

...TO THE GRAVE

AS RUGBY'S POPULARITY INCREASED, DARK CLOUDS LOOMED ON THE HORIZON



Yugoslavia v Italy, 1972

1978 - The first of four tours to Yugoslavia by the 'All Yugoslav Rugby Team', later to become the 'New Zealand Yugoslav Sports Club'. These teams were made up of New Zealanders of Yugoslav descent.

1984 - Formation of the Yugoslav Golden Oldies Rugby Club 'Zrelo Doba', which played in the Golden Oldie Tournaments at Twickenham in 1985 and Auckland, New Zealand, in 1987.

1988 - Yugoslavia Rugby Federation joined the IRB (International Rugby Board).

1989 - The old Yugoslavia played their one and only Rugby World Cup qualifying match, against Czechoslovakia. The Czechs won the match 25-6.

1991 - The last ever international match of the old Yugoslavia was played against Czechoslovakia. Yugoslavia won 22-6. The Union officially disbanded on 10th October with the country enveloped in Civil War. The Tour for Peace (with players from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Slovenia and Croatia) was a final attempt to keep the Yugoslav team together but clubs from Serbia declined to send their players. The final match of the tour was against a North Wales XV on 29th October in Wrexham.



'Zrelo Doba' and 'Wak Sun RFC' from Japan at Golden Oldies Festival, 1985

Before being disbanded, the Union had played 116 internationals and consisted of 22 clubs with 2200 registered senior players and 500 youth players. Each club ran Under 19 and Under 15 teams. The National First Team and Under 19 teams had also played in the FIRA Championships and Cups.

However, this was not to be the end of rugby in this part of Europe. When peace came, rugby returned to the new countries that had been part of Yugoslavia, and the sport is once again thriving.

