

ABSTRACTS

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD: CZECH(OSLOVAK) EXILE IN AUSTRALIA, 1948-1989

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Existing research on Czech and Slovak exile has primarily focused on the main centres of Czech and Slovak exile in the USA and Western Europe. However, an analysis of life in exile in a geographically and geopolitically more peripheral region can provide illuminating insights into the problem as well. The study presented here deals with the exile of Czechs and Slovaks in Australia, and it comes to the conclusion that these groups of exiles exhibited a high degree of autonomy from the “Council of Free Czechoslovakia” (*Rada svobodného Československa*). At the same time, the article analyses the specific conditions affecting immigrants and exiles in Australia and determining their organizational activities. One factor was the country’s significant distance from Europe along with its gigantic size, while another was the fact that there were no older cultural or political organisations of Czech and Slovak compatriots in Australia. Likewise important were the circumstances that the Australian society was politically oriented towards the Left and that the Australian government initially obligated political refugees to sign two-year work contracts. On the other hand, the life of Czech and Slovak communities in Australia also exhibited various common features and problems of anti-communist exile – most of all, the attempts to copy the political and cultural paradigms of “Masaryk Czechoslovakia.” The large majority of these immigrants were politically passive, and there was a generational and cultural difference between the refugees of 1948 and those of 1968. Finally, tensions between Czechs and Slovaks that were suppressed in totalitarian Czechoslovakia became visible in Australia as well.