

Jewish community, with whom he had a close relationship, to get the legislation introduced; and whether or not U.S., British and even Australian security intelligence organisations had facilitated the war criminals' immigration to Australia in return for services rendered by them to western intelligence as the cold war developed soon after the war.

The programme also discussed the possibility of extraditing suspected war criminals to the countries where the crimes were committed to stand trial there rather than in Australia.

#### *The Complaint*

The matter was first raised in a letter to the producer of the programme on 11 June 1989. Mr Gilich said that, under the pretext of investigating war criminals, the programme unleashed an unprovoked and undeserved attack on Croatian immigrants to Australia and by direct association on Croatian immigrants to New Zealand. He said the programme was cruel, biased, prejudiced and racist for the following reasons which we summarise as follows:

1. The programme gave the impression that Croatsians were the main, if not the only, culprits in persecuting Jews under Nazi occupation. He said that a number of other nations were collaborating with the Nazis to a much greater degree than Croatsians. Many thousands of immigrants from those nations had also settled in Australia in far greater numbers than Croatsians but Croatsians had been singled out in the programme.
2. The programme implied that all or most Croatsians were involved in the crimes. Nowhere did it make it clear that only a tiny percentage of them were voluntarily collaborating with the Nazis. This made the programme racist.
3. Wide, sweeping accusations of alleged Croatian massacres of Serbs and Gypsies had also been exaggerated and gravely biased. While it was true that Serbs had been killed by some Croatian fanatics seeking revenge for past injustices, it was equally true that thousands of Croatian civilians had been massacred by Serbian Chetniks, who had also collaborated with the Germans. He said that Croatsians did not intrude into Serbian soil at any stage during the war while thousands of Serbian Chetniks and other Serbian groups were marauding on Croatian soil.
4. Depiction of the assassination of King Alexander in 1934 had nothing to do with the World War II criminals. It was shown to present Croatsians as villains. The king was killed by a Macedonian, a member of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, not by a Croatian. The programme omitted the assassination in 1928 of 3 Croatian leaders by a Serb.
5. The individuals under suspicion of war crimes were portrayed in the programme as "constructive, law-abiding and anti-communist". The implication was that if a Croatian was constructive, law-abiding or anti-communist, that was all the more reason for him to be suspect. No Croatian was free from suspicion and smear.

Mr Gilich submitted that those who prepared the programme were badly misinformed, with a heavy bias against the Croatian nation. "In times when we in New Zealand are proud to foster multi-racial awareness and pride in one's origin, it is said that a proud and heroic people with more than 1300 years of culture is treated with such ignorance and disrespect," he wrote.

The complainant said that Yugoslavia was not a nationality but a state with 6 main ethnic groups, similar to the Soviet Union. Nobody would dream of calling a Russian, Ukrainian or Latvian a "Soviet Unionist".

He sought an equally prominent time slot for the Croatian community to present the complainants' case and "correct the

racist and vicious smear on our nation of which we are rightly proud".

#### *Television New Zealand's Reply*

On 13 July the Chief Assistant to the Director of News and Current Affairs at Television New Zealand, David Edmunds, replied that he had viewed the programme again and it appeared to him to be perfectly fair and objective. It had been obtained from a reputable source, the *Sunday* programme on Channel Nine in Australia. He said he saw nothing in the programme which could bring New Zealanders of Croatian descent into disrepute and did not think that right-thinking New Zealanders would link citizens such as the complainant with the attitudes and events portrayed in the programme.

The programme seemed to reflect accurately the accounts published in various histories of the period that he had been able to consult since receiving the letter. It seemed that the Ustasha (or Ustace) was a very small, outlawed minority of Croatsians before the war. What seemed to be in dispute was the degree to which Croatsians supported Ustasha and Pavelic once they were installed and during their 4 years of government. He quoted Nora Beloff who wrote:

"How much the Ustasha were tolerated or even helped by other Croats during the war cannot be ascertained any more than we can know how many Germans supported the Nazis."

Another writer whom Mr Edmunds quoted described Pavelic and his supporters as having brought "dishonour to the name of Croatia". All the references quoted blamed Pavelic for appalling atrocities, principally against orthodox Serbs but also against Jews and Muslims. According to research, Pavelic's actions were described at the Nuremberg trials as "genocide". One writer went so far as to describe him as "a homicidal maniac". The same sources also supported Mr Gilich's observations that Serbian Chetniks too were guilty of horrifying massacres but that these were acts of retaliation against Pavelic and Ustasha.

Mr Edmunds expressed regret that the programme had caused distress. He later sent the complainant details of the sources that he had used for research.

Mr Gilich replied saying his complaint had been misunderstood. He was not complaining about the investigation of war criminals, which he supported, but he was against the singling out of one nation and conducting a "hate" campaign against it, as he contended the programme had done. He could not understand why Serbian immigrants were not investigated as well and the atrocities Serbians committed on Croats and others also shown. It was the Croats who were acting in retaliation although he conceded that 2 wrongs did not make a right. He raised the question of whether those who supported a particular political system became guilty because of the crimes committed by that system.

The complainant said the programme failed to investigate crimes committed at the end of the war and which continued for some months after. The support of Croatsians to the Partisans was not mentioned. He said, "... your selection and 1-sided concern could be interpreted as anti-Croatian bias and implies a degree of collective guilt of the Croatian people."

In reply, Mr Edmunds said Mr Gilich had accused him of bias when the real complaint was against the specific report which came from an overseas source. He suggested that a formal complaint be made. Mr Gilich responded on 24 August that he meant no personal criticism of Mr Edmunds.

#### *Formal Complaint to Television New Zealand*

Earlier, on 18 August, Mr Gilich had written to the Chief Executive of TVNZ formally complaining about the programme and reiterating the main points in the complaint. He also drew attention to a video tape of reports on the attempted assassination in Scotland of Nichola Stedul, a Croatian nationalist, by Vinko Sindicic, a member of the