Serbian birth, naturalisation); *Auckland Star*, 17 June 1916, p.10 and *New Zealand Herald*, 26 June 1916, p.7 (re collection for Serbian war relief fund).

[487] See: *Northern Advocate*, 25 May 1916, p.2 and *Dominion*, 26 May 1916, p.4 (re Kaihu resolution); and Marshall (1968:268-276) for discussion of the Parengarenga internment proposal.

In response to such public fears, the Government appointed an Aliens Commission to investigate the matter. The two Commissioners (J.W. Poyton and G. Elliot) visited a wide variety of places including Dargaville, Whangarei, Kaihu, Kaitaia, Awanui and Auckland. Sittings, widely advertised, were open to the public and evidence was taken from 125 witnesses. Few New Zealanders, and least of all the Croatians, could have anticipated the content and conclusions of their report.

Presented to the Minister of Justice in August 1916, the Commission's report was later published in full in the *Auckland Star*.[488] Minor points aside, the Croatians were exonerated. Emphasis was placed upon their loyalty and law abiding character (the incidence of crimes committed was half that of Britons and Maori). Attention was drawn to the conduct of "some of the more ignorant British in the North" who subjected "Dalmatians" to insult and annoyance, and to substantial evidence of serious misrepresentation of their behaviour and loyalty. A petition signed by 370 persons, including "members of local bodies, Justices of the Peace and others who might be expected to consider before acting in such a manner", was cited as an example. Having examined as many petitioners as they could find, the Commissioners reported that:

> *... not one of them, even those that drew up the petition could be found to justify the charges therein made against the Dalmatians. These statements included...the assertion that many of the naturalisation papers granted to them were obtained by fraud; that the majority of them were trained to arms, and in the event of a reverse to our forces in Europe...[they] would be a serious danger to us ... The man who originated the petition said he merely wanted the gumfields to be reserved for the British-born.*

And to cap it all it was suggested that loyal and respected "Dalmatian" leaders should be given a status, "*such as a special constable or Justice of the Peace*", with powers to prevent a recurrence of "*the absurd, lying and mischievous rumours recently so widely prevalent*". The Commissioners concluded, under their terms of reference, that the community was not endangered by the "Dalmatians" presence, that neither public feeling nor interest required their internment or segregation, and that internment (if carried out) would seriously disturb business conditions. Publicity and an

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[488] *Auckland Star*, 19 September 1916, p.8. A summary of findings and recommendations was widely reported (e.g. *Northern Advocate*, 20 September 1916, p.2 and *Dominion*, 20 September 1916, p.7).

official pronouncement to make known their loyalty and "*to counteract the feeling of disquietude excited by ... wild and reckless statements*" was recommended.

While the leaders and their compatriots in the Croatian community had good cause to feel satisfied there were others who were far from happy. Two years later, when Home Service problems erupted, a scathing attack was launched in the *New Zealand Truth*. Under the heading "Briton and Slav" the Commission was described as a "Royal Comic Opera".[489] The author ("Black Watch") claimed that: the Commission had made up its mind before hearing evidence; its function was "*to insult and brow beat British residents into tame acceptance of an administrative evil*"; and that a stellar visitor reading the report would be convinced that:

> *... the British were at best but a vile scum of dangerous, drunken, ignorant, criminal liars; and the Slavs a race of saints and martyrs more fitted for the gumfields of heaven than the desolate diggings of the North.*
>
> *It is scarcely credible that sane adults could have been induced to occupy themselves with such vulgar drivel; yet you will find it is perfectly of a piece with the whole line of research pursued by this troupe of queer fellows in their zeal to establish the superiority of the Slav over the Briton.*

If nothing else the views of "Black Watch" serve as a reminder that ethnic prejudice and xenophobia, enhanced by the war, was never far below the surface of public attitudes and could give rise on occasion to discriminatory and/or hostile behaviour well beyond the northern gumfields. To illustrate this point consider the following examples. In 1915 in Wanganui, fishmonger Frank Sanko, from the village of Podgora and naturalised in 1908, attributed his bankruptcy to a drop in takings as a result of a business boycott prompted by "*a rumour ... that he was an enemy subject*". The following year, in Tauranga, Peter Soljak (from Vrgorac) felt himself compelled to write to the *Bay of Plenty Times* protesting at an anonymous letter to the County Council that he believed referred to him as an "enemy alien" and advocated "*withholding employment from aliens*", a call that several Council members agreed with. Likewise an advertisement for a private drainage contract at Turua/Netherton in the Thames district in 1917 called for tenders but advised that "No Austrians need apply". And in 1918, "Jan Pavich" was assaulted in what a Hamilton Magistrate described as an

[489] *New Zealand Truth*, 31 August 1918, p.5.

act of "hoodlumism" by a "*young fellow...[who] think[s] it a fine thing to bait foreigners*". The end of the war appeared to do little to mute such feelings or behaviour. During 1919 the Whakatane Rugby Union, having discussed a protest against playing "Dalmatians" made by returned servicemen and others, "*resolved that Dalmatians be debarred from playing in the senior grade competition*". Fortunately the management committee of the New Zealand Rugby Union in reply to a query from the Auckland Union resolved that it had no authority to prevent them playing. Finally, at the beginning of 1920, an inquest into the suicide of "Jack Begovich", who had lost heavily on a drainage contract in Whangarei, revealed that he had been upset by remarks made by men on the contract that he was "*a Dalmatian and not a Britisher*". Responding to this evidence the inquest jury expressed the hope that this "*question of nationality may not be further revived now that hostilities have ceased*".[490]

The Nationality Issue

Only a week after Britain declared war on Germany, George Scansie, as President of the C.S.L.I., acting on instructions from his committee, wrote to Prime Minster W.F. Massey inquiring if volunteers for service with Serbian forces could join the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. The inquiry, acknowledged by Massey, was passed to Sir James Allen, Minister of Defence. At about the same time John Totich advised M.P. Gordon Coates of an offer of volunteers from a meeting in Dargaville. On 23 August a memo was sent from H.Q. New Zealand Military Forces, Wellington, to all District H.Qs. advising that members of the C.S.L.I. were to be allowed to enlist for military service. Six days later, however, Allen informed Scansie that as the full quota for the Expeditionary Force had already been made up the services of C.S.L.I. members could not be immediately accepted, but their applications would be gladly considered if reinforcements followed the main body of troops.[491] Though not the outcome hoped for by those keen to

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[490] See: *Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 June 1915, p.4 (re Sanko bankruptcy); *Bay of Plenty Times*, 11 March 1916, p.3 (re Soljak); *Thames Star*, 10 January 1917, p.1 (re Turua/Netherton contract); *Evening Post*, 30 July 1918, p.8 (re Pavich assault); *Evening Post*, 12 August 1919, p.8 and *New Zealand Herald*, 18 September 1919, p.4 (re rugby); and *Northern Advocate*, 3 January 1920, p.2 (re Begovich suicide).

[491] See: Scansie to Massey, letter, 11 August 1914; Totich to Coates, telegram, 15 August 1914; H.Q. Military Forces, Wellington, to District H.Qs., memo, 23 August 1914; and Allen to Scansie, letter, 29 August 1914, all in Department of Defence File AD 9/86 "Jugo Slav Contingent: Formation for Service Abroad", Archives New Zealand, Wellington. This file is hereafter cited as AD 9/86.

engage the enemy it was at least established, by the end of August 1914, that there were Croatians able and willing to enlist for armed service.

The first enlistment stumbling block – nationality/citizenship – appeared in June 1915, and gained importance during the following months. According to Scansie "*a fair number of Slavs who were naturalised British subjects enlisted and were accepted*" but there was a difficulty in the case of those not naturalised, including a number of such men already in training at Trentham Camp. One of the latter had been discharged "Not being a British subject" and thus, Scansie claimed, others who had enlisted and not yet been called up for training feared that they too would be sent back. He therefore made a plea to the Minister of Defence to "look into this matter and allow these men to proceed", noting that Government had suspended the issuing of naturalisation papers until after the war.[492] Scansie's plea was fruitless. For reasons which will be stated later, this was not just because of the Government's stand on naturalisation (although it would hardly wish to set a precedent).

Clearly aware of the nationality obstacle a number of individuals sought alternative solutions. For example, Peter Sulenta, in response to Serbian appeals, suggested a small group of "Slavs" could be organised and despatched from New Zealand to land near Serbian territory. Others, such as Ivan Sokolich and Joseph Rudalj, offered their voluntary services to assist with construction work behind the frontlines in France and Belgium. These suggestions and offers, while appreciated by the Minister of Defence, were declined.[493] Nevertheless the search for alternatives continued and toward the end of 1915 was given a point of focus by events in Europe.

On 5 October 1915 Allied troops landed at Salonika (Greece), it being clear that the Central Powers and Bulgaria were about to mount an offensive against Serbia. A week later the Allies declared they would assist Serbia under the Bucharest Treaty of 1913. For New Zealand's Croatians there appeared to be a real chance at last for direct assistance. Early in November, Bartul Mihaljevich wrote to the Government, listed the names of 45 compatriots in the Whangarei district who volunteered for service with

[492] Scansie to Allen, letter, 19 June 1915, file AD 9/86.

[493] See: Sulenta to Allen, letter, 20 September 1915; Ivan Sokolich and others to Allen, letter, 3 November 1915; and Allen to Sokolich and others, letter, 12 November 1915, file AD 9/86.

Serbia, and offered to act as an organiser for a "Croatian Contingent".[494] The idea caught on. An *Auckland Star* editorial (25 November 1915) suggested that the so-called Austrians "*could easily be formed into a separate detachment on the lines of the Foreign Legion…*". Prompted by this editorial, and probably sensitive to shifts in public opinion during the Gallipoli campaign, George Scansie likewise wrote in support of a "Croatian Contingent" and offered his services for either office or camp work as an interpreter. In the same letter, aware that some of his countrymen were also writing to Government and that the diverse opinions/suggestions offered were likely to cause confusion, Scansie wrote:

> *I understand it is a very difficult matter for the Government to deal with these Slavs, as it has to depend entirely on the report of a few excited ones, and eventually not being able to comprehend their way, has to drop any dealings with them.*[495]

Scansie's foresight was spot on.

Once again Government's response was negative. In a personal letter to the Editor of the *Auckland Star*, the Minster of Defence stated that he had considered his suggestion "*that we might form a contingent of Croatians*" but did "*not think it practicable at the present time*". When the whole matter (including Scansie's offer) was discussed in Cabinet on 6 December it was decided to take no action. Scansie was informed of this decision.[496] Croatians who were not naturalised therefore remained unacceptable and by the end of 1915 even the position of those who were naturalised was in doubt.

Against the background of events in the Balkans, October-December 1915, Col. C.M. Gibbon (Chief of General Staff) sent a memo to the Minister of Defence recommending that:

> *... no alien enemies or descendants of alien enemies should be accepted for service with the reinforcements for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, except under special authority...*

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[494] Mihaljevich to R.H. High Excellency The Premier (sic), letter, 9 November 1915, file AD 9/86.

[495] Scansie to Allen, letter, 26 November 1915, file AD 9/86.

[496] Allen to *Auckland Star* editor, letter, 4 December 1915, and Allen to Scansie, letter, 9 December 1915, file AD 9/86.

Acting through the Governor (Lord Liverpool), the Prime Minister (Massey) sought advice from the Imperial authorities. The reply received in January 1916 to the Governor's query read "*consider there is grave objection to enlistment of alien enemies or descendants in New Zealand forces*".[497] A critical question now presented itself. Did this ruling apply strictly and without exception to all aliens (naturalised or not) and to descendants of naturalised British subjects resident in the Dominion for many years? From the evidence available it seems not, but the Croatians unfortunately fell foul of administrative error.

In October 1916, Scansie, elated by the Aliens Commission report published a month earlier, drew the attention of the Minister of Defence to cases of naturalised Croatians who were refused enlistment on the grounds that such men could be accepted "*only if their fathers were naturalised British subjects*". If correct such a regulation placed almost all Croatian immigrants in the unacceptable category. Something had clearly gone wrong, and sure enough the error was admitted to the Minister in early November.

> *The paragraph* "Men of alien nationality may be accepted only if their fathers were naturalised British subjects" *refers to instructions issued in regard to the sons of Germans or Austrians, and evidently the Auckland Office has taken the instruction to apply to Slavs. The matter has been rectified and naturalised Slavs are to be accepted for service in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.*[498]

So once again the eligibility of naturalised Croatians was confirmed, while the rest (approximately 55 percent) remained in limbo.

The war was now into its third year and there appeared to be little prospect of an immediate end to the carnage and destruction. If only to appease public opinion, showing signs of increasing dissatisfaction, a way of securing recruits among those not naturalised was obviously desirable to all concerned. To this end a "Croatian" deputation met with the Acting Prime Minister (the Minister of Defence) in Wellington on 10 February 1917. The deputation – Tony Petrie (a.k.a. Ante Petric) and George Mark Erceg – was introduced by J.S. Dickson M.P., and the others present were the Hon. W.H.

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[497] See: Gibbon to Minster of Defence (Allen), memo, 23 December 1915; Massey to Governor, January 1916; Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies, telegram, 17 January 1916; and Secretary of State for Colonies to Governor, telegram, 25 January 1916, file AD 9/86.

[498] See: Scansie to Allen, letter, 19 October 1916; and Defence H.Q. to Allen, memo, 6 November 1916, file AD 9/86.

Herries, Col. C.M. Gibbon (Chief of General Staff) and J.D. Gray (Secretary of the Recruiting Board).

Minutes of that meeting record discussion on 3 issues.[499] First was a proposal to set up a committee to seek recruits. The deputation wanted Government to draft a circular which this committee could distribute to each of their countrymen asking them whether or not they would volunteer for military service. Second was the related issue of men who were not naturalised. Tony Petrie was firmly of the opinion that:

> *... it would only be fair for any volunteer, who was not naturalised, to be naturalised, so that he could be protected by International Law. If any unnaturalised man was taken prisoner by the Austrian Army he would be shot.*

The Minister of Defence's reply was brief – it "*was a matter for Cabinet to consider*". Finally, there was the issue of enlistment conditions. Here, apparently locked into the "Croatian Contingent" notion he had earlier dismissed as being impractical, the Minister stressed that a contingent of men who were:

> *... perfectly loyal and naturalised ... could not be officered by New Zealand officers, or be treated as part of the Expeditionary Force. The instructions sent to the Government were that Slavs who were loyal might be enlisted, and sent to Salonika, where they would be trained, and where they would join the forces operating about Salonika.*

He also remarked, on the question of pay, that he "*did not think Cabinet would refuse to put them on the same footing as New Zealanders*". Putting it bluntly, what the Minister wanted to know was whether men could be secured for this purpose and, if so, how many and how soon. Petrie, favouring the Croatian Contingent idea, noting the Minister's brief comment concerning pay "*on the same footing as New Zealanders*", but wary of committing himself on the expected number of volunteers, agreed to do all that he could. The meeting adjourned on an understanding that Col. Gibbon would draft the deputation a letter setting out the position.

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[499] See: "Enlistment of Jugo Slavs: Deputation to the Acting Prime Minister (Hon. Sir James Allen) and the Hon. W.H. Herries, Wellington, 10th February, 1917". Department of Defence file AD 9/86/1, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. Hereafter cited as AD 9/86/1.



Tony Petrie (Petrich)
***Source:* Jelicich Papers**

Chafing under rumours and attacks from opponents concerning the meeting, Petrie waited six weeks before Gibbon's letter finally arrived. Consultation with Serbian authorities (hence the delay) had yielded enlistment conditions so frugal that Petrie must surely have doubted his eyes. Pay was to be at the rate of ordinary Serbian troops, no allowances were made for dependents, and the Serbian Government was prepared to grant a small holding (5ha) of fertile land at war's end to each volunteer. Gibbon's letter finished with a request that he be informed at the earliest by Petrie and Erceg of the probable number of volunteers they considered would be forthcoming under these conditions. Petrie replied: "*We are doubtful that [a] sufficient number ... will volunteer under the conditions offered ...*" and questioned why they should be paid less than New Zealand soldiers, etc.[500]

[500] See: Gibbon to Petrie, letter, 20 March 1917; and Petrie to Gibbon, letter, 27 March 1917, file AD 9/86/1.

Apparently accepting Petrie's reply as both definite and definitive, no further action was taken by Government. After all, if the volunteers were to serve with the Serbian army then they were logically subject to its enlistment conditions and not those of soldiers in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Later in the year, during the second reading of the Registration of Aliens Bill in September, the Minister of Defence declared that the "Slavs" had in fact *refused to go* without New Zealand pension provisions and rates of pay.[501] Goaded by these remarks, Petrie retorted that since the Government had never formally asked or appealed for volunteers the "Slavs" had never had the opportunity to refuse. Furthermore it was unreasonable to expect married men to enlist without provision for dependents, and an injustice to offer volunteers (who regarded themselves as colonials) less than New Zealand rates of pay "*seeing that they would be fighting for Great Britain and New Zealand as much as for...[Serbia*]".[502] In fairness to the Minister, however, it should be noted that he was more restrained and tolerant in Parliament than some of his colleagues, and his remarks were not without sympathy for Petrie's views.

Conscious of public opinion, anxious to demonstrate their willingness to serve, a "representative meeting" of the Auckland Province "Slavs" was held on the 29 October 1917. Loyalty to Britain and the Allies was reaffirmed and it was resolved:

> *That this meeting requests the Government to remove the restrictions upon Jugo Slavs in the matter of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force; that the Government devise means whereby the Jugo Slavs may join the ... [Serbians] at Salonika to fight direct against the national foes; that the Jugo Slavs are prepared and willing to devote all their energies to such essential industries or other works as the Minister of Internal Affairs directs, but that all work so done should be at the same*

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[501] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1917 (180:45-46).

[502] *New Zealand Herald*, 14 September 1917, p.6. With respect to the notion of "refusal", Petrie was perfectly correct. This is borne out by the text of a telegram (11 August 1917, file AD 9/86/1) sent by Allen to the Kaipara Chamber of Commerce, in which he said (emphasis added):

> *...the* [Slav] *leaders reported that there was little possibility of raising any men*...at Serbian rates pay and asked New Zealand pay rates as paid to New Zealand soldiers. New Zealand Government declined pay soldiers at New Zealand rates no further action taken.

rate of pay and under similar conditions as those pertaining to the Expeditionary Force.[503]

A resolution was also passed expressing regret that "Slavs" resident in the Dominion "*were classed in the same category as the Central Powers*" (i.e. Germans, Austrians and Hungarians) and urged that their case should be investigated to remove current "misunderstandings" and to extend to them "*the same rights and privileges as other Allied residents*". Covering much of the same ground and grievances of previous years the resolutions nevertheless made one important advance. A commitment to engage in Home Service work was established, albeit with a caveat on pay and service conditions. It was a course of action that had gained increasing public support since the beginning of the year.

Finally, it should be noted here that a little known aspect of the nationality issue confronting non-naturalised Croatians and other aliens concerned the status of their New Zealand-born or British-born wives. Two events that impinged directly on their lives were: the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 which took effect in January 1915 throughout the British Empire to create a common nationality but deemed an alien's wife to be alien; and in New Zealand the introduction of the 1917 Registration of Aliens Act. Readers interested in the difficulty experienced by female British subjects as a result of these measures (in terms of loss of rights and privileges, and restrictions on their activities) are urged to consult studies written by Dorothy Page and Sandra Coney with particular attention to the case of Miriam Bridelia Soljak (née Cummings). Born in 1879 in Thames, New Zealand, to a Northern Irish Catholic father and a Scottish Protestant mother, Miriam was married to Peter Soljak from Vrgorac.[504]

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[503] *Evening Post*, 30 October 1917, p.3. The wording of this quote varies in some respects from that originally cited by this author (Trlin, 1979:107) but is consistent with that appearing in other papers such as the *Dominion* (30 October 1917, p.4) and *Colonist* (1 November 1917, p.7).

[504] See: Page (1986 and 1998) and Coney (1993:131). Des Mataga, in a personal communication, November 2013, notes that "notwithstanding this [the difficulties actually or likely to be experienced] 97 New Zealand women married Dalmatian immigrants from 1915 to 1921". See also Mataga (2013:32).



Miriam and Peter Soljak
Source: **Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society**

The Military Service Record

Until recently an assessment of the World War 1 military service record of Croatian immigrants, the New Zealand-born descendants of pioneers (1857-1880) and early followers (during the 1880s), was impeded by a lack of accessible documentation. To a considerable extent this obstacle has now been overcome by Archives New Zealand digitalising and placing on-line all of the individual military personnel files entrusted to its care.[505] However, in order to manage the identification and examination of relevant files from among the hundreds available it was necessary to draw up a list of individuals who were known or thought to have enlisted and served abroad. This task was accomplished using lists provided by the Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society[506], the "Papers Past" resource of the

[505] It has been suggested that there may still be files held by the Defence Department for unspecified reasons. Such files may (if they exist) eventually be transferred to Archives New Zealand and await the attention of a researcher in the future.

[506] These lists were: first, one titled "World War I. 1914-1918... Mainly Dalmatians of [the] Gumdigging generation who volunteered and served overseas with the ...New Zealand

National Library and the list of pioneer surnames presented in Table 1 (see Chapter 1). A combined list was developed, edited to remove duplications and the personnel files were then downloaded and examined. In the course of this examination it was necessary to delete persons whose files were missing or incomplete (34), non-Croatians and persons of Croatian ancestry born elsewhere (e.g. Australia, England), potential recruits classed as medically unfit for active service and those seeking to enlist who were officially deemed too late to proceed overseas as well as immigrants officially identified as not being naturalised British subjects. Additional names that came to light in the course of research were included, followed up and examined as appropriate. The overall result of this exercise was that 67 eligible cases of men who served overseas were identified, their files examined and relevant details recorded; 36 were Croatian immigrants and 31 New Zealand-born sons of pioneers or close followers. Given the number of incomplete or missing files, however, the findings presented below can only be regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

The call to arms was answered by 52 percent of these 67 men within the years 1914 and 1915, the percentage being higher for the immigrant group than for the New Zealand-born (61 and 41 percent, respectively). In the absence of reliable evidence, it is assumed that the motivations for these groups were quite different; Croatian and/or "Jugoslav" nationalist fervour among the immigrants, and possibly the attitudes or memories of a father for the New Zealand-born who (like others in their peer group) were moved also by a sense of British patriotism and a thirst for adventure abroad. As expected, an initial medical examination ensured that they were generally young (74.6 percent 20-29 years of age) and physically healthy aside from a not uncommon need for dental treatment. The age range was slightly narrower for the immigrants (20-39 years) than the NZ-born (19-42 years). A surprising finding, in the light of the nationality debate, was that six immigrants (16.7 percent) without naturalisation papers still managed to slip through the selection process. This oversight was probably due to variations in a personal questionnaire; not all recruits were asked, at enlistment, to state their nationality or the birthplace and nationality of parents. For example, 20 year-old Vincent Patrick (a.k.a. Petricevich), who was born in Sućuraj (Hvar) and nominated his mother still living in the home village as his next of kin, was recruited and served abroad for over three years. Similarly, 23 year-old Mate Peko, born in Komin (Neretva River valley), escaped attention for

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Expeditionary Force..."; and second, a list titled "Roll of Honour. Sons of early Dalmatian Pioneers who served in [the] New Zealand Army...1914-1918". Both lists, especially the second one, were found to be flawed.

some seven months before he was discharged as an "*incorrigible ... unnaturalised alien*" and returned to New Zealand. Both Vincent and Mate subsequently attained the status of a British subject in 1921.

Although each group included a small number who served for less than 2 years, the majority served for between 2 and almost 4 years (immigrants 66.7 percent, NZ-born 71 percent) with the remainder (depending on their enlistment dates) serving for up to 5½ years. Their initial overseas theatres of service were Egypt and/or with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine (52.2 percent), and/or the iconic shores and hills of Gallipoli (almost 15 percent) before being relocated along with later reinforcements to the carnage of trench warfare in Western Europe (91 percent).



The farewell for war of Mate Vujcich in Dargaville
***Source:* Far North Regional Museum, Kaitaia**

Their personal conduct during initial training in New Zealand and service abroad was marred by instances of insubordination, absence without leave and other behaviour that warranted penalties (e.g. loss of pay), especially among the NZ-born (38.7 percent) as compared with the immigrants (22.2 percent). Promotions, earned by 22.4 percent of all of the recruits were typically elevations from the base ranks (privates, riflemen and sappers) to those of non-commissioned officers (lance-corporal and corporal). Two exceptions to this pattern were promotions from sergeant to second lieutenant, in both cases for New Zealand-born recruits (Joseph Gasparich and Percy Silich).



Arthur Macale in uniform in England 1918 (New Zealand born.)
Source: **Janet Welford**



Francis George Covacich (New Zealand born)
Source: Covacich family



Samuel Vella (New Zealand born)
Source: Stephen Jelicich papers



John Jure Ravlich, London, 1916
(born in Kozica, naturalised New Zealander)
Source: Stephen Jelicich papers



Valentino Trubuhovich
(born on Hvar, naturalised New Zealander)
Source: Stephen Jelicich papers



Mate Peko
(born in Komin, not naturalised)
Source: Stephen Jelicich papers

A soldier's life can be illustrated by extracts from two letters written by 21 year-old Rifleman Francis George Covacich, born in Kamo, near Whangarei, a son of Peter Covacich (from Trpanj) and Rosa (née Broadribb). Presented with a "soldier's writing outfit" at a surprise party[507] in August 1915 during leave before departing for Europe, Francis George (he preferred to be called George) made good use of it. The first letter, written in June 1916 from "somewhere in France", was clearly meant to be reassuring but also to alert a concerned mother to the daily risks he was facing.

> *I got your parcel the day after we came out of the trenches; we are in a rest place now. We had a fairly good time. Our food was good; we got two hot meals a day and plenty of bread and jam, also some butter. Sleep was what we got very little of. We have had some casualties too. I was about 20 yards from the first chap who got hit. He was shot through the heart ... He was about the only one to stop a rifle bullet as far as I know. The others have all been shrapnelled. We got plenty of shell fire while we were out on our little visit to the trenches ... So I tell you we have been among the high explosives. It was a regular hell on earth and [your Francis] George was not the only one affected in the same way...*[508]

The second letter to his mother, written a month or two later from a hospital in London, was also reassuring while carefully explaining what had happened.

> *I am doing all right. ... three small wounds have healed and it is just a week since I was hit ... and my back is not too bad. The wound is 2 inches long and 1 inch deep, so there is nothing to worry about. I am lucky; the chap next to me has nine wounds, each as bad as the one in my back. ...Our little battle lasted four hours, but Fritz evidently knew something about it, for as soon as our mortars and guns opened up he absolutely blew our trenches to pieces. Then he raided us. As soon as we heard he was on us we all left our cover, such as it was. ...We got ready for what was coming. Some of them were in the trenches on the left, but we got [them with] a shower of hand grenades. There was a Hun on the parapet right in front of me. I gave him a "pill" from where I stood. I reloaded and then caught one of their [mortar] bombs which set me spinning and [fragments] splintered my legs. Still conscious I grabbed my rifle and scrambled to my feet, in fear of getting a poke from a bayonet, but all was clear. I tried to walk to a rough cover but*

[507] *Northern Advocate*, 31 August 1915, p.3.

[508] *Northern Advocate*, 5 August 1916, p.3.

fell, so I crawled. I could balance on my feet and stood up in time to catch another [mortar] bomb [fragment] in the back. This one "outed me", and when I came to, I made a dash on my hands and knees for the rear of the trench. I got about 50 yards and picked up with some chaps of ours ... We crawled into a small hole behind some little trees. It was half full of water, but we stopped there, as the shells were landing very close. I was knocked silly with falling mud and lumps of clay. ... We had about one hour in the hole of water. When the artillery stopped, we crawled and walked into safety from machine gun fire. I could walk though I was in pain ... and got to the field dressing station about two hours after I was hit. They took a piece of metal like lead out of my back ...

We got a great reception when we arrived in London. They threw showers of beautiful roses in the ambulance as we passed through the station gates. On our journey we had plenty of cigs [cigarettes] and sweets. ... I wish my little lot would take me home.[509]

As George said, he was indeed "lucky". After recuperating in England for several weeks he was eventually discharged in New Zealand, classified as no longer physically fit for war service on account of his wounds.

Some others were less fortunate. A sobering picture of casualties emerges when the experiences of the immigrants and NZ-born are combined. Overall, 8 of the eligible 67 men (11.9 percent) were killed in action or died very shortly afterwards as a result of their wounds, while 5 (7.4 percent) were gassed, and 34 (50.7 percent) were wounded at least once, the latter total including about 66 percent of the immigrant group. In addition, a total of 55 men (82 percent) were hospitalised at least once for the treatment of wounds, accidental injuries, shell shock and a variety of illnesses that included venereal disease (VD), influenza, bronchitis, pneumonia, dysentery, chronic gastritis, diarrhoea, measles, appendicitis and malaria. The life of soldiers was often one of deprivation as quality food was hard to get. Vegetables and fresh meat (not tinned) were lacking with consequent affects upon their health and well-being as illustrated in a study of likely contributions to scurvy and other nutrient deficiency disorders among New Zealanders at Gallipoli.[510] Much the same could be said with regard to the lack of good water, shelter and sanitation that encouraged infectious diseases such as typhoid, dysentery and diarrhoea. Several decades after serving at Gallipoli, New Zealand-born Joseph Gasparich still vividly remembered the hundreds

[509] *Northern Advocate*, 14 September 1916, p.4.

[510] See Wilson et al. (2013) for scurvy etc. at Gallipoli.

of unburied and decomposing corpses, the swarms of flies that bred upon the dead and in open latrines, the pervasive and debilitating dysentery, and watching fellows dying on the latrines.[511] That said, there can be no doubt that some of the reasons for hospitalisation also stemmed from reckless, hubristic attitudes and behaviour. This was most evident with respect to sexual relationships; 13 of the 14 cases where hospital treatment was required for VD were accounted for by members of the immigrant group.

A simple assessment of such casualties upon service continuation can be made via the reasons for formal service discharge. Setting aside those killed in action (8), it was found that of the remaining 59 men just 28 (47.5 percent) were discharged upon the termination of their period of engagement (the war's end). Of the earlier discharges, only 10 (16.9 percent) were accounted for by wounds and 14 (23.7 percent) by illnesses which rendered the men unfit for further service. The remaining seven discharges included two transfers to the Serbian army (Marijan Berosh and George Hrstich), not being a naturalised British subject (Mate Peko) and four for which the reasons were unspecified.



Alphonso Sarich (far right) recovering from a gas attack
Source: **Sarich family**

[511] See: Shadbolt (2001:85-86) for the recollections of Joseph (Joe) Gasparich. Additional insights on the living conditions of soldiers can be gained from the rich collection of letters edited by Harper (2011:169-226 and 269-286).

The effects of injuries resulting in physical and/or mental disability extended to a soldier's post-war personal life. For example, Thomas Vegar (from Ravča, near Vrgorac), having been gassed on the Western Front and also hospitalised for influenza, was plagued for the rest of his life with emphysema.[512] Another case was that of New Zealand-born Alexander Sentch (son of pioneer Nicholas [Nikola] Sentch), a shell shock victim from the Somme battlefield, who suffered from muscular tremor in his hands and feet, giddiness on exertion, shortness of breath, poor concentration and eyesight. Alexander was otherwise in good health, unlike Andrew Tomich (from Korčula) who contracted pulmonary tuberculosis while on active service and was reported as being in need of continuous care from December 1919.

A soldier's death, of course, affected the whole family, especially where two or more family members were on active service. An example is that of Walter Claude Sarich, a New Zealand-born son of pioneer Antonio Sarich. Walter volunteered early in 1917 but was classed as unfit, a classification reversed in 1918 by a medical board set up to consider such cases. Walter appealed against his new classification, claiming he was the sole support of his widowed mother. In support of his claim he noted that of three older New Zealand-born brothers serving overseas: Jack, a member of the No.2 Imperial Light Horse, had died in 1915 in South Africa; Norman was serving with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine; and Alphonso had been gassed on the Western Front and was hospitalised in Dunedin. Walter was granted indefinite leave. A similar (but unsuccessful) appeal was made by 28 year-old, New Zealand-born Francis Obuglien who argued that as one brother (Edward) had been killed in action, he was the only son at home to care for an elderly mother in poor health. One imagines that a similar tale of hardship could have been made with respect to the family of Antonio Gasparich; four New Zealand-born sons (Edward, Francis, John and Joseph) were each discharged as no longer medically fit for service on account of wounds sustained and/or illness contracted while on active service.

To round off this military record review it may be noted that service abroad was marked by the award of three medals. They were: the 1914-15 Star, for service in a specified theatre of war between August 1914 and December 1915; the British War Medal, introduced to mark the end of World War 1 and service given; and finally, the Victory Medal, awarded to commemorate the victory of the allies and service in a theatre of war between August 1914

[512] For a short account of Thomas Vegar's life after he moved to Australia in the 1930s, see Veness (2004).

and November 1918. Overall, all three medals were awarded to 13 (19.4 percent) of the 67 men (or entrusted to their next of kin) in accord with their date of enlistment, location and duration of service. With the exception of six men to whom no award was made (and not explained in their files), and two awarded just the Victory Medal (again without explanation), the remaining 59 (88 percent) were awarded both the British War Medal and Victory Medal. On the evidence available, the only other award was to immigrant Vincent Patrick (a.k.a. Petricevich) who won the Military Medal for bravery in the field

Increasing Tension and Conscription for Home Service, 1917

While the soldiers fought, died or were wounded, their immigrant compatriots in New Zealand continued to face increasing public dissatisfaction and prejudice. Publication of the Alien Commission report in September 1916 had the desired effect of generally quashing wild rumours, allaying some public fears on matters of internal security and won for "Dalmatians" their rightful status as *technical* enemy aliens who were law abiding, friendly and loyal to the Allied cause. During 1917, therefore, the key issue was not one of loyalty and/or security but of their contributions to the war effort. Why? Quite simply it was believed that they were taking advantage of conditions created by the departure of young men for military service. Resentment was aroused, in particular, by *alleged* demands (in the face of labour shortages) for higher wages as farm labourers. Similarly, it was *believed* that they were buying up land that some servicemen were forced to place on the market.

The land issue, described by the *New Zealand Herald* as an injustice to New Zealanders,[513] was effectively resolved in August. Government advised land registrars and registrars of deeds that land dealings by non-naturalised alien enemies should not be registered and formalised the move via the War Legislation Act 1917. There were, as might be expected, breaches or attempted breaches of the regulations, especially as they were maintained well after the end of the war, but such cases appear to have been few and far between.[514] It was the labour issue, however, that attracted most attention throughout the year.

[513] *New Zealand Herald*, 27 August 1917, p.4.

[514] See, for example, *Northern Advocate*, 6 March 1919, p.1 (re case involving Tony Miosich and James Sutich), and 10 December 1919, p.4, and 12 April 1920, p.2. (re case involving Joe Erceg).

Resolutions or statements featuring alien labour conscription were passed by various associations, conferences, local bodies and public meetings. For example, in May 1917, the conference of the Auckland Provincial Farmers' Union discussed a moderately worded remit from Patetonga on the subject. In the course of discussion reference was made to shortages of labour on the Hauraki Plains for farm work and drainage projects, and from the Te Kowhai district it was reported that "Austrians" were reluctant to take contracts "*at which they were unable to earn £1 a day*". The result was that the conference accepted a more direct remit from Te Puke "*That all enemy aliens be conscripted forthwith for labour purposes*". About the same time the Te Aroha Borough Council passed a resolution urging Government to conscript all enemy aliens for employment on road and drainage works at soldiers' rates of pay.[515] Finally, in September, further resolutions were passed and telegraphed to Government by a large public meeting in Dargaville and by the Northern Wairoa Branch, Second Division League.[516] In Wellington, Prime Minister Massey responded by passing the two latter telegrams to the National Efficiency Board (N.E.B.) at the beginning of October.

Recognising a need for urgency the N.E.B. chairman replied immediately with a memorandum specifying resolutions passed during the Board's current sitting. First, enlistment of *allied* aliens fit and liable for military service, either with the New Zealand force or other allies, was endorsed. Second, that *allied* aliens unfit for military service should be invited to volunteer for New Zealand Home Service. Third, conscription for use on Government work was favoured for "*all males of military age and subjects or sons of subjects of countries with which the allied nations are at war*", payment for such to be "*at the same scale as [for]...privates on active service...with a fair allowance for maintenance*". And fourth, the Board favoured the use of this labour "*for the preparation of undeveloped Crown, private or Maori land*" for the settlement of returned servicemen[517]. For Croatians from Dalmatia who were not naturalised (technically "Austrian" enemy aliens), the last two resolutions were directly relevant.

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[515] *Northern Advocate*, 24 May 1917, p.2, and *Poverty Bay Herald*, 28 May 1917, p.4.

[516] For further details and/or discussion of these and other resolutions and various newspaper editorials, see Marshall (1968:283-285).

[517] W. Ferguson, Board Chairman, to Prime Minister (Massey), memo, 3 October 1917, National Efficiency Board Papers, Archives New Zealand, Wellington, hereafter cited as N.E.B. Papers.

Government's decision on the matter was made known to the N.E.B. Chairman a few weeks later. Sir James Allen would receive a representative deputation of "Slavs", in Auckland, and would put before them three proposals.

> *That those who are naturalised will have the opportunity of joining the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. That those who are not naturalised will be given an option of going to Australia [to join a Croatian Contingent being formed] with the object of proceeding to Europe and joining the ... [Serbian] Army there. The Government will use the remainder for industrial and other purposes within the Dominion at military rates of pay.*[518]

Upon reading these proposals the N.E.B. Chairman could have been forgiven for thinking he had heard or seen them before. He certainly had. In essence they matched resolutions passed by both the N.E.B. (early October) and the 29 October 1917 "representative meeting" of "Slavs" in the Auckland Province. This being the case, it is difficult to say whether Government was taking the initiative (at last), and simply capitalising on the 29 October resolution, or whether Government was all but capitulating to both public opinion *and* the "Slavs".

Whatever the answer, the Auckland meeting, called by Sir James Allen (Minister of Defence), took place on 10 November 1917, at the Grand Hotel. Croatian representatives present were J. Barbarich, S.P. Cvitanovich, G.M. Erceg, M.A. (Mathew) Ferri, T.A. (Tony) Petrie, D. Rudalj, G.L. (George) Scansie, M. Simich, P.M. (Peter) Sulenta, J. (John) Totich and S.M. Ujdur. Proceedings were recorded.[519] The meeting was quickly defined to those present as one to solicit their assistance and views with respect to a decision that had already been made. Acknowledging their loyalty, Allen stated (emphasis added):

> *If the Jugo Slavs are to be organised to assist in the battle for freedom or in the service of New Zealand* I have come to the conclusion that the best plan is for the New Zealand Government itself to take in hand the organisation of the Jugo Slavs, *whether it is for service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force or for service with your own countrymen or for service in New Zealand if that can be arranged. We have been accepting naturalised Jugo Slavs in our Expeditionary Force and we*

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[518] Prime Minister (Massey) to N.E.B. Chairman, letter, 9 November 1917, N.E.B. Papers.

[519] "Report of Conference with Jugo Slav Representatives, Grand Hotel, Auckland, 10th November 1917." Typed 9 page report, file AD 9/86/1.

> *are prepared to accept them so long as we have no doubt in our minds as to their loyalty…*

What he wanted from the representatives present at the meeting was first of all assistance in finding naturalised men who were loyal, willing and able to serve. Second, on the question of Home Service, he wanted their views with respect to: (a) pay rates, either military plus allowances (favoured by implication) or current civilian in local districts; (b) whether there were many married "Slavs" on their own holdings who, in the interests of the country or production, should be left alone; and (c) whether, if they were enlisted for Home Service, they and their countrymen would be prepared to go wherever they were asked to go.

Allowing for minor variations between the viewpoints expressed, Allen concluded "*they were all pretty well agreed about the main point*", namely that "*the only course was for the Government to take the matter in hand*". Recommendations would be made to Cabinet, which, if agreed to, would be made public. That the meeting should end on this note was virtually a foregone conclusion. Government's proposals, as communicated by Allen, matched the 29 October resolution and were openly supported by Simich and Ujdur (President and Secretary, respectively, of a committee elected at the 29 October meeting), Cvitanovich, Petrie, Totich and Sulenta. Why then was the meeting called if the outcome was obvious? The only answer is that a consensus of opinion was desired and sought by Government in the midst of confusion and conflict generated by factions in the Croatian community.

Community Factions, 1917

On 10 February 1917 the deputation comprising T.A. Petrie, G.M. Erceg and J.S. Dickson M.P. met with Sir James Allen and others in Wellington. As noted earlier, several weeks passed before Serbian enlistment conditions were made known to Petrie by Col. Gibbon. Early in March, Petrie complained about the delay and informed Gibbon that:

> *... in the meantime there is a rumour going on among the Slavs accusing me of taking Mr. Erceg to Wellington for the purpose of assisting the Government with some scheme or other which is against the Slav interest here in New Zealand, for which services we are accused of receiving payment from the Government.*[520]

[520] Petrie to Gibbon, letter, 7 March 1917, file AD 9/86/1.

The fact that a meeting had taken place between "Jugo Slavs representatives", Mr. Dickson and Government was announced by the *New Zealand Herald* on 17 March, and readers were incorrectly told that a scheme had been formulated to overcome the difficult position of "Jugo Slavs".[521] Petrie, meanwhile, was still waiting for Gibbon's letter! Thanks to Dickson's precipitous statement to the *Herald*, the divisive forces of factionalism were unleashed.

Fired up by the newspaper report and "*at the request of many influential Dalmatians*", Mathew Ferri wrote to Sir James Allen damning the deputation.

> *... the so-called representatives ... who accompanied Mr Dickson to Wellington have not the respect or confidence of the large decent body of our Race here. They had no authority from that Race to represent them. They were in fact self-styled representatives and therefore any representations or arrangements they may have made with your Government ... may and probably will come as a surprise to the large body of Dalmatians, and will no doubt lead to further and greater difficulties arising.*[522]

Who and what were Allen and Gibbon to believe? Petrie, born in a small village near Starigrad on the Island of Hvar, was naturalised in 1908 at which time he was a 25 year-old farmer at Waiharara. On his own admission he had not mixed with his countrymen for some years and had no wish to do so in the future. A reasonably successful entrepreneur, he was also an Anglophile declaring "*I am happy among the British where generally I am not among my own countrymen*", a feeling reflected in his Anglicised name (Tony Petrie=Ante Petrich).[523] Ferri, on the other hand, born at Trpanj on the Pelješac Peninsula and naturalised in 1899, was closely associated with his countrymen. He had served as editor of two prominent, albeit short-lived Croatian-language newspapers (*Bratska Sloga* and *Napredak*), and from time-to-time was vocal on affairs concerning his ethnic group. With some justice, and more than a little arrogance, he considered himself a leader. Ferri, however, was not trusted by the Police, had only recently been released from internment on Somes Island, and his judgement was also

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[521] *New Zealand Herald*, 17 March 1917, p.7.

[522] Ferri to Allen, letter, 22 March 1917, file AD 9/86/1.

[523] Petrie's admissions/statements are included in the "Enlistment of Jugo Slavs: Deputation to the Acting Prime Minister..." report (p.2) and more particularly in his letter to Gibbon, 7 March 1917, file AD 9/86/1.

suspect for reasons of personal jealousy toward Petrie. Just how much he disliked Petrie was made crystal clear the following year in a letter to the Chief Censor in which he wrote:

> *I do not hesitate to state that a man named Tony Petrie is boasting about the city [Auckland] that he reads as many as 30 Slav letters per week for the Censor. If that is so and if the Chief Censor knows that Petrie is extremely prejudiced and that he has never been educated enough to even understand his own language, I am sure he would not be given this privilege. In fact he is not to be trusted.*[524]

The fact that Ferri himself had been in business for years as an interpreter, business and estate agent would not have been overlooked by the authorities.

One other figure was well placed to speak with authority on or for his compatriots – George Scansie. Well educated and perhaps inclined to a touch of flamboyance, Scansie was editor of *Zora (The Dawn)*, the most successful of the Croatian-language newspapers. A more vocal and committed opponent of Austria just wasn't to be found among his contemporaries. Unhappily, Scansie was also deemed to be untrustworthy. In March and April of 1916 opinions had been sought on him from a handful of Auckland businessmen. The results were bad – "*from a business point of view a bad mark*", "*no good, very shifty*", and "*an unprincipled man, whose loyalty is doubtful*". On the strength of such reports Col. Gibbon (Chief of General Staff) had issued instructions that Scansie was not permitted to visit any interned "Dalmatians" or "Austrians".[525] Now Scansie too was caught in the web of factional intrigue.

While Ferri was damning the Petrie-Erceg-Dickson deputation, Scansie was drafting and then published a circular titled "Jugoslovenska Narodna Obrana" (Jugoslav National Defence). Early in April, Gibbon received a translation from Petrie who described the circular as a "*mass of selfishness and ingratitude towards our Empire and the Allies*".[526] Meanwhile, Sir James Allen received a letter from Bartul Mihaljevich who was also concerned and angry over the circular, so much so that he felt like

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[524] Ferri to Chief Censor, letter, 27 August 1918, in Mathew Ferri file AAAB 482 51/e Record No. 519, Department of Defence, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

[525] For reports obtained by Gibbon and the denial of permission to visit interned compatriots, see "Correspondence re G.L. Scansie", Department of Defence, file AD 10/527, Archives New Zealand, Wellington. Hereafter cited as file AD 10/527.

[526] Petrie to Gibbon, letter and translation, 9 April 1917, file AD 10/527.

challenging Scansie to a duel. A former associate of Scansie, and briefly editor or co-editor of *Zora (The Dawn)*, Mihaljevich declared that he was no longer a Scansie supporter. Within a matter of days, however, he had almost completely reversed his position. He now advised Allen that Petrie, whom he had recently met, had inaccurately translated the circular, was personally prejudiced against Scansie and plotting to get him interned. Admitting he was "*not on friendly terms with Mr. Scansie*", Mihaljevich concluded "*I do not wish to help Mr. Petrie in his action, which is purely a personal revenge*".[527]

What did Scansie have to say for himself? Learning from the Auckland Police that he was reported to be causing strife by turning his countrymen against their leaders in New Zealand, he wrote to Gibbon as follows:

> *... As a matter of fact there are no Jugo Slav leaders in New Zealand appointed by the people, and when I said that the Jugo Slavs should be organised to prevent anybody representing them to the Government and promising anything on behalf of the people, it was because many of the 'would be' leaders on several occasions offered 500 or 1,000 volunteers, while to my knowledge no such men have offered [themselves], with the exception of those who have already joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.*
>
> *The Jugo Slavs in general have become very disturbed, complaining that nobody has a right to put any proposition before the Government regarding their service. Knowing that this made them less ready to answer any call should the Government make any on them, I have, in the circular, raised their national duty towards their home country and have prepared them to be in readiness to offer to help local industries for which the Government may need them.*[528]

Leadership protestations notwithstanding, Scansie was undoubtedly displeased with the Petrie-Erceg-Dickson deputation because it usurped his desire to act as Serbian Consul in New Zealand and his carefully cultivated position and power as editor of *Zora (the Dawn)* to be a spokesman. His concluding words concerning "readiness to offer to help local industries", however, provided food for thought, given the discernable trend in public opinion, so once again Gibbon had to decide who and what to believe.

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[527] Mihaljevich to Allen, first letter, 5 April 1917, and second letter, 11 April 1917, file AD 10/527.

[528] Scansie to Gibbon, letter, 10 April 1917, file AD 10/527.

Hard on the heels of his own circular translation, requested by Gibbon (13 April 1917), Scansie dispatched another letter accusing Petrie of intrigue and deliberate misrepresentation.

> *I have discovered that various letters have been written by T.A. Petrie ... who asked different ones to sign and forward to the Defence Authorities ... He also urged them to hold meetings in a certain boarding-house in Auckland against me, to pass a resolution to substantiate his aim. The meeting was held and speeches were made but none would adopt the resolution against me.*[529]

In the same letter, having outlined the background objectives of *Zora (The Dawn)*, Scansie reported that his position of editor had been attacked by "*certain men*" in 1915 and 1916. Elections were held in both years to appoint "*a chairman of their organisation* [presumably the Croatian Publishing Company] *and editor of their paper*", and on both occasions the result was overwhelmingly in his favour. This, said Scansie, "*created much ill-feeling amongst those placed for election and explains the quarrelling for leadership*". To clarify these points it should be noted that Scansie's stance and opinions as published in *Zora* were sometimes regarded as inflammatory. On two occasions, in 1914 and 1916, they prompted warnings to Government from Mathew Ferri and Peter Sulenta, both of whom recommended suppression of the newspaper.[530]

If anything, Scansie's correspondence made the decision-making tasks of Col. Gibbon (Chief of General Staff) and particularly Sir James Allen (Minister of Defence) that much more difficult. On the basis of available evidence, Scansie appeared to be loyal and the leading spokesman. But was he or Petrie to be trusted? In retrospect, the fact that Government decided to take no further action after March 1917 regarding the enlistment of "Jugo Slavs" who were not naturalised was probably a decision that owed much to the bewilderment created by the problem of factionalism.

Against this background, and undeniable public support for conscription of alien labour, we return to the 10 November 1917 meeting in Auckland. Allen's desire for a consensus of opinion was evident from the outset when he described those present as "*representatives of the various committees*" which had communicated with Government. Underlying tensions came to the

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[529] Scansie to Gibbon, letter, 16 April 1917, file AD 10/527.

[530] See: Ferri to Premier, telegram, 1 August 1914, in file AAAB 482 51/e Record No. 519; and Sulenta to Prime Minister (Massey), letter, 30 January 1916, file AD 9/86.

surface on at least three occasions during the meeting. First, M. Simich stated that the 29 October meeting of "Jugo Slavs", which elected a new committee of which he was President, had taken place against the wishes of Scansie, who, it appeared, claimed to be the official Serbian Consul in New Zealand. Allen quickly dispensed with this matter; it was not an issue to be discussed at that time, and Government would not recognise Scansie's appointment until official confirmation was received from Serbia. Second, Petrie, apparently touched with remorse, admitted to "*a great deal of worry and sorrow to see that there was so much dissention amongst them*", and with respect to Scansie and their relationship acknowledged "*they had not been friendly for a long while*". Finally, toward the end of the meeting, Simich and Scansie "*had a rather heated discussion*" with Simich accusing Scansie of calling him disloyal and demanding an apology. Small wonder then that Allen, in his concluding comments, virtually demanded that "*all little differences had to be abolished*". Furthermore, Allen's key conclusion that "*the only course was for the Government to take the matter in hand*", a conclusion about which "*they were all pretty well agreed*", is given an extra dimension of meaning within the context of competing factions and conflicting personalities.[531]

John Cullen and Home Service, 1917-1919

Returning from Auckland, Allen briefed his Cabinet colleagues and by the end of November 1917 a decision had been made. Though details of policy had yet to be finalised it was announced that Mr. John Cullen was to take charge of organising "Jugo Slavs" for Home Service.

Born in Ireland in 1850, where he was educated and served with the Royal Irish Constabulary, John Cullen arrived in New Zealand in 1876. He was the first to graduate from the New Zealand Armed Constabulary depot into the Police branch of the unified Constabulary Force then being formed and in 1877 was posted for duty at Blenheim. Promoted to Sergeant in 1878, he soon gained a reputation as a disciplinarian and "survived a number of accusations of overbearing behaviour". In 1897 he attained the rank of Inspector, was posted to Greymouth and in the following year to the Auckland district. Finally, in 1912, he became Commissioner of Police, "*the first commissioner to rise from within the ranks of the force*". Cullen held this rank until retirement a few years later.[532] Authoritarian, a disciplinarian,

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[531] For all quotes in this paragraph, see "Report of Conference with Jugo Slav Representatives, Grand Hotel, Auckland, 10th November, 1917", file AD 9/86/1.

[532] Cullen's career details as reported by Hill (1996:125-126).

zealous in the performance of his duties, Cullen at least once revealed a tendency to partiality. During the Waihi strike (1912-1913), a milestone in New Zealand's history of trade unionism, Cullen, as commander of the Police, is known to have taken *"a particularly combative stance"* and to have become *"more partisan as the fight wore on"*, supporting and encouraging the Arbitrationists against the politically radical, militant Federationists.[533] Familiar with both the Auckland City and provincial scenes, Cullen was a no nonsense policeman, accustomed to having orders followed without question, who had enjoyed a successful and rewarding career in law enforcement. This was the man selected for Home Service organisation of the "Jugoslavs" – a community of predominantly young, energetic, adult males divided into factions, passionate in their beliefs and imbued with stubborn determination.



John Cullen, Commissioner of Police 1912-1917 and Commissioner in charge of "Jugoslav" Home Service Organisation 1918-1919
Source: **Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington**

[533] Campbell (1974:38 and 40).

Cullen's duties were wide-ranging. He was to: (a) investigate and report upon the loyalty and suitability of all naturalised "Jugoslavs" who enlisted for service with the Expeditionary Force; (b) prepare a register of all "Jugoslavs", showing name, address, and occupation of each individual; (c) determine which of those men who volunteered for Home Service should be utilised under Government supervision and which should remain in their current occupations; (d) indicate the class of work each man was best fitted to perform for Home Service, and the rate of payment which should be made; and (e) exercise general supervision over men employed on Home Service.[534] Paid £256 10s per annum (the difference between his superannuation and pre-retirement salary), entitled to claim travelling allowances, office space found and a qualified typist installed, Cullen set about his duties in January 1918 just as the First World War entered its final year. Only a few months after being appointed, his powers were increased by gazetted regulations in June 1918 so that all "Jugoslavs" on the register were eligible for Home Service whether or not they were naturalised.

An indeterminate number of "Jugoslavs" (possibly about 600 men) were directed by Cullen to employment with the departments of Public Works and Lands and Survey, while others were exempted from Home Service because they were engaged in essential industries, on farms, in business, employed by local bodies or judged to be physically unfit for the labour involved. For those engaged on government works the main activities and locations were: (a) swamp drainage and stopbank construction – at Kaitaia-Awanui, Thornton-Rangitaiki, Kerepehi, Paeroa, Ruawai, Tirohia-Rotokuhu and the upper Waihou River; (b) railway construction work – at Okahukura (Stratford main trunk railway), Kaikohe-Hokianga, Whangarei-Mangapai, north of Maungaturoto, and on the Waiuku branch railway; and (c) road making at Ruawai. Since the majority of the men conscripted had previously laboured under wet and difficult conditions as gumdiggers, Cullen considered that the work they were put to differed little from what they were used to.[535] Men accustomed to being self-employed, however, were apt to appraise their working conditions and payment with a more critical eye when working for someone else. Add to that the element of compulsion behind their conscription, and the result was inevitable. Trouble! Trouble within a

[534] Allen to Cullen, letter, 15 December 1917, Alien Service Board files AD 86/1-86/6. Archives New Zealand, Wellington. Hereafter cited as AD 86/1-86/6.

[535] Cullen to Col. Andrews (Defence Office, Auckland), letter, 7 January 1919, file AD 86/1-86/6.

few months of Cullen's appointment: especially once the war ended but his powers remained in force; as the influenza epidemic took its course; and as the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes came into being and was recognised by Great Britain.

In June 1918 strikes occurred at the Okahukura railway construction works in Taranaki and at the swamp drainage works near Kaitaia-Awanui. At Okahukura about 40 men went on strike because they objected to the Public Works Department's piecework system under which they were employed and paid. At the court hearing in July for this strike, 34 men were charged. The court was told that the men were only technically enemy aliens under the terms of the regulations, that the piecework conditions had not been properly explained to them and that they had not been shown the conditions of the contract. Commissioner Cullen, however, asserted they knew the conditions, that he had put up with much insolence and that the "*trouble was due to an agitator...absolutely hostile to the British*". The presiding magistrate reserved his decision when it was agreed that the men would be advised to return to work provided the conditions of work were read out to them.[536] Working conditions and pay were at the root of the Kaitaia-Awanui strike as well, with a formal complaint being made by Peter Sulenta, but were overshadowed by the action of a foreman who discharged a worker. Other "Jugoslavs" immediately downed tools and refused to return to work until the discharged man was taken on again. The man concerned was given another chance and work was resumed.[537]

Cullen's official perception and response to these events, after visiting the Kaitaia-Awanui works, is typified by his report to Sir James Allen.

> *The Slavs engaged on these works are no worse off as regards their earnings than if they were gumdigging, as the incessant rain we have been having would have prevented them digging gum just as effectively as [it did employment on] the drainage works.*
>
> *The men are provided with good tents and a dry camping ground within two hundred yards from their work.*
>
> *With regard to the writer of attached letter* [Sulenta's letter of complaint], *I consider this man to be an out-and-out agitator and a disloyalist at heart, and is causing a good deal of trouble amongst the*

[536] For a report of the Court hearing, see *Northern Advocate*, 26 July 1918, p.1.

[537] *Auckland Star*, 24 June 1918, p.2.

> *Slavs at work as well as amongst others who are being called up for work at the present time.*[538]

Summing up, Cullen urged internment of Peter Sulenta, Mick Zidich and Ivan Sumich, not just in the public interest but also in the interests of "Slavs" who are being "*worked up against the Government by the under-hand agitation of Sulenta ...*". George Divich was also identified as an agitator. The men named were subsequently interned. Peter Sulenta, it will be recalled, was one of the representatives who met with Allen in November 1917. On that occasion he had little to say beyond expressing complete agreement with Allen's proposals and conclusions.

Another strike occurred on the stopbank work at Paeroa at the beginning of February 1919, although the court hearing indicated there were signs of trouble with an alleged "go slow" attitude once hostilities in Europe ceased, and the influenza epidemic had a marked impact upon the health of many of the men employed. While there can be little if any doubt that the men resented their continued treatment as technical enemy aliens under the regulations enforced by Cullen, and that ill-health would have affected productivity, the prime cause for the strike appears to have been altogether much simpler. According to Jack Katavich (from Vrgorac):

> *Two of our number lived in Paeroa, and rode to work daily on their bicycles. They were never late for work, and never lost any time. The overseer wanted them to live in camp on the works. As there was no apparent reason why they should do so, they continued to board in Paeroa. ... they were arrested and taken by the evening train to Wellington [for internment]. In consequence of this high-handed action, we, in loyalty to our two mates ceased work ...*[539]

As expected, Jack Katavich was identified by Cullen as "*the moving spirit in the unrest – an agitator of the first water*". The presiding magistrate, however, having heard the evidence presented, found that there was not a word of disloyalty about any of the defendants and decided the case could be concluded by ordering them to pay the costs of the prosecution with a warning of severe penalties in the event of any future trouble.[540]

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[538] Cullen to Allen, letter, 4 July 1918, file AD 86/1-86/6.

[539] Katavich, letter to editor, *Auckland Star*, 7 February 1919, p.6.

[540] For a detailed report of the court hearing, see *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 February 1919, p.3.

Problems of another kind involved tracing the whereabouts of men liable for registration and service, getting them registered and then directing them to their place of work. There were problems also with men who left Home Service employment without permission or because of the influenza epidemic or who failed to return after leave was granted for the 1918/1919 Christmas and New Year holidays. Nor were the problems limited to the "Jugoslavs" but extended to employers who failed to gain approval for hiring enemy aliens or failed to provide the required details of such men already in their employment. Aware of the attractions of share-milking, for example, Cullen went so far as to urge farmers, as a matter of patriotism and loyalty, to give preference to discharged soldiers but admitted that his efforts did not appear to have had any effect.[541] Cullen's files are replete with difficulties encountered in all of these areas, difficulties which thwarted his effectiveness, rapidly eroded what tolerance and sympathy he had, and which were exacerbated by the end of hostilities in Europe.

On 3 November 1918 the Allies signed an armistice with Austria-Hungary, and a week later another was signed with Germany. The war was over but in New Zealand the "Jugoslav" (Croatian) immigrant found himself bound to continued Home Service employment. Cullen made the position perfectly clear in a letter to the Chief Drainage Engineer, Department of Lands and Survey.

> *It appears that a number of Jugoslavs are now under the impression that the armistice having been signed they are no longer liable to work in National [i.e. Home] Service, and inquiries are being made by them as to when they will be permitted to proceed to their homes.*
>
> *I would thank you to have all Jugoslavs employed by your Department informed of the following conditions.*
>
> *The War Regulations Act, Amendments, and all Regulations made therein remain in force for one year after the declaration of peace with Germany and Austria, unless meantime repealed by the Governor by order in Council.*
>
> *All Jugoslavs must remain subject to the conditions of the Alien Service Regulations until such time as the Regulations have been revoked, which will not be for some time…*[542]

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[541] For examples of Cullen's notices, see: *Northern Advocate*, 5 August 1918, p.3 (notice to employers) and 29 August 1918, p.2 (re share-milking); and *Thames Star*, 15 January 1919, p.1 (notice to absent aliens and to employers).

[542] Cullen to Thompson, letter, 22 November 1918, file AD 86/1-86/6.

Events during the following months (December 1918 – February 1919) left memories, associated with Cullen's name, which many Croatians recalled for years afterwards with anger.

Complaints from the Public Works Resident Engineer, Taumarunui, barely a month after the armistice with Germany, are indicative of changing attitudes, resentment and open defiance. Less than half the "Jugoslavs" engaged on railway construction were presenting themselves for work on any one day. Some simply declined to work before Christmas, although apparently in good health, some alleged they were unable to work but offered no proof, and a number of others were absent without leave. There seemed, stated the Resident Engineer, to be:

> *... a general conspiracy on the part of the men to work only half-time and so prejudice the carrying on of the work, the object being no doubt to make the Government realise that the conscripting of ... labour is not worth while.*[543]

His supposition was possibly true, and yet the influenza epidemic did have a marked effect on health and affected men engaged on government projects were given leave of absence to recuperate. The problem was that some of those granted leave seized the opportunity to disappear, and were joined by a number of their compatriots over the Christmas vacation.

Cullen responded with a proclamation ordering them to recommence their duties by 27 January, and recommended internment of those suspected of causing disaffection. The proclamation proved to be fruitless and internment just aggravated the situation. By mid-February 1919, Cullen found himself in an unenviable position. Unable to say how many more were likely to be interned before peace returned to the Home Service scheme, he claimed that to date only extreme cases had been recommended for internment. But now further recommendations seemed to be inevitable because the men were "*showing a very defiant and offensive attitude*" toward himself and officers of the Public Works and Lands and Survey departments. Bitter and frustrated, he declared "*it would have been much better to have interned all Jugoslavs at the outbreak of war*" and then to have given them the option of volunteering for government work. In his opinion "*most of them would have so volunteered*". Government's decision, however, was that no more of these

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[543] See memos from Baker to Cullen, 9 and 12 December 1918, file AD 86/1-86/6.

men would be interned but consideration was being given to prosecution of all recalcitrant aliens.[544]

Possibly seeking a compromise to avoid internment of would be martyrs and an escalation of tension, Government was probably also sensitive to a potential source of trouble in international relations. A new nation had emerged from the chaos of war; on 1 December 1918 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes came into being with Alexander, former regent of Serbia, as King. Croatians resident in New Zealand who were not naturalised were among the subjects of this new multicultural nation. It seems likely that this factor, quite apart from the difficulties facing Cullen, led to the discontinuation of the Home Service directed labour scheme in September 1919 even though many other discriminatory regulations remained in force.

The Home Service Record

With disputes over pay and working conditions, strikes, so-called "agitators" and internment figuring in the above account, a reader could be forgiven for concluding that the Home Service scheme was a complete failure and that Croatians as a group were troublesome, uncooperative and hence disloyal to the Allied cause. But is it a conclusion supported by evidence in Cullen's files? The short answer is no.

At the beginning of June 1919, with an eye to the eventual repatriation of "*Jugoslavs ... likely to become public charges*", Cullen wrote to the Minister of Defence offering to prepare lists of: elderly immigrants in poor circumstances; young men suffering from debilitating diseases; and those who had been difficult on Home Service projects. He asserted that among the younger ones a "*fairly large number are undoubtedly anarchists ... [who] approve of ... the Bolsheviks*".[545] Receiving a positive response to his offer, he set himself the task of preparing:

> *... a list of all Jugoslavs who have given or caused trouble on government [Home Service] works or have left the works without permission or who have shown themselves in any way hostile to the allied cause.*

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[544] For relevant correspondence see file 86/1-86/6: Cullen to Gibbon, letter, 15 February 1919; and Gibbon to Cullen, memo, 18 February 1919.

[545] Cullen to Minister of Defence, memo, 2 June 1919. Photocopy provided by Stephen Jelicich, Auckland, with no Archives New Zealand file number.

To obtain the evidence required he despatched a memo outlining his task to: the Chief Drainage Engineer, Department of Lands and Survey, Auckland (J.B. Thompson); the District Engineer, Public Works Department, Auckland (G. Murray); the District Engineer, Public Works Department, Whangarei (J. Wood); and to the Resident Engineer, Public Works Department, Taumarunui. Each was asked to supply information respecting each individual Jugoslav employed on works under the supervision of their officers.[546] Replies from all but one of these civil servants (the Resident Engineer, Taumurunui) have been located and are summarised below.

J.B. Thompson reported with respect to men employed on the Hauraki Plains, at Ruawai, on the Rangitaiki Plains and Kaitaia-Awanui as follows:[547]

> *Hauraki Plains*
> *Generally speaking the Slavs ... have been loyal and have caused very little friction. To date one hundred and twenty one have reported. Sixteen of same have left the Works, some having died during the [influenza] epidemic, the others having been transferred or granted exemption. I should say the approximate number of disloyalists would not be more than twelve percent.*

A list of 11 "agitators" was included with this report. The men concerned were those who had allegedly caused friction, left work without permission, defied authority, indulged in "go-slow" work or used abusive language.

> *Ruawai*
>
> *Generally speaking none ... at present employed have shown themselves to be in any way disloyal or hostile to the Allied Cause.*
>
> *Rangitaiki Plains*
>
> *... very loyally disposed ... none have caused any trouble ... in fact they are an industrious and sober Race.*

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[546] Cullen to those named, memo, 14 August 1919, file AD 86/1-86/6.

[547] Thompson to Cullen, memos, 29August 1919 (re Hauraki Plains), 30 August 1919 (re Ruawai) and 1 September 1919 (re Rangitaiki Plains), file AD 86/1-86/6. A further memo from Thompson to Cullen, 2 September 1919 (re Kaitaia-Awanui) was located in file AD 9/86/1. In each case Thompson quotes from reports received from his officers in each district.

> *Kaitaia-Awanui*
> *Very few of these men are friendly at heart and several who seem at first sight friendly make the balls for the others to fire. On the whole the men have been a very 'Bolshevik' crowd and very restless. Prominent men in the district have not been above inciting them on account of less trade since their leaving the gumfields.*

Of 37 "Jugoslavs" at Kaitaia-Awanui named and assessed, 13 were classed as "agitators", "sneaks" etc., while the remainder were described as "*fairly well behaved, quiet, no trouble, good workers*". With little more than a third classed as "agitators" etc., it seems rather harsh to describe the group as a whole as "*a very 'Bolshevik' crowd and very restless*".

Compared with the extremes of good and bad experienced on Lands and Survey Department projects, behaviour on Public Works Department projects elicited little more than mild criticism from G. Murray and J. Wood. Two or so instances aside, Wood found behaviour to be satisfactory; nothing had occurred to indicate disloyalty or hostility, and on the whole instructions given were carried out willingly.[548] Murray too was generally satisfied, though there were "*a few isolated cases*" of disloyalty. His comments with respect to the Paeroa, Mauku and Maungaturoto sub-districts suggest a measure of sympathetic understanding, absent from Thompson's reports.[549]

> *Paeroa*
>
> *... no specific act of disloyalty ... [they] have always abided with the War Regulations imposed upon them, although they have expressed dissatisfaction with same, and will welcome the removal of such restrictions.*
>
> *Mauku (Waiuku branch railway)*
>
> *... very little trouble ... majority appear to be loyal, when allowance is made for their natural dislike of being compelled to work and having their movements restricted. Only one man had pronounced Bolshevik ideas ...*
>
> *Maungaturoto*
>
> *... the men on these works have shown very little sign of disloyalty ...*

[548] Wood to Cullen, memo, 12 September 1919, file AD 86/1-86/6.

[549] Murray to Cullen, letter, 9 September 1919, file AD 86/1-86/6. Like Thompson, Murray quotes from the reports of his Assistant Engineers in each of the sub-districts.

Cullen made very selective use of these reports in a memo to the Minister of Defence, and stated that:

> *... I am now quite convinced that more than two-thirds of the Jugoslavs in the Dominion are thoroughly disloyal both to the British and their Allies, and are therefore most undesirable people to be allowed to remain in the country.*[550]

Together with other information and evidence, he recommended deportation, cancellation of naturalisation papers and surveillance of a substantial number of "Jugoslavs". For the record, however, it must be said that only a very small minority – no more than 40-50 individuals – were hostile, uncooperative or difficult, and that the rest generally made a willing and useful contribution under the Home Service programme as indicated in the above Engineers' reports.

Internment, Loyalty and Justice

How many were actually interned? Were they all, without exception, pro-Austrian or pro-German and thus a source of disaffection and danger to the community? The answer to the first question is that a total of at least 66 men are known to have been interned at some time or other.[551] Of these, 24 were interned (at least initially) on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour and almost all were subsequently transferred to Featherston military camp in Wairarapa.

The second question, somewhat contentious and crucial to the reputation of Croatian settlers, is difficult to answer with confidence because available records are often contradictory. In general, the reasons for arrest and internment appear to fall into four broad categories: failure to comply with war regulations; failure to comply with Home Service regulations; expressing disloyal utterances and/or behaving in a disloyal manner with respect to Home Service public works (an "agitator" involved in "go slow" work practices or strikes); and civil reasons. Each of these categories is discussed below.

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[550] Cullen to Minister of Defence, memo, 30 September 1919. Photocopy provided by Stephen Jelicich, Auckland, with no Archives New Zealand file number.

[551] This figure for internments 1914-1919 falls short of the number (114) included in an official document titled "Miscellaneous – List of disaffected Jugoslavs interned during First World War" (Archives reference IA52 Box 13 Item ref. 20). The key problem with this list is the inclusion of non-Croatians born in other European countries.

The first category, failure to comply with war regulations, includes failure: to register and report to police as required; to advise police of a change of address; to obtain a travel authority from police; and remitting money to a wife or relations in the home country. For example, Luka Vegar (from Ravča village in the Vrgorac district) was officially interned because he refused to report to police as an enemy alien or to report his movements. Luka's version of events, however, is rather different. In a letter addressed to the "Chairman, Aliens Commission, Wellington", he explained that he had reported to police regularly as required every Saturday but had failed to get a permit to travel from the Public Works site at Pukekohe to Auckland over the 1916 Easter break in order to collect debts owed to his brother Thomas Vegar, an army recruit about to depart for the front. Finding no police officer available to issue a permit after Mass on Good Friday evening he still left for Auckland the next morning and upon his return on Tuesday was informed that he had broken the regulations and would have to be interned.[552]



Luka Vegar, interned for breach of wartime travel regulations.
***Source:* Vegar family**

A similar account was provided by Ivan Antin Vodanovich (from Podgora village), a restaurant cook living in Stratford. Desiring to farewell his cousin Ivan Letica in Auckland prior to his departure for the front in 1916, Ivan did everything correctly except when it came to allowing sufficient time to

[552] Re Luka Vegar, see file AAAB 482 66/h Record No.652.

obtain a permit for his return to Stratford. Concerned that he might lose his job if he returned late, he took the risk and proceeded anyway.[553] Both men readily acknowledged their failing and understandably felt aggrieved that in demonstrating their loyalty and support for a brother and cousin, respectively, and thereby for the Allied cause, they were interned (Luka seven months, Ivan six months) as an example to others.

Other examples of failure to comply with war regulations concern Ivan Letica and Ivan Nikolich, the latter officially arrested and interned because he had remitted money to his family in Dalmatia. In fact, however, the case was not that clear cut. Before coming to New Zealand, Ivan Nikolich (from Ravca) had lent money to a friend to pay for his passage to the USA. When his friend in the USA was in a position to repay the loan he wrote asking Ivan where he wanted the money sent. Ivan replied that he should send it his people at home. Exactly how his instruction became known to the New Zealand authorities is unclear but he was interned for nine months in 1916 and eventually released on condition that he would "*undertake not to communicate with an enemy country, directly or indirectly, during the war*".[554]

And finally, though not interned, there is the case of the afore mentioned Ivan Letica (from Podgora), a returned soldier discharged in December 1918 as no longer fit for military service on account of illness contracted while on active service. When Ivan failed to register as an alien on his return to New Zealand in 1919 he was prosecuted and directed to essential work – a back-handed "thank you" for more than two years service (1916-1918) on the western front.[555]

The second category, failure to comply with Home Service regulations, is well illustrated by the examples of Paul Arnerich, Mijo Lulich and John Alach. Interned in March 1918 and released after 18 months, Paul Arnerich (from Dol, Island of Brač) had only been in New Zealand four years when he refused to register for Home Service, arguing (on the assumption that the Allies might lose the war) that he would be unable to return to Dalmatia if he worked for the Government. During his internment he also expressed strong pro-German and anti-British sentiments. His brother Ivan was interned for

[553] Re Ivan Antin Vodanovich, see file AAAB 482 10/h Record No.111.

[554] Re Ivan Nikolich, see file AAAB 482 50/h Record No. 512.

[555] Personal communication from Des Mataga, Auckland, November 2013.

the same initial reason but held stronger anti-British views. Paul was regarded by Cullen as "*a disaffected and disturbing element*" among his compatriots.[556] Mijo Lulich (from Makarska township) registered as required and was sent to work on railway construction at Stratford but absented himself after one month. Cullen was uncharacteristically patient with Mijo, interviewing him twice (without success) to secure a return to work. On the second occasion, he became "*incensed ... quite insolent and defiant*". Interned for five months during the first half of 1919, Mijo was later diagnosed as suffering from "chronic phthisis" (Tb of the lungs) and rated unfit for hard work.[557] Finally, John Alach (from Drvenik village), a farmer at Waihopo, failed to register until interviewed by the Police in March 1918. When notified for Home Service he successfully applied for an extension of time but subsequently failed to report for work. Interned for seven months in 1919, John was considered by Cullen to be dangerous, with an "evil influence" over others in the Paeroa district.[558]

The third category consisted of men officially interned for their disloyal utterances and/or behaviour in relation to the Allied cause or behaviour as alleged "agitators" involved in "go slow" work practices or strikes. Examples here include those of Jure Ravlich, George Divich and Peter Sulenta. Of these three, Jure Ravlich (from Poljica, near Makarska)) had refused to work but the prime reason for his interment appears to have been disloyalty. A retrospective Police report claimed that:

> *... when he saw a picture of our King and soldiers in the papers [he] would tear them up and jump on them. His shanty was lined with pictures of the Kaiser, Austrian Emperor etc ... He used to walk miles to get a newspaper with the war news in it. If it happened that the British were getting the best of it he would tear the paper up and say it was all lies. If the Germans were beating us he would be very jubilant over it.*[559]

Jure was interned for 17 months over the period 1918-1919. George Divich (from Drvenik), however, was interned for 13 months over the same period as Cullen considered him "*a prime mover*" in the strike at the Kaitaia-

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[556] Re Paul Arnerich (and his brother Ivan), see file AAAB 482 26/a Record No.244.

[557] Re Mijo (Mick) Lulich , see file AAAB 482 54/a Record No.545.

[558] Re John Alach, see file AAAB 482 54/c Record No. 547.

[559] Re Jure Ravlich, see file AAAB 482 25/g Record No. 242.

Awanui drainage works. Nothing else "*was known against his character*".[560] Also interned for his activities at Kaitaia-Awanui was Peter Sulenta (from Drašnice) whose case, as a prominent leader, warrants closer attention.

In 1916 Peter Sulenta wrote to the Minister of Police questioning why he needed to obtain a permit to travel more than 20 miles given his long duration of residence in the Dominion (23 years), his naturalisation (1911), and his ownership of property as a farmer. His letter was apparently referred to the then Commissioner of Police (Cullen) who not only advised the Minister what to say in reply (under the war regulations an enemy alien was anyone born in enemy territory, naturalised or not) but added that Sulenta was an agitator in whom he had no confidence.[561] It was hardly an auspicious beginning.



Peter Sulenta, interred for acting as an "agitator" on the Kaitaia-Awanui drainage works.
Source: **Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society**

[560] Re George Divich, see file AAAB 482 35/e Record No. 323.

[561] See Sulenta file AAAB 478 10/ao. A month earlier, Sulenta wrote a similar letter of complaint concerning the need for a travel permit to the Prime Minister.

When Peter complained about pay and working conditions at Kaitaia-Awanui in June 1918, he was, to those who knew him, behaving as he always did as an advocate with respect to an issue affecting his compatriots. Neither Cullen (now Commissioner of Aliens) nor the police shared this view. In a December 1918 police report he is depicted as "*a man who would not do any hard work if he could obtain a living by other means*", completely ignoring his work history as a gumdigger, storekeeper, farmer and viticulturalist, not to mention a flaxmill owner/operator in association with his brother and a non-Croatian neighbour. The same report added that:

> *He was looked upon by the English portion of the population in this district [Waipapakauri] as a very sly, scheming person, and the general expression at the time of his arrest [July 1918], was "It is about time he was put away".*

Cullen would have agreed. In an undated retrospective report, he wrote that:

> *... Sulenta commenced an underhand agitation among his countrymen with the object of preventing them helping the Government. ... he succeeded only too well as was evidenced by the fact that nearly all the Jugoslavs in the Waipapakauri district either failed to render national [i.e. Home] service or adopted a 'go-slow' policy on Government work. ... As Sulenta's propaganda was causing much trouble to the Government engineers I recommended his internment ... Since his internment the trouble on Awanui-Kaitaia works has practically ceased, and most of those called up for work have complied with notices served on them. Sulenta is undoubtedly a most disloyal person and a confirmed mischief-maker.*

Needless to say the latter view was not shared by all. To his Camp Commandant (Major J.W. Brunt) he was an "*excellent influence*" on compatriots, "strongly pro-British" and his conduct was "*very good*". Speaking from the experience of more than 12 months contact with Sulenta, Brunt also reported that:

> *This man's character whilst here has been excellent. He has in every way endeavoured to promote a friendly spirit among his men. He has rendered valuable assistance as an interpreter. He has a peculiar gift of being able to control his fellow countrymen. They look up to him as a chief.*

An imposing figure (6ft 3½ inches tall), Peter Sulenta was interned for 14 months between July 1918 and September 1919. Like a number of others, his

naturalisation was revoked.[562] At best he was the victim of wartime xenophobia and misconstrued behaviour. At worst he was the innocent victim of an authoritarian (perhaps ethnically prejudiced) Commissioner unable or unwilling to distinguish between a leader with strong convictions and a disloyal agitator.

Internment for civil reasons, the fourth and final category, is illustrated here with two examples – Frank Piskulich and Mathew Ferri.

The case of Frank Piskulich (from Novi Vinodol on the northern Adriatic coast) is the simpler of the two and stems from a brawl at the Aratapu Hotel in April 1917. Reputed to be a very strong fellow, he was challenged to a trial of strength with a hand grip and elbows on the table. Frank was reported to have tried to cheat. In the brawl that followed he attacked his challenger, was overpowered, twice removed from the hotel and resorted to language that was judged to be obscene, hostile and disloyal. The police report on the incident noted also that when excited Frank went "mad", was very dangerous and (implying a family pre-disposition) had a brother in the Auckland mental hospital.[563] Frank Piskulich was interned at the beginning of May 1917 until repatriated in 1919.

The second example, Mathew Ferri (from Trpanj, Pelješac Peninsula), like that of Peter Sulenta, is more complex and deserves closer attention given his prominance.

Mathew Ferri's internment stands as a conscious travesty of justice on the part of John Cullen in his prior role as Police Commissioner. Inquiries were begun in February 1916 when an unknown correspondent drew attention to Ferri's association with "Austrians, Greeks, etc…." A short (5ft 4 inch), dark complexioned, well educated and vocal individual, he stood out as "a foreigner". Following a request from the Attorney General for inquiries to be made, a number of police reports were prepared and submitted.[564] The first report simply stated that:

> *Ferri has an office at No. 33 His Majesty's Arcade, Queen Street, his business being acting as agent for Austrians residing in country*

[562] See Sulenta file AAAB 482 35/a Record No. 319.

[563] Re Frank Piskulich, see file AAAB 482 16/b Record No. 147.

[564] Re Mathew Ferri, see file AAAB 482 51/e Record No. 519.

districts. As regards his loyalty and conduct I have heard nothing that could be objected to.

A second report to ascertain the nature of Ferri's agency described his activities as:

... a general agency business and ... interpreter. He buys and sells gum, assists them in buying and selling land and generally acts as adviser to Austrians. He is now engaged in assisting to recruit ... for the Expeditionary Force and on the 7th inst. secured two recruits.



Mathew Ferri – journalist, interpreter and business agent
Source: **Ferri family**

Three weeks passed during which Cullen established that Ferri was naturalised (1899) and had been convicted of forgery in New South Wales (c.1896). By late March, Cullen had formed and recorded his opinion that Ferri should be interned. Then came the third police report (3 April 1916).

I respectfully report having made enquiries and was informed that when war was declared against Austria a number of Austrians burnt the Austrian flag. Ferri with one or two other Austrians took exception to their conduct and appeared before Mr. Langguth, Austrian Consul, protesting against their conduct and declaring their sympathy with Austria. I questioned him about this matter when, he said, he simply acted as the interpreter. I cannot learn of any disloyal remarks used by him since the outbreak of war.

Other information included in the police reports indicated that Ferri was involved in trying to recruit women to set up or manage a brothel for gumdiggers coming to Auckland for a holiday. While there is no evidence

that any action was taken on this matter, it probably contributed to Cullen's perceptions.

Believing his opinion to be confirmed, Cullen dismissed Ferri's recruiting activity as "a blind" and recommended to the Minister of Police that Ferri be interned. The recommendation was accepted and acted upon primarily because of his forgery conviction in Australia 20 years earlier. When he was arrested and his home searched, the police report noted that "*nothing of an incriminating matter was found*". Repeated statements in earlier police reports concerning a lack of evidence of disloyalty were ignored. Nor was any consideration given to the possibility that Ferri, acting as an agent and/or advisor for his countrymen, would be in frequent contact with Langguth, and that such contact (over more than a decade) might have engendered respect and sympathy for the man and not his position as Austrian Consul or the country he represented. Had Cullen bothered to consult the 1898 report of the Royal Commission on the Kauri Gum Industry he would have found Ferri's evidence condemning Austrian rule of Dalmatia. Had he also sought unbiased advice regarding Ferri's stance as editor of the newspapers *Bratska Sloga* and *Napredak* he would have found a man extolling the virtues of life under the British flag at a time when temporary residence was still the norm for his younger compatriots. Bearing these points in mind, Cullen may be said to have acted on the basis of one fact (a previous forgery conviction), his personal feelings and suspicions.

Arrested in April 1916 and released on parole from Somes Island eight months later, Ferri was initially perceived by his Camp Commandant as "*an enthusiastic nuisance unable to distinguish between important matters and trifles*". Eight months later, however, he noted that Ferri's "*expressions of loyalty have raised the bitter hatred of the enemy* [i.e. the German internees]" and added that "*I do not think his conviction...long ago should be further taken into account*".[565] But Cullen remained firmly opposed to Ferri, a stance carried over into his new role of Commissioner in charge of Home Service organisation. In September 1918 he described Ferri as "*one of the lowest type of Jugo-Slavs in the Dominion*" and insisted that he "*should not have been released from internment*". Again, a year later, in correspondence concerning George Scansie and Serbian passports (as a ploy to avoid internment and Home Service) he asserted that Ferri (like Scansie and Frank Hrstich, a returned soldier) belonged "*to the inner circle*" of his ethnic group's secret societies. Implying undercover, nefarious activities, the exact

[565] See file AAAB 482 51/e Record No. 519.

nature of these societies remains a complete mystery. Neither Cullen nor anyone else has offered evidence concerning their activities or existence. Could they have been an illusion conjured up by the reserve and/or reluctance of enemy aliens who had had more than enough of Cullen when approached to provide information about a fellow countryman?

Repatriation

Cullen would no doubt have been very disappointed that repatriation when it occurred in 1919 did not follow his recommendations, was not enforced and was largely voluntary in nature for men who seized the opportunity of free passage to their homeland. In a published, rancour-free letter of appreciation, written in May 1919 on behalf of his compatriots and addressed to the Jugoslav Committee in Auckland, an unidentified individual about to be repatriated wrote:

> *I am requested to thank the New Zealand Government and the people of the Dominion for the kind treatment we have received before and during the war ... The military authorities and the Public Trustee have both shown us every kindness and consideration and last but not the least we all desire to thank the [Jugoslav] committee for the great assistance given us during the time we have been ... awaiting our departure. ... the reason we are leaving this fair Dominion is because most of us are married men with wives and families at Home and during the last four and a half years none of us has heard from our dear loved ones, and we do not know whether they are alive or dead.*[566]

If the claim that "*most of us are married men*" is true then the repatriation pool was very limited indeed.[567] Putting that matter aside, the tenor and full content of the letter suggests a carefully planned departure strategy intended to sooth public opinion, and contrasts sharply with the first paragraph of a retrospective account by Marko Rakić quoted by Stephen Jelicich.[568] Putting this aside also, the key issue here is how many men were repatriated and what happened to them en route.

The number repatriated on the vessel *Willochra* in May 1919 is open to debate and varies in accord with the information source used. An

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[566] *Auckland Star*, 14 May 1919, p.7.

[567] This claim is given some support by Mataga (2013:244-247) who identifies exactly half of the men being repatriated as "married".

[568] Jelicich (2008:150).

examination of a published list of "Austrians repatriated" suggests a total of about 94 Croatian men, give or take two or three to allow for surname spelling errors and unfamiliar names.[569] This total is at the bottom of the range (96-119) offered by Des Mataga, Stephen Jelicich, Mary Stenning and Marko Rakić.[570] The conclusion is clear; whatever the actual total, it fell well short of that desired by Commissioner Cullen. As for what happened to the men en route, their passage was neither swift nor uneventful. According to Rakić, upon reaching Sydney they were disembarked and transferred to the Liverpool internment camp to join other interned Croatians. They remained there for four long months, during which time Rakić and others feared for their lives as they encountered a hostile reception and beatings from pro-Austrian Croatians opposed to the new Jugoslav nation and identity.[571] Finally, in September, apart from Joseph Kukalj who had died and Marko Rakić who sailed a month later, they left for Europe on the *Frankfurt* and made their way home after further delays in Suez and internment of up to three months in Alexandria.[572]

Did the return of these men, some of whom had experienced and become soured by gumfield prejudice, mistrust by Government, internment and – for all of them – a long, arduous voyage home, deter further emigration to New Zealand from the islands and villages of central Dalmatia? No. At least one of them (Spiro Talijancich) is known to have returned to the gumfields 11 years later. More importantly they appear to have had little if any adverse impact upon the established and ongoing process of chain migration by young men in search of work, the wives and daughters of men who had previously decided to settle in New Zealand, and especially 'letter' and proxy brides who joined the flow in larger numbers during the 1920s and

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[569] *Evening Post*, 19 May 1919, p.7.

[570] Mataga (2013:244-247) lists 96 individuals from an official record provided by Stephen Jelicich. Jelicich (2008:149-150), however, states that a group of 46 men travelled from Auckland to join the vessel in Wellington, where, according to an extended quote he presents from a report by Rakić, they "met 40 other countrymen" to bring the total on board to "119". Clearly the numbers don't add up and the picture is further confused by Stenning (1995:32-34) who states that "108 New Zealand Slavs [from the *Willochra*] were registered" upon arrival at the Liverpool internment camp in Australia.

[571] See extract from Rakić report in Jelicich (2008:150-152).

[572] Stenning (1995:32). The delays in Suez and Alexandria were reported by one of the men, Spiro Talijancich, in an interview at Dargaville with Stephen Jelicich in 1984. A copy of typed notes made from the interview may be obtained from the Dargaville Museum.

1930s. The negative aspects of the war, Home Service and internment were more than out-weighed by the promise of a better life in New Zealand.

Conclusion

To examine the foundations of early Croatian immigration and settlement this book has focused upon four cornerstones – the pioneers, chain migrants, the gumdiggers and enemy aliens – bringing together and integrating the findings of other researchers with information from new research resources in order to contribute to a growing pool of knowledge, to enhance understanding and to deepen appreciation of the Croatian thread in New Zealand's historical tapestry. In the course of this examination a number of misconceptions have been noted and challenged. The task now is to briefly summarise key findings for each of the four cornerstones, and to identify topics in need of further research on the foundations and beyond.

Five key findings have been identified for the pioneers. First, their birthplaces have been traced to ports, towns, villages and islands along the whole of the Croatian Adriatic coast from Trieste in the north to Kotor in the south. Although they included migrants from central Dalmatia and its off-shore islands (Hvar, Korčula, Brač and Vis), such men among the pioneers were few in number, not arriving in any appreciable numbers until the 1880s and 1890s. Second, their primary sphere of employment was as miners on the South Island goldfields of Otago and Westland in particular, as well as Thames in the North Island. Some pioneers may have achieved direct entry into work as publicans or contractors but these occupations were typically combined with mining activities at various times during their working lives. Others found their way into work as farmers, fishermen or labourers. With a handful of notable exceptions, however, farming appears to have been a less popular occupation than might have been expected, perhaps due to a shortage of capital rarely overcome with work as a contractor and especially as a miner subject to the whim of a fickle Lady Luck. Third, when it came to marriage the norm was out-group marriage with a bride born in Ireland, Scotland, England or Australia, a choice fraught with the prospect of cultural differences that may have had a negative affect upon some relationships with a spouse and children. Fourth, difficulties later in life were found in only a few cases but are indicative of the vulnerability of elderly men who lived on their own or were targeted by troublemakers because of their age, infirmity and possibly cultural distinctiveness. Finally, and most importantly, was the role of the pioneers as initiators of large migration chains. The fact that only three men (Paul Lupis, Mariano Vella and Paul Arnerich) from central Dalmatia are definitely known to have performed this role successfully *suggests* that: not all of the pioneers were equally motivated to assist their kith and kin at home; they were competing with their peers who settled and

did well elsewhere in the world; or that the norm of out-group marriage may have blunted their enthusiasm and ability to encourage and assist relatives and friends to join them.

The prime feature of the chain migrants' cornerstone was the restricted area of origin in central Dalmatia for the great majority of those naturalised in New Zealand during the periods 1890-1914 and 1918-1939. Built upon contacts with at least three pioneers and subsequently their close followers during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, this feature forged a link in a transnational framework for a flow of information about opportunities abroad whilst stamping its mark over successive decades upon the Croatian dialect, the residential patterns, village concentrations, occupations and relationships of settlers in New Zealand. A second feature of this cornerstone was its domination until 1900 by sojourners aspiring to attain landholder status or maintaintain self sufficiency when they returned home, joined by an influx from 1903 to World War I by young, single migrants typically subject to a measure of social control via letters and the presence of kith and kin from their Dalmatian home community. Contrary to popular belief, emigration did not necessarily entail the rupture of previous family relationships and obligations, especially for sojourners aspiring to attain independent landholder status and self-sufficiency when they returned home. Return migration, however, could not be guaranteed as evidenced by a third feature, namely a shift toward permanent migration with an associated increase in the proportion of females (e.g. as 'letter' or proxy brides, fiancées etc.) from 4 percent of all arrivals pre-1920 to 34 percent for the period 1920-1939. During the transition from temporary to permanent settlement, the process and character of chain migration was influenced by a fourth feature; namely, restrictions upon gumdigging first introduced in 1899 and especially by a policy implemented in 1926 that sought to cap the ultimate size and shape the composition of Croatian immigration. While the occupational restrictions served (to some degree) to encourage permanent settlement, the 1926 policy had the unintended effect of sustaining the very aspects of Croatian settlement that Government desired to change (i.e. residential concentration and resistance to assimilation) in the interests of maintaining cultural homogeneity.

In an extended examination of the causes of migration as part of the chain migrant cornerstone, it was argued that Dalmatian emigration was *not* due solely to a single factor (military service) but was the outcome of a complex set of often interrelated factors. These factors included: a history of foreign control that impeded indigenous socio-economic development; limited natural resources; a change in values with the penetration of capitalism; the

demise of the zadruga as a communal life-style; and a shift from a pure to a mixed peasant society extolling independent landholder status and self-sufficiency. Additional factors included: a 66 percent increase in the population between 1840 and 1914 (with a gain of almost 36 percent over the period 1880-1910 when emigration was at its highest); the fragmentation of landholdings; the absence or failure of indigenous political movements and reforms; and the remittances and personal examples provided by pioneer migrants, close followers and returning sojourners. Taken together, these diverse factors created conditions such that economic or political events could trigger rapid if short term peaks in emigration. Examples are the arrival of Phylloxera in coastal Istria about 1890 and adjacent areas of coastal Dalmatia in the early 1900's[573] the trade agreement between Austria and Italy in 1892 allowing imports of cheap Italian wine and which resulted in halving the selling price of Dalmatian wine[574] and wine blight in Dalmatia in 1897-8 that cut wine production by one third[575]. All of these events led to sojourner emigration to New Zealand to enable families to survive. From 1903 to 1914 the increasing instability in the Balkans with the increasing chance of war led many Croatians faced with conscription into the armed forces to seek long term or permanent emigration.

The employment of these new arrivals as gumdiggers, the third cornerstone of immigration and settlement, proved to be a mixed blessing for Auckland Province as a whole and Northland in particular. Around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gumdigging contributed significantly to exports, swamp drainage, farmland development, population growth and new settlements. At the same time, however, it also scarred the landscape: mounds of earth were left with unfilled holes; vegetation cover was destroyed along with fragile soils; roads were badly affected by the cartage of stores and extracted gum; and in some areas full settlement was delayed or negatively affected as gum market prices rose and fell.

At the start of Croatian involvement in gumdigging, gum could be found at shallow depths and many gumfields had not been opened up. As the easily won gum became exhausted, profitable mining of gum depended on experience, collective operations and hard labour, often in hazardous working conditions. Experienced cooperative Croatian groups, such as

[573] Spread of Phylloxera to Istria. Report by M Tisserand to the "Superior Commission on Phylloxera"1891

[574] Halving of wine price and impact of wine blight. "Vinogradarski slom I demografski rasaf juzne hrvatske u osvit 20 Stoljeca" by Rudolf Kraljevic

[575] Ibid.

Sokolichs, had sojourners arriving from before 1890 to 1914[576] Life was less pleasant for those with no experience and no connection with established groups, who soon learned that the initial outlay for tools, work clothes and stores could take months to recoup. Short term surges in immigration brought many such diggers to New Zealand. After 1905 gum became increasingly difficult to mine, but at the same time New Zealand's economy reached a buoyant stage, and it was not surprising to find increasing numbers of Croatians taking advantage of alternative employment or enterprises and becoming permanent settlers.

A small number, probably failing to achieve their goals, fell prey to mental illness, committed suicide or ended their days as lonely, isolated old men. Alcohol consumption and drunkenness was rife on the gumfields thanks in part to a third key feature – the production of what was known as "Austrian wine" from vineyards at Herekino and elsewhere in Northland (e.g. the Babich brothers at Kaikino near Awanui). Efforts to control production, to regulate sales of what was described as a "*vile*", "*maddening concoction*", made subsequent development difficult but from this beginning came the vineyards and orchards of West Auckland in later decades.

The fourth and fifth key features of the gumdigger cornerstone are to some degree related and deserve closer attention. Prompted by the fears and prejudices of "British" diggers (critical of well-organised, energetic, innovative competitors) and small landholders (relying on gumdigging for extra family income and farm development funds), Government introduced the Kauri Gum Industry Act in 1898 to stem the arrival of "Austrian birds of passage" who systematically stripped an area of its gum and remitted their savings to Dalmatia with (it was alleged) no benefit to New Zealand. As a fourth key cornerstone feature this Act had the effect, via restrictive residential and citizenship provisions, of stimulating the processes of naturalisation and occupational diversification. The latter process, already evident among sojourners seeking a better return than gumdigging offered, saw increasing numbers take up work as rural labourers, scrub cutters, drainage contractors and farmers while others moved into higher levels of the kauri gum industry as gum-buyers, storekeepers, gum merchants and entrepreneurs in the development of gum washing or cleaning ventures. Success was sometimes elusive, with bankruptcy a not uncommon outcome. Parallel with occupational diversification an increase in the rate of naturalisation, at first to meet particular citizenship provisions of the 1898

[576] Sokolich family numbers. Passenger lists from Sydney to Auckland between 1892 and 1914

Act, encouraged a shift in thinking toward permanent (rather than temporary) settlement together with thoughts of marriage and the establishment of a family.

As the choice of a partner was extremely limited on the gumfields, marriages or de facto relationships with Maori provided one option but was generally limited to Herekino and Mangonui Counties. Marriages to European New Zealand women initially outnumbered marriages to Croatian immigrant women and some of those married to New Zealanders became absorbed into the local New Zealand communities.[577]

Eventually marriages to local women were overtaken by the arrival of 'letter' brides, fiancées and other women from the homeland as the pace of occupational diversification plus an associated movement into towns and cities throughout the North Island accelerated. The arrival of women, the fifth key feature of the gumdigger cornerstone, served to modify the form and composition of chain migration and to consolidate the process of settlement, laying the foundations of community relationships and organisations that proved resistant to some aspects of assimilation. For women where husbands had turned to farming but kept the door open to gumdigging as a source of additional income, life was especially hard as they struggled with their isolation, lack of English language expertise, homesickness, farm development, gumdigging, household duties and family health problems (including infant and/or child mortality). These trials were often forged into personal narratives of sacrifice to chronicle their lives and (at times) to chasten children and forgetful husbands.

At the beginning of the chapter on enemy aliens, the fourth cornerstone examined in this study, attention was drawn to the account by Revel Lochore with respect to the Dalmatian records for military service and Home Service during the First World War. It was an ill-informed account and the general aim here has been to set the record straight. Examination of this cornerstone is set within the context of gumfield tensions arising first from a prejudiced perception of the migrants' potential as an economic threat, and second from a negative view of their contribution to the war effort. The first key point to emerge from the evidence available was that Croatians from Dalmatia did *not* have a "vague sympathy with the Serbian cause", as Lochore asserted, *nor* did they stand aloof from the subsequent struggles on the battlefields of Gallipoli, Palestine and especially on the Western Front. Within days of Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia, and before Britain declared war on

[577] Marriage to European New Zealanders, "The Stayers", P.D. Mataga, Table 1

Germany and Austria-Hungary, a small demonstration was held outside the Austrian Consul's office in Auckland, far-removed from the gumfields and other employment opportunities of North Auckland where the majority laboured. The second key point identified was that among those who were naturalised a small number enlisted and served abroad with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Their personal costs and contribution may be crudely measured in terms of: duration of service; lives lost; wounds sustained; hospitalisation; and the proportion discharged as medically unfit for further active war service. To put it bluntly they paid for their beliefs and loyalty to their new home with their lives, their blood and their general well-being. They fought alongside other New Zealanders, contributing to the war effort and (as part of the ANZAC legend) to shaping New Zealand's future identity as an independent nation.

A third key point was that the small number involved (36 eligible immigrants whose files have been traced) was primarily due to the nationality issue which severely restricted enlistment and was discussed in meetings and correspondence with Government members and officials at various times over the period 1914-1917. That the issue was never resolved to the complete satisfaction of all concerned was due as much to Government's excessive caution as to factions among the immigrants. It may, of course, be argued that despite the obstacle of nationality the number of volunteers was miniscule in relation to the number naturalised (a pool of about 600-700) and therefore eligible for enlistment. This argument gains some support from the 31 New Zealand-born recruits drawn from the smaller pool of those with pioneer and early follower Croatian ancestry. Such a comparison, however, also draws attention to the fact that the latter group, raised in almost all cases by mothers with British ancestry, were educated in New Zealand and fluent in English. On the other hand, for immigrant Croatians subject to years of opposition and prejudice on the gumfields, there was little incentive to volunteer, especially with limited English that impeded communication and probably caused more than one recruiting officer to be dismissive of prospective recruits. Other factors deterring enlistment *may* have included: a reluctance to face the possibility of having to take up arms against kith and kin conscripted into the Austrian armed forces; fears that enlistment, however remote, might endanger or affect the long-term wellbeing of family still in Dalmatia; and a desire, among temporary migrants in particular, to return and fulfil ongoing responsibilities to parents and siblings after the war. Nor can one ignore, among the settlers, legitimate exemptions to initial voluntary recruitment and later conscription arising from: age; work-related ill-health and associated disabilities; and self-employment in an industry (farming), of national importance, experiencing a shortage of labour.

With regard to Home Service and internment, Lochore suggests irrational resistance to Home Service registration and subsequent conscription, and then asserts that *"a dozen men refused to perform national [i.e. Home] service and were...interned as pro-Austrian*". On the basis of the internment categories and examples provided, one cannot avoid questioning Lochore's interpretation of events and the justice of what was done. Putting aside the clear infringement of war regulations (failure to obtain a travel permit, etc.), and some purely civil reasons for internment (e.g. Ferri's conviction and Piskulich's drunken brawling) – events that pre-dated the introduction of Home Service – it may be argued as a fourth key point of the cornerstone that blame for the problems and troubles that beset those involved should include a combination of factors. These included: the long delay in the scheme's introduction (January 1918); the terms and conditions of work; the end of hostilities in Europe (November 1918); the post-war continuance of Home Service directed-labour until 1919; the impact of the influenza epidemic (October to December 1918); creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (December 1918), which highlighted the friendly status of Croatian aliens; and apparent clashes between some Home Service supervisors and their charges on certain work sites.

A fifth key point for the cornerstone is that the above list of factors must include the appointment of an authoritarian, officious and intolerant Commissioner. John Cullen was clearly prejudiced with respect to particular individuals such as Mathew Ferri and Peter Sulenta, and the possibility of general ethnic prejudice cannot be dismissed. In fairness to Cullen it must be acknowledged that wartime public xenophobia would hardly have helped him to remain objective and tolerant. Furthermore, Cullen's career had been one of law-enforcement and command. His work had focused on laws and regulations to be respected and obeyed. As an Inspector then Commissioner of Police, backed by in-service discipline, he would have expected directives to be respected and obeyed by those under his authority, and he clearly expected the same in his role as the Commissioner for Home Service organisation. But the men concerned, who had to be registered and assigned to work sites, were not policemen and the majority were not even naturalised British subjects. They were determined men, generally anti-Austrian, and debarred from the Expeditionary Force because of their lack of citizenship via naturalisation. Their spokesmen were convinced of their rights (e.g. for pay and working conditions) and were prepared to argue for such rights when required. Such actions earned them the Commissioner's earmark as "disloyal agitators" who should be interned and eventually repatriated. A refusal to perform Home Service because of a pro-Austrian loyalty or sympathy probably accounted for more than the "dozen men" interned as

reported by Lochore but for only a fraction of the 66 men known to have been interned over the period 1914-1918.

Future Research on the Foundations and Beyond

The following research topics are offered as a list of suggestions for readers keen to contribute to the pool of knowledge on Croatian immigration and settlement. It is not a definitive list. Your choice will, of course, be influenced by your particular interest, background and needs but to ensure an effective contribution you are strongly advised, *before* beginning to collect information, to familiarise yourself with any work already done on the topic, the relevant resources available and research techniques that may be required. A good place to begin is the material held by the Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society (DG&HS) in Auckland. As always, thorough preparation helps to avoid frustration and disappointments for the researcher and readers.

Suggested research topics

Some of the following topics, or parts thereof, are more difficult to tackle than others thanks to the erosive passage of time, a lack of documentation, the death of people concerned and the resources required. Don't be put off. Seek advice from the DG&HS or some other reputable source and where necessary adapt a topic or aspects of it as required by your position, resources and interests.

- *Family history, biography or memoir*: a useful starting point for the new researcher that may include or be built around the biography or memoir of one or more key family members and be either a complete life story or focused upon a particular phase in a family's or person's life. Of special interest would be studies of: (a) pioneers whose stories have not yet been made accessible to a wider audience; (b) close followers (1880-1900) who during their working lives played a special role in establishing or consolidating a migration chain from central Dalmatia (e.g. the Vrgorac area); and of (c) your own family members or ancestors who arrived during the period 1900-1939 and whose life experiences embrace features from at least one of the Croatian settlement cornerstones. An important point to remember is that accounts of lives that appear to be ordinary and mundane are as valuable to our understanding of migration and settlement as accounts that are unique and extraordinary.

- *In towns and cities*: although the pattern of urban residence and employment increased rapidly after 1920 with the process of occupational diversification and the shift to permanent settlement, the presence of Croatians in New Zealand's small rural townships, provincial centres and cities can be traced back to pioneers and close followers who worked as publicans, boarding house proprietors, retailers, harbour board employees etc. For this topic there is a long-standing need for studies of: (a) Croatian boarding houses, gambling dens and billiard rooms in Auckland from the 1880s onwards; (b) the entry into restaurants, cafes and fish ships throughout the North Island's provincial towns and larger cities since the early 1900s; (c) the growth and decline of Croatian settlement and businesses in the inner city area of Auckland (i.e. Victoria Street West, Hobson Street, Federal Street and Nelson Street) from 1900 until 1970; and (d) the growth and decline of the quarrying community of Mt. Wellington. Such studies could include biographies of leading business proprietors.
- *Farming*: a topic that has for too long been taken for granted without the careful attention it deserves. Research is needed on Croatians in: (a) the dairying industry, for both milk production and the administration of cooperatives; and (b) other livestock farming or agriculture. Particular (but not exclusive) attention could be given to farming in localities that were former swamplands or gumlands brought into production by Croatians and their New Zealand-born children. A focus upon individual examples of success, average achievers and failures (if any) would be useful to identify and demonstrate factors contributing to outcomes in a given locality and to differences between localities such as the Northern Wairoa, Herekino, around Kaitaia-Awanui, Whangarei and the Hauraki Plains.
- *The fishing industry*: the contributions of immigrants and those of Croatian descent to catching and processing fish have attracted increased attention during recent decades. There is now a need to integrate and consolidate what has been learned with regard to: (a) the early history of Croatian fishing in New Zealand, including their contribution to the growth and development of seine-net fishing as part of the Auckland fleet; (b) factors contributing to the initial growth and subsequent decline of particular companies; and (c) factors shaping the emergence and success of highly successful companies such as Vela Fishing and Talley's Group Ltd. Both of the latter companies are privately owned and deserve overdue in-depth

case studies. Vela Fishing is a global trading company and the family also has major interests in the breeding, rearing and sales of racing thoroughbreds. Talley's (established in 1936 by Ivan Talijancich a.k.a. Ivan Talley) is a major agribusiness company located in the South Island with three divisions for seafood, dairy and vegetable products.

- *Vineyards and orchards*: the two went hand in hand in the businesses of most Auckland Croatian families (especially in the Oratia and Henderson localities) until specialisation set in after 1945. Today rather more is known about the vineyards and their wines than the orchards but there is still ample room for further studies. In particular, research is needed: (a) to trace the impact of specific factors underlying the growth and decline of orchards in different areas as a result of urban growth, local government regulations and the role of New Zealand-born generations in family-owned and operated enterprises; (b) to identify broad trends and patterns in the location and production of vineyards since the 1950s, with particular attention to examples of small and medium family enterprises; and (c) to produce case studies of the changing fortunes of large companies. With regard to the latter a high standard has recently been set by Kerry Tyack in his book on George Fistonich and Villa Maria.[578] One would hope to see similar efforts made with regard to Babich Wines, Kumeu River Wines (Brajkovich), the Nobilo Wine Group and Selak's Wines.

- *Displaced persons, refugees and skilled immigrants*: not all Croatians arriving since 1945 were chain migrants from central Dalmatia. Among them were four other groups of Croatians (as defined by their birthplace, parentage, ancestry or last place of residence): displaced persons – uprooted by war as well as some P.O.Ws in Germany and Italy who decided not to return home – admitted to New Zealand as part of the International Refugee Organization resettlement scheme between 1949 and 1952; 'hard-core' or 'handicapped' refugees (i.e. persons difficult to resettle for a variety of reasons), admitted initially as part of New Zealand's commitment to World Refugee Year (1958) and later on humanitarian grounds; skilled workers recruited in 1965/1966 on two-year contracts by Fletcher Holdings Ltd. for work on the Marsden Point Power Station and other projects, plus those hired by the Utah Construction and Mining Company in 1966/1967 to fill vacancies on the Manapouri power project; and skilled

[578] Tyack, 2012

immigrants arriving in the 1990s via applications made under a General Category implemented in November 1991 and a more stringent General Skills Category that took effect in October 1995. For each of these four groups, research could usefully examine: (a) the reasons for departing from the homeland; (b) their characteristics (cultural, demographic, socio-economic); (c) difficulties they experienced after arrival; (d) adaptive strategies employed to overcome such difficulties; and (e) factors affecting the outcome of these strategies over time.

- *Segmented assimilation of New Zealand-born children*: this topic has attracted some attention in Pacific Islander and Asian communities but has been ignored by most European groups, including Croatians, despite its importance in relation to New Zealand's increasing cultural diversity and its evolving multicultural society. It is now more or less well understood that the children of immigrants usually adapt and are assimilated into the new society more quickly than their parents, but that the ease and rapidity of this assimilation is typically uneven over time and easier to attain in some areas of their lives (e.g. language, attitudes and employment) than others (e.g. family values). This unevenness arises in accord with: changing socio-economic conditions in the host society; their personal characteristics (including education); their home environment, parentage (e.g. mixed versus in-group marriages) and parental expectations; place of residence; opportunities for in-group versus out-group contacts and relationships, etc.[579] Bearing in mind the huge changes that have occurred in New Zealand since the early 1920s, research on this topic could very usefully focus upon any of the following: (a) family case studies of children born in different decades (e.g. the 1920s, 1940s and 1960s) and localities (e.g. rural, small town and large urban centres) with respect to differentials in their aspects of assimilation; (b) case studies to identify gender differences in aspects of assimilation among children by time period, residential location and place of education; and (c) the role played by Croatian voluntary associations as compared with mainstream voluntary clubs and societies in facilitating and/or hampering aspects of cultural, economic and social assimilation.

Whatever aspects you focus on for your research topic it is strongly recommended that you include in your report material on: the difficulties

[579] For useful discussions of the concept of segmented assimilation research in the United States and Europe, see Stepick and Stepick (2010) and Vermuelen (2010).

encountered; limitations imposed by these difficulties; innovations or new resources (if used) to overcome such limitations; and copies of personal letters, official documents, newspaper reports and photographs used in support of your findings. It would also be extremely helpful to other researchers if a typed copy of your manuscript was submitted to the DG&HS archive along with any reasonable restrictions on access if necessary.

Like the cornerstones examined in this book each of the research topics listed above will contribute not only to a growing body of knowledge but to a better under-standing and appreciation of the struggles and achievements of Croatian settlers and successive generations of New Zealand-born children. Each completed topic is also another step forward that adds to a sharper sense of personal identity in answer to the key underlying question: "*Who do you think you are*?" Given the dynamic, evolving quality of identity there is, of course, no definitive answer to this question. Today, in New Zealand's rapidly emerging multicultural population and society that celebrates different origins and the value of diversity, there is an increasing need to cherish one's identity and (as part of this endeavour) to formally recognise Croatian achievers who can be sources of pride and role models for their community. There will no doubt be those who shy away from any suggestion of difference because of the possible cultural, social and political implications. To those persons there can be only one answer – we are all New Zealanders, but we also take pride in our particular origin and cultural heritage.



Appendix 1
The Elingamite Affair

On 9 November 1902, while on a regular run from Sydney to Auckland, the steamship *Elingamite* ran ashore (in thick fog) on West Island in the Three Kings Islands. The ship sank in 20 minutes. A total of 45 lives were lost (28 of the 136 passengers and 17 of the 58 crewmen) as a result of drowning or exposure. Also lost was a consignment of silver and gold coins valued at £17,300 despatched by the Bank of New South Wales to branches in New Zealand. Several attempts were later made to recover this treasure before a modest level of success was achieved in 1968.[580]

Of interest here is that 11 of the passengers were "Austrians" from Dalmatia, all of whom were among the survivors. Nine of these men (and their birthplaces) were Mate Beros, Mijo Borich, Luka Lunjevich, Mate Sumich (all from Podgora), Dick Fredatovich (from Vrbanj, island of Hvar), Mijo Markotich (Vrgorac), Jure Pribicevich (Zaostrog), Jure Prodan (Veliko Brdo, Makarska district) and Ante Rosandich (possibly Podgora but maybe Sucuraj, island of Hvar).[581] As often happens in such cases there were conflicting early reports about events as the ship sank, especially with regard to the behaviour of some passengers. In particular, it was reported that: the Austrians, disregarding the safety of women and children, had tried to rush the lifeboats; that an officer had to cut down one of the Austrians with an axe, "*though the cowardly wretch was not seriously injured*"; and that when they secured places in the boats the Austrians shirked their share of work needed to get the crafts to shore. Although these allegations were denied by those concerned, it was clearly implied by a number of newspapers (apart from the Christchurch *Press*) that all of the Austrians survived because they

[580] See Doak (1969) for an account of the successful attempt to recover treasure and other aspects of the *Elingamite* affair.

[581] Five survivors are identified by Ante Kosovich (1908:19-27) in his epic poem about the *Elingamite*. Mate Beros and Mate Sumic (i.e. Sumich) are identified as survivors picked up by the *Zealandia* (see *Evening Post*, 13 November 1902, p.5 – this report also lists 4 of those identified by Ante Kosovich, but their first name identification and spelling of surnames varies considerably. Two more names – Dick Fredatovich, Ante Rosandich – were supplied by Jelicich (2008: 81-82) who also lists the names Ante Kosovich included in his poem.

acted without thought for the safety of others; in short, they had not conducted themselves like English gentlemen.[582]

However, Jure Pribicevich, one of the 11 Dalmatian survivors, provided an *Auckland Star* representative with a completely different account of their behaviour. Speaking via an interpreter, Jure reported that:

> *We came on deck after breakfast on Sunday at about 8am when there was a heavy fog all around us. The vessel was then going at slow speed, her engines having been slowed down about 7 o'clock. We were standing forward, keeping a lookout with the sailors. At about 10.30 o'clock we saw in front of us a line of breakers, showing us that we were close to the rocks. Then we all shouted, and the sailors ran aft and we heard the captain ring the bell in the engine-room. Then the vessel struck a rock ...*
>
> *When the vessel struck everybody ran to assist in getting the boats down, and to put the ladies and children aboard. They were put in the boats as they reached the level of the rail when being lowered. We assisted to get three boats down, and when No.3 reached the water, all the women and children having left the ship, the captain gave orders for the men to make for the boats and to save themselves. We tried to get into the boats with the others, but some of the sailors and firemen tried to push [us] back. There was then only one Austrian in the boat, which contained a number of English sailors. The captain of the Elingamite interfered, and told them that the lives of the Austrians should be saved just as much as their own, and gave orders for them to allow the men to go aboard. Seven of us got into one boat, one into another, and three into a third. I got into the boat with seven [?six] others. If it had not been for the orders of the captain I believe we all would have had to remain on the Elingamite, and would have been drowned. All of us are very grateful to the captain. Some of the Austrians jumped into the boat, others jumped into the water and were pulled on board.*
>
> *The boat pulled away from the wreck, and we assisted, some of us bailing out while others pulled on the oars... One man was under the seats, and he did not help, but the others were all at work ...*
>
> *We all come from coastal districts and know how to handle boats and were pleased to handle an oar. The Austrians took their coats off while rowing and the English sailors borrowed these for a few hours, but*

[582] For an example of hostile reporting, see *Taranaki Herald*, 14 November 1902, p.5, and for a very restrained report – wherein the writer expressed a preference "to say nothing until we have had definite and positive information on the subject" – see *Press*, 14 November 1902, p.4.

when on landing we asked for them back we could not get them again until on board the [rescue vessel] Zealandia on arrival in Auckland.

There was a keg of whisky aboard, but none of it was offered to us, and we never had anything but water to drink the whole time. There was also some tobacco, but we did not get a smoke, and a box of tobacco which one Austrian had was handed over to the sailors. When we reached the landing the ladies were landed first and they were put under a tent. They were taken off first when the Zealandia arrived, and we were left to the last.

We were all surprised to be told of the statement that we had not assisted. One Austrian, Mijo Borich, was in a boat with English sailors and passengers, and he rowed for the whole eight hours until the landing was reached, receiving a little assistance from a lady who gave him a few minutes spell occasionally. The other men took turn about in pulling. We ate limpets, crabs and pippies on the island, and helped to gather them for the ladies and children.[583]

With ill-feeling and outright prejudice toward "Austrians" already rife on the gumfields, the *Elingamite* disaster seemed set to exacerbate the situation. Against this background, Eugen Langguth, the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Consul, conducted an inquiry on 15 and 17 November 1902 with respect to the behaviour of the 11 Dalmatians. The inquiry was attended by all of the Dalmatian survivors as well as passengers whose published accounts contained grave accusations against them. Captain Ernest Atwood, the *Elingamite's* master, was unable to attend but forwarded an explanation indicating that he personally had no accusations to make.[584] Langguth later reported that none of the other passengers he examined could substantiate their charges when confronted with the "Austrians".[585]

In response to an application by the Collector of Customs on behalf of the Marine Department, an official magisterial inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the wreck of the *Elingamite* began in Auckland on 28 November 1902. By the time the inquiry concluded (13 January 1903), evidence had been given by Captain Atwood, the surviving officers, and a large number of

[583] "A different version," *Auckland Star*, 13 November 1902, p.2. This account differs slightly from that cited by Doak (1969:190-191).

[584] *Auckland Star*, 17 November 1902, p.7.

[585] *Auckland Star*, 23 January 1903, p.6.

the crew and passengers.[586] In its findings, issued 19 January 1903, the Court of Inquiry found: Captain Atwood guilty of grossly negligent navigation; that Captain Atwood had committed a grave error of judgment in allowing the No.1 lifeboat to leave the ship with only half the number of people it was able to carry; that Captain Atwood and the first officer were to blame for not having all lifeboats properly equipped (with a compass and provisions), the launching tackle in proper order and the crew efficiently exercised in boat drill; and that the ship's engines were not in perfect working order.[587]

Once the Court's findings were issued, Langguth took obvious pleasure in writing to the editor of the *Auckland Star*, declaring:

> *Everybody who has followed the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry knows well that not a single word of accusation on the part of the captain, officers, crew or passengers... was made against the Austrians, although a special opportunity was given by the chairman.*
>
> *In my opinion the inquiry has done the Austrians good, as people can now see clearly that a certain section of people take every opportunity of attacking them, simply, perhaps, because they are foreigners.*

No doubt still smarting from the injustice of newspaper reports that had prompted his own inquiry, Langguth probably relished the opportunity to conclude by wondering just how English passengers would behave in similar circumstances on an Austrian boat, not knowing the language and unable to understand the orders given.

> *... I am inclined to think they would also decline to be put on one side and quietly stand by whilst the others saved themselves; but this is what was apparently expected from the Austrians by a number of people, who apparently believe no one else but themselves are possessed of manly qualities.*[588]

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[586] For daily newspaper reports on the inquiry proceedings, see: *Auckland Star*, 26 November 1902, p.2; 27 November 1902, p.4; 28 November 1902, p.5 continued p.2; 29 November 1902, p.6 continued p.5;
1 December 1902, p.5 continued p.2; 2 December 1902, p.5 continued p.2; 3 December 1902, p.3 continued p.5 and p.2; 4 December 1902, p.3; 5 December 1902, p.5 continued p.2; 6 December 1902, p.3; 8 December 1902, p.2; 9 December 1902, p.5 continued p.2; 10 December 1902, p.3 continued p.5 and p.6; 11 December 1902, p.3; 16 December 1902, p.5; 19 December 1902, p.5; 23 December 1902, p.5; 24 December 1902, p.6; 12 January 1903, p.2; 13 January 1903, p.2; and 14 January 1903, p.3.

[587] *Auckland Star*, 19 January 1903, p.5.

[588] *Auckland Star*, 23 January 1903, p.6.

Eight years later (1910) an Australian naval survey proved that the charted position of the Three Kings Islands was in error by as much as a mile and a half. Special legislation (the *Elingamite* Re-hearing Act) was consequently passed in October 1911 to enable the inquiry to be re-opened. The re-hearing was conducted in the Supreme Court in December 1911 before the Chief Justice (Sir Robert Stout) and two assessors. Captain Ernest Atwood was exonerated.[589]

[589] For daily newspaper reports of the re-hearing proceedings and the decision reached, see: *Dominion*, 11 December 1911, p.3; 12 December 1911, p.3; and 13 December 1911, p.4.

Appendix 2
Croatian Language Newspapers, 1899-1919

A notable feature of the gumdigger period was the publication of nine Croatian language newspapers. Their names and other key details were as follows:[590]

Bratska Sloga [Brotherly Unity], Auckland; proprietor Antun Bulat; editors Antun Bulat and Mathew Ferri; 4 issues, published in Croatian and English (holdings, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington).

Danica [Morning Star], Auckland; proprietors Ivan Segetin, Ivan Pavlinovich, and Baldo Marusich; editor Ivan Segetin; 2-4 issues, published 1899 (no known holdings).

Hrvatsko Glasilo [Croatian Herald], Auckland; proprietor and editor Peter Luksich; 6-8 issues, published 1903 (no known holdings).

Napredak [Progress], Auckland; proprietor British and Austrian Newspaper Company; editor Mathew Ferri; numerous issues, published 1906-1909 (holdings, Auckland Public Library).

Hrvatsko Trubilo [Croatian Bugle], Kaitaia; proprietor unknown; editor Anton Sulenta; number of issues unknown, published 1908 (no known holdings).

Glas Istine [The Voice of Truth], Dargaville; proprietors and editors Tony Suvaljko and Grgo Ravlich; number of issues unknown, published 1908-1910 (no known holdings).[591]

Sloga [Unity], Auckland; proprietor and editor Tony Suvaljko; estimated 20 issues, published 1912-1913 (one issue held by ???).

Zora [Dawn] and (from May 1916) *Zora, The Dawn, The Southern Slav Bulletin*, Auckland; proprietor Croatian Publishing Co. Ltd; editors George Scansie, Bartul Mihaljevich, Andrew Frankovich and John Petricevich; numerous issues, partly in English, published August 1913-

[590] This list is an amended version of one first published in Jelicich and Trlin (1997:277).

[591] According to a report in the *Auckland Star* (13 September 1909, p.3), Mr R. Halpin, foreman printer of the *North Auckland Times*, resigned from his position in September 1909 to go into partnership with Tony Suvaljko with the intention of publishing *Glas Istine* at Auckland instead of Dargaville.

January 1917 (holdings Auckland Museum Library, and private collections).

Novi Svjet [New World], Auckland; proprietor and editor Mathew Ferri; number of issues unclear, one or more in English, published 1919 (holdings, one copy, ???).

What were the contents of these newspapers and why were they so short-lived? An answer to the first part of this question has been provided by Damir Trupinic using seven analytical categories for a content examination of *Bratska Sloga, Napredak* (both edited by Mathew Ferri) and *Zora* (edited by George Scansie).[592] He found that *Bratska Sloga's* content was heavily weighted toward material on New Zealand's Croatian community (44 percent of column space), particularly items concerned with the work of Croatian organisations, employment and immigrant settlement. Most of the column space remaining consisted of: items in the miscellaneous category (15.5 percent, notably Croatian fiction, poetry, etc.); overseas news, apart from material on the homeland (13 percent); and New Zealand affairs (10.5 percent, mainly on immigration). Surprisingly little space was accounted for by advertisements (9.5 percent), indicating a weak source of revenue, and items concerned with the homeland (3.1 percent) that could be expected to attract readers who were generally sojourners. Aside from much more space devoted to advertising (25.5 percent), the content of *Napredak* during its first year of publication (1906) was very similar to that of *Bratska Sloga*. Lessons learned from *Bratska Sloga* were thereafter applied by Ferri with some success. In *Napredak's* final year of publication (1909) a revenue healthy 26.5 percent of column space was still accounted for by advertising, while space devoted to the Croatian community in New Zealand had dropped from 32.4 to 21.1 percent and the space taken by homeland items had increased from 3.3 to 13.4 percent along with a smaller increase (15.8 to 19.2 percent) in other overseas news items.

The content analysis of *Zora* revealed, as expected, both similarities and differences for the period 1913-1916. Content was initially dominated by two categories: advertisements (24.9 percent), for commercial products and services rather than jobs or real estate; and items concerned with foreign affairs (20.7 percent) – primarily politics – outside the homeland and New Zealand. Both of these categories, however, experienced a decline in space,

[592] See Trupinic (2004:13) for table titled "Percentage of the column space…associated with the main and sub-categories" and Trupinic (2004:5-12) for a description of his methodology and analytical categories.

especially during 1916, to 13.6 and 9.4 percent, respectively. Over the same period, significant increases were identified for items concerned with: the Croatian community in New Zealand (19 to 37.6 percent), particularly group activity such as the work of and need for support of various organisations; and the homeland (12.3 to 20.6 percent), notably articles dealing with Croatian history, language, nationality or the concept of Jugoslavia. Aside from legal information, for which no items were identified despite the imposition of war regulations, the space devoted to New Zealand affairs (e.g. immigration, politics) and miscellaneous material (e.g. literary items) was relatively small and fairly stable. Overall, the decline in advertising column space probably heralded *Zora's* demise in January 1917 because of adverse national, social and economic conditions, while the expansion of space for both the homeland and Croatian community categories signalled the editor's and possibly readers' perceptions of special wartime needs.

Aside from the absence of certain types of content material that could be satisfied by mainstream host society publications, the short life of the newspapers was rooted in two other factors. First, the relatively small, mobile and widely scattered nature of the gumdigging readership made it very difficult to gain more than 500 subscribers, even with the aid of roving agents appointed to sell subscriptions and gather news. Second, and probably more important, were the personality and 'mission' characteristics of the proprietors and editors – a factor well illustrated by both Ferri and Scansie.

The passage of the Kauri Gum Industry Act 1898 and restrictions on the immigration of Austrians from Dalmatia provoked a reaction led by Antun Bulat and Mathew Ferri in *Bratska Sloga* with the nominal support of the Austrian Consul, Eugen Langguth, who declared (*Bratska Sloga*, 29 May 1899) that it had become:

> *... absolutely necessary that we should write and resist as much as possible the attacks made against us, and the appearance of a newspaper on the Croatian language is an important step in the union of our as yet scattered forces.*

But only a month after the paper's appearance it was suggested that it had failed to gain a large circulation because of its lack of opposition to Government actions, and Ferri admitted that some of his countrymen found him wanting in patriotism.

Ferri's shortcomings, however, probably related more to his other objectives and actions. In his first editorial – as Bulat's assistant but actually the main editor and contributor – he presented a statement of policy (*Bratska Sloga*,

15 May 1899) that stands as a prime expression of a foreign language newspaper's function:

> *There are very few who can make themselves understood in English; and even the few who have some knowledge of that language can express themselves very indifferently in it, and have no means of knowing the current news of the day, or to become acquainted with the views and actions of our public men. It seemed to us necessary that some means should be provided to these people expressed in a language understood by them.*

The presentation of news on New Zealand affairs, including kauri gum prices (introduced to appease 'British' diggers who felt the Dalmatians were being cheated and their product glutting the market) would certainly have assisted readers in their contacts with the host society. Such items, together with advertisements for Croatian businesses, lists of arrivals, notices from the Austrian Consul, obituaries and similar items of interest to readers, also established a pattern for other publications (including *Napredak*) to emulate. Where then was the problem?

The problem was Ferri's desire to achieve harmony between his compatriots and other New Zealand residents. His efforts in this regard were more or less doomed because he expressed aspirations not shared by most of his countrymen. For example, to counter criticism of "Austrians" from Dalmatia as "birds of passage," seeking to make £200-£400 before returning home, he advocated permanent settlement, extolling the advantages of life in New Zealand and (in both *Bratska Sloga* and *Napredak*) the need to learn English as a path to advancement. He was apparently unwilling to accept that temporary migration was rooted in aspirations to attain individual landholding and self-sufficiency in Dalmatia, not overseas. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that his vision of permanent settlement – reiterated in *Napredak* (1 December 1906) in a plea to readers to wake up, to grasp the opportunities available – were rejected by most Dalmatian sojourners at that time.

Another reason for Ferri's failure lay in attempts to influence the behaviour and business practices of some compatriots and his scathing attacks on rival newspapers. In *Napredak*, for example, he was critical of: Croatian boardinghouses that provided expensive, overcrowded, unhygienic accommodation with poor food (29 May 1907); and men who failed to maintain contact with and support for families left in Dalmatia (9 December 1908). Such criticism, though laudable, was hardly likely to win additional advertising or new subscribers in a small, tight-knit ethnic community. Nor

would Ferri and his *Bratska Sloga* co-editor and proprietor Antun Bulat have endeared themselves to readers with their blistering personal attack on rival Ivan Segetin – described as "Lucifer big donkey (or big dunce)" (29 May 1899) – and subsequent dismissal (12 June 1899) of his newspaper:

> *We are in receipt of the second number of Danica and we find that from beginning to end there is no interesting literary matter whatever ... the peasant gumdigging class are not fitted for literary purposes.*

Segetin took legal action, charging Bulat with having written and published a "*false, scandalous, malicious and defamatory libel.*" The Police Court magistrate, however, decided there was no case to answer and declined to commit Bulat for trial. A year later Antun Bulat filed a petition for bankruptcy, stating that *Bratska Sloga* (started with capital of about £30) had not paid its way and was stopped after just two months.[593]

Zora, edited by Scansie (and briefly by Bartul Mihaljevich in 1915) enjoyed wider support than either of Ferri's publications. Following the establishment of the Croatian Publishing Company in 1913, printing commenced in 1913 with the bold aim of "*upholding the rights and promoting the unity of the Slavonian People*". From the outset, therefore, and particularly after the outbreak of war in 1914, *Zora* was essentially an organ of pro-Slav propaganda. In a letter to Col. C.M. Gibbon (Chief of General Staff) in April 1917, Scansie stated that:

> *... Zora ...was published in the Slav language in accordance with the Jugoslav programme set out about fifteen years ago, viz to liberate Jugoslav people under Austria and unite them with their self governed brothers – the Serbs. To do this was a very difficult task in Austria, hence many papers were published in America and from there circulated to Austria. My share of the work was in the publication of Zora, through which medium I pointed out the despotism of Austria and the golden liberty with Serbia ...*[594]

After affiliation with the London Jugoslav Committee in 1916 the paper became *Zora, The Dawn, The Southern Slav Bulletin* and its aims were also impressively expanded.

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[593] See: *Auckland Star*, 28 June 1899, p.5 and 29 June 1899, p.3 (re the libel hearing); and *Auckland Star*, 20 June 1900, p.4 (re Bulat's bankruptcy petition).

[594] Scansie to Gibbon, letter, 16 April 1917, Department of Defence file AD 10/527 (correspondence re G.L. Scansie), Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

> *Our programme consists of the deliverance of all Jugoslavs from the Austrian yoke and union with their free brothers in Serbia and Montenegro in one united state. One of the best and surest means of attaining the realisation of this programme is to inform the public of the allied nations of the true state of things, through the medium of the press and by publication of a newspaper* (*Zora*, 13 May 1916).

The case for implementing this programme can only be appreciated against the background of prejudice and hostility initially nurtured on the northern gumfields during the 1890s and early 1900s toward the "Austrian birds of passage". Intense feelings of patriotism aroused by the war had resulted in increased verbal attacks upon the "aliens in the north" who were often incorrectly perceived: to be unwilling to undertake military service; to take advantage of military call-up to buy land or properties vacated by departing New Zealanders; and to demand higher rates of pay once the labour shortage became evident. As explained in Chapters 4 and 5, charges were also made in local newspapers and at public meetings of sexual offences by enemy aliens, debauchery among rural Maori women intoxicated by locally produced "Austrian wine" and of the alleged existence of a fifth column training on the gumfields.

Under these circumstances Scansie's mission was quite clear; he was to secure an understanding of as well as sympathy and tolerance for his compatriots. In striving to fulfill this mission the sustained propaganda of *Zora* gave migrants from the Dalmatian coast a new public identity as ethnic Croatians and subsequently as Jugoslav (South Slav) citizens. Until then they were indifferently classed and discriminated against as "Austrians". The content and quality of Scansie's arguments are clearly illustrated by an editorial (*Zora*, 3 January 1914), published some 7 months *before* the outbreak of the First World War, titled "*Croatians or Austrians*?"

> *After 1868, when the Austrian Government seriously started Pan-German politics against the Pan-Slavs, the political situation of the Southern Slavs of both Monarchies, Austria and Hungary, became absolutely cruel and unbearable ... culture, agriculture, industry and various other branches of national life were hardly existent in the Slav States ... It is almost impossible to explain the misery suffered by the Southern Slavs ... under this despotic regime of Austria ... These stringent conditions have compelled thousands of Croatians to leave their native soil to seek release in countries across the sea ... During recent years over one million Croatians have left their country for the overseas Dominions of the Empire of Great Britain, United States of America etc., not on account of poverty, but to escape the tyran[ny] and depression of the Austrian Government.*

> *On the arrival of Croats in New Zealand, the colonists mistook them for Austrians and unfortunately the name has stuck to them ever since ... the very name of Austrians is distasteful to them...*
>
> *We would take this opportunity to respectfully ask the New Zealand authorities, the newspapers, and the general public of New Zealand, when referring to members of our nationality to call them 'Croatians' not Austrians ... This paper will do its best to introduce the name of 'Croatian' amongst English speaking people of this colony and would call upon all Croats residing here to assist.*

An image of persecuted, exploited peoples was created to win support from New Zealanders who knew little (if anything) about a remote Slav backwater somewhere in the Balkans. Austrian military conscription in Croatia was now presented as a key motive for emigration, rather than the socio-economic pressures of poverty and a growing population in a territory with limited natural resources (see Chapter 3). It is perhaps a measure of Scansie's supporters and his influence via the pages of *Zora* that the notion of military conscription as a prime motivation for migration persisted in public thinking until the 1960s. Nor can there be any doubt regarding Scansie's role in winning for his compatriots their gradual acceptance as "friendly aliens".

As for the target of *Zora's* attacks a testimony of the newspaper's success is provided by the Austrian Consul's letter to Prime Minister W.F. Massey, dated 30 July 1914 seeking prosecution of the Croatian Publishing Company and cessation of publication for *Zora*. Among other points the Consul (Eugen Langguth) referred with considerable indignation: to the publication of "*viturperations and vile calumnies against the country I have the honour to represent*"; to the preaching of "*sedition and revolution*"; to disgraceful attacks against the Imperial Austrian family; to contacts "*with nihilistic and anarchical papers both in Europe and America*"; and finally, to *Zora's* supporters as "*agitators of the Social-Democratic stamp*".[595] Massey (who only a few days earlier made a strong attack against the production and sale of "Austrian wine" on the gumfields) passed the letter to the Attorney-General … and publication of *Zora* continued.

Had Scansie known of Langguth's letter he would surely have rejoiced. One wonders, however, how he would have responded had he also known that, at about the same time, Ferri sent a telegram to Massey suggesting suppression

[595] Langguth to Massey, letter, 30 July 1914, in the personal file of Mathew Ferri, AAAB 482 51/e Record No. 519, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

of *Zora* in order to secure peace and avoid conflict and bloodshed on the gumfields, presumably between pro- and anti-Austrian supporters among the Croatians.[596] During the next few years, however, Ferri had a change of heart – probably because of: his personal experience of internment as an alien; because of the widespread public ill-feeling toward those variously identified as "enemy aliens", "Austrians", "Dalmatians" or as "troublesome Jugoslavs" engaged on Home Service drainage and railway construction projects; and because of the destructive factionalism among his compatriots that would have affected the growth of *Zora's* readership and its economic viability. In defence of *Zora* and Scansie, at a time when Scansie was claiming to be Serbian Consul and suspected of trying to obtain Serbian passports for Croatians in New Zealand, he wrote to the Minister of Internal Affairs (G.W. Russell) as follows:

> *The articles from Zora which Mr. Scansie wrote in English and Jugoslav languages were deep and strong. They were the 'opening eye' of the situation and the war which he said was to come. Numerous articles if his have been republished in local British newspapers and throughout America... Mr. Scansie is well known in European circles as the 'Mater hand' [sic] writer of European and especially Jugoslav political situations.*[597]

It should not be imagined that a foreign language newspaper could always be established free of suspicion, inspection or restraint from the host society. Even as Ferri was defending Scansie, his own third venture – *Novi Svijet* (New World) – was being subjected to official scrutiny. An open letter in Croatian in the issue of 17 May 1919 was translated and found to be unfavourable toward the National (i.e. Home) Service regulations. A prohibition notice was consequently gazetted under the regulations of 11 October 1915 indicating that the paper was "*injurous to the public interest in respect to the present war*".[598] Prosecution was also considered as the paper contained material likely to excite discontent and disobedience among Jugoslavs in New Zealand. Though the relevant information is not complete, it appears that Ferri was commenting on Cullen's drafting of his countrymen

[596] Ferri to Massey, telegram, 1 August 1914, in the file of Mathew Ferri, AAAB 482 51/e Record No. 519, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

[597] Ferri to Russell, letter, 23 July 1919, file AD 10/527, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

[598] *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 June 1919, p.1779.

onto public works beyond the end of the war. The only item printed in English was an article "*inciting treason and disloyalty in Ireland*".[599]

Ferri eventually obtained permission to publish in English under the title *New World* to facilitate close inspection, but the paper was of little value in this form to its intended readers and sales were poor. An application to publish in both English and Croatian (like *Zora*) was refused. Government at the time was averse to any New Zealand newspaper appearing in a foreign language and considered that "*one of the most effective means of Anglicising foreigners was to discourage as completely as possible the use by them of their own foreign language*".[600] One suspects, however, that Ferri's reputation and record as a suspected agitator, possibly disloyal and involved in suspect dealings, were also determining factors behind the action taken and the paper's demise.

[599] Anderson (1952:243-244).

[600] Anderson (1952:244).

Appendix 3
Two Strong Voices

Ante Kosovich, A Gumfield Poet

Ante was born in 1879 in the village of Zaostrog, died, 24 February 1958 and was interred at Waikumete cemetery. He was naturalized in October 1906 at which time he was a gumdigger at Poroti, west of Whangarei.



Ante Kosovich
Source: **From the frontispiece of his collection of poems *Dalmatinac izTudjine* (From a Dalmatian in Exile) published 1908 in Split**

A son of Simun Kosovich and Ane Jasprica, Ante was educated in the Zaostrog parish school. According to Stephen Jelicich he was a keen student who learned "*to write in the folk style of Andrija Kačić-Miošić, a learned Franciscan monk and Dalmatian folk poet.*" Ante arrived in New Zealand in 1898, joined his brother Nikola and they worked together on the gumfields for two years until Nikola returned to his wife and child in Dalmatia. If his contemporaries are to be believed, Ante was not one for back-breaking toil but adept at reciting ballads, composing eulogies, other verse for special

events and more formal poetry. He married Henrietta Ethel Doube in 1923 but the marriage (without issue) was dissolved in 1930. Henrietta petitioned for divorce on the ground that when she asked her husband to provide better accommodation than the shanty in which they lived he had left their home and never returned.

Ante's first collection of poems, *Dalmatinac iz Tudjine*, graphically captured the homesickness, spiritual isolation, exploitation and persecution of fellow gumdiggers with titles such as "Longing for home," "Eviction from the gumfields by the English" and "The Tragedy of the *Elingamite*." It was written in his native tongue with the clear intention of warning (if not discouraging) young Dalmatians thinking of emigration to New Zealand.

Two later works, equally epic in scope, reflected his political sympathies: *Uskrsnuće Jugoslavije* (The Resurrection of Jugoslavia), published in 1920, was fired by his south Slav idealism and support for the new state after World War I; and *Uskrsnuće Slavena* (The Resurrection of the Slavs), published in 1947, drew on his pan-Slav idealism to trace the Jugoslav and Russian struggles during World War II.[601] On a lighter note, his sense of humour and familiarity with compatriots addicted to horse racing is beautifully captured in *Dalmatinci Diskusiraju Formu Konja prije Utrke: Slozio za Spotmane* (Dalmatians Discussing the Form of Horses before the Races: Written for Sportsmen), published in 1946.[602]

[601] Details of Ante Kosovich's life were drawn from two accounts by Jelicich (1996:270 and 2008:83-84). For the grounds for divorce, see *Auckland Star*, 21 August 1930, p.8 and 22 August 1930, p.9. For a concise review of *Dalmatinac iz Tudjine*, see Batistich (1966).

[602] A translation of this poem, by Leonard Lulich and Milica Matich and versified by Barry Haynes, has been deposited in the archive of the Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society, Auckland. An appendix to this translation provides additional details on individuals named in the poem.

George Scansie

Born 1877 in the village of St. Martin, Brazza (Sumartin, Brač), arrived in New Zealand in 1900, naturalised 1903. He married Caroline Lowe (from Bendigo, Australia) in June 1914, and they had two sons. George died suddenly during a visit to Sydney in 1926.



George Leno Scansie, a patriot
***Source:* Totich Papers, March 1914**

Very little is known about George Scansie's life and activities prior to 1914. When naturalised in 1903, George and his brother John (Ivan)were gumdiggers at Waiuku. George with two partners later set up and managed a successful boot repair business in Awanui, near Kaitaia. About 1911 he settled in Auckland.

Encouraged by a strong sense of patriotism created during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 he was a key figure behind the successful establishment of the Croatian Publishing Company Ltd. This company produced *Zora* (The Dawn), edited in the main but not exclusively by George, from August 1913 until 1918 (see Appendix 2) and, in 1919, his edited book *The Fight for Freedom of the Jugoslavs*.

At various times during the First World War he was President of the Croatian-Slovenian League of Independence, Honorary Secretary of the Mayor of Auckland's Serbian War Relief Fund and President of the New Zealand Branch of the London based Jugoslav Committee (headed by Dr A. Trumbic). Scansie was vocal on many issues concerning his countrymen and obviously very patriotic. His effectiveness, however, was limited by factional opponents within the Croatian community and in interactions with the New Zealand Government by John Cullen, appointed as Commissioner for organisation of the Jugoslavs for Home Service in 1917. Cullen described him as "*a through schemer and utterly untrustworthy*." Nevertheless, given his energetic engagement in patriotic activities, representation of his compatriots and strong support for the concept of South Slav (Jugoslav) unity, George was the obvious choice for appointment in 1922 as the first Consul of the new post-war Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. When he died in 1926 the consulate was maintained by his widow Caroline and brother John until the appointment of John Totich in 1927.

In business, despite his talents, George's activities after the war were never completely successful. The Croatian Publishing Company Ltd., its patriotic work done, ended with a meeting of creditors and his last major venture, International Merchantile Ltd, was bankrupted in the 1920s.

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Andrew Trlin

In 1979 Andrew wrote and published "Now Respected, Once Despised". This book was the first comprehensive account of the immigration of Yugoslavs to New Zealand. It was recognised as a classic and was the benchmark for later studies. Since 1979 "Yugoslavia" had dissolved and much more information was available in New Zealand, so Andrew decided that the book should be comprehensively revised. Part way through this revision, Andrew was diagnosed with cancer and was unable to rewrite some sections of his earlier work. Nonetheless, the much improved version of the bulk of that book is included in this new publication, "Foundations".

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