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# THE IDEOLOGY OF NATION AND RACE: THE CROATIAN USTASHA REGIME AND ITS POLICIES TOWARD THE SERBS IN THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA 1941-1945.

**Abstract.** Contrary to the general historiographical view that has either ignored or downplayed the influence of racial theories on Ustasha policies toward the Serbs of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH), this article highlights how the question of 'race' permeated Ustasha attitudes on the 'Serb problem' and connected with this, on the wider question of Croatian national identity. Ustasha ideas on race evolved from the attempt to confirm Croatian national individuality in the face of the racial supranational ideology of Yugoslavism and expansionist and assimilationist greater Serbian nationalism. This article will examine how the Ustashe distinguished the 'Aryan' and 'Nordic-Dinaric' Croats from the 'Balkan-Vlach' and 'Near Eastern' Serbs and how these racial definitions shaped Ustasha policies toward the Serbs.

## Introduction

The way the Ustasha movement 'imagined' the Croatian nation has received little attention from historians, who tend to focus on the Ustasha attempt to establish an independent state, rather than on the movement's attempt to redefine Croatian nationhood itself.<sup>1</sup> The Ustashe had two principal aims. One was to establish, for the first time in modern history, a Croatian nation state – thereby completing the national integration of the Croats – and secondly, simultaneously removing the ethnic, racial and religious minorities that the Ustashe considered both alien and a threat to the interests of the Croatian nation.<sup>2</sup> The Ustasha regime attempted to complete Croatian national integration by grounding its notion of Croatian nationhood on a firm ethno-linguistic/

1 | Two models came to dominate Croatian historiography in the period from 1945-1990: the 'Marxist' model of Yugoslav historians keen to stress the Nazi-Fascist origins of the Ustasha state and the 'Nostalgic-Apologetic' model of Croatian political émigrés who sought to legitimize the national aspirations of the regime. See Nada Kisić-Kolanović, 'Povijest NDH kao predmet istraživanja', *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2002, pp. 683-691. N. Kisić-Kolanović has, in the meantime, devoted more attention to the question of Ustasha ideology, but her work lacks an examination of the relationship between Ustasha nationalism and the ideologies of earlier Croatian national movements. See Kisić-Kolanović, *NDH i Italija: političke veze i diplomatski odnosi* (Naklada Ljevak: Zagreb, 2001), pp. 56-63. The works cited in the following footnote also lack a more thorough examination of the roots of Ustasha ideology.

2 | For summaries on Ustasha policies aimed at the removal of Serbs, Gypsies and Jews, see Martin Broszat and Ladislaus Hory, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat, 1941-1945* (Deutsche Verlags Anstalt: Stuttgart, 1964), pp. 91-106; Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941-1945* (Liber: Zagreb, 1977), pp. 158-187; Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* (Naklada Pavičić: Zagreb, 1994), pp. 154-164; Holm Sundhussen, 'Der Ustascha Staat: Anatomie eines Herrschaftssystems', *Österreichische Osthefte*, 37, 1995, pp. 521-532 and Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945: occupation and collaboration* (Stanford University Press: California, 2001), pp. 392-409, 528-548, 592-604, 608-610.

racial basis. This need to redefine the nation was in reaction to the attempts of earlier Croatian nationalists who sought Croatian national integration within a wider south Slav (Yugoslav) integration, which the Ustashe completely rejected.

The Ustasha movement saw itself involved in a struggle over the fundamental national identity of the Croats; hence the movement's immense attachment to the Croatian national name itself, a name in its eyes of great antiquity threatened by the alien and artificial Yugoslav name. The Ustashe felt that they had to 'prove' the existence of a separate Croatian nation that had a right to its own independent state and in the political tradition of East-central Europe that was best done by relying on ethno-linguistic arguments. In comparison, the allies of the Ustashe, the German National Socialists and Italian Fascists, felt threatened by outsiders who did not belong to the nation, but did not feel that the existence of a separate German or Italian nation itself was in question.<sup>3</sup>

Opposition to Yugoslavism meant defining the Croats first and foremost in relation to their principle south Slav speaking neighbours, the Serbs.<sup>4</sup> The Ustasha war against the ideology of Yugoslavism could not be won without a solution to the 'Serb problem' in the NDH for both Yugoslav and greater Serbian nationalists used the presence of the large Serbian minority in Croatia (and Bosnia-Herzegovina) to substantiate their claims to the territory and ethnic identity of the Croats. Accordingly, the Ustashe based their notion of Croat nationhood on an ethno-linguistic/racial basis to help dismantle the rival supra-national ideology of Yugoslavism and highlight the ethnic-racial differences between Croats and Serbs. Consequently, Ustasha racial theories would also serve to identify Jews and Gypsies as the other principle outsiders to the Croatian 'national community'. Stereotypes of, and policies toward, Serbs, Gypsies and Jews would merge in the NDH, and these racist stereotypes would in turn merge with anti-Communism during the course of the Ustasha struggle against the Communist led Yugoslav partisans.<sup>5</sup>

Ustasha polices reflected the ideology of a 'nationalizing war', that is, 'the extensive use of military and political violence to reduce a multi-national state to a nation state'.<sup>6</sup> The Ustasha war was another in a series of nationalizing wars that have plagued Balkan and East European political life since the early nineteenth century. The principle of ethnic homogeneity was viewed by

3 | John A. Armstrong noted this difference between the German National Socialists and the Ustashe (as well as collaborationist Slovak and Ukrainian groups) with regard to the question of national identity, but did not examine it in great detail. See J. A. Armstrong, 'Collaborationism in World War II: The integral nationalist variant in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Modern History*, Sept. 1968, pp. 404-405.

4 | Without 'Abgrenzung' (marking/fencing off) there can be no nationalism; any nation is defined, first and foremost, through its relations to others. H. Sundhassen, 'Nationsbildung und Nationalismus im Donau-Balkan-Raum', *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 48, 1993, p. 244.

5 | The prevailing historiographical view is that Ustasha policies toward Serbs, Jews, Gypsies were essentially separate phenomena, in that the persecution of Jews and Gypsies was primarily motivated by the desire of the Ustashe to win favour with their German patrons. Consequently, Ustasha racial theories are not explored in any great detail. Jelić-Butić, for example, notes that policies toward Serbs and Jews were part of the same 'racial politics' of the Ustasha regime (ibid, p. 158), but does not attempt to detail how Serbs were racially identified with Jews and Gypsies, and makes only brief mention of Ustasha race theories (ibid, pp. 138-140), without exploring the historical roots of these theories.

6 | Jonathan Gumz, 'Wehrmacht Perceptions of Mass Violence in Croatia, 1941-1942', *The Historical Journal*, 44, 4, 2001, p. 1019.

successive politicians in the Balkans as a corollary to political, social and economic modernization.<sup>7</sup> Modernization implied centralization and this in turn implied cultural uniformity.<sup>8</sup> The Ustashe saw nation building in the same sense, except that their war was able to converge with the Nazis' race war. Ustasha racism differed considerably from Nazi racism, however, in that the former was based primarily on the principle that state and nationality should correspond while the latter was based on a pseudo-scientific racial-imperialist expansionism.

How a Croatian ethno-linguistic identity was defined in relation to Serbs (and connected to this, Yugoslav ideology) and how the question of 'race' helped shape the Ustasha regime's 'nationalizing war' against the Serbs will be examined in the following pages.

### **Croatian national identity: Croat or Slav**

A proper starting point for an understanding of Ustasha nationalism must be to examine their 'cult of authenticity'. This cult, as Anthony D. Smith explains, lies 'at the centre of the nationalist belief system...and at the heart of this cult is the quest for the true self.'<sup>9</sup> Alongside the national flag and anthem, it is the national name that is the first mark of uniqueness and authenticity ('our own and nobody else's').<sup>10</sup> There was, however, a great deal of disagreement over the nature of Croatian national authenticity among Croatia's political and cultural elite throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – including the period 1941-1945. The Ustashe rejected any notions of Slav or Yugoslav 'reciprocity', present in Croatian national ideologies beginning with the Illyrian movement (1835-1848). Proponents of Illyrianism and its ideological heir, Yugoslavism, adhered to the idea of, as Wolf Dietrich Behschnitt explains, 'a special reciprocity, a relationship of a special type between the south Slavic, or rather Yugoslav nations, according to which these nations altogether represent a greater national community in comparison to all other nations'.<sup>11</sup> Faced with expansionist Hungarian, Italian and German nationalisms, proponents of Yugoslav ideology sought to counter Croatian fears of assimilation with the idea of cultural unification with other south Slavs (and indeed all Slavs).

The opposition to Yugoslavism/pan-Slavism and also to the expansionist ethno-linguistic Serbian nationalism of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić found its first spokesman in the figure of Ante Starčević (1823-1896), founder of the Croatian Party of Right (Hrvatska Stranka Prava, HSP) and considered an ideological predecessor by the Ustasha Poglavnik Ante Pavelić (1889-1959). Starčević was the first Croatian politician to define a modern Croatian national consciousness outside of a pan-Slav

7 | Mark Mazower, *The Balkans* (Phoenix Press: London, 2000), p. 109.

8 | *ibid.*, p. 110.

9 | The 'authentic' in any nation is something that is 'genuine', 'pure' and 'particular'. A good example of 'national authenticity' is the apparently uncorrupted life of the peasantry. See A. D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: sacred sources of national identity* (Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 37-39.

10 | *ibid.*, p. 38.

11 | Author's own free translation from p. 51 in Wolf Dietrich Behschnitt, *Nationalismus bei Serben und Kroaten 1830-1914: Analyse und Typologie der nationalen Ideologie* (R. Oldenbourg Verlag: München, 1980).

or Yugoslav framework.<sup>12</sup> He defined Croatian nationhood primarily on the notion of the historic state right of the Croatian 'political nation' or *natio croatica* (the Croatian nobility), which now according to Starčević included the lower classes.<sup>13</sup> Croatian historic state right was based on the legal continuity of the medieval Croatian kingdom, preserved in the office of the Ban (viceroy) and the institution of the Sabor (parliament), which continued to exist even after Croatia was united, first with the Hungarian kingdom and later absorbed into the Habsburg Empire. Starčević demanded full Croatian independence, but he was unable to precisely determine his future state's borders or the ethnic character of its inhabitants; at times, he claimed all south Slavs (except Bulgarians) as Croats. Starčević also claimed Serbs as Croats, but denigrated the Serb name, which he thought signified only a nomadic Balkan 'breed' (*pasmina*) with no culture.<sup>14</sup>

Starčević remains a controversial figure in Croat cultural and historical discourses. Some historians have interpreted his nationalism as a form of Yugoslavism, in the sense that because he believed that all south Slavs were Croats, then he essentially adhered to the idea that the 'Yugoslavs' were one people.<sup>15</sup> This interpretation, along with Starčević's devotion to the ideals of the French revolution and his scorn for German culture has consequently led to the argument that the Ustashe misconstrued Starčević's ideology to suit their own political ends.<sup>16</sup> While there is no doubt that the Ustashe could be liberal in their interpretation of Starčević's ideology, it is also clear that the ideas of Starčević and his closest colleague Eugen Kvaternik (1825-1871) provided the Ustasha movement with a great deal of intellectual and cultural legitimacy. Significant parts of Ustasha ideology – historic state right as the foundation of Croatian independence, the threat of Serbian nationalism to Croatian interests, Croatia as a bulwark of the Christian West and the Croatian racial origins of the Bosnian Muslims – can be traced back to the HSP.

Although committed to the ideals of the French revolution, Starčević departed from the idea of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' in one important respect. In line with the Aristotelian defence of slavery as justified since certain individuals and peoples ('barbarians') were slaves by nature, Starčević developed the idea that there were similar 'slaves' in his time, people he referred to as slavoserbs. These were people who were unfit for democratic life because they did not understand true freedom and the needs of the nation.<sup>17</sup> Starčević derived the words 'Slav' and 'Serb' from

12 | Notions of Slavic reciprocity were, according to Starčević, 'empty words, for those dreams (i.e. Slavic unity) are without any content, they do not have a basis in history, a reason in the present, nor a perspective in the future'. See Ante Starčević, 'Bi-li k Slavstvu ili ka Hrvatstvu: dva razgovora', in *Djela Dra Ante Starčevića, 3. Znanstveno-političke razprave, 1894-1896* (Inačica: Varaždin, 1995), p. 6.

13 | I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: origins, history, politics* (Cornell University Press: London, 1984) p. 86.

14 | For Starčević's definition of a 'pasmina', see Mirjana Gross, *Izvorno pravaštvo: ideologija, agitacija, pokret* (Golden Marketing: Zagreb, 2000), p. 347.

15 | For the different interpretations of Starčević's ideology, see W. Behschnitt, *Nationalismus bei Serben und Kroaten*, p. 173.

16 | Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, p. 143 and Ivo Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu* (Novi Liber: Zagreb, 2001), pp. 89- 90.

17 | Mirjana Gross, *ibid.*, p. 18.

the Latin words, 'sclavus' and 'servus', both meaning 'slave'.<sup>18</sup> There has been much controversy over exactly whom Starčević considered a slavoserb, because the term included not only ethnic Serbs (who he at times identified with the nomadic inhabitants of the Balkans, the Vlachs) but also Croats, who according to Starčević served foreign powers and ideologies, whether it was Austria or pan-Slavism; indeed Starčević argued that there were slavoserbs (in other words, traitors and 'slaves') among all nations.<sup>19</sup>

However the HSP could never clarify the relationship between the Croats and their neighbours, the Serbs, with whom they shared much of the same living space and the south Slav dialect known as štokavian (although there exist sub-dialectal differences between Croat and Serb štokavian and significantly different literary traditions between the two). This lack of clarity meant that attempts to fashion an ethno-linguistic notion of Croatian nationhood were difficult. That the Illyrians and later Croat Yugoslavists did not argue in favour of a purely Croatian ethno-nationalism but a south Slavic one, was due in part to the fact that the ethnic and linguistic boundary between the Croats and Serbs was blurred in some regions to the point that it was difficult to define who was a Croat or a Serb, once defining peoples by their 'nation' became a political fashion in the nineteenth century. However this was not the case in all areas. This is important to note, because the real dividing line between Serbs and Croats has often erroneously been designated as being essentially a religious one, between two 'groups' of the same nation.<sup>20</sup> This interpretation has also led to the subsequent misinterpretation of the aims of the Ustasha regime with attempts to portray it as a clericalist regime.<sup>21</sup> It is more accurate, as the Croat historian Nikša Stančić argues, to point out that the churches influenced the shaping of different cultural, social and ethical values between the Croats and Serbs.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Orthodoxy was far more important for the shaping of Serb nationhood than Catholicism was for Croat national identity, simply because the Serbs possessed a national institution in the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>23</sup>

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18 | *ibid.*, pp. 221, 230.

19 | *ibid.*, pp. 249-250 & 341.

20 | Eric Hobsbawm notes that, 'it is certainly Roman Catholicism (and its by-product, the Latin script) and Orthodoxy (with its by-product, the Cyrillic script) which has most obviously divided Croats from Serbs, with whom they share a single language of culture'. This argument needs to be qualified from region to region. E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 70.

21 | This interpretation was more popular in the 1960s. For example, see Carlo Falconi, *The Silence of Pius XII* (Faber & Faber: London, 1965). See also J. Gumz, 'Wehrmacht Perceptions', pp. 1025-1026 and Jonathan Steinberg, 'Types of Genocide? Croats, Serbs and Jews 1941-5' in David Cesarani (ed.) *The Final Solution: origins and implementations* (Routledge: London and New York, 1994), pp. 175-193. In a welcome critical analysis, Mark Biondich has recently brought attention to how little the Ustashe were motivated in their anti-Serbian measures by Catholicism. However, he downplays the racial aspect of Ustasha ideology, by arguing that the Ustashe 'never formulated a coherently racist ideology' in that the ideology's 'racial undertone' was 'implied rather than explicit'. See M. Biondich, 'Religion and Nation in Wartime Croatia: reflections on the Ustaša policy of forced religious conversions, 1941-1942', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1, Jan. 2005, p. 78.

22 | Nikša Stančić, *Hrvatska nacija i nacionalizam u 19. i 20. stoljeću* (Barbat: Zagreb, 2002), pp. 89-91.

23 | *ibid.*, p. 120 and also I. Banac, *National Question*, pp. 64-65.

Religious differences played the most significant role in the shaping of Croatian nationhood not in the entire region, but only in religiously and ethnically mixed areas that had been part of the Ottoman Empire, where the population spoke the štokavian dialect. Religion had far less importance in the Croatian čakavian and kajkavian speaking areas (northwest Croatia, Istria, the islands, the Croatian and Dalmatian Littoral) where the population was overwhelmingly Croat and Catholic, living under the strong influence of Italian and Austro-German cultures.<sup>24</sup> It was precisely in these areas in which modern Croatian nationalism emerged.

In any case, Starčević placed more emphasis on history in his notion of Croatian nationhood, rather than on language and culture. In contrast, under the influence of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), the Illyrians and Yugoslavists equated nationhood with language.<sup>25</sup> However they could not clarify with precision to what nation the Croats actually belonged. The words 'nation' and 'tribe' were used intermittently to describe the Croats, south Slavs and Slavs in general.<sup>26</sup> Attempts by the Illyrians and Yugoslavs to forge political and cultural links with the Serbs were frustrated by their efforts to preserve Croatia's historical identity within the Habsburg Empire while seeking the cultural unification of the south Slavs. Most of the Serbian political and cultural elite rejected Yugoslavism and managed to develop a much more coherent sense of nationhood than the Croats, one based on language (i.e. Vuk Karadžić's notion of štokavian as a purely Serb dialect), religion (Serbian Orthodoxy) and state (the medieval Serb kingdom and the modern nineteenth century state).<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, few Croatian nationalists of the nineteenth century considered complete independence outside of the Habsburg Empire as realistic.<sup>28</sup> The Croats had deep cultural and political ties with Austria, Italy and Hungary, which they wanted to preserve, but at the same time the Croats had always nurtured strong ties with the 'Slavic East'.<sup>29</sup> However preserving and forging ties across ethnic lines was going to be difficult to accomplish in an age, when among all of the Croats' neighbours, respective cultural elites were beginning to standardize 'national' languages, develop modern national identities and seek nation-statehood.<sup>30</sup> The acceptance of ethno-linguistic nationalism would further prove problematic for the Croats because they also

24 | Language was the main criterion of nationhood for these Croats as they were in extensive contact with Catholic foreigners – German-Austrians, Hungarians and Italians. N. Stančić, *Hrvatska Nacija*, p. 89.

25 | Mirjana Gross, 'Croatian National-Integrational Ideologies from the end of Illyrism to the Creation of Yugoslavia', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 15-16, 1979-1980, pp. 9-10.

26 | Mirjana Gross, *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

27 | Nicholas J. Miller, *Between Nation and State: Serbian politics in Croatia before the First World War* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), pp. 25-27.

28 | Ivo J. Lederer, 'Nationalism and the Yugoslavs' in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (eds.) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (University of Washington Press, 1969), p. 410.

29 | I. Banac, *National Question*, p. 62.

30 | Elinor Murray Despalatović, *Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement* (East European Quarterly, Columbia University Press: New York, 1975) p. 20.

used three dialects, each with its own literary heritage.<sup>31</sup> This ambiguity over what actually constituted *hrvatstvo* (Croatdom) led most of the Croat political and cultural elite to champion the notion of 'Yugoslav reciprocity'. Different forms of Yugoslavism emerged reflecting different answers to the question of what sort of political relationship should exist between the south Slav peoples.

That political relationship was difficult to define, for the question of what territory belonged to the Croats and Serbs respectively, could not be agreed upon. Both Serb and Croat nationalists claimed Bosnia-Herzegovina as their own and the question of its ownership was of supreme importance. As Ivo Lederer states, 'the party that could legitimize or secure its proprietary claim to the Bosnian middle zone would likely become dominant in any future Yugoslav state'.<sup>32</sup> Serbian nationalists also claimed large parts of the Croatian 'Triune Kingdom', (the Kingdom of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia) which was home to large numbers of Orthodox Serbs. Most Croatian Serbs were descendants of Orthodox refugees (including Serbs, but also Vlachs and other Orthodox Balkan inhabitants) who fled to Croatia, or were resettled there by the Ottomans and Habsburgs in the late sixteenth and especially early seventeenth centuries in the wake of the Ottoman invasions.

Known collectively as Vlachs to the authorities and local population, the majority of the Orthodox refugees were organized as peasant military colonists in the so-called *Militärgrenze/Vojna Krajina* (also home to large numbers of Croats).<sup>33</sup> More importantly, the Orthodox colonists were granted religious autonomy and under the influence of Serbian Orthodox confessional schools would come to identify themselves with the Serbian nation by the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> The attraction of a Serbian irredentist nationalism for increasing numbers of Croatian Serbs greatly worried the HSP, which sought to counter the growth of Serbian (and Yugoslav) nationalism in Croatia by negating the existence of Serbs altogether or denigrating their culture.

The question of south Slav 'unity' was not resolved in the new postwar Yugoslavia – first known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Serbs, with political experience of running an independent state for half a century and motivated by an expansionist nationalism aiming to unify all Serbs in one state – and also aiming to assimilate the Croats who were 'really' Serbs (i.e. štokavian Croats) – followed a program of centralization.<sup>35</sup> The foundation of the new state was to be the army (which was in its organization and spirit essentially a Serbian army) and the Serb

31 | As I. Banac notes, 'the unique Croat dialectal situation...could not be reconciled with the romantic belief that language was the most profound expression of national spirit. Obviously one nation could not have three spirits, nor could one dialect be shared with two nationalities. I. Banac, *National Question*, p. 81.

32 | Ivo Lederer, 'Nationalism and the Yugoslavs', p. 426.

33 | On the history of the pre-Slav Romanized Vlachs, see chapter six, 'Serbs and Vlachs' in Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: a short history* (Papermac: London, 1996).

34 | N. Miller, *Between Nation and State*, pp. 21-22 & N. Stančić, *Hrvatska nacija*, pp. 120-121.

35 | For an overview of the Serbian based Yugoslav nationalism of the interwar Belgrade regime, see the chapter, 'Racial Messianism in Culture', in I. Banac, *National Question*, pp. 202-214.

Karadorđević dynasty.<sup>36</sup> This was not acceptable to the majority of Croats, who were historically accustomed to more federalized state arrangements and aimed to preserve a measure of Croatia's traditional autonomy and full equality with Serbia. Mass Croat opposition to Serbian domination soon arose in the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka, HSS), led by Stjepan Radić (1871–1928). Prior to the formation of Yugoslavia, in the tradition of the Illyrians and Yugoslavists, Radić had adhered to an idea of 'cultural Yugoslavism' and 'political Croatism'.<sup>37</sup> The growing political rift between Serbs and Croats in the new Yugoslav state led Radić to effectively dismiss the idea of 'narodno jedinstvo' (Yugoslav national unity), but not in its entirety. He continually stressed Croatian national individuality, but was willing to accept an autonomous Croatia within Yugoslavia.<sup>38</sup> The same ambiguity over the exact relationship between the Croats and their south Slav 'brethren' would characterize the policies of Radić's successor, Vladko Maček, who continued the HSS's tradition of cautious parliamentary, conciliatory, pacifist and Slavophile politics. During the same period, there arose an internal Croatian conflict between radical Croatian nationalists (called Frankists, after Starčević's successor as leader of the HSP, Josip Frank) and the Peasant Party over how the Croats should best resist Serbian hegemony in the new state. These differences came to light in a period when the processes of Croatian national integration were entering what Miroslav Hroch has referred to as the final stage of national-integrative processes among central European nations; in this third stage, the greater part of the wider ethnic community (in the Croatian case, mostly peasants) becomes integrated into the nation through the national movement.<sup>39</sup> During this period, the artificial racial/supranational Yugoslav notion of Croatian nationhood came into conflict both with exclusive Croatian nationalism and greater Serbian nationalism.<sup>40</sup> This consequently opened a window of opportunity for the Ustasha movement to emerge as a nationalist alternative, albeit one that remained on the political periphery for most of the 1930s.

### Historic state right and the national community: defining the Croats

The Ustasha movement aimed to create a completely independent, ethnically homogeneous nation-state, an aim justified in its eyes by the argument of historic state right and the rights of national self-determination. The first article of the seventeen 'Principles of the Ustasha Movement' – issued by Ante Pavelić in 1933 in Italy, where he enjoyed the hospitality of Mussolini's regime – claims that the Croats are a 'self-contained ethnic unit that is not part of, or a tribe of, any other

36 | The Serbian army was the Karadorđević regime's main instrument for securing south Slav 'unification' in Croatia, where it behaved as an occupying force. I. Banac, *ibid.*, pp. 147–152.

37 | According to this idea, the Croats were culturally 'Yugoslav' but politically 'Croat'. See *ibid.*, pp. 104–105 & Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904–1928* (University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 99–102, 115.

38 | Tihomir Cipek, *Ideja hrvatske države u političkoj misli Stjepana Radića* (Alinea: Zagreb, 2001), p. 174 and Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*, p. 16.

39 | Mirjana Gross, 'On the Integration of the Croatian Nation: a case study in nation building', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No. 2, June 1981, pp. 221–224.

40 | Many Serbian nationalists thought that they could eventually assimilate the Croats to Serbian nationhood through the ideology of Yugoslavism, for this ideology would extinguish a separate Croat identity but not Serb identity, for the Serbs were politically and numerically much stronger than the Croats. See I. Banac, *National Question*, pp. 163–165.



nation'.<sup>41</sup> The next two principles deal with the national and territorial names of the Croat people – Hrvat (Croat) and Hrvatska (Croatia) – names that 'cannot be substituted for any other name' (p. 117). Principles five and six maintain that the Croats arrived in their present day homeland as a completely free and organized people and have rights to that land based on the right of conquest (p. 118). Article seven states that the 'Croatian people maintained its Croatian state throughout the centuries, up until the end of the world war' (ibid.). Principle eleven states that 'no-one who is not by descent and blood a member of the Croatian people can decide on Croatian state and national matters' (ibid.). The foundation of the Croatian people lies in the peasantry (principle 12) and the people's economic organization (principle 16) lies in the peasant economy (the *zadruga*) (pp. 118-119). Its moral strength comes from its 'ordered and religious family life' (principle 16) and the individual has no specific rights as he/she only counts as part of the whole, meaning the 'nation and state' (principle 14, p. 119).

The brevity of the central ideological document of the Ustashe underlined the simple idea that the movement wanted to get across – Croatian ethnic individuality and on the basis of that fact (and the fact of historic state right) Croatia's right to independent statehood. The document expressed the idea, as Holm Sundhaussen summarizes, that the Croats were a 'god-given, immortal blood community, which conquered its settled areas 1400 years ago' and therefore 'had acquired inalienable territorial rights'.<sup>42</sup> However, historians have neglected to explain why the Ustashe had to go to great lengths to prove that the Croats were a separate ethno-linguistic nation. Earlier Croatian nationalists, the Illyrian leader Ljudevit Gaj, the Yugoslav leader Josip Juraj Strossmayer and the Peasant leader Radić were unambiguous on the question of Croatian national individuality on political grounds – the theory of historic Croat statehood – but ethnically or culturally, that identity for them was also clearly Yugoslav and/or Slavic. This caused a problem, because once romantic ethnic nationalism became the dominant political ideology in Central and Eastern Europe from the late eighteenth century onward, the only type of nation that was considered to have a legitimate right to independence was the one which was properly understood as a nation – an ethno-linguistic one.<sup>43</sup> This view was also accepted in the West; close British observers of Yugoslav politics in the post World War One period (such as Arthur Evans, Henry Wickham Steed and R. W. Seton-Watson) considered a single state for the 'Yugoslavs' as completely natural.<sup>44</sup> These observers were sincere supporters of 'Yugoslav unification' and opposed Serbian hegemony in the new state, because they, like the pro-Yugoslav Croat politician Ante Trumbić, viewed it as a detriment to the 'internal harmony of a homogeneous race'.<sup>45</sup> Although the 'Yugoslavs' were supposedly one people, most Western academics and politicians

41 | Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše* (Globus: Zagreb, 1978) p. 117 (Page numbers that follow also refer to this work).

42 | Free translation from p. 513 in Holm Sundhaussen, 'Ustascha-Staat'.

43 | N. Miller, *Between Nation and State*, pp. 180-181.

44 | Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: ethnicity, religion and nationalism* (Cambridge University Press) p. 125 and I. Banac, *National Question*, p. 119.

45 | Trumbić quoted in I. Banac, *ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

viewed the Serbs as the 'most representative Balkan Slavs' and as the Balkan 'Piedmont', the destined leader of the south Slavs.<sup>46</sup>

In an age of nationality, where every nation was supposed to have its own state, Croatian nationalists had to prove to the wider world that they were indeed a nation in every sense of the word; and in an age of science, they needed firm academic arguments to convince doubters (even among their own people). As a result the question of race played an increasingly important role for nationalists such as Pavelić. Since the late 19th century, racial theories had 'aided' a growing number of nationalist politicians and academics in the interpretation of national conflicts in Europe, especially those of Austria-Hungary. As George Mosse points out, 'racism gave new dimensions to the idea of rootedness inherent in all of nationalism, while at the same time sharpening the differences between nations, providing clear and unambiguous distinctions between them'.<sup>47</sup> During the nineteenth century, Croatian nationalists of Yugoslav orientation thought in terms of 'race'.<sup>48</sup> They had equated language with race, as was the romanticist fashion; thus the Croats spoke a Slav language and language was the key to the origins of a people – and the Slavs were supposedly more or less one people or 'race' – so accordingly, the Croats were 'racially' Slavic. In contrast, Starčević had correctly noted that 'all peoples were a mix of diverse nations, of diverse blood' and the Croat too undoubtedly had 'Roman, or Greek, or some Barbarian blood'.<sup>49</sup> However, the idea that the 'Yugoslavs' were a 'homogeneous race' was more widespread throughout Europe and this impelled a new breed of Croatian nationalists to prove otherwise.

In line with the growing importance of 'race', Pavelić was significantly influenced by the little known work of the Croatian historian Ivo Pilar, entitled *Die Südslawische Frage* ('The Southern Slav Question', 1918). *Historians have overlooked Pilar's contribution to Pavelić's ideas, even if Pavelić cited Pilar's text in a propaganda pamphlet in 1929, as useful for understanding the Serbs and why it is 'impossible for anybody to live in a common state with Serbia'*.<sup>50</sup> Pilar's answer to the problem of Croatian-Serbian relations revolved around the two related questions of religion and

46 | The names 'Serb' and 'Yugoslav' were often interchanged, since the Croats and other south Slavs were thought to be ethnically Serb. A. Hastings, *ibid* and p.136.

47 | George Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: toward a general theory of Fascism* (Howard Fertig: New York, 1999), p. 55.

48 | The concept of race was often used in 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe as a synonym for the 'nation' or 'ethnic group'. The term did not necessarily refer to physical characteristics, but could imply that cultural/ethnic differences were somehow 'immutable'. Katherine Verdery writes that 'a racist ideology is one that classifies a person on the basis of what are socially presumed to be *unchangeable* characteristics... Although physical traits are in objective terms generally unchangeable and cultural ones are not, some systems of ethnic classification nonetheless proceed on the contrary assumption. For instance, many Hungarians... spoke of Romanians *as if they were incapable of civilization* – that is in racist terms but with culture as the relevant trait'. See Verdery's Introduction in Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery (eds.) *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Europe* (Yale Center for International and Area Studies: New Haven, 1995), p. xvii.

49 | A. Starčević, 'Bi-li Slavstvu ili ka Hrvatstvu', pp. 39- 40. Starčević viewed the unity of the Croatian nation resting on spiritual rather than on biological grounds. See M. Gross, *Izvorno Pravaštvo*, pp. 347-348.

50 | A. Pavelić, 'Uzpostave hrvatske države, trajni mir na Balkanu', in Petar Požar (ed.), *Ustaša: dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (Zagrebačka Stvarnost: Zagreb, 1995), p. 40.

race. Although Pilar did not argue that the Croats were of non-Slav origin (as Ustasha ideologists would later do), he believed that the Croats had preserved the 'Nordic-Aryan' heritage of their Slavic ancestors (who, as original Indo-Europeans, Pilar also considered 'Aryans') far more than the Serbs, who had interbred – to a large degree – with the dark skinned Balkan Romanic Vlachs (who had probably intermarried with Gypsies).<sup>51</sup> Pilar considered the Vlachs to be a detriment to the social harmony and progress of states in which they lived; they were a race of socially destructive pastoral nomads, bandits and traders who had made up the largest part of the invading Ottoman irregular forces.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the Croats were characterized by the values and virtues of their nobility, which was the only hereditary aristocracy in the Balkans: 'Croatian fidelity, Croatian hospitality, highly advanced sense for aesthetics and love for art and theatre, and on the other hand, a weak sense for the realistic side of life'.<sup>53</sup>

The negative characteristics of the Serbs were further exacerbated by Byzantine influence. Quoting extensively from the anti-philhellene German scholar Jacob Philip Fallmerayer, Pilar took a disparaging view of the Greeks ('a worthless people of mixed race') and Orthodoxy (describing it as morally corrupt, due to its subjection to the Emperor).<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the conflict between the Western church and Holy Roman Empire had caused the separation of church and state and coupled with 'Germanic individualism', this had ensured the development of freedom in the West.<sup>55</sup>

A second important intellectual influence on the Ustashe came in the figure of the internationally renowned Croatian historian, Prof. Milan Šufflay, the chief ideologist of the inter-war HSP. His chief contribution was in attributing an elevated mission to Croatian nationalism, arguing that since Croatia was situated on the border between the West and East or Europe and Asia, Croatian nationalism was different in nature to the nationalism of a 'non-Frontier' nation.<sup>56</sup> In Šufflay's words from 1928, 'Croatian nationalism did not just mean local patriotism, but loyal service to the whole White West'.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to the Croats, Šufflay noted the stronger influence of Vlach (specifically Cincar) blood and Byzantine-Ottoman culture on the Serbs.<sup>58</sup>

51 | L. V. Südland (Ivo Pilar), *Južnoslavensko pitanje: prikaz cjelokupnog pitanja* (Hrvatska Demokratska Stranka: Varaždin, 1990), pp. 19-20, 108, 121-122 and 184-188.

52 | *ibid.*, p. 112, pp. 187-188.

53 | *ibid.*, p. 317. Also pp. 95-96.

54 | *ibid.*, p. 129, 132-133.

55 | *ibid.*, pp. 133-135.

56 | Dr. Milan Šufflay, *Hrvatska u svijetlu svjetske historije i politike: dvanaest eseja* (Novija hrvatska povjesnica: Zagreb, 1999), p. 40-41.

57 | *ibid.*, p. 41. For an Ustasha panegyric on Šufflay, see the article, 'Dr. Milan Šufflay: hrvatski historiozof i nacionalni hrvatski ideolog', *Hrvatski narod*, 27 April 1941, p. 5. Šufflay was brutally murdered by Belgrade government agents in 1931 for his opposition to the Karadorđević regime.

58 | The Cincars are a community of Hellenized Vlachs. See M. Šufflay, *ibid.*, p. 51.

Once in power, the Ustashe proceeded to construct a state that was primarily based on the racial idea of the 'narodna zajednica', ('national community') which directly corresponds to the German National Socialist notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Pavelić acknowledged this in a statement in late 1941, when he sought to explain the significance of the 'national community': 'Today, when we, the Croatian people, have come to new ideas, and rejected individualistic and democratic ideas, the whole people becomes one family, what the Germans today call: the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Individuals... cease to be of worth, except as members of the national community.'<sup>59</sup>

Only the Croatian national community had exclusive rights to the territory that encompassed the NDH, despite the sizeable number of non-Croats on this territory, because it was Croatian by historical right. The Ustashe had no intention of accepting ethnic non-Croats as 'citizens' of their state for the Croats were not only a historical community, but also a blood community.<sup>60</sup>

The Ustashe had definite ideas on the territories that were the patrimony of the Croatian 'blood community'. These included the core territories of the pre-1918 'Triune Kingdom', (Dalmatia, Slavonia and Croatia, the latter in the narrow political sense of Zagreb and its environs) as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Drina river boundary between Bosnia and Serbia played an important role in the nationalist mythology of the Ustasha movement as not only the border between Croats and Serbs, but also as the border between Western and Eastern civilization.<sup>61</sup> Istria was claimed as Croatian ethnic, but not historic, territory, as was the Muslim Slav populated region of South-west Serbia known as the Sandžak.<sup>62</sup> Large parts of the northern and central Dalmatian coast were occupied by Italy and Ustasha assent to this annexation by their pre-war patrons was a heavy blow to the regime's initial popularity among the people as the apparent liberators of Croatia from Serbian rule. However the Ustashe continued to regard Dalmatia as solely Croatian and after the capitulation of Italy in 1943, the regime conducted an anti-Italian campaign in the press and through pamphlets and books, accusing the Italians of anti-Croat collaboration with the Chetniks (which was true).<sup>63</sup>

Although the territorial question was not solved completely to the satisfaction of the Ustashe in 1941, they proceeded to construct a state based on the exclusive rights of the Croatian historic nation to its land. As a 'historic nation', the Croats had proven themselves capable of creating

59 | Quoted in Aleksandar Seitz, *Put do hrvatskog socializma* (Hrvatska državna tiskara: Zagreb, 1943). p. 45.

60 | The only concession was made to the sizeable ethnic German community (*Volksdeutsche*) of North-eastern Croatia, which was organized as the 'Volksgruppe' and granted substantial cultural and administrative autonomy. This did not, however, stop continual disputes between Ustasha and ethnic German officials in ethnically mixed areas over matters of jurisdiction in all areas. See H. Matković, *Povijest NDH*, pp. 152-153.

61 | For the historic role of the Drina in Croatian nationalist mythology see I. Goldstein, 'Granica na Drini – značenje i razvoj mitologema' in H. Kamberović (ed.) *Historijski mitovi na Balkanu* (Institut za istoriju: Sarajevo, 2003).

62 | Mladen Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata* (DoNeHa: Zagreb, 1996), pp. 195-196, 244. The Muslims of the Sandžak are culturally close to the Bosnian Muslims. The Ustashe also argued that the Croats had contributed to the ethnic make-up of the Slovenes and Montenegrins. See *ibid*, pp. 24-40.

63 | Mladen Lorković, *Hrvatska u borbi protiv boljševizma* (Velebit: Zagreb, 1944), pp. 14-16. The Ustashe also falsely accused the Italians of supporting the Partisans. Thousands of Italian soldiers did, however, join the Partisans after Italy's capitulation.

a state. This had been achieved primarily through the use of arms. As Field Marshal Slavko Kvaternik, commander-in-chief of the Croatian Army (1941-1942) explained to the Croatian Sabor in February 1942, 'only warrior peoples possess a creative spirit, because only they have created the greatest and most worthy social community, and that is the state.'<sup>64</sup> This 'creativity' was considered a racial rather than a cultural trait, carried chiefly through the centuries by the *natio croatica*, which had struggled to preserve Croatian historic state right.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, all Croats were possessed of the warrior spirit that had created and preserved that historic state right.<sup>66</sup>

Significantly, the racial characteristic of 'creativity' was used to prove that the Croats were not of Slavic origin, even if they spoke a Slav language. The notion that the Slavs totally lacked state-building talents had found widespread acceptance in both popular and intellectual circles in fin-de-siecle Austria-Hungary and Germany (and so too among some circles in Croatia). The Slavs were thought to be the perpetual losers in a social Darwinian contest over power. The Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz used the term 'Rassenkampf' to denote these struggles between different peoples or races; states were formed when one racial group conquered another and established itself as the ruling class.<sup>67</sup> According to Gumplowicz, this race war had occurred in early Croatian history, for a Gothic tribe had supposedly founded the first Croatian state and had then formed a warrior caste ruling over a group of Slavs.<sup>68</sup>

The 'Gothic theory' - as further developed by the Croatian nationalist priest Kerubin Šegvić - was popular among the more overtly pro-German Ustashe (who did not look favourably on Pavelić's close ties to Italy) and the small number of wartime Croatian National Socialists, who appear to have aimed to turn the NDH into a protectorate of Germany.<sup>69</sup> The Ustashe did indeed argue that the Goths had contributed to the racial make-up of the Croats, but the theory itself served more as an instrument to curry favour with the Nazis. At their first meeting in June 1941 in Berchtesgaden, Pavelić told the Führer that the Croats co-operated so well with the German ethnic minority in Croatia because the Croats were Goths by their origin, which Hitler more or less accepted.<sup>70</sup> More popular with the Ustashe was the theory that the proto-Croats were in fact

64 | Quoted in 'Hrvati - ratnički narod', *Hrvatski narod*, 28 February 1942.

65 | Ivo Bogdan, 'Povjestni značaj ustaške revolucije' in *Spremnost*, 10 April 1942, p. 3.

66 | *ibid.*

67 | For more on Gumplowicz and his influence on the intellectual discourse on the national question in Austria-Hungary, see Marius Turda, "The Magyars: a ruling race": the idea of national superiority in fin-de-siecle Hungary', *European Review of History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2003, p. 25.

68 | Ludwig Gumplowicz, 'Die politische Geschichte der Serben und Kroaten', *Politisch-Anthropologische Revue: Monatschrift für das soziale und geistige Leben der Völker* (Thüringische Verlags-Anstalt: Eisenach und Leipzig, 1902/03). Gumplowicz also argued that the Serbian state had been founded in a similar manner.

69 | See the brochure by the Croatian National Socialist politician Stjepan Buć, *Naši službeni povjesničari i pitanje podrijetla Hrvata* (Zagreb, 1941), where he attacked the 'pan-Slav' tendencies of earlier Croatian historiography. Although close to the age of 80, Šegvić was sentenced to death by Tito's regime in 1945, accused of 'destroying Slavic unity' through his Gothic theory. See Šegvić's biography in Darko Stuparić (ed.) *Tko je Tko u NDH* (Minerva: Zagreb, 1997), p. 378.

70 | For the meeting between Pavelić and Hitler see Vol. XII, 'The War Years' (February 1 - June 22, 1941) Series D (1937-1945), *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945* (U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, 1964),

Iranians, because this had attained a growing acceptance among historians, archaeologists and philologists and also because it provided the regime with its own 'Aryan' racial theory.<sup>71</sup>

Ustasha ideologists admitted that the Croats were of partly Slavic origin, but that it was primarily the Iranian component that had given the Croats their state building talents.<sup>72</sup> One of the leading Ustasha intellectuals, Mladen Lorković (later foreign and interior minister of the NDH) wrote in his 1939 publication, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata*, that the proto-Croats had been the non-Slavic (i.e. Iranian) stratum which had 'organized the Slavic masses' in the proto-homeland of the Croats in southern Poland (*White Croatia*) and also in the Adriatic territory, which was to become Croatia.<sup>73</sup> This Iranian-Caucasian military and political ruling class intermarried with the more numerous Slavs, whereby the Iranian Croats were linguistically assimilated.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the Croats subsequently intermarried with the remnants of the population of Romanized Illyrians and Celts, Romans, Avars and Goths left in Dalmatia and Pannonia after the fall of the Western Roman Empire.<sup>75</sup> In a later publication from 1944, entitled 'For Croatian Individuality – the laws of land, blood and spirit', the head of the foremost Croatian cultural institution Matica Hrvatska (from 1928-1945), the conservative nationalist Prof. Filip Lukas, explained the result of all this mixing; 'because of this mixing, the Croats, regardless of how much they belong to the Slavic group by their language, are racially closer to some neighbouring tribes, than they are to the Slavic Russians'.<sup>76</sup> By neighbouring tribes, Lukas had in mind those of the 'Dinaric' race (such as the Germans of Tyrol and Bavaria).<sup>77</sup> According to Lukas, the dominant racial type among the Croats was the Dinaric, followed by the Alpine (found mainly in the lowlands of northern Croatia), while there were also some Nordics and those of Mediterranean race (along the coast).<sup>78</sup>

p. 977-981. For Hitler's favourable opinion on the Croats' racial value, see *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-1944* (Translated by N. Cameron & R. H. Stevens) (Weidenfeld and Nicholson: London, 1953), pp. 8, 95, 110, 473.

71 | Although there is an on-going academic debate on the origins of the proto-Croats, the name 'Croat' itself is most probably of Iranian origin. See Radoslav Katičić, 'On the Origins of the Croats', in Ivan Supićić (ed.) *Croatia in the Early Middle Ages: a cultural survey* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1999), pp. 149-167.

72 | One author noted that the Croats were racially made up of two components – the Iranian and the Slavic. The first was characterized by a 'fighting spirit' and by 'state-building' talents, while the latter had a 'pacifist' nature. See Z. K. 'Hrvatska povijest je proizvod hrvatske narodne duše', in *Ustaški godišnjak 1942* (Glavni ustaški Stan: Zagreb, 1942), p. 122. The Ustashe claimed that the name 'Slav' was only a linguistic classification. One could speak of 'nations of the Slavic language group', but there was no such thing as a separate Slavic race, culture or ethnicity. See I. Bogdan, "'Slavenski kongres" u Moskvi', *Spremnost*, April 26, 1942, p. 1.

73 | M. Lorković, *Narod i zemlja*, p. 43.

74 | *ibid.*, p. 41.

75 | *ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

76 | Filip Lukas, 'Hrvatski narod i hrvatska državna misao' (book 2) in *Za hrvatsku samosvojnost: zakoni zemlje – krvi – duha* (Matica Hrvatska: Zagreb, 1944), p. 50. Lukas himself was not a member of the Ustasha movement and disagreed with aspects of the regime's policies, but his nationalist publications certainly provided Ustasha ideology with intellectual legitimacy.

77 | *ibid.*, fn. 3.

78 | *ibid.* The Ustashe argued that a 'special Croatian race does not exist, for the Croats, as generally all European nations, are a mixture of the Nordic, Dinaric, Alpine, Baltic and Mediterranean races'. See 'Tumačenje rasnih zakonskih odredbi', *Hrvatski narod*, 3 May 1941, p. 7.

The Dinaric race theory favoured by Ustasha ideologists had been popular for some time among many writers, politicians, sociologists and anthropologists as an explanation for the peculiarities of south Slavic life and culture, beginning with the greater Serbian nationalist geographer, Jovan Cvijić.<sup>79</sup> Cvijić argued that the Dinaric man (the best type of which was supposedly the Serb) had many fine qualities, especially bravery in war and love of freedom.<sup>80</sup> German race theorists, such as Hans F. K. Günther, also had a high opinion of the Dinarics for these same qualities; the Dinarics also had apparent physical similarities to the Nordic race (such as great height and a long face, although the Dinarics were said to be broad rather than long headed and usually had dark hair).<sup>81</sup> Lukas limited the Dinarics to his own people, arguing that only a minority of Serbs were actually true Dinarics, while the rest were racially similar to the Bulgarians (who, like the Serbs, were the product of a Balkan-Near Eastern racial mixture).<sup>82</sup>

Ustasha ideologists were cautious, however, not to exaggerate race as the most important factor in Croatian nationhood. Culture, language and history were considered just as significant, if not more.<sup>83</sup> In response to unitarist attempts under the Karađorđević regime to fashion an artificial 'Yugoslav' or 'Serbo-Croatian' language, the Ustashe introduced a policy of linguistic purism with the establishment of the 'Croatian State Office for Language', whose aim was to purge the Croatian literary language of Serbian and indeed all foreign lexical influences.<sup>84</sup> As Pavelić noted to the Sabor in February 1942, under Serbian rule, the 'most vulgar, the most bad and ugliest Balkan words had become a component part of the Croatian language'.<sup>85</sup> Croatian culture and history as

79 | See Cathie Carmichael, *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans: nationalism and the destruction of tradition* (Routledge: London, 2002), pp. 96-100.

80 | Jovan Cvijić, 'Studies in Yugoslav Psychology' in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 9, 1930-31, pp. 377-378. According to Cvijić, most Croats were of the inferior 'Pannonian' racial type, much weaker than the 'Serb Dinaric' due to the 'corrupting' influences of a centuries long feudal social structure, German culture and Catholicism in northern Croatia. See Dinko Tomašić, 'Sociology in Yugoslavia', *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, 1941-1942, p. 55.

81 | Hans F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (J. F. Lehmanns Verlag: München, 1935), pp. 224-226. See also Dinko Tomašić, *Politički razvitak Hrvata* (Jesenski i Turk: Zagreb, 1997), pp. 142, 150-152. A sizeable number of Dinarics were also classified as fair-haired (especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina). See Mirko Kus-Nikolažev, 'Rasni sastav Hrvata: nordijske primjese pojačavaju i onako visoku životnu i kulturnu vrijednost hrvatskog naroda' in *Spremnost*, 12 July 1942, p. 5. Hitler commented that as a result of their predominant Dinaric racial strain, the Croats would be suitable for possible 'Germanization'. See John Connelly, 'Nazis and Slavs: from racial theory to racist practice', *Central European History*, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 17.

82 | F. Lukas, 'Hrvatski narod', p. 51. Despite this Bulgarian-Serb racial affiliation, the Ustashe enjoyed cordial relations with their Axis partners in Sofia and usually found admirable things to say about the 'noble' Bulgarian people. See for example, 'Bolesni srpski duh', *Hrvatski narod*, 31 July 1941, p. 1.

83 | Mirko Kus-Nikolažev, 'Rasni sastav Hrvata', p. 5. Lukas noted that the 'most important question' in Croatian history was that of Christianity, for through conversion to Catholic Christianity, Croatia had entered the 'universal West' and had thus become a civilized nation. See Lukas, 'Hrvatski narod', pp. 53 and 60. He also cautiously argued that race and nation were not synonymous, for the nation was primarily a 'social and cultural-psychic creation', while race was a 'biological phenomenon'. However, there was a dominant racial type in every nation that contributed to shaping a unique national character. See *ibid.*, p. 65 and Lukas, 'Ličnosti – Stvaranja – Pokreti' (book 3) in *Za hrvatsku samosvojnost*, pp. 85, 231-232.

84 | On the language question in the NDH, see Marko Samardžija, *Hrvatski jezik u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada: Zagreb, 1993).

85 | Pavelić quoted in Ivan Košutić, *Hrvatsko domobranstvo u drugom svjetskom ratu* (Školska knjiga: Zagreb 1992), p. 92.

a whole was thought to be significantly Western in character, but not completely. Although the Ustasha movement consistently emphasized Croatia's Western, Catholic, Latin-Germanic cultural heritage, the movement also asserted that the authentic Croatian spirit and culture was to be found in the patriarchal tribal communities of the mountainous Dinaric areas of the NDH (including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lika and the Dalmatian hinterland – thus those areas least touched by Western civilization) and especially among the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>86</sup> Although this might appear as a contradiction, nationalist ideologists such as Lukas provided the argument that the Croats were a 'Western-Eastern' people, a bridge between the West (understood as the Latin-Germanic world) and East (the Slavic world).<sup>87</sup> It was stressed that the racial and 'original psychological' ties of the Croats were strongest with the 'East', but that these characteristics had been successfully adapted to Western culture (from which the Croats had received, for example, their faith, notions of law, art and philosophy).<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, the Croats were also a bridge to the Islamic world. The Ustasha regime imagined the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina as the decisive link to the 'Orient'.<sup>89</sup> Historians tend to portray the Ustasha courting of the Bosnian Muslims as being primarily an example of *realpolitik*, the need to attract the Muslims to the Croatian side not only in order to secure an ally against the Serbs, but also a Croatian numerical majority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Serbs were in a relative majority (44%) before the war.<sup>90</sup> However, in the case of wooing the Muslims Pavelić was also following in the ideological footsteps of Starčević, who considered the Bosnian Muslims the ethnically purest Croats. The latter's positive attitude to the Muslims was shaped by his theory of historic state right. According to Starčević, Bosnia-Herzegovina had been part of the medieval Croatian kingdom and furthermore, the Bosnian Muslims – who had formed the upper class of Ottoman-ruled Bosnia – were the descendants of the medieval Bosnian (Croatian) nobility that had converted to Islam at the time of the Ottoman occupation in order to preserve its titles and privileges.<sup>91</sup> To Starčević, this action on the part of the Bosnian nobility – sacrificing its faith in favour of its 'lordship' – proved just how strong the sense of noble honour was in this part of the Croatian nation.<sup>92</sup> This action further ensured that the Bosnian Muslims remained a closed upper caste, distinct from both ethnic Turks and non-Muslim Bosnian serfs; consequently, the Muslims had, in Starčević's eyes, retained 'the purest Croatian blood'.<sup>93</sup>

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86 | F. Lukas, 'Hrvatski narod', p. 198. The Ustasha Militia commander Tomislav Sertić claimed in 1944 that, generally speaking, only the 'Dinaric type' of Croat was 'nationally constructive' (*državotvoran*). Quoted in N. Kisić-Kolanović, *NDH i Italija*, p. 58.

87 | F. Lukas, *ibid.*, pp. 93, 96.

88 | *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

89 | F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, p. 140.

90 | For example, Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: denial of a nation* (Westview Press: Colorado, 1996), p. 123. On population statistics, see Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, pp. 480-481.

91 | Mario S. Spalatin, 'The Croatian Nationalism of Ante Starčević, 1845-1871', *Journal of Croatian Studies*, 16, 1975, p. 55.

92 | M. Gross, *Izvorno pravaštvo*, p. 308.

93 | A. Starčević, 'Bi-li ka Slavstvu', p. 40.



In line with this theory, Ustasha propagandists continually stressed that the Muslims were Croatian by their blood and their noble history.<sup>94</sup> Just as the Catholic Croats had been the bulwark of Western Christianity facing the Ottoman world (*antemurale christianitatis*), the 'Islamic Croats' were portrayed as the vanguard of Islam. Lorković concluded, accordingly, that 'a people of weak blood, of a hybrid breed, of a small land and tiny numbers would not have given evidence of that vital force and real greatness which the Croats of both faiths gave, fighting on two sides of the world barricade'.<sup>95</sup> It is true that Pavelić's praise of the Bosnian Muslims often remained no more than that and Muslims were generally underrepresented in government offices.<sup>96</sup> However, large numbers of Muslims did serve in the Croatian Armed Forces (whether in the Home Guard or the elite Ustasha Militia) and the regime was seriously concerned with integrating the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, hence the determined Ustasha opposition to attempts by some Muslim political groups to secure Bosnian autonomy under the aegis of the German Reich in 1942 and German plans to set up a separate Muslim SS division.<sup>97</sup> After the loss of large parts of northern and central Dalmatia to Fascist Italy as a result of the Rome agreements of May 1941, whereby Pavelić (Mussolini's onetime protégé) agreed to the Italian annexation, the Ustasha regime focused its attention more squarely on Bosnia-Herzegovina, arguing that Croatia 'could live as a body without a limb (here referring to Dalmatia – *op cit.*), but we cannot live without Bosnia-Herzegovina, because it is our body and heart'.<sup>98</sup>

### The 'problem' of Serbian Orthodox identity in the NDH: defining the Serbs

There were three communities that the Ustashe declared had no place in the NDH, the Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. As historically the two most conspicuous ethnic minorities on the European continent, the Jews and Gypsies were officially designated by the race laws promulgated in late April 1941 as 'non-Aryan'.<sup>99</sup> The Serbs were not officially defined as a racial community, but as a religious one (they were termed *grkoistočnjaci*, 'Greek-Easterners').<sup>100</sup> This religious community

94 | The Muslims were said to possess as predominant racial traits those that were characteristic of the Croats as a whole, such as fair or brown hair and light skin complexion. This, according to the Ustashe, set them apart from the Serbs, who were predominantly black haired, dark-eyed and of dark complexion. See 'Hrvatstvo bosansko-hercegovačkih Muslimana: zvjerstva Srba nad Muslimana', *Novi list*, 8 May 1941, p. 7.

95 | M. Lorković, *Narod*, p. 58. The Ustashe liked to conjure up the image of a warrior race by often referring to the Croats as a nation of 'wolves and lions' (*vuka i arslana*). See, for example, Žarko Brzić, 'Vizija prošlosti', *Ustaški godišnjak 1942*, p. 211. In the same article, Brzić referred to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Senj military order, the Uskoks, as the 'first Ustashe' (p. 210). Both terms, 'Uskok' and 'Ustaša' (the latter meaning 'insurgent' or 'rebel') have their origins in the folkloric tradition of anti-Turk struggles and social banditry common to large parts of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

96 | Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, p. 505.

97 | *ibid.*, pp. 490-498.

98 | Quoted in Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, p. 100.

99 | The dominant racial strain among the Jews was defined as the 'Oriental and Near Eastern race with admixtures of the Mongol and Black races', while the Gypsies (or 'Indids') were defined as a 'mixture of the Indic and Iranian race with paleo-Negroid elements with oriental and mongoloid admixtures'. Both also supposedly had, however, a 20% European racial admixture. This 'European admixture' allowed some 'meritorious' Jews to acquire 'honorary Aryan' status in the NDH. See 'Tumačenje rasnih zakonskih odredbi'.

100 | H. Matković, *Povijest NDH*, pp. 113-114.

was thought, however, to be of various ethnic/racial origins (including Croatian). The regime felt that this fact demanded a different policy than the one employed against Jews and Gypsies.

The regime did not conduct a uniform policy toward all the Serbs found in the NDH and this reflects the fact that it divided the Serb population into several groups. As a result, the regime conducted a policy that included deportation to German occupied Serbia, mass murder and forcibly assimilating Serbs (which meant conversion to Roman Catholicism, and later establishing a Croatian Orthodox Church). The more moderate Ustashe advocated deportation and conversion, while Pavelić and the militant émigré Ustashe that followed him from Italy were the main instigators and organizers of mass killings.<sup>101</sup> First of all, a distinction was made between autochthonous Croatian Serbs and Serbians from Serbia proper (who had immigrated to Croatia after 1900), and the latter (together with their descendents) were to be deported first.<sup>102</sup> In order to carry out the deportations, the regime established a 'State Directorate for Renewal' (*Državno ravnateljstvo za ponovu*).<sup>103</sup> The closely related Montenegrins were also subject to discrimination at first, but in line with the Ustasha policy of co-operation with anti-Serb Montenegrin nationalists (and also racial theory, which characterized the Montenegrins as predominantly Dinaric), were later not persecuted.<sup>104</sup>

As far as the almost two million 'Greek-Easterners' in the NDH were concerned, the Ustashe believed that the Serbian identity of this population was based primarily on its adherence to the Serbian Orthodox Church. According to the Ustashe, the Croatian Serbs were actually the descendants of three main groups: 1) nomadic Orthodox immigrants of various ethnic/racial origins (Vlach, Bulgarian, Greek, Gypsy) that had arrived in Croatian lands serving as irregular troops in Ottoman armies; 2) Catholic Croats who had been pressured to convert to Orthodoxy (especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina) during the seventeenth century under the Ottomans, who favoured the Orthodox over the Catholic Church, and 3) ethnic Serbs who had arrived into northern Croatia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during the so-called great migrations of ethnic Serbs after 1690.<sup>105</sup>

101 | Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia: a history* (Hurst & Company: London, 1999), p. 138. Also I. Goldstein, *Holokaust*, pp. 592-593. On Slavko Kvaternik's more moderate stance on the 'Serb question', see Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Vojskovođa i politika: sjećanja Slavka Kvaternika* (Golden Marketing: Zagreb, 1997), pp. 43-44. The Ustashe justified their deportations of Serbs by referring to the precedent of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey on mutual deportations of Greeks and Muslims/Turks in 1923. The Ustasha minister for the 'national economy', dr. Lovro Sušić, explained at one public rally that there would be 'no bloody cleansing': 'if the Turks and Greeks had to exchange, then these (the Serbs – op. cit) have to leave as well'. See, 'Velika skupština ustaškog pokreta u Slunju', *Hrvatski narod*, 9 June 1941, p. 5. At his trial in May 1945, the one-time Ustasha education minister Mile Budak claimed that he never thought that the 'Croatian-Serbian conflict could be solved by massacres and killings, but only by a mutual exchange of populations'. See Jere Jareb, 'Prilog životopisu dra Mile Budaka', *Hrvatska revija*, XL, Vol. 2, June, 1990, p. 316.

102 | See the 'Decree on the duty to register Serbians', issued on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1941, in P. Požar (ed.), *Ustaša*, p. 191.

103 | The main aim of this institution was defined as the 'eviction of foreign life from the NDH'. The Directorate (which was abolished in December 1941) set up offices in all districts that in turn set up assembly points from where Serbs were deported. See Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, pp. 167-171.

104 | See footnote 102 in Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, p. 165. On the Montenegrins' racial affiliation, see the maps in F. Lukas, 'Hrvatski narod', p. 48-49.

105 | M. Lorković, *Narod*, pp. 83-88. Also see the interview Lorković gave to the German language Ustasha newspaper on the topic of the 'Serbenfrage' in the NDH, *Neue Ordnung*, 7 September 1941, pp. 1-2. And F. Lukas, 'Ličnosti

Accordingly, the only thing that held these disparate groups together was their Serbian Orthodox faith; linguistically, they spoke more or less the same language as the Croats, but because of their faith and various origins had not assimilated into the Croatian nation as other immigrants had done.<sup>106</sup> The Ustashe saw the 'problem' of the Orthodox minority in the NDH as one of trying to assimilate an 'anti-social' nomadic element. As Lukas explained in 1943, there were historically two waves of immigration to Croatia, one from the West and the other from the East; the Western immigrants (who included Germans, Slovaks, Slovenes, Czechs and Hungarians) were, 'racially and culturally kindred' to the Croats even if they did not share a common heritage and common national customs with them.<sup>107</sup> However, while these Western immigrants had, by and large, come with time to identify with their new homeland, the Serbian Orthodox immigrants from the East (mainly Vlachs and Gypsies) were both racially and culturally distinct from the Croats and remained more or less a foreign element on Croatian soil.<sup>108</sup>

Although not subject to the race laws, Serbs were portrayed as being racially similar to Jews and Gypsies.<sup>109</sup> The Ustashe argued, for example, that due to centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule in Serbia, the Serbians had been subject to a great deal of racial mixing with various immigrants from Asia Minor and the Middle East. In an article in the Ustasha journal *Spremnost* in November 1942, it was claimed that a sizeable number of Serbs (some 15%) possessed 'non-Aryan Near Eastern and very conspicuous Gypsy' racial features.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, only a minority of Serbs were actually Dinaric, while the majority belonged to the related, but still distinct 'Armenoid' racial type (which was characterized by a dark complexion and a personality prone to trickery, fawning and cheating).<sup>111</sup> The Croats, on the other hand, had (as a member of the Croatian parliament in the same year noted) 'received into their blood a strong admixture of the ethical Nordic race, while the Serbs had received a considerable admixture of Gypsy, nomadic and Semitic blood,

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- Stvaranja – Pokreti', pp. 236-237.

106 | In a speech at a public rally in Karlovac, the education minister Mile Budak claimed that the Croats had taught the Orthodox immigrants (a mixture of 'Greeks, Cincars, Gypsies, Bulgarians, Romanians and some Serbs') the Croatian language, but they had not become Croatian. See, 'Prva ustaška skupština u Karlovcu', *Hrvatski narod*, 14 July 1941, p. 2.

107 | F. Lukas, 'Ličnosti', pp. 235-237.

108 | *ibid.* The distinction made between 'Western' and 'Eastern' immigrants was reflected somewhat in the June 1941 German-Croatian agreements on mutual deportations of 179,000 Slovenes from German annexed Slovenia to Croatia and the simultaneous deportation of the same number of Croatian Serbs to German occupied Serbia. The Croats were, in fact, reluctant to receive too many Slovenes at once, much to the Germans' frustration. See Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše*, pp. 167-170. Also see Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims: the establishment of the new order* (W.W. Norton & Company Inc: New York, 1974), pp. 271-272.

109 | Although the Serbs were legally speaking not 'non-Aryans', discriminatory decrees were issued by the regime dealing with Serbs and Jews together. For example, see *Hrvatski narod*, 10 May 1941, 'Židovi i Srbi moraju za 8 dana napustiti sjeverni dio Zagreba' ('Jews and Serbs must leave the northern part of Zagreb within 8 days').

110 | Milivoj Karamarko, 'Dinarska rasa i Hrvati: osebujne naše značajke i pozitivni prinos nordijske rase', *Spremnost*, 22 November 1942, p. 7.

111 | *ibid.*

and were therefore clever, cunning, envious and selfish'; the Serbs were materialists, rather than idealists like the Croats.<sup>112</sup>

In an all out propaganda campaign involving mass public rallies throughout several Croatian towns from May to July 1941, the Serbs of the NDH were portrayed by the Ustashe not only as a fifth column of the Belgrade regime, but also as a nomadic group or as the descendents of nomads, similar to the equally 'nomadic' and stateless Jews and Gypsies. In a speech in the town of Križevci in early July 1941, the justice minister Mirko Puk argued that the Serbs had come 'to our regions with Turkish units, as looters, as the dregs and refuse of the Balkans'.<sup>113</sup> The education minister Mile Budak spoke of the NDH's Serbs in a similar manner, often referring to them as Vlachs and/or as the descendents of various Orthodox Balkan immigrants, who served as slaves of, or auxiliaries to, the Ottoman Turks.<sup>114</sup>

Thus the NDH's Serbs were a people who were not a nation in the strictest sense of the word, because they had no true homeland of their own. They were not even truly Serbian, save for their Serbian Orthodox faith. Consequently, the regime characterized the rise of the anti-NDH Partisan and Chetnik movements that operated all over Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as the product of this anti-Croatian and indeed socially destructive and uncivilized element. Although the greater Serbian monarchist Chetniks and Communist led Partisans fought each other for most of the period of the Second World War, the fact that both were committed to the restoration of the Yugoslav state (albeit with different ideas on what form of state it should be), and the fact that the Partisan movement was initially mainly Serb in terms of its ethnic make-up, enabled the Ustashe to depict them as essentially the same phenomena.<sup>115</sup>

The regime's propaganda apparatus usually identified the two groups as one movement by the use of the hyphenated term 'communist-chetnik'.<sup>116</sup> The 'communist-chetniks' were accused of acting in collaboration with Jewry, which had long been portrayed by the Ustashe as the leader of world communism.<sup>117</sup> The overall picture of the 'communist-chetnik bandits' the regime presented to the public was of bloodthirsty Balkan criminal murderers, who hid in the forests and mountains

112 | Dr. Mirko Košutić, 'Ništetnost državnih čina od 1918', *Spremnost*, 15 March 1942, p. 1.

113 | See the article headed 'Doglavnik Dr. Mile Budak o dužnostima svakog Hrvata', *Hrvatski narod*, 7 July 1941, p. 3.

114 | See for example 'Sav je narod uz Poglavnika', *Hrvatski narod*, 27 May 1941, pp. 1, 3. Starčević's term 'Slavoserb' was also employed by Ustasha propaganda, but less as a synonym for Serbs and more as a term of reference for Croatian traitors and 'Yugoslavs'. See the article 'Nek' se Čistil', *Novi list*, 21 May 1941, p. 1.

115 | With the exception of the Italian annexed parts of Croatia the Partisans made little headway among the Croatian peasant masses until late 1942, when larger numbers of Croats began to join the Partisans. See Dušan Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest* (Golden Marketing: Zagreb, 1999), pp. 141-143, 148-149.

116 | See for example the Croatian army report, 'Komunističko-četnički izgredi' ('communist-chetnik riots') in *Hrvatski narod*, 7 August 1941, p. 3. Ustasha journalists were instructed to use the word 'communist' and not 'Serb' when referring to the 'Vlachs in Croatia'. See Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, fn. 57, p. 237.

117 | For the connection between the 'communist-chetniks' and Jews, see 'komunističko-četnički izgredi'.

of the NDH and were led by the equally amoral Jews.<sup>118</sup> In 1944, Lorković argued that the 'outlaws' (i.e. 'communist-chetniks') were the direct descendents of the so-called *martolosi*, the Christian (mainly Vlach) auxiliaries who had served as irregular Ottoman forces, or as Lorković explained, the 'rabble who were brought over in the Turkish period from the Balkan interior'.<sup>119</sup>

### **Ustasha policies toward the NDH's Serbs: religious conversion**

The Ustashe did not attempt to precisely determine who was of Croatian, or Vlach/Gypsy, or Serb origin (which would have in any case been a logistical impossibility). In reality, the Ustashe were unable to come to an overall ethnic/racial definition of the Orthodox minority in Croatia, because that minority was thought to be a distinct minority only by virtue of its religion. Thus there were no Nuremberg type laws pertaining to the Serbs in the NDH. The absence of a defined legal status for the NDH's Serbs allowed the regime to pursue a more flexible policy with regard to them. Accordingly, the Ustashe decided to first destroy the institution that they regarded as the nurturer of a Serbian identity in Croatia - the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>120</sup>

One way to eliminate the Orthodox Church was to conduct a policy of conversion. This took on mass proportions in September 1941, but had begun months in advance.<sup>121</sup> It is important to stress that the Ustashe decided on this policy not for 'crusading' reasons, but because the people they wanted to assimilate were subject to the Serbian Patriarch in Belgrade, the capital of their enemy. If the regime wanted to assimilate a part of its Serb population - which according to it was only Serbian by virtue of its religion - then the answer lay in conversion to the faith to which the majority of the Croatian people belonged (i.e. Catholicism). On July 30th 1941, the Ministry of Justice and Religion sent a detailed circular to all districts (*župe*) in the NDH, in which the regime spelled out the procedures for conversion. 'Greek-Easterners' wishing to convert to Catholicism had to provide a 'certificate of good conduct', issued by their respective district authorities.<sup>122</sup> The

118 | One Ustasha brochure from 1944 referred to the 'communist-chetniks' as 'forest bandits', 'drunken rabble' and a 'plundering gang gone savage'. Mijo Bizik, *Ustaški pogledi (1928-1941-1944)* (Ustaša: Zagreb, 1944), pp. 75-77.

119 | M. Lorković, *Hrvatska u borbi*, p. 9.

120 | Pavelić had in fact described the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia to the Catholic Archbishop Stepinac in 1941 as a 'political organization'. See Stella Alexander, *The Triple Myth: a Life of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1987), p. 62. Hundreds of Serb Orthodox priests in Croatia were deported to Serbia or murdered, along with the destruction of many Serb Orthodox churches. See J. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, p. 529.

121 | In late 1941, the Ustashe needed to 'readjust' their policy of deporting and killing the Serbs somewhat, for the outbreak of Serb rebellions throughout the NDH (and in Serbia) in the summer of 1941 led the Germans in Serbia to close the border and the Croats were unable to continue deporting mass numbers of Serbs. See F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, pp. 172-175. Many Serbs sought conversion to Catholicism in the early months of 1941 in the hope of avoiding discrimination or persecution. See Biondich, 'Religion and Nation', p. 84. While Biondich (*ibid*) is correct in suggesting that the Ustashe were 'not yet interested in mass conversions' in the early months of 1941, preferring deportation and outright killing to solve the 'Serb question', the Ustashe needed conversion as a possible back-up, for according to the German-Croatian agreements of June 1941 regulating deportations, only 179,000 of the NDH's Serbs were in fact to be deported to Serbia, still leaving well over a million and a half Serbs in the NDH.

122 | Carlo Falconi, *The Silence of Pius XII*, pp. 283-284 and Jelić-Butić, *ibid*, p. 174.

circular maintained the 'basic principle' that 'Greek-Eastern schoolmasters, priests, tradesmen, artisans, rich peasants and the intelligentsia' should not receive certificates.<sup>123</sup>

Thus conversion was only limited to the Serbian Orthodox peasantry, for the regime deduced that the Serb identity of the peasants was weaker and less sophisticated than that of educated or wealthy Serbs (being based almost solely on their faith) and therefore the conversion of peasants would be a fair less complicated process. However conversion was to not be conducted in all areas. The above-mentioned circular stated that the conversion rules were valid for all the župe of the NDH, except Gora, Krbava and Psat (districts found on the border between Croatia and Bosnia, south of Zagreb), where the local authorities could 'circulate rules suited to their territory according to the local situation'.<sup>124</sup> What this in reality meant, was that in these strategically important areas the 'Serb problem' would be solved once and for all by the ultimate means (i.e. deportation and extermination).<sup>125</sup>

In theory, Serbs could convert to Protestantism and/or Islam as well (since they were legally recognized by the state), but this was not encouraged in light of the regime's problems with issues over autonomy with the ethnic Germans (many of whom were Protestants) and Muslims; the regime had no desire to strengthen the numbers of these communities.<sup>126</sup> In any case, conversion to Catholic Christianity was a much simpler process than conversion to a non-Christian faith, while conversion to Protestantism (the Evangelical Church) might well entail assimilation into ethnic German rather than Croatian culture.<sup>127</sup> The regime also stipulated that any Jews, Gypsies or Cincars wishing to convert to Catholicism would be prohibited from doing so.<sup>128</sup> Therefore conversions in the NDH were subject to racial restrictions – only Serbs (in 'reality' Croats) could convert. Pavelić pointed out to Italian representatives in the NDH that the 'largest part of the

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123 | Jelić-Butić, *ibid.*

124 | *ibid.*

125 | *ibid.* After sending the elite Ustasha 'Poglavnik's Bodyguard' (PTS) units on a 'punitive expedition' into the area of Kordun (south of Zagreb along the border with Bosnia) in early 1942, Pavelić told Slavko Kvaternik that he ordered the attack on the Chetniks in the area, because he 'could not tolerate a Serbian state right in front of Zagreb'. See N. Kisić-Kolanović, *Vojskovođa i politika*, p. 226.

126 | For problems over conversion to Islam, see Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, pp. 543-544 and Biondich, 'Religion and Nation' pp. 88-89, 105-109. Tomasevich claims that this issue shows how the Muslims were treated as second-class citizens by the NDH regime. I would argue instead that the Ustashe saw possible conversions to Islam (and Protestantism) as complicating matters too much for the reasons stated in this article.

127 | The Ustashe were strongly opposed to any moves whereby the German Volksgruppe might become a 'pole of attraction for Croatian elements which are not of German origin' (as Pavelić told the Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano in December 1941). See Malcolm Muggeridge (ed) *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, (trans. Stuart Hood) (Odhams Press Ltd: London, 1948), p. 472. There were constant bureaucratic tussles between the Ustasha movement and Volksgruppe over whether a particular individual was German or Croatian. Ustasha authorities were deeply concerned about Croats joining the Volksgruppe. See HDA, MUP NDH, kutija 26: Broj 23914/1941 ('Upisivanje i stupanja Hrvata u članstvo njemačke narodne skupine') 14 August 1941. In light of the power of the Reich behind the Volksgruppe and growing German military influence in the NDH, Croat fears of German assimilation were not unfounded. Hitler himself spoke of the possibility of one-day integrating Croatia into the Reich and Germanizing the Croats. See *Hitler's Table Talk*, *ibid* and the second volume of B. Krizman, *Ustaše i Treći Reich* (Globus: Zagreb, 1986), pp. 70-71.

128 | C. Falconi, *Pius XII*, p. 285. On the Gypsies and Cincars, see HDA, fond MUP NDH, kutija 34: Broj 26081/1941, ('Upute za vjerozakonski prelaz grčkoistočnjaka') 24 October 1941.

Orthodox population in Croatia is of Croatian race and language' and that the Orthodox should therefore 'return to racial and political Croatdom'; this would be achieved through conversion to Catholicism.<sup>129</sup>

As far as the Catholic Church's position on conversions is concerned, it is true that it welcomed the possibility of gaining converts, but the church hierarchy opposed the government's policy because it violated Catholic teaching (the conversions were carried out under duress) and placed the jurisdiction of the conversions in the regime's hands.<sup>130</sup> The regime was able to secure the services of part of the lower clergy for conducting the actual conversion ceremonies, whereas the church hierarchy remained opposed to forced conversions.<sup>131</sup> The conversions were thus carried out under the civil and not church authorities. The head of the church, Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac had, for his part, instructed the clergy to allow Orthodox Christians to convert, without too much concern for their motive, if this would save lives.<sup>132</sup> Around 100,000 Serbs were converted, but hundreds and thousands were also deported and killed.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore Catholicized Serbs were not safe from further harassment and persecution. This merely shows that the regime (or at least the most extreme Ustashe) always tended to favour a racial policy, according to which the majority of the NDH's Serbs were a different ethnic/racial minority that could not be assimilated.<sup>134</sup>

As regards the relationship between the Church and the regime, there is no doubt that the Ustashe tried to win the favour of the Catholic Church because they needed the prestige and legitimacy that the Church could offer in a predominantly Catholic country.<sup>135</sup> For its part, the Church also welcomed the establishment of the NDH, where, in contrast to its inferior position in Yugoslavia, it would be the dominant religion and also because the Catholic Church in Croatia

129 | Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *NDH i Italija*, p. 271. See also Pavelić's interview, 'Der Poglavnik zur Innenpolitik' in *Neue Ordnung*, 24 August 1941, p. 2, where Pavelić made similar comments.

130 | S. Alexander, *Triple Myth*, pp. 74-76.

131 | *ibid.*, pp. 75-76 and M. Biondich, 'Religion and Nation', pp. 86-87.

132 | S. Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 85.

133 | Biondich gives the figure of between, 97,447 to 99,333 converts to Catholicism (and a very small number of converts to Islam and Protestantism) for the period 1941-1942. See M. Biondich, 'Religion and Nation', p. 111. While historians correctly note that the conversion process was a failure (for it did not 'solve' the Serb 'problem'), the attempted assimilation of even 100,000 Serbs is significant if one takes into account that half a million or so ethnic Croats in Italian occupied Istria and Dalmatia and Hungarian occupied Međimurje were 'lost' to the NDH. One could hypothesize, as Paul Hehn did, that the Ustashe were seeking to correct the demographic balance in the NDH to the Croats' favour. Paul N. Hehn, 'Serbia, Croatia and Germany 1941-1945: civil war and revolution in the Balkans', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* Vol. 13, 1971, p. 349. Some 200,000 of the NDH's Serbs were deported or fled to Serbia. See J. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, pp. 392-397. In *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga* (Globus: Zagreb, 1992), the Croatian demographer Vladimir Žerjavić, calculated that approximately 217,000 Serbs died in the NDH as victims of 'fascist terror' (thus including the Serb victims of the Ustashe, Germans and Italians). See *ibid.*, p. 71.

134 | M. Biondich, *ibid.*, pp. 102-104. Catholicized Serbs were, however, officially designated as Croats. See HDA, MUP NDH, kutija 45: Broj 818/1942 ('Srbi prelaznici na rimokatoličku vjeru – upisivanje narodnosti'), 13 January 1942.

135 | Yeshayahu Jellinek, 'Clergy and Fascism: The Hlinka Party in Slovakia and the Croatian Ustasha Movement' in S. U. Larsen, B. Hagtvet, J. P. Myklebust (eds.) *Who were the Fascists: social roots of European fascism* (Universitetsforlaget: Bergen, 1980), p. 373.

sincerely welcomed the prospect of an independent Croatian state.<sup>136</sup> Stepinac was a fervent anti-Communist (like his superior Pope Pius XII) and although he certainly disliked Pavelić and the Ustashe (and vice-versa), he more or less accepted the NDH as a Croatian national state (as did the heads of the Evangelical Church in Croatia and the Islamic Religious Community).<sup>137</sup> *Much of the lower clergy supported or even joined the Ustasha movement.*<sup>138</sup> These Catholics had subordinated their religious convictions to their higher nationalist ones. However, there were also Catholic priests (albeit a much smaller number, but not insignificant) who joined or collaborated with the Partisans.<sup>139</sup> All in all, the Church had little political influence on the regime. In fact, serious differences arose between the regime and the Church over the racism of the former; tensions simmered after Stepinac attacked racist ideology in unequivocal terms in several sermons in Zagreb cathedral during 1942 and 1943.<sup>140</sup> The regime shied away from seeking too close a relationship with the Church. In conference with high-ranking officials of the Ustasha movement in Sept. 1943, Pavelić explained that there existed three categories in Croatian political life, the 'Starčevićites', 'Clericalists' and the 'Slavoserbs'; 'only Starčevićism', Pavelić continued, 'is the bearer of hrvatstvo... Starčevićism is a racial matter, only it carries hrvatstvo and the state idea'.<sup>141</sup>

### The Croatian Orthodox Church

Locked in a bloody struggle with both greater Serbian royalist nationalists, the Chetniks (who conducted their own wave of terror, killing tens of thousands of Croat and Muslim civilians) and the Communist led Partisans (who also engaged in brutal killings of 'class enemies'), which led to the Ustashe losing control of large parts of their state as early as the summer of 1941, the regime tried to come to a modus vivendi with the Serbian minority. With the added pressure of German military complaints concerning the growing unrest in the NDH, Pavelić declared the establishment of a 'Croatian Orthodox Church' in April 1942.<sup>142</sup> Henceforth, the NDH's remaining Serbs (but not including converts to Catholicism) who voluntarily and formally joined

136 | I. Goldstein, *Holokaust*, p. 562. Also see Pedro Ramet, 'From Strossmayer to Stepinac: Croatian National Ideology and Catholicism', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, XII, 1, 1985, pp. 133-134.

137 | On Stepinac's anti-Communism, see S. Alexander, *Triple Myth*, pp. 88-89. The head of the Evangelical Church, Bishop Dr. Philip Popp, was subsequently executed by Tito's regime after the war, as was the mufti of Zagreb, Ismet Muftić. Archbishop Stepinac was imprisoned on trumped up charges of 'collaboration' with the Ustashe and Nazis until 1951 and afterwards remained under house arrest until his death in 1960. See J. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, pp. 560-563, 573-574. The Ustashe suspected the Archbishop of 'Yugoslav' tendencies, for he had joined the 'Yugoslav Legion' (made up of Austro-Hungarian POW's and deserters) in 1918. See Vilim Cecelja, 'Moja sjećanja na uzoritoga Kardinala Stepinca, zagrebačkoga nadbiskupa', in *Hrvatska revija*, God. XL, Vol. 4 (160), Dec. 1990, pp. 705, 731.

138 | H. Matković, *Povijest*, pp. 111-112.

139 | Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: the disintegration of Yugoslavia from the death of Tito to ethnic war* (Westview Press: Colorado, 1996) p. 137.

140 | See S. Alexander, *Triple Myth*, pp. 96-101.

141 | Quoted in Jere Jareb, 'Bilješke sa sjednica doglavničkog vijeća 1943-1945 iz ostavštine dra Lovre Sušića', *Hrvatska revija*, Jubilarni zbornik 1951-1975, München-Barcelona, 1976, p. 161.

142 | Jelić-Butić, *ibid.*, pp. 177-178.



the Croat Church were declared 'Orthodox Croats'.<sup>143</sup> A small number of Serb Orthodox clergy joined the new church, but the Serbian Church hierarchy and most ordinary Serbs rejected it.<sup>144</sup> In fact, a Russian émigré priest became the church's head under the name of Germogen. The Croatian Orthodox Church did, however, obtain official recognition from the Romanian Orthodox Church.<sup>145</sup> It is true that the church served more as a propaganda tool for the regime and the persecution of Serbs did not stop.<sup>146</sup> Nonetheless, the church could not have come into existence without some ideological justification – which held that large numbers of *Serbs were in fact of ethnic Croatian origin – in the first place*.<sup>147</sup> Pavelić was reluctant in the beginning to allow the NDH's Serbs any religious autonomy at all (whether as members of a separate Orthodox Church or of the Greek Catholic Church), for they would, he said, 'again remain Vlachs and be our enemies'.<sup>148</sup> In any case the idea of a Croatian Orthodox Church was hard to sell to the wider population (especially the remaining Serbs) after the previous year when the Ustashe had tried to destroy the Serbian Orthodox Church as an institution.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, although the regime recognized that one of the main causes for the existence of a 'Serb question' was that 'a defined legal status' was not provided by state law to 'hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people' (i.e. to the NDH's Serbs), the establishment of the Croatian Orthodox Church did not solve the question of the legal position of the remaining Serbs who had not joined the Croatian Orthodox Church, had not been converted, deported or murdered.<sup>150</sup>

143 | J. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, p. 546. M. Biondich, 'Religion and Nation', 135fn, p. 110. See also Petar Požar, *Hrvatska pravoslavna crkva: u prošlosti i budućnosti* (Naklada Pavičić: Zagreb, 1996), p. 295. There was some initial uncertainty in parts of Croatia whether members of the newly established Croatian Orthodox Church were still to be officially designated as Serbs in an ethnic sense. In a letter to the district authorities in Vukovar, the head of police in Hrvatska Mitrovica requested clarification on the national designation for members of the Croatian Orthodox Church, as 'many citizens of the Croatian Orthodox faith wish that instead of "Serb", their nationality be [stated] as Croat'. See HDA, MUP NDH, kutija 45: Broj T. 168/1942 ('Hrvatsko-pravoslavna vjeroispovjest, narodnost i obilježje'), 15 April 1942.

144 | F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, p. 178. There were apparently 51 'Croatian Orthodox' priests in the NDH by the end of 1942. See Petar Požar, *Hrvatska pravoslavna crkva*, p. 297. Despite the lack of recognition for the Croatian Orthodox Church, S. P. Ramet aptly observes that the establishment of the Croat Church was the 'first twentieth century challenge' to the Serbian Orthodox Church. See S. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp. 174-175.

145 | See P. Požar, *ibid*, pp. 199-201. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church also appears to have recognized the Croatian Church, but this is not for certain. See *ibid*, p. 203.

146 | Hundreds of Serbs were murdered in an Ustasha police operation in North-eastern Croatia in April 1942. See Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Vojskovođa i politika*, p. 42.

147 | In 1861, Eugen Kvaternik became the first Croatian politician to put forward the suggestion of establishing a Croatian Orthodox Church. See P. Požar, *Hrvatska pravoslavna crkva*, pp. 103-105. Ustasha propaganda did place greater emphasis on the notion of the 'Croatian heritage' of the NDH's Serbs during the conversion process (late 1941 and early 1942) and the setting up of the Orthodox church than at any other time, but the regime was fairly consistent throughout 1941-1945 (and in pre-war times) in its thesis that the Serbs of the NDH were the descendants of the three groups as described in this article. For example see S. Kvaternik's speech before Croatian soldiers in Zagreb, January 1942, where he referred to the 'one part of the Croats who converted to the Greek-Eastern faith' and to the 'various mixture of peoples' that had joined the Turks during the Ottoman invasions of Croatia and who because of their Orthodox faith became Serbs. 'Prošla godina bila je za Hrvate najvažnija godina', *Hrvatski narod*, 1 January 1942, p. 1.

148 | Pavelić quoted in Vilim Cecelja, 'Moja sjećanja na uzoritoga kardinala Štepinca' p. 721.

149 | F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, p. 178.

150 | The above quote is found in the draft for the 'Law decrees on the legal status of members of the Eastern Church in the Independent State of Croatia', which sought to regulate the legal position of the NDH's Serbs. See Jelić-Butić *ibid*, p. 176. Attempts by members of the Croatian *Sabor* to secure a greater decree of legal protection for the 'Greek-Easterners'

In practice, different methods (whether deportation, killing, forced assimilation) were used depending on whether the particular method seemed politically expedient at a particular time. However the use of different methods was also, as mentioned, determined by what the regime saw as the complex nature of Serbian Orthodox identity in Croatia. Some of the NDH's Orthodox inhabitants were clearly acceptable to the regime as Croats. For example, there were three self-professed Orthodox Croat generals in the Croatian Home Guard, one of whom - Djuro Gruić - was among Pavelić's most trusted generals.<sup>151</sup> Orthodox Christianity itself was never a target of Ustasha anti-Serb policy, only Serbian Orthodoxy (on the territory of the NDH).<sup>152</sup>

### Conclusion

Interestingly, despite the efforts to define Croatian nationhood on an ethno-linguistic basis, the Ustashe recognized that the Croats were of hybrid stock. Of course, most of the groups that chiefly contributed to Croatian ethnogenesis were defined as belonging broadly to the same 'Aryan race', but the Ustashe rejected the view that the Croats belonged exclusively to one of the great ethno-linguistic branches of Europe (Slavic, Germanic, Romanic). This was in contrast to the nationalism of their German and Italian allies (but also to the nationalism of their Yugoslav and greater Serbian opponents). As Leon Poliakov notes, the Italian notion of 'race' was mainly a spiritual and cultural one, rather different in content to the biological-anthropological idea of race expounded by the Germans, but both ideas held that the Italians or Germans were 'descended from a single stock'; thus the Fascists believed that Italians were the descendents of the Romans and were thus a single people.<sup>153</sup> In contrast, the Ustashe argued that the Croats were a unique nation formed by the more or less harmonious blending of different (albeit usually Aryan) ethnic groups.<sup>154</sup>

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were not accepted by the regime (see *ibid.*, fn. 148), nor for that matter was the above draft (which would have officially made Serbs who rejected Croat assimilation second class citizens) ever put into practice. After the mass conversions, mass deportations and outright killings, there were still approximately over a million Serbs living within the territory of the NDH. It should be noted however that by the time the Croat Orthodox Church was established (April 1942), large parts of the NDH were under Partisan or Chetnik control.

151 | The other two generals were Fedor Dragojlov and Lavoslav Milić. See J. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, p. 426. To be sure, Supreme Ustasha Headquarters did not look favourably on the high military office of these Croats of Serb-Orthodox origin. See Tomasevich, *ibid.*, p. 436. For a short biography of Gruić, who was also made a 'knight' (*vitez*) of the NDH, see *Tko je tko u NDH*, p. 142. In conversation with the Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović in 1942, Pavelić claimed that his intention was 'not the extermination of the professed Serbs, but rather the Serbian fifth column... Many of those have already perished, but more so that the others are frightened into escaping across the Drina or so that they are pacified and become loyal citizens. One need not force them to Catholicize... I couldn't care less about the Catholic Church. Let them [i.e. the Serbs] recognize themselves as Croats and even I will accept Orthodoxy'. See Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje* (Matica Hrvatska: Zagreb, 1969), pp. 322-323.

152 | Thus the small number of Orthodox Montenegrins, Russians, Romanians and Ukrainians living in the NDH were not discriminated against or persecuted. See M. Biondich, 'Religion and Nation', p. 88.

153 | Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: a history of racist and nationalist ideas in Europe* (University of Sussex Press, 1975), pp. 68-69.

154 | At the same time, the Ustashe argued that the Croats were one of the oldest nations in Europe, for they 'appeared on the stage of the history of cultured humanity under their own name and as a defined and created ethnic group already in the early Middle Ages' while the other major nations of Western Europe were at that time still part of the 'general Germanic' or 'general Romanic groups'. See 'Najsvetija dužnost majke: uz Poglavnikovu zakonsku odredbu', *Hrvatski narod*, 13 June 1941. Pavelić went so far as to argue (in his memoirs in 1947) that the Croatian language was (alongside

However, there were groups that had not assimilated and the 'problem' of Croatian history was, as one Croatian author noted in 1943, 'the mutual assimilation of all components and values, which contribute to the internal homogeneity of the national whole'.<sup>155</sup> Consequently, racial theories and policies were propagated and employed by the Ustasha regime in order to, as it saw it, overcome internal dissensions and create *national cohesion, by ridding their state of 'anti-social' elements. As Mosse notes, racism as a European ideology has always been more concerned with the 'internal enemy' rather than with foreign enemies outside of the nation's borders.*<sup>156</sup> In the case of the Croats, the Ustashe were convinced that their nation faced an anti-social internal enemy (the Serbs – who were aided by the Jews) that was a 'fifth column' of a neighbouring country (Serbia) that had oppressed them. Even more pernicious in Ustasha eyes was the fact that this enemy also used a supranational/racial ideology (Yugoslavism) alongside its greater Serbian nationalism in order to break Croatian national resistance and extinguish Croatian national individuality itself. Of course, Yugoslav national ideology had originated with the Croats themselves, which the Ustashe duly recognized, regarding the acceptance of Yugoslav or pan-Slav ideology by the Croats as tantamount to national suicide.<sup>157</sup>

It is important to note that the Ustashe did not simply invent a racial theory to suit their momentary needs in the European political climate they found themselves. As Mosse argued, one needs 'tradition to activate thought or else it can not be activated'.<sup>158</sup> For example, Mussolini found it difficult (though not impossible) to build (and then 'activate') an imported 'Nordic-Aryan' racial theory, which had had few adherents in Italy prior to the 1930s: 'when Italian racism was introduced, it had to be invented and you get a crude transposition from the German Aryan man to the Mediterranean Aryan man, whatever that was supposed to mean'.<sup>159</sup> In contrast, the Ustashe were able to build their theories upon the traditions of Starčević's anti-pan-Slavism, medieval mythological traditions linking the Croats and Goths and upon a sizeable body of Croat and non-Croat academic work – stretching back to the late nineteenth century – that dealt with the non-Slav origins of the proto-Croats.<sup>160</sup>

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Lithuanian) the closest relative to the proto-Indo-European language and most probably therefore formed a branch of the Indo-European family in its own right. See A. Pavelić, *Doživljaji* (Domovina: Madrid, 1968), pp. 285, 288.

155 | See the preface by Fedor Pucek, in L. v. Südländ, *Južnoslavensko pitanje*, p. xxv.

156 | G. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, p. 65.

157 | The Ustashe did not distinguish between pan-Slavism and the more narrow ideology of Yugoslavism (which itself was considered synonymous with the Greater Serbian ideology). For example, Lorković argued that from its creation, the 'Greater Serbian idea entered into the framework of pan-Slav conceptions' for Karadžić's notion that all štokavians were Serbs was supported by pan-Slav scholars such as Šafarik and Kolar, while the Serbian state was 'created by Russian arms and Russian diplomatic protection'. See Lorković, *Hrvatska u borbi*, pp. 9-10.

158 | George L. Mosse, *Nazism: a historical and comparative analysis of National Socialism* (Transaction Books: New Brunswick, 1978), p. 101.

159 | *ibid.*

160 | The Czech historian Konstantin Jireček was the first foreign scholar to identify the ancient Croats as Iranians, in 1911. See Vladimir Koščak, 'Iranian Theory of the Croats' Origin', in Neven Budak (ed.) *Etnogeneza Hrvata* (Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske: Zagreb, 1995), p. 233. Two of the three oldest historical accounts on the early history of the Croats, the 12<sup>th</sup> century 'Chronicle of the Presbyter Docleas' and the 13<sup>th</sup> century 'Historia Salonitana' by Thomas Archdeacon of Split, derived the origins of Croatian rule in the former Roman province of Dalmatia from

The Ustashe were in fact the first proponents of an exclusively Croatian nationalism. They had tried to resolve the contradiction between nationalist and racial/supra-nationalist ideas that had plagued earlier national discourses about the identity of the Croats. In that sense anti-Yugoslavism was actually more central to Ustasha ideology than anti-Serbianism. The Ustasha movement was opposed to the presence of a Serbian cultural and political identity in Croatia (and Bosnia-Herzegovina), but it had no interest in the Serbians of Serbia proper or, for that matter, in the other so-called Yugoslavs.<sup>161</sup>

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## **IDEOLOGIJA NACIJE I RASE: USTAŠKI REŽIM I NJEGOVA POLITIKA PREMA SRBIMA U NEZAVISNOJ DRŽAVI HRVATSKOJ, 1941-1945**

Suprotno od prevladavajućih historiografskih stavova koji su ignorirali ili umanjivali važnost rasnih teorija na oblikovanje ustaške politike prema Srbima u NDH, ovaj članak pokazuje kako je pitanje 'rase' oblikovalo ustaške stavove prema 'srpskom pitanju' i šira pitanja vezana uz hrvatski nacionalni identitet. Ustaše su isticale etničko-rasne razlike između 'arijskih/nordijsko-dinarskih' Hrvata i 'balkansko-vlaških/prednjoazijskih' Srba da bi dokazali neutemeljenost pretpostavke o navodnoj (jugo)slavenskoj 'rasnoj' jedinstvenosti Hrvata i Srba. Članak će ispitati kako su ustaše definirali Hrvate i Srbe uz pomoć rasne teorije, a onda i to na koji način su te definicije oblikovale ustaški odnos prema Srbima.

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the invading Goths (who are, however, also synonymous with the Slavs in the two accounts). See R. Katičić, 'On the Origins of the Croats', pp. 151-155.

161 | Pavelić had expressed his 'absolute disinterest' in Serbia (as well as all the other non-Croat south Slav speaking lands) as early as 1927 in a memorandum to a member of the Italian Fascist Party Grand Council, Roberto Forges D'Avanzati. See B. Krizman, *Ante Pavelić*, p. 15.