

Rt. Hon. SIR ROBERT MENZIES,
K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.,

ON

YUGOSLAV IMMIGRANT ORGANISATIONS.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

[From the "Parliamentary Debates," 27th August 1964.]

Sir ROBERT MENZIES (Kooyong—Prime Minister)—by leave—For some time, there have been references both in the Parliament and elsewhere to the activities of certain Yugoslav immigrant organisations. The Government is, and over a period as been, in possession of considerable information on these activities. Certain of this information is embodied in replies which are being made separately to the series of questions on the matter which were asked in the previous parliamentary session. This applies to questions asked by the honorable member for Yarra (Dr. J. F. Cairns), answers to which he should get today. However, I feel I should also take the opportunity to make some observations to the House about the Government's general policy in relation to migrant organisations and about immigration from Yugoslavia.

In the years since World War II, Australia's immigration programme has brought to this country people from all parts of Europe with a diversity of historical and cultural backgrounds. Many of these people were refugees from oppression. Many derived from happier circumstances. This flow of new citizens has played an import-

ant part in building the nation. It is something which has given us great satisfaction and we wish to see it continue. However, it is basic to our immigration policy that all these new citizens should be integrated as fully, and as quickly, as possible into Australia's national life. The people of Australia endorse this approach and, as part of its migration programme, the Government has enlisted the help of community and public bodies throughout the Commonwealth in the vital work of assimilation. There has been a very gratifying response in this regard and on the whole the programme of integration has met with great success.

The Government is not taking an attitude against immigrants from particular countries joining in their own associations. We do not expect newcomers to turn their backs on their original heritage. On the contrary, it is wholly understandable that immigrants should establish organisations amongst themselves for a variety of social and cultural purposes. It rather follows the precedents of the Irish and Scots in this country. These organisations, as honorable members will know, can also be a most valuable means

of assisting migrants to become fully integrated into the Australian community. I have no doubt that the great majority of organisations and societies to which migrants belong come within the category to which I have just been referring. However, the Government looks with disfavour on any activities of any migrant organisation which tend to frustrate integration.

The possibility always exists that at some point, the activities of a particular immigrant organisation, or the activities of individuals within that organisation, may transgress the law. As necessary, investigations are made, and will be made, into the activities of various organisations including some which are not organisations of migrants alone or even primarily. If, as a result of these investigations, there is evidence of illegal activities on the part of an organisation, or individuals within an organisation, evidence which would be receivable in a court of law, then steps will be taken promptly, as may be appropriate to the particular case, to appeal to the law of the State or to invoke the relevant Commonwealth legislation. I add however, by way of reminder to the House, that it is not and never has been the practice to make details of security investigations available or public.

I turn now to the matter of immigration from Yugoslavia. To understand the attitudes of these migrants it is necessary to remind ourselves that this part of Europe has an exceedingly complex and troubled history. Yugoslavia emerged from the political settlements of World War I. It brought together as a union a number of southern Slav peoples including Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, under the Serbian King Alexander. The Serbs obtained their independence from the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century and were numerically the largest group in the new State. The Croats had formerly enjoyed a degree of autonomy within the Austro-Hungarian empire and retained a national identity dating back as early as the ninth century. Deep differences of religious, cultural and historical kinds have existed between the groups despite kindred racial origins.

Within the new State, the Croats sought a federal concept of government with a large degree of local autonomy. In 1928,

the leader of the Croats, Stjepan Radic of the Croatian Peasant Party and two of his colleagues were assassinated in the Parliament in Belgrade. This precipitated a profound breach between Serbs and Croats. The Croats developed strong agitation in support of independence. Peasant Party leaders taking their cause to the League of Nations. Some Croat Parliamentary representatives were arrested, others, among them Dr. Ante Pavelic, went into exile.

It was at this time that a revolutionary movement called Ustashi, meaning "insurgents" was founded, both in Croatia and abroad, Pavelic being one of its first leaders. This movement, in common with other Croat organisations, took as its symbol the traditional Croatian emblem of a white and red check shield but associated with this emblem the letter "U". The traditional emblem, both with and without the "U" is to be found in extensive use today by Croatian migrant groups throughout the world.

It is difficult for people coming to Australia easily to forget their historical backgrounds. Since the war a number of organisations opposed to the present Government of Yugoslavia have developed throughout the world amongst refugees and migrants from that country. It is understandable that some Yugoslav migrants of Croatian origin should continue to hope for the establishment of an independent Croatia and within a democracy like Australia they have a right to advocate their views so long as they do so by legitimate means. I wish to make it perfectly clear that the vast majority of the migrants from all parts of Yugoslavia who have settled in Australia have proved to be law abiding, hard working citizens and a real asset to this country.

Commonwealth and State authorities are continuing their investigations of Yugoslav and other organisations. Recently the Acting Premier of Victoria issued a statement on police inquiries in that State. He said that the police had found "that isolated acts of assault and misbehaviour had occurred but found no evidence whatever to support allegations of Ustashi violence towards individuals of Yugoslav nationality from which systematic or organised attacks could be inferred". That I take to mean that individual attacks have been noted but not

an organised or systematic series of attacks. Similar allegations made in Cairns also were, I understand, found by the Queensland police to be unsubstantiated. The Commonwealth's own investigations so far have not produced any evidence which would warrant legal proceedings.

I wish to make the Government's position in this regard quite plain, however, Sir, and that is the real purpose of this statement, as well as to intimate at the same time that the particular questions

asked in detail have been answered in detail, though not in this statement. So I make the Government's position quite clear: This Government will not interfere with freedom of opinion. Equally, it will not tolerate any activities which constitute a breach of the law.

I present the following paper—

Yugoslav Immigrant Organisations—Ministerial Statement, 27th August 1964—
and move—

That the House take note of the paper.