

THE IDEAL NORDIC-DINARIC RACIAL TYPE: RACIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA

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Introduction

Historians have paid little attention to the question of Ustasha race theories even though the Ustasha regime had its own race laws and persecuted the "non-Aryan" minorities of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH).¹ In particular, historiography has neglected to examine in

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¹ Fikreta Jelić-Butić notes, for example, that policies toward Serbs and Jews were part of the same "racial politics" of the Ustasha regime, but does not detail how the Serbs were racially identified with Jews and Gypsies in Ustasha propaganda and makes only brief mention of Ustasha race theories. See F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941-1945* (Zagreb: Liber, 1977), pp. 138-140, 158. Mark Biondich, for his part, argues that the Ustashe "never formulated a coherently racist ideology" in that the ideology's "racial undertone" was implicit "rather than explicit". See M. Biondich, "Religion and Nation in Wartime Croatia: Reflections on the Ustaša Policy of Forced Religious Conversions, 1941-1942", *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1, January 2005, p. 78. More recently, Mario Jareb has explored the attitude of the Ustasha regime toward the non-Slavic racial theories of Croatian origins, rightly pointing out that the Ustashe did not deny the (partly) Slavic character of the Croats. His article does not, however, examine how the Croats were defined in a specifically anthropological sense in the NDH. See M. Jareb, "Jesu li Hrvati postali Goti? Odnos ustaša i vlasti Nezavisne Države Hrvatske prema neslavenskim teorijama o podrijetlu Hrvata", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, No. 3, 2008, pp. 869-882. Rory Yeomans also does not address the question of the specific Croatian racial type/s as articulated by nationalist intellectuals. See R. Yeomans, "Of 'Yugoslav Barbarians' and Croatian Gentleman Scholars: Nationalist Ideology and Racial Anthropology in Interwar Yugoslavia" in Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (eds.), *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900-1940* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), pp. 83-122. For more on Ustasha racial policies, see Nevenko Bartulin, "The Ideology of Nation and Race: The Croatian Ustasha Regime and its Policies toward Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945)", *Croatian Studies Review*, Vol. 5, 2008, pp. 75-102.

detail how the Ustashe defined the Croatian nation in a racial sense, in other words, how the Croats were defined by their physical type and “blood” origins. Both Croatian and non-Croatian historians have instead primarily focused on the Ustasha attempt to establish an independent state, rather than on the regime’s attempt to redefine Croatian nationhood itself.²

The Ustashe attempted to complete Croatian national integration by grounding their notion of Croatian nationhood on a firm ethno-linguistic and racial basis. During the long process of Croatian national integration, stretching from the 1830s to the 1920s,³ all the major Croatian national movements, apart from Ante Starčević’s Party of Right, had stressed an ethnic and racial “Slav” or “South Slav” identity for the Croats. During the nineteenth century, Croatian nationalists of Yugoslav orientation had thought in terms of “race”.⁴ They had equated language with race, as was the romantic fashion (in other words, the idea that the European peoples could be divided into three major “races”, the Germanic, Latin and Slavic).⁵ Since the Croats spoke a Slavic language and language was supposedly the key to the origins of a people the Croats were deemed “racially” Slavic.⁶ This idea continued into Croatian politics right into the twentieth century. Following the tradition of the Illyrian movement and the Yugoslavist National Party, the Croatian Peasant Party also adhered to the idea of “political Croatism” and “cultural Yugoslavism”; in other words, Croatian

² Two models came to dominate Croatian (and Yugoslav) historiography on the NDH in the period from 1945 to 1990: the “Marxist” model of Yugoslav historiography that stressed 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 Ustasha regime. See Nada Kisić-Kolanović, “Povijest NDH kao predmet istraživanja”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 34, No. 3, 2002, 683-691.

³ See 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.

⁴ In nineteenth century Europe, the term “race” did not necessarily refer to physical characteristics, but it usually implied that cultural/ethnic differences were somehow “immutable”. As Katherine Verdery writes, “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 Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), p. xvii.

⁵ One of the first intellectuals to divide Europe into the three races of the Latin, Germanic and Slavic was the French-Swiss romantic writer Madame de Staël. See Ezequiel Adamovsky, “Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810-1880”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 77, September 2005, p. 597.

⁶ The founder of the pan-Slav Croatian Illyrian movement, Ljudevit Gaj, argued that the Croats “belonged to three nationalities: the Croats, the Illyrians and the Slavs”. See Elinor Murray Despalatović, *Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 90-91, 110.

national individuality rested on political grounds – the theory of historic Croat statehood – but culturally and ethnically, Croatian national identity was clearly “Yugoslav” and/or Slavic.⁷

In contrast, Ante Starčević had correctly noted that “every nation was a mix of diverse nations, of diverse blood” and the Croat too undoubtedly had “Roman, or Greek, or some Barbarian blood”.⁸ On the other hand, Starčević had also often included all the other south Slavs (except the Bulgars) as “Croats” and therefore had not clearly and unambiguously differentiated Croats from Serbs (and other south Slavs).⁹ The task of creating a truly Croatian ethnic and racial identity was in the end left to the Ustasha movement and regime.

The Ustashe maintained that the Croats were both a distinct ethnic group (one defined as possessing common descent and a shared culture) and a distinct nation (possessing both historic state right and a corresponding modern national consciousness).¹⁰ The Ustashe also argued that the “best” Croats bore the traits of certain European racial types (primarily the Dinaric and Nordic),¹¹ which endowed the Croatian nation as a whole with particular biological and spiritual characteristics. The Ustashe recognized the fact that the Croats were of hybrid stock, but would define most of the groups that had chiefly contributed to the Croatian ethnic make-up as belonging to the same

⁷ According to the Croatian Peasant Party, the Slavs were all of “one blood” and their “ancestors had herded sheep under one sky”. See Antun Radić, *Sabrana djela VIII* (Zagreb: Dom, 1937), pp. 7-8. Also see Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 99-102, 115.

⁸ See Ante Starčević, “Bi-li k Slavstvu ili ka Hrvatstvu?: Dva razgovora”, in Josip Bratulić (ur.) *Djela dra. Ante Starčevića: 3. Znanstveno-političke razprave, 1894-1896* (Varaždin: Inačica, 1995), pp. 39-40. Starčević viewed the unity of the Croatian nation resting on spiritual rather than biological grounds. See Mirjana Gross, *Izvorno pravaštvo: Ideologija, agitacija, pokret* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2000), pp. 347-348.

⁹ See Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 86-87.

¹⁰ Anthony D. Smith defines the *ethnie* as “named units of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites”. See A. D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 57. A nation, on the other hand, aspires to, or claims, political sovereignty and possesses a corresponding national consciousness. See Holm Sundhaussen, “Nationsbildung und Nationalismus im Donau-Balkan Raum”, *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 48, 1993, pp. 236.

¹¹ Prior to the Second World War, anthropologists and scientists customarily divided humankind into a range of types: “the use of single examples for each variety, such as the blond Nordic male, expresses faith in the notion of racial type. The essence of type resides in the skull; its length, its breadth, the size of the teeth, the height of the brow, the prominence of the chin... Traditional typology, in which human groups are divided into ‘types’ according to physical traits, proposes a connection between these cranial nuances and the characteristics of the type as a whole”. See Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 10.

white Indo-European or “Aryan”¹² race (which included Iranians, Goths, Slavs, Illyrians and Celts).

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 and/or racial arguments. By basing their notion of Croat nationhood on a secure ethnic and racial foundation, the Ustashe were also convinced that they could disprove the racial supranational ideology of Yugoslavism and provide an ideological barrier against the expansionist racial aims of Greater Serbianism.¹³ The racial ideas of the Ustashe thus emerged primarily within the political culture of interwar Yugoslavia. As Rory Yeomans has pointed out, “in interwar Yugoslavia, as in the rest of Europe, questions of race and nationality dominated the political agenda”.¹⁴

The Ustashe sought to define the authentic Croat racial type that would complement the heroic “new Croatian man”¹⁵ that the NDH was trying to mould. The quest for this racial “ideal type”¹⁶ among Croatian nationalists began well before the 1940s. The Ustashe were able to build their racial ideal upon the earlier studies of Croatian intellectuals and academics who were

¹² Since the late eighteenth century discovery of the common origin of Sanskrit and the languages of Europe, the Sanskrit name “Aryan” (meaning “noble”) has been used as both a linguistic and racial term to designate the Indo-European peoples. See Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1997), pp. 43-44. For example, in an English geography textbook from 1913 one finds the following definition: “The Caucasian race may be conveniently divided into three parts. (1) The Aryan, or Indo-European branch, which embraces the Kelts, Romans, Greeks, Teutons, Slavs and Hindus. All the great European nations are thus derived. (2) The Semitic branch, which includes the Jews, Arabs, and many of the peoples of Northern Africa. (3) The Hamitic branch, of which the Egyptians are the only famous nation. P. H. L’Estrange, *A Progressive Course of Comparative Geography* (London: George Philip & Son, Ltd, 1913), p. 83.

¹³ Ideas of “Serbian Dinaric” racial supremacy (propagated, among others, by the influential geographer Jovan Cvijić) had a great influence on a whole generation of Serbian political and cultural leaders in the first half of the twentieth century. See Dinko Tomašić, “Sociology in Yugoslavia”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, 1941-42, pp. 53-57. Also see Banac, *National Question in Yugoslavia*, pp. 202-208, 311-312, 293-295.

¹⁴ Yeomans, “Of Yugoslav Barbarians and Croatian Gentleman Scholars”, p. 83.

¹⁵ According to the Ustasha journalist Mijo Bzik, “the new Croatian man... must be a man of duty, responsibility, work, struggle, honesty, heroism”, who must also “connect the new virtues of Ustashism with the virtues of the old Croats, the eternal fighters and warriors”. M. Bzik, *Ustaški pogledi 1928-1941-1944* (Zagreb: Ustaša, 1944), p. 21.

¹⁶ Leading German race theorists “utilized both Plato and modern sociology and constructed an “ideal type”. Not everyone possessed all the Aryan characteristics but all Aryans possessed at least some of them and together they formed an ideal type. As part of the ideal, outward appearance did matter for it was the way you could tell an enemy from a friend”. See George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Rand McNally & Company: Chicago, 1961), p. 360.

interested in racial anthropology and/or “racial science” – the idea that race (or a human population sharing hereditary physical features) determines our mental abilities.¹⁷ According to racial anthropologists, human races could be defined according to both physical and spiritual/mental characteristics.¹⁸

This article examines how the Ustasha state defined the Croats in an anthropological and biological sense by analysing the NDH’s race laws and the numerous books and newspaper articles that dealt with the topic of race, written by both Ustasha ideologists and Croatian academics/intellectuals writing on behalf of the Ustasha regime. A closer analysis of the cultural politics of the NDH shows that a broad consensus existed among a large number of writers, intellectuals and ideologists concerning the Croatian racial ideal type. The Ustasha regime did not officially subscribe to any one particular theory (i.e. Slavic, Gothic, Iranian) on the specific ethno-linguistic origins of the Croats, but it did legally proclaim the Croats as racially Aryan and, furthermore, allowed more than sufficient space in the cultural life of the NDH for Ustasha ideologists and Croatian nationalist intellectuals to articulate a racial narrative that extolled an ideal Nordic-Dinaric racial type.

Pre-war racial science in Croatia

In the age of nationality, or national self-determination, in which 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 scientific 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 the future Ustasha leader or Poglavnik Ante Pavelić (1889-1959). Since the late nineteenth century, racial theories had aided a large number of nationalist politicians and academics in the interpretation of national conflicts in Europe, especially those of Austria-Hungary. As George Mosse pointed 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”.¹⁹ Even before the creation of the Yugoslav state in 1918, individual Croatian intellectuals began to search for “clear and

¹⁷ For more on the history of racial science, see Kohn, *The Race Gallery*, pp. 1-57.

¹⁸ Thus, alongside the science of race, which attempted to classify human types according to physical criteria, there also existed the “mystery of race”, which was concerned primarily with the soul, spirit and/or personality of a race and less with physical features. See George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1978), p. 94.

¹⁹ George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), p. 55.

unambiguous” racial distinctions between the Croats and Serbs, thereby defining the main racial or physical markers of the Croats themselves.²⁰

The noted Croatian archaeologist Ćiro Truhelka (1865-1942) wrote a booklet as early as 1907 entitled *Hrvatska Bosna (Mi i “oni tamo”)* (“Croatian Bosnia: We and ‘They over There’”), in which he attempted to show that Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged both racially and historically to Croatia. According to Truhelka, the Catholics and Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina were members of the same fair Slavic-Croatian “ethnic element” in an “anthropological sense”, while the Orthodox Serb inhabitants of Bosnia were predominantly dark skinned with dark hair and eyes, due to their Balkan Romanic/Vlach descent.²¹ Truhelka cited anthropological research to argue that in Bosnia there were more than twice as many fair-haired Catholics and Muslims as there were fair Orthodox Christians, while the number of blue-eyed Catholics and Muslims in comparison to blue-eyed Orthodox Bosnians was even higher.²² Truhelka further argued that there were a higher number of brachycephalic individuals among the Croatian Catholics and Muslims, while the Orthodox population included a greater percentage of dolichocephalic skulls; this highlighted the backwardness of the Bosnian Serbs, for dolichocephaly was a “characteristic of old culturally lower races”, while brachycephaly was evidence of a people’s cultural progression.²³

Truhelka would return to anthropology in a 1934 article entitled “O podrijetlu bosanskih muslimana” (“On the Origin of the Bosnian Muslims”), in which he argued that intermarriage between the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Turks under Ottoman rule had been rare, for the Bosnian Muslims practiced strict endogamy.²⁴ Indeed,

“if it is further taken into consideration that the Slavs, who settled in the south of Europe, were the first representatives of the lighter type, of which fair

²⁰ Without *Abgrenzung* (marking/fencing off) there can be no nationalism: any nation is defined, first and foremost, through its relations to others. See H. Sundhaussen, “Nationsbildung und Nationalismus”, p. 244.

²¹ [Ćiro Truhelka], *Hrvatska Bosna (Mi i ,oni tamo”)* (Sarajevo: Tiskara Vogler i drugovi, 1907), p. 15, 16-19, 20-25.

²² *ibid*, pp. 13-14. To be precise, according to Truhelka, 25,7% of Catholics and 22,8% of Muslims had fair hair, while apparently only 10,4% of the Orthodox had such hair colour. For blue eyes, the figures were as follows: 25,7% of Catholics, 17,5% of Muslims and only 6,3% of the Orthodox population; 64,5% of Orthodox Serbs in Bosnia had dark eyes, as compared to 48% of Catholics and 38,6% of Muslims. See *ibid*.

²³ *ibid*, pp. 14-15. It was the Swedish scientist Anders Retzius who (in the 1840s) coined the term ‘cephalic index’, a measurement that was able to distinguish between long-headed or dolichocephalic peoples and broad-headed or brachycephalic peoples. See Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, pp. 27-28.

²⁴ Ćiro Truhelka, “O podrijetlu bosanskih muslimana” (1934), in Petar Šarac and Miljenko Primorac (ur.), *Hrvatsko podrijetlo bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana: Rasprave i članci* (Zagreb: Hrvatska tiskara, 1992), p. 16.

hair and blue eyes are the main racial traits, then it is of added importance that the pure fair type is most strongly represented among the Muslims, so that precisely according to that [fact], our Muslims would be the purest Slavs, in other words Croats, in Bosnia.”²⁵

Truhelka was not the only Croatian intellectual to highlight that the Croats were racially “purer” Slavs than the Serbs. In *Die südslawische Frage (The South Slav Question)*, 1918), the Croatian sociologist and historian Ivo Pilar (1874-1933) argued that the Croats had preserved the Nordic-Aryan heritage of their Slavic ancestors²⁶ to a far greater extent than the Serbs, who had interbred extensively with the dark skinned nomadic Vlachs.²⁷ Pilar wrote that the “old Croats” had been a “Slavic-Aryan people of pure Aryan type: fair-haired, blue-eyed, tall and dolichocephalic heads”.²⁸ According to Pilar, contemporary anthropological studies had shown that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “there are more than two times the number of fair Nordic types among the [Croat] Catholics and Muslims than among the Orthodox” (the latter being of “some other dark, pre-Aryan type”).²⁹

Pilar’s work, which stressed the importance of race in understanding historical Croat-Serb relations,³⁰ is particularly important for examining Ustasha racial ideas. Ante Pavelić cited Pilar’s book in his first important

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 19. Truhelka’s article was included in a 1941 collection of his essays. See Ćiro Truhelka, *Studije o podrijetlu: Etnološka razmatranja iz Bosne i Hercegovine* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1941).

²⁶ Since the Slavic languages are Indo-European, the Slavs could also be considered Aryans. Indeed, leading race theorists regarded the ancient Slavs as Nordic-Aryans. According to Hans F. K. Günther, “the graves of the Old Slavs from the times of the wandering of the peoples show a ruling class which is still almost purely Nordic”. See H. F. K. Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History*, translated by G. C. Wheeler (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1926), p. 225. Houston Stewart Chamberlain wrote of the “Germanic Slav”, claiming that the Slavs belonged to the “Germanic” race. He further noted that “in Bosnia one is struck with the tallness of the men and the prevalence of fair hair”. See H. S. Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1, translated by John Lees (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1910), p. 505.

²⁷ See L. von Südland/Ivo Pilar, *Južnoslavensko pitanje: Prikaz cjelokupnog pitanja*, translated by Fedor Pucek (reprint: Varaždin: Hrvatska demokratska stranka, 1990), pp. 19-20, 108, 121-122, 316. Pilar’s work was originally published as L. von Südland, *Die südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg: übersichtliche Darstellung des Gesamt-Problems* (Vienna, 1918).

²⁸ See *ibid*, pp. 19-20, 121-122, 333. While Pilar argued that the early Croats had long skulls (characteristic of the Nordic race), Truhelka noted that the local Dinaric race in Croatia (present there since Neolithic times) received a greater share of “brachycephalic elements” with the arrival of the Slavs. See Truhelka, “O podrijetlu bosanskih muslimana”, p. 18.

²⁹ Pilar, *Južnoslavensko pitanje*, p. 122.

³⁰ Pilar concluded that “the dangerous traits of the traditions and aspirations of the Serbo-Byzantine Church stumbled upon, in the Serbian people, an unusually efficacious supplement for the penetration of the Balkan-Romanic nomadic blood, which, with its innate racial appetite for usurpation, its anti-social tendencies, its mania for destruction...has made the Serbs a first class danger for neighbouring peoples and states”. See *ibid*, p. 189.

propaganda pamphlet (from 1929) as a requisite text for understanding the Serbs, and from which the reader would come to the conclusion that it was “impossible for anybody to live in a common state with Serbia”.³¹ In 1943, the first Croatian translation of Pilar’s book was published. The NDH’s Minister of Education, Mile Starčević, wrote on the occasion of its publication that Pilar’s work had served as a “bible” for the Croatian nationalist youth at the University of Zagreb during the 1920s and 1930s.³²

Another anti-Yugoslav intellectual who addressed the question of race was the internationally renowned Croatian historian Prof. Milan Šufflay (1879-1931). Šufflay argued 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. As the conflict between Europe and Asia was in essence a battle between the white and yellow races, Šufflay claimed in 1928 that “Croatian nationalism did not just mean local patriotism, but loyal service to the whole White West”.³³

In his popular work, *Kultura Hrvata kroz 1000 godina* (*The Culture of the Croats through a Thousand Years*, 1939), the Croatian journalist and publisher Josip Horvat argued that the medieval “Croatian type” stood out in the “Saracen world” of Muslim Spain (where many Islamised former slaves of Croat origin became noted military leaders). The Croatian type, Horvat wrote, was “blue eyed and fair-haired and [had] a slender waist”.³⁴ Truhelka, Pilar, Šufflay and Horvat were not suggesting, of course, that the Croats were all, or even predominantly, blue-eyed blond Nordics, but rather, that the Croats were, on average, of lighter complexion and hair colour than the Serbs and other Balkan peoples (and all four men readily admitted the presence of other racial types among the Croats).³⁵

³¹ Ante Pavelić, “Uzpostava hrvatske države, trajni mir na Balkanu”, in Petar Požar (ur.), *Ustaša: Dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka stvarnost, 1995), p. 40.

³² See Yeomans, “Of ‘Yugoslav Barbarians’ and Croatian Gentleman Scholars”, p. 83.

³³ Milan Šufflay, “Značajke hrvatske nacije” in Dr. M. Šufflay, *Hrvatska u svijetlu svjetske historije i politike: Dvanaest eseja* (1928; reprint Zagreb: Novija hrvatska povjesnica, 1999), p. 41. As Ivo Banac writes, in spite of Šufflay’s “favourable view of Eastern civilization...he was unable to shed a lasting sense of Eastern menace”. See I. Banac, “Zarathustra in Red Croatia: Milan Šufflay and His Theory of Nationhood” in Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery (eds.) *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), p. 191.

³⁴ Josip Horvat, *Kultura Hrvata kroz 1000 godina* (Zagreb: “Tipografija” D.D., 1939), p. 84. Horvat also argued that “the purest old Croatian type of mankind” was also preserved in “those Croatian families that received Islam”. Accordingly, “anthropological research has established that amongst the population of Bosnia the fair haired type is best preserved in the aristocratic Muslim families”. See *ibid*, p. 247.

³⁵ See “Podrijetlo bosanskih muslimana” in Truhelka, *Studije o podrijetlu*, p. 16. Pilar wrote that the “Croatian state was a product of the blending of the ruling Slavic layer with the remnants of the pre-Croatian subjugated Slavic, Avar, Roman and Illyrian population”. See Pilar, *Južno-slavensko pitanje*, p. 26. Šufflay argued that “Illyrian blood” had formed the Dinaric racial type found among the Croats of Dalmatia and Herzegovina. See Šufflay, “Značajke hrvatske nacije”, pp. 37-38.

Under the influence of Croatian nationalist intellectuals such as Truhelka, Pilar and Šufflay, the pre-war Ustasha movement used ethnic and racial arguments to highlight the national individuality of the Croats. The first article of the central ideological document of the Ustashe, the "Principles of the Ustasha Movement" (issued in 1933), claimed that the Croatian nation "is a self-contained ethnic unit; it is a nation in its own right and from an ethnic perspective is not identical with any other nation".³⁶ Principles five and six maintained that the Croats arrived in their present day homeland, which they "conquered", as a "completely free" (principle five) and "completely organized" people, in both a "military and familial" sense (principle six).³⁷ Principle eleven stated that "no-one who is not by descent and blood a member of the Croatian nation can decide on Croatian state and national matters".³⁸

The Ustashe managed to formulate a coherent version of Croatian ethnic and racial history even before the creation of the NDH, the clearest example of which was Dr. Mladen Lorković's 1939 study, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata* ("The Nation and Land of the Croats"), the work of one of the leading Ustasha ideologists.³⁹ While Truhelka, Pilar and Šufflay stressed the Slavic component in Croatian racial history, Ustasha ideologists such as Lorković placed more emphasis on the theory of Iranian origins (of the elite stratum of the proto- or "White" Croats⁴⁰), as well as the important ethnic contributions of other Indo-European peoples (such as the Illyrians and Goths). There were also Croatian nationalists who postulated a Gothic origin for the proto-Croats, chief among them the Catholic priest Kerubin Šegvić.⁴¹

The Ustashe did not deny the importance of the Slavs in the Croatian ethnic make-up, but rather, argued that a non-Slavic ethno-linguistic component had

³⁶ See Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše* (Zagreb: Globus, 1978), p. 117. The Ustasha principles underwent slight changes after 1941. The original document from 1933 had fifteen rather than seventeen principles. See Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret: Od nastanka do travnja 1941. godine* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), pp. 124-128.

³⁷ Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*, p. 118.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 118. In article 13 (article 12 after 1941) of the Ustasha principles, we also find that not only is the Croatian peasantry "the base and also the source of all life", and that it "constitutes the Croatian nation", but also that "those in Croatia who do not originate from a peasant family are, in ninety nine cases out of a hundred, not of Croatian descent or blood, but foreign settlers". See Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, p. 128 and Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*, p. 118.

³⁹ See the edition, Mladen Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata* (1939; reprint Zagreb: DoNeHa, 1996).

⁴⁰ According to one theory, the names White and Red Croatia "belong to the oriental, particularly Iranian system of geographical denominations". See Vladimir Koščak, "Iranian Theory of the Croatians' Origin", in Neven Budak (ur.) *Etnogeneza Hrvata* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1995), p. 234.

⁴¹ Šegvić argued that the name "Croat" was derived from the Gothic root "Hrothi" (meaning "glorious"), which had a variety of forms, such as "Hruat" and "Chrout". See Cherubin Segvić, "Die gotische Abstammung der Kroaten", *Nordische Welt* (Berlin: Verlag Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1935), p. 35.

given the Croats their state building capabilities. This theory was in line with the widely held academic view in Europe (especially in Germany and Austria) that Slavs on their own were incapable of establishing states; the popularity of the Iranian theory among the Ustashe also reflected the fact that a growing number of historians, philologists and archaeologists had accepted the strong probability of the Croats' Iranian origins.⁴² Mladen Lorković thus argued that the earliest Croats were "a tribe of Iranian-Caucasian race" (i.e. from the Caucasus region), which had "organized the Slavic masses" in the proto-homeland of the Croats in present day southern Poland (White Croatia) as well as in the Adriatic region.⁴³ This Iranian military ruling class intermarried with the more numerous Slavs, whereby the Iranian Croats were linguistically assimilated.⁴⁴

To substantiate his argument, Lorković cited the authority of the Croatian historian Dr. Stjepan Sakač, who wrote that "the strong and fresh Caucasian [Iranian] blood produced in one part of the primitive Slavic masses an enterprising and heroic Eurasian⁴⁵ type, who had more sense for state organization than the Slavic individualists and more initiative than the passive pure Slav".⁴⁶ Furthermore, once the Croats reached the Adriatic, they subsequently intermarried with the remnants of the Romanized Illyrians and Celts, Avars and Goths left in the former Roman provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia.⁴⁷ Consequently, the Croats (especially those in the south) received a

⁴² See, for example, the work of the noted Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909), who argued that a Gothic tribe had founded the medieval Croatian kingdom. L. Gumplowicz, "Die politische Geschichte der Serben und Kroaten", *Politisch-Anthropologische Revue: Monatschrift für das soziale und geistige Leben der Völker* (Eisenach und Leipzig: Thüringische Verlags-Anstalt, 1902/1903). The "Iranian theory" was first presented in Zagreb in 1797 by the historian Josip Mikoci (1734-1800), who argued that "the Croats, [who are] Slavs by their nationality, originated from the Sarmatians, the descendants of the [Iranian] Medes, and arrived in Dalmatia from Poland around the year 630". Cited in Mato Marčinko, *Mučenička Hrvatska* (Zagreb: HKD Sv. Jeronima, 2008), pp. 331, 343. The Czech historian Konstantin Jireček was the first foreign scholar to identify the early Croats as Iranians (in 1911). See Koščak, "Iranian Theory of the Croatians' Origin", p. 233.

⁴³ Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata*, pp. 41-43. Lorković argued that the "first Croatia" (*prva Hrvatska*) was located between the Caucasus mountains and Russian lowlands, which was, from the second to fourth centuries AD, the proto-homeland of the Iranian Croats. The "second Croatia" was the later state of White Croatia in southern Poland, as described by the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and the "third Croatia" was the present day "Adriatic Croatia". See *ibid*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, pp. 18, 41.

⁴⁵ Here "Eurasian" is clearly used as a geographical, and not racial, term.

⁴⁶ Sakač cited in *ibid*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, pp. 43-45. Although Lorković pointed out that the majority of historians and philologists had rejected the Gothic theory, he also noted that the proponents of that theory had been the first to draw attention to the non-Slav origin of the old Croatian ruling caste and to the evidence of numerous Gothic-Croatian ethnic links. See *ibid*, 38n, p. 43.

“strong Illyrian-Celtic blood admixture”.⁴⁸ According to Lorković, the Illyrians and Celts represented the second and third “waves” of migration of “Aryan” peoples into Croatian territory, beginning in the late Bronze Age.⁴⁹

The head of Croatia’s foremost cultural institution *Matica hrvatska*, Prof. Filip Lukas, also noted in a work published in 1938 that the Croats had interbred with the same groups as described in Lorković’s book and, furthermore, that the proto-Croats had intermarried with Caucasian, Tatar-Mongol and Germanic tribes, such as the Antes, Avars and Goths.⁵⁰ Lukas explained that, as a result of all 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 to the Slavic Russians”.⁵¹ By neighbouring tribes, Lukas had in mind those of the tall, broad-headed Dinaric race. According to Lukas, the dominant racial type among the Croats was the Dinaric (found mainly in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Lika and the Dalmatian hinterland), followed by the Alpine and East Baltic racial types (found largely in northern Croatia) and a small number belonging to the Mediterranean race (found along the coast); Croatia also contained some Nordics, “who, merging with the old [Dinaric] inhabitants, gave our culture many beautiful contributions”.⁵²

Lukas’ racial classification was clearly influenced by the work of leading German race theorists,⁵³ such as Hans F. K. Günther (1891-1968), who argued that all the European nations were mixtures of six main racial groups: Nordic,

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Lorković noted that the Thracians were the first Aryan people to arrive in the Croatian and/or Balkan region. See *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁰ F. Lukas, “Problem hrvatske kulture” (1938) in Filip Lukas, *Hrvatska narodna samobitnost*, Mirko Mador (ur.) (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 1997), p. 251. Lukas himself never became a member of the Ustasha movement, but he continued to head *Matica hrvatska* after the Ustashe attained power and could be described as “an ideologue of Croatian nationalism with a pronounced anti-Serbian and anti-Communist attitude”. See Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Naklada Pavičić, 1994), p. 39. On the other hand, Lukas did periodically criticize the Ustasha regime for not constructing a more legalistic state. See Jere Jareb, *Pola stoljeća hrvatske politike 1895-1945* (1960; reprint Zagreb: Institut za suvremenu povijest, 1995), pp. 93-94.

⁵¹ Lukas, “Problem hrvatske kulture”, p. 252.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 251. According to standard racial studies of European populations, the Alpine race was customarily characterized as short, brown haired and round-headed, while the Mediterranean was short, long-headed and of dark pigmentation. See, for example, Günther, *Racial Elements of European History*, pp. 23-29, 35-42.

⁵³ The influence of German race theory can also be seen in Lukas’ argument that language was not “a racial characteristic”, for most Jews of central Europe, for example, spoke German but remained “racially” distinct from the German people. See Lukas, “Problem hrvatske kulture”, p. 252. Lukas also relied on the work of the Swiss anthropologist Eugène Pittard to argue that the Dinaric racial type was more widespread among the Croats than the Serbs. See *ibid.*

Alpine, Mediterranean, Dinaric, East Baltic and Phalian.⁵⁴ Günther identified the Nordic race as being physically and mentally the most superior European racial type. He also had a very favourable opinion of the Dinaric race, which was found largely in a swathe of territory stretching from southern Germany to the western Balkans. Günther praised the Dinarics for the spiritual qualities they shared with Nordics, such as honour, bravery in war, love of home and nature and musical ability; and like the Nordic man, the Dinaric was also tall and possessed a long face, although the Dinarics were broad rather than long-headed and usually had a darker pigmentation than the fair-haired and blue-eyed Nordic European.⁵⁵

Lukas' racial arguments were part of a "wider nationalist consensus"⁵⁶ aimed at disproving the pervasive idea that Croats belonged by their blood to the Yugoslav "nation" and/or Slavic "race". The theoretical foundations for the NDH's racial narrative were thus set well before 1941. The importance of race theories in the political life of interwar Yugoslavia was already clear to the Croatian sociologist Dinko Tomašić, who included a long critique of the racial ideas of Serbian, Yugoslav and Croatian nationalists in his book, *Politički razvitak Hrvata* ("The Political Development of the Croats", 1938). Tomašić claimed that the ever-increasing talk among race theorists in Europe of a "Nordic-Dinaric race" was intended to "provide a theoretical justification to [Alfred] Rosenberg's plans for a 'Nordic empire', the borders of which would include a huge space that stretches from the Scandinavian all the way to the Balkan lands".⁵⁷

The Ustashe, for their part, hardly wished Croatia to become part of a "Nordic empire", but their racial ideas would find enough common theoretical ground with National Socialist racial theories to further strengthen the alliance between the NDH and the German Reich. By 1941 a rough image had been sketched in nationalist intellectual circles of the authentic or "ideal"

⁵⁴ See Egbert Klautke, "German 'Race Psychology' and Its Implementation in Central Europe: Egon von Eickstedt and Rudolf Hippius", p. 26 and Margit Berner, "From 'Prisoner of War Studies' to Proof of Paternity: Racial Anthropologists and the Measuring of 'Others' in Austria", p. 47 in Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (eds.) *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900-1940* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ Günther placed the Dinaric race "second among the races of Europe" (after the Nordic) in terms of its "mental capacity". According to Günther, many of the greatest figures of European history and culture (particularly in the field of music) show a "more or less strong Dinaric strain", including the "Nordic-Dinaric" musicians Haydn, Mozart, Liszt, Wagner, Bruckner, Chopin and Verdi. See Günther, *Racial Elements of European History*, pp. 51-56, 58-59, 111 and H. F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (München: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1935), pp. 224-226.

⁵⁶ Yeomans, "Of 'Yugoslav Barbarians' and Croatian Gentleman Scholars", p. 117.

⁵⁷ Dinko Tomašić, *Politički razvitak Hrvata* (1938: reprint, Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 1997), p. 142. Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) was one of the most important National Socialist theorists on race. Among other things, he was the editor of the leading arts magazine in Nazi Germany, *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich* ("Art in the Third Reich"). See Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1992), p. 115.

Croatian racial type: this ideal type was found on the territory of “historic” Croatia (including Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Muslim population) and was marked by Dinaric and/or Nordic physical features and Aryan (Slavic, Iranian, Gothic and Illyrian-Celtic) blood. The ideal Croat type would be more finely moulded in the NDH.

The Aryan race laws

A day after returning to Croatia (from his long sojourn in Italy) in mid April 1941, Ante Pavelić told Italian journalists that

“today’s restoration of Croatian independence has its foundation in historical and ethnic factors. The pan-Slavist movement spread throughout the entire world the belief that we are one people with the Serbs. This is not true as the Croats are racially not Slavs but rather are Croats by their origin and nothing else. Without repeating the known differences in religion and culture, the two nations are differentiated ethnically even in a somatic sense”.⁵⁸

The Croats were also Aryans and by the end of April 1941, Pavelić had made that racial argument legal fact by introducing race laws that were designed primarily to separate Europeans/Aryans from non-Aryans (i.e. Jews and Gypsies).

There was no mention of Iranian or Gothic origins in the new racial decrees of the NDH, for those laws used the all encompassing racial term “Aryan”, which could include all the peoples (including Slavs) and racial types (Nordic, Dinaric, etc.) that had contributed to the Croatian ethnic and racial make-up. The legal concept of the “Aryan race” was introduced into Croatian public life on 30 April 1941 with the promulgation of the “Law decree on racial affiliation” and the “Law decree on the protection of the Aryan blood and honour of the Croatian nation”.⁵⁹ The first decree stated that an individual of Aryan descent is one “who descends from ancestors who are members of the European racial community or who descends from ancestors of that community outside of Europe”, while the second law decree banned marriages between Aryans and Jews.⁶⁰ An article from early May 1941, in the main Ustasha daily *Hrvatski*

⁵⁸ Cited in Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, p. 140.

⁵⁹ See “Krv i čast hrvatskog naroda zaštićeni posebnim odredbama”, *Hrvatski narod*, 1 May 1941, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* An individual could prove his/her “Aryan descent” by way of birth and marriage certificates of one’s parents and grandparents. The first decree also stipulated who was legally a Jew. Individuals were Jewish if they had at least three Jewish grandparents, while quarter Jews (some half-Jews, and even in exceptional cases, some full Jews) could legally attain the status of Aryans. The first law decree also defined the Gypsy as an individual who had two or more grandparents who were Gypsies by race. See *ibid.* The racial decrees did not specifically mention the NDH’s Serbs. Ustasha propaganda often lumped Serbs together with Jews (and especially) Gypsies, for

narod, entitled “Interpretation of the racial law decrees”, defined the “European racial community” as “a group of those races that have for centuries been mixing with one another: Nordic, Dinaric, Alpine, Baltic and Mediterranean”.⁶¹ The article noted that there was no such thing as a separate Croatian race, “for the Croats, as generally all European nations, are a mixture of the Nordic, Dinaric, Alpine, Baltic and Mediterranean races with small admixtures of other races”.⁶²

The main expert who drafted the NDH’s race laws was the Slovenian born Croatian biologist Prof. Boris Zarnik (1883-1945), a sympathizer of National Socialism who had already written several articles in the 1920s and 1930s on the question of race (during most of this period Zarnik was an intellectual adherent of Yugoslavism, but he had switched to a Croatian nationalist position by 1941).⁶³ Zarnik argued that the Nordic and Dinaric racial types were intellectually and spiritually gifted to a greater degree than other races; therefore, mixing between the Nordic and Dinaric races produced individuals of great talent.⁶⁴ Zarnik was also a member of the NDH’s “Racial-Political Committee” (*Rasno-političko povjerenstvo*), a government agency set up in early June 1941 to “prepare proposals and drafts of laws, law decrees and regulations that concern the areas of racial biology, racial politics and racial hygiene or eugenics”.⁶⁵

Although modelled on the National Socialist race laws, the Ustasha racial decrees were nevertheless broadly in line with pre-war Ustasha ideological tenets. The above article in *Hrvatski narod* on the racial decrees stated that “the NDH is a national state and only Aryans have the right to occupy responsible positions in it and direct its fate”.⁶⁶ Apart from the use of the term “Aryan”, this statement is very similar to article eleven of the “Ustasha principles” (see previous section). The author of the article acknowledged that the race laws were

a large portion of Serbs were defined as having Near-Eastern blood, but many Serbs were also thought to possess Croatian blood and therefore the “Serb Question” was considered a much more complex problem requiring a different approach. See Bartulin, “The Ideology of Nation and Race”, pp. 91-100.

⁶¹ Tumačenje rasnih zakonskih odredbi”, *Hrvatski narod*, 3 May 1941, p. 7.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ See Christian Promitzer, “The Body of the Other: ‘Racial Science’ and Ethnic Minorities in the Balkans” in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas (JGKS)/History and Culture of South Eastern Europe*, 5 (München: Slavica Verlag Kovač, 2003), p. 37.

⁶⁴ Boris Zarnik, “Rasa i duševna produktivnost” in Prof. Dr. Miroslav Hirtz (ur.) *Priroda: Popularni ilustrovani časopis Hrv. Prirodoslovnog Društva u Zagrebu*, Godina XXL, svibanj/lipanj, br. 5 i 6, 1931, pp. 129-140. As Zarnik pointed out in this article, “we can at any rate be satisfied that our nation has Nordic and Dinaric elements, thus races which produce very good combinations”. See *ibid.*, p. 140.

⁶⁵ The committee was also to “collect material on the racial and familial statistics of the NDH”. See “Rasno-političko povjerenstvo Nezavisne Države Hrvatske”, *Hrvatski narod*, 5 June 1941, p. 6.

⁶⁶ See “Tumačenje rasnih zakonskih odredbi”.

adapted from the 1935 Nuremberg laws, but noted that whereas the Germans used the term *deutsches oder artverwandtes Blut* ("German or related blood"), the Croats used the term *arijsko porijetlo* ("Aryan descent") for "blood in a biological sense has actually no connection with heredity".⁶⁷ A nation, the article claimed, was "a group of people with a common tradition, common spiritual goods and the will for the common advancement of those goods", while a race was "a group of people who correspond in essential hereditary characteristics".⁶⁸ The nation was said to have a unique spirit, and "spirituality has its source in the individual's psyche, which to a large degree is the expression of his hereditary spiritual characteristics" and consequently, the "spiritual essence of the nation is therefore mainly a function of its racial structure".⁶⁹

According to a May 1941 article in the Zagreb daily *Novi list*, the Croats had to "protect their blood from Jewish, Gypsy and non-Aryan admixtures in general, for that is one of the significant prerequisites for the construction of the new Croatia".⁷⁰ Indeed, as Croatia was situated on the "crossroads of opposing civilizations", the Croatian nation could not "fulfil its historical mission" if it did not "protect its racial purity".⁷¹ The Croats were clearly "members of the white race", as the Ustasha ideologist Ivo Bogdan noted in 1942, and Croatia a land situated "on the eastern rim of the European West", close to "the centres of civilization and progress of the white man".⁷² A year earlier, an article in *Hrvatski narod* explained that the Croats had given the "white European race" many illustrious cultural figures throughout history.⁷³

The Dinaric and Nordic races

Although the Croats exhibited traits of all the European races, Ustasha ideologists and Croat intellectuals writing on the subject of race in the NDH specifically praised the Dinaric and Nordic races as the dominant and best Croatian racial types. According to Filip Lukas, one could trace the origins of the Dinaric race to the Stone Age. During that period it seems that a group of

⁶⁷ *ibid.* As Raul Hilberg writes, "the Croat authorities dutifully followed, and even improved upon, the original Lösener definition". Dr. Bernhard Lösener was one of the authors of the Nuremberg race laws. See R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), p. 454.

⁶⁸ "Tumačenje rasnih zakonskih odredbi".

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ "Povjesna važnost zakonskih odredaba o zaštiti arijske krvi", *Novi list*, 3 May 1941, p. 5.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Ivo Bogdan, "Povjestni značaj ustaške revolucije", *Spremnost*, 10 April 1942, p. 3.

⁷³ The article specifically mentioned the famous Croat astronomer Ruđer Josip Bošković (1711-1787) and the Renaissance Croat painter Andrija Medulić (around 1503-1563). See "Hrvatska država i nacionalistička misao", *Hrvatski narod*, 8 June 1941, p. 14.

Nordic settlers had interbred with the “dark Near Eastern race” of Armenoids in the western Balkans and, consequently, it was from this admixture that the Dinaric racial type emerged.⁷⁴ In a two volume scholarly work on Croatian history and culture entitled, *Naša domovina* (“Our Homeland”, 1943), the chief editor Filip Lukas argued that centuries of political and cultural Romanization had not managed to change “the racial traits” of the indigenous Illyrians in the Roman province of Dalmatia; through the later admixture of Illyrians and early medieval Croatian settlers, the Dinaric “bodily-spiritual characteristics” of the former “became prominent” among the Croats.⁷⁵ The Croats preserved this “racial heritage” through the centuries and in doing so a distinct racial type was “further developed in the purest form” on Croatian territory, a type science later referred to as the “Dinaric” (the name being derived from the Dinaric Alps).⁷⁶

Furthermore, a large part of Croatian territory, one stretching “from the north Adriatic, through Lika and central Bosnia to the Drina”, was inhabited, according to the Croatian ethnographer Mirko Kus-Nikolajev, by people of Dinaric race with “a strong admixture of the Nordic racial element”.⁷⁷ As Kus-Nikolajev argued in the Ustasha party newspaper *Spremnost* in 1942, “racial psychology gives the Dinaric race a high life and cultural value. The strengthening of the Nordic element in the Dinaric race would also mean the strengthening of the positive features in our nation”; Kus-Nikolajev noted that Hans F. K. Günther had drawn attention to the “striking similarities” between the Nordic and Dinaric races.⁷⁸ Kus-Nikolajev was of the opinion that the Nordic element among the Croats probably originated from the Illyrians and/or Celts, although he also identified the early “Iranian Croats” as Nordic (German race theorists considered the ancient Iranians or Persians to have been impeccable Nordic-Aryans).⁷⁹

⁷⁴ See Filip Lukas, “Osebnost hrvatske kulture” in F. Lukas, *Za hrvatsku samosvojnost: Zakoni zemlje – krvi – duha* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1944), p. 144 and F. Lukas, “Bosna i Hercegovina u geopolitičkom pogledu”, in *Povijest Bosne i Hercegovine od najstarijih vremena do godine 1463* (1942; reprint Sarajevo: Hrvatsko kulturno društvo Napredak, 1998) p. 67. Also see Mirko Kus-Nikolajev, “Rasni sastav Hrvata: nordijske primjese pojačavaju i onako visoku životnu i kulturnu vrijednost hrvatskog naroda”, *Spremnost*, 12 July 1942, p. 5.

⁷⁵ Filip Lukas, “Geopolitička osnova Nezavisne Države Hrvatske”, svezak 1, F. Lukas (glavni urednik) *Naša Domovina: Hrvatska zemlja – hrvatski narod – hrvatska poviest – hrvatska znanost* (Zagreb: Tiskara Matice hrvatskih akademičara, 1943), p. 3.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ Kus-Nikolajev, “Rasni sastav Hrvata”. Although he was not a member of the Ustasha movement, Kus-Nikolajev did work in the library of the NDH’s “Main Directorate for Propaganda” and wrote several articles for various Ustasha newspapers. See “Mirko Kus-Nikolajev” in Darko Stuparić (glavni ur.) *Tko je tko u NDH: Hrvatska 1941-1945* (Zagreb: Minerva, 1997), p. 222.

⁷⁸ Kus-Nikolajev, “Rasni sastav Hrvata”.

⁷⁹ *ibid.* Also see Mirko Kus-Nikolajev, “Nordijsko podrijetlo starohrvatskog pletenca”, *Spremnost*, 10 April 1942, p. 7. In this article, Kus-Nikolajev expressed his support for Josef Strzygowski’s

Kus-Nikolajev noted that other races existed among the Croats, pointing to the “visible” number of individuals of Mediterranean race along the central and southern Adriatic coast (particularly in the towns), and the “strong” presence of the Alpine race in northern Croatia. However, the Mediterranean racial influence was not, as Kus-Nikolajev explained, “decisive” in the Croatian racial make-up.⁸⁰ In a German monograph on Croatian history, society and culture (published in 1942), the NDH education minister and one-time envoy to Berlin, Prof. Stjepan Ratković, also wrote that all the European races were to be found among the Croats, although the Dinaric race, “with its highly developed bodily and spiritual peculiarities” was the most widespread racial type.⁸¹ On the other hand, the Near Eastern and “other Asiatic races” were only to be found in “isolated” numbers.⁸² The Croatian part of the Balkan Peninsula was “never a settlement area for Asiatic racial components.”⁸³

As Lukas explained, because of the largely mountainous terrain of the Dinaric region, “there was not a region in Europe where the old original [patriarchal and warrior] culture would be better preserved”, for mountains act like “fortresses”, keeping the nation relatively pure from outside influences.⁸⁴ It was indeed in mountainous central Bosnia, among the Croatian Catholics and Muslims, where the highest number of “fair Dinarics” were found.⁸⁵ In a 1942 study on Bosnian geography and history, Lukas noted that the “largest percentage of fair types” among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina was found among the Muslims, closely followed by the Catholic Croats.⁸⁶ As Lukas remarked, “this is one more argument that confirms the instinctual thinking

“Nordic-Germanic thesis” on the origins of medieval Croatian art. For more on Strzygowski, a leading Austrian art historian, see Radovan Ivančević, “The Pre-Romanesque in Croatia – A Question of Interpretation” in Ivan Supićić (ed.) *Croatia in the Early Middle Ages: A Cultural Survey* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1999), pp. 422-423. For the National Socialist racial view of Iranians, see Adam, *Art of the Third Reich*, pp. 22-23. The name “Iran” is derived from the ancient form “Eryana”, which means “Land of the Aryans”. See Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, p. 44.

⁸⁰ Kus-Nikolajev, “Rasni sastav Hrvata”. Also see Filip Lukas, “Stogodišnja uloga Matice hrvatske u kulturnoj povijesti hrvatskog naroda” in F. Lukas, *Za hrvatsku samosvojnost: Zakoni zemlje – krvi – duha* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1944), pp. 231-232.

⁸¹ Stjepan Ratković, “Einiges über Natur, Volk und Wirtschaft im Unabhängigen Staate Kroatien” in Clemens Diederich (Herausgeber) *Die Kroaten* (Zagreb: Verlagsbuchhandlung Velebit, 1942), p. 17.

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Lukas, “Osebnost hrvatske kulture”, p. 143.

⁸⁵ Lukas, “Bosna i Hercegovina u geopolitičkom pogledu”, p. 67. Also see Filip Lukas, “Zemljopisni i geopolitički položaj” in Dr. Zvonimir Dugački (ur.) *Zemljopis Hrvatske: Opći dio*, 1 sv. (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1942), p. 28.

⁸⁶ Lukas, “Bosna i Hercegovina u geopolitičkom pogledu”, p. 68.

of Dr. Ante Starčević, [namely] that the Bosnian Muslims are the ethnically purest preserved part of the Croatian people”.⁸⁷

According to the Ustasha press, the “fairer type” (*svjetliji tip*) was dominant among the Bosnian Muslims: this type was characterised by a “mellow [i.e. fair] complexion, fair or at least brown hair and blue or at least brown eyes”, features that were denoted as typical of the Croats.⁸⁸ When travelling through Bosnia, the Ustasha commander Tomislav Sertić would customarily have himself photographed with pretty and healthy “rosy-cheeked” Muslim girls and women, claiming that they were of the “purest Croatian blood” and only capable of “giving birth to heroes”; Sertić stated confidently in 1944 that, generally speaking, only the “Dinaric type” of Croat was “nationally constructive” (*državotvoran*).⁸⁹ Such attitudes were only in line with the common assertion of the Ustasha regime that “the purest type of Croatian from the point of view of blood, feelings and intellectual capacity lives in Bosnia and Hercegovina”.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Dinaric region of the Dalmatian hinterland was the “cradle” of Croatian chivalry and heroism, as it was home to a “hardy, tall human type”.⁹¹

The writer Ante Tresić-Pavičić also described the ideal Croatian racial type in glowing terms in his book, *Izgon Mongola iz Hrvatske* (“The Expulsion of the Mongols from Croatia”, 1942). The “Croatian prototype” was, the author wrote, a “highlander, [a] lean, tall and broad-shouldered hero [with] grey and blue eyes, just as everything around him is blue: the rugged mountains, the sky and the blue sea”.⁹² Noting that the medieval Croats who encountered the invading Mongol forces of the thirteenth century referred to their enemies as *pasoglavci* (literally “dog-heads”), Tresić-Pavičić explained that, “indeed, their [Mongol] exterior appearance, when compared to the handsome Aryan type that inhabits our lands, could provoke nothing but disgust, fear and horror”.⁹³

According to the Ustasha journalist and student leader Milivoj Karamarko, the fair hair and light complexion of a sizeable number of Dinaric Croats was

⁸⁷ *ibid.* Ante Starčević had argued that the “Mohammedans of Bosnia and Herzegovina have nothing [in common] with the Turkish Mohammedan breed; they are of Croatian breed, they are the oldest and purest nobility that Europe has”. Cited in Ante Starčević, *Misli i pogledi: Pojedinač - Hrvatska - svijet*, Blaž Jurišić (ur.) (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1971), p. 90.

⁸⁸ “Hrvatstvo bosansko-hercegovačkih Muslimana: zvjerstva Srba nad Muslimanima”, *Novi list*, 8 May 1941, p. 7. In contrast, the Serbs generally had black hair, dark eyes and dark skin. See *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Sertić cited in Ivo Rojnica, *Susreti i doživljaji 1938-1945* (München: Knjižnica Hrvatske revidije, 1969), p. 206, and Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *NDH i Italija: Političke veze i diplomatski odnosi* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2001), p. 58.

⁹⁰ This statement comes from an article in *Hrvatsko Gospodarstvo*, July 25 1941, cited in Dinko Tomašić, “Croatia in European Politics”, *Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 2, 1942-43, p. 81.

⁹¹ See *Hrvatska zemlja: Lijepa naša domovina* (knjiga prva) (Zagreb: Izdanje hrvatskog izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda, 1942), p. 3.

⁹² Ante Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola iz Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1942), p. 17.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 41.

another indicator of the close relationship between the Dinaric and Nordic races, which together comprised the majority of the Croatian population: in a 1942 article in *Spremnost*, Karamarko calculated that approximately 65% of Croats were of Dinaric race, 20% were Alpine, 10% of Nordic race, while only 5% were of Armenoid type, 3% of the East Baltic race, 1% Mediterranean and another 1% were of “Mongoloid and some other Near Eastern race”.⁹⁴ Karamarko concluded that, with regard to the physical characteristics of the Dinaric race, the Croats could be “completely satisfied, because it is a healthy, strong race, very tenacious...while the share of the Nordic race, which is the closest to the Dinaric, strengthens these values and characteristics to a considerable measure”.⁹⁵

The geographer Dr. Zvonimir Dugački more or less agreed with Karamarko’s racial estimates. In a 1942 article on the “Earth and its population” in the popular encyclopaedia *Znanje i radost* (“Knowledge and Joy”), Dugački noted that the Croats were largely Dinaric in racial type, with smaller numbers belonging to the Alpine and Nordic races.⁹⁶ Dr. Mirko Košutić, a representative in the Croatian *Sabor*, remarked in the same year that the Croats were a “trustworthy, dependable and honest” nation because, among other reasons, they had “received into their blood strong admixtures of the ethical Nordic race”.⁹⁷ In a speech given on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of *Matica hrvatska* in 1943, its president, Filip Lukas, referred to the racial history of the Croats, arguing that representatives of the Dinaric race had constructed the first medieval Croatian state along the Adriatic, for that race was “characterised by a fighting spirit and aspirations to independence and freedom”; Lukas added that, after the Dinaric race, the Nordic was the most widespread racial type found among the Croats (especially in central Bosnia).⁹⁸

The “Nordic Slavic-Gothic-Iranian” core component

As regards the specific ethno-linguistic origins of the Croats, the NDH’s historians and ideologists argued that the Croats did not belong exclusively

⁹⁴ Milivoj Karamarko, “Dinarska rasa i Hrvati: osebujne naše značajke i pozitivni prinos nordijske rase”, *Spremnost*, 22 November 1942, p. 7. Karamarko estimated that only 25% of Serbs belonged to the Dinaric race; 35% belonged to the Armenoid race, which was characterized by a dark complexion and a personality prone to trickery, fawning and cheating, while a further 15% of Serbs possessed “non-Aryan Near Eastern and very conspicuous Gypsy” racial features. See *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ See Zvonimir Dugački, “Zemlja i njezino stanovništvo”, *Znanje i radost: Enciklopedijski zbornik* (knjiga prva) (Zagreb: Naklada hrvatskoga izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda, 1942), p. 203.

⁹⁷ Dr. Mirko Košutić, “Ništetnost državnih čina od 1918”, *Spremnost*, 15 March 1942, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Filip Lukas, “Stogodišnja uloga Matice hrvatske u kulturnoj povijesti hrvatskog naroda” in F. Lukas, *Za hrvatsku samosvojnost: Zakoni zemlje – krvi – duha* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1944), pp. 231-232.

to any one Indo-European or Aryan ethno-linguistic branch, whether Slavic, Germanic or Indo-Iranian. For example, in his introduction to the 1943 Croatian edition of Ivo Pilar's *Die südslawische Frage*, the "bible" of Croatian racial nationalism, the Croat translator, Fedor Pucek, noted that the Croats were the product of the "mixing of various nations and races": the contemporary Croats thus carried the blood of all the peoples that had inhabited the Croatian lands before the arrival of the proto-Croats in the seventh century AD, including "Celts, Illyrians, Huns, Avars, Romans and Goths".⁹⁹ Furthermore, the original Croats were also not entirely "homogeneous", but rather consisted of a "Slavic majority" led by a less numerous "warrior stratum of Gothic-Caucasian-Iranian origin".¹⁰⁰

In short, the Croatian state was "an organism organized by Gothic-Caucasian Iranians on behalf of Slavic tribes on the territory of the West Roman Empire".¹⁰¹ The Slavic element was Nordic ("for the Slavs are also Nordic") and the largest "racial component" among the Croats, although the "Gothic-Iranian component" was also "comparatively very high"; in any case, the Croats were neither, "only Slavs or only Goths", but simply Croats.¹⁰² Pucek maintained that the "fairer elements", or those which "today we partially term Nordic or European in a limited sense", became predominant among the Croats through the centuries.¹⁰³

To be sure, some Ustasha ideologists in the NDH maintained that the Croats were not of mixed descent. Danijel Crljen, for one, was adamant that the Croats "never consisted of various nations", that their "descent is uniform and did not originate from the merging of various groups".¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, 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 as a specific and already formed ethnic group under its own and present-day name as far back as the early Middle Ages", while the other major nations of Europe were at that time still part of the "common Germanic" or "common Romanic groups".¹⁰⁵ Such claims were primarily concerned with the ethnic and national identity of the Croats. In other words, the most significant point that Crljen and others were trying to get across was that an *ethnic* group under the Croatian name had existed from the earliest times. As Crljen wrote in 1942, "[the Croats] arrived

⁹⁹ See F. Pucek's Introduction in Pilar, *Južnoslavensko pitanje*, p. xxv.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*, pp. xxv-xxvi.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁴ See Danijel Crljen, "Načela hrvatskog ustaškog pokreta" in Petar Požar (ur.) *Ustaša: Dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka stvarnost, 1995), p. 57.

¹⁰⁵ See "Najsvetija dužnost majke: uz Poglavnikovu zakonsku odredbu", *Hrvatski narod*, 13 June 1941.

from their old homeland in their new homeland as an organized national group under the name *Croat* [Crljen's emphasis].¹⁰⁶

Such arguments were therefore not in contradiction with the thesis that a leading or core component existed in the Croatian nation, which was able to assimilate individuals from other ethnic (Aryan) groups. Pucek described the core Croatian "component" as the "Nordic Slavic-Gothic-Iranian" one.¹⁰⁷ This component consisted of an ethnic mixture, but was nonetheless *racially* "Nordic-Aryan" and united under the Croatian name. Crljen had himself claimed that the "conquering" Croats were able to "reign over the submissive Slavs" and located the "proto-homeland" of the Croats in Iran.¹⁰⁸ Similar views were expressed in other Ustasha publications. An unnamed article in the 1942 *Ustasha Annual*, for example, noted that the Croats consisted primarily of two "blood" components – the Iranian and the Slavic.¹⁰⁹ The first component was clearly the "core" one, because the Iranian element was characterised by a "fighting spirit" and "state-building" talents, while the Slavic component was denoted by "peacefulness" (pacifism in other words) and the nature of "compromise".¹¹⁰ Ante Pavelić and his Ustashe definitely belonged to the "Iranian" component.

Indeed, the Poglavnik was "the progeny of the purest Croatian blood", and who, like Ante Starčević, hailed from Dinaric Lika, "the Croatian Sparta", which "gives birth to healthy, firm people, heroes and men of character".¹¹¹ The Dalmatian county (*župa*) of Cetina was another racially "healthy" region. In July 1941, in a speech to a crowd in the county capital of Omiš, the *veliki župan* ("district-chief"), Ante Luetić, expressed his happiness at being able to speak to the "descendants of pirates and men of good stock [*koljenovići*] of the holy blood of Croatian princes".¹¹² Both the Iranian and Slavic blood components were united within one "national soul", but it was important that there be balance between the two, for it would be "fatal" if the Slavic component completely ruled the "Croatian soul".¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Crljen, "Načela hrvatskog ustaškog pokreta", p. 57.

¹⁰⁷ Pucek, "Introduction", p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁸ Prof. Danijel Crljen, "Organizatorna sposobnost i snaga Hrvata", *Spremnost*, 19 April 1942, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ See Z. K. "Hrvatska povijest je proizvod hrvatske narodne duše", *Ustaški godišnjak 1942* (Zagreb: Glavni ustaški stan, 1942), p. 122.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ See Ivo Bogdan, "Poglavnik – vodja hrvatskog naroda – odvjetak najčišće hrvatske krvi i odraz nepatvorene hrvatske sredine", *Spremnost*, 10 April 1942, p. 2. The Ustashe had frequently stressed that leading Croatian pan-Slavists and Yugoslavists (such as Ljudevit Gaj and Josip Juraj Strossmayer) had in fact been of non-Croatian ethnic descent. In his 1936 memorandum to the German government (*Die kroatische Frage*) Pavelić argued that "with the exception of a small part of the intelligentsia, mostly of foreign blood, the Croatian people, above all the Croatian peasantry, determinedly rejected Yugoslavism". Cited in Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*, p. 237.

¹¹² See "Skupština ustaškog pokreta velike župe Cetine", *Hrvatski narod*, 22 July 1941, p. 6.

¹¹³ Z. K. "Hrvatska povijest je proizvod hrvatske narodne duše", p. 123.

Intellectuals and Ustasha ideologists in the NDH were free to argue as to which *non-Slavic* core element – Iranian or Gothic – had formed the warrior ruling class of the Slavs in White Croatia. For example, in 1943 the historian Stjepan Sakač argued that the Croatian name (and by association, the ethno-linguistic origins of the Croatian people) could be traced to ancient Iran, or more precisely, to the Iranian province of Harahvatiš (in present day southern Afghanistan). The name Harahvati (or, “Harahvaiti”, from which the name “Croat/Hrvat” was derived) “denoted those Aryan or Iranian clans and tribes” that lived in the province.¹¹⁴ According to Sakač, the Iranian Harahvati formed the “main core of the later Slavic people of White Croats and the present day Croats”.¹¹⁵ Sakač argued that many aspects of Croatian culture and history (such as Old Croatian art) had their origins in ancient Iran.¹¹⁶ Therefore, wrote Sakač, “the Slavic Croats will understand themselves and their history and their language and a considerable part of their present times at the same time when they thoroughly research the past of their Old Iranian ancestors. ‘Blood is thicker than water!’”¹¹⁷

The Ustasha ideologist Dr. Ivo Guberina not only accepted Sakač’s theory on the Old Iranian origins of the Croats, but also argued that the Croats were not completely Slavicized until they reached the Adriatic, having thus arrived in Dalmatia as ethnic Iranians.¹¹⁸ The Adriatic Croats kept alive their Iranian cultural heritage by giving the geographical names “White” and “Red” Croatia to their new homeland, thereby expressing the “consciousness of the communality of the whole of Croatia and its unique origin from Harahvatiš to Split and Bar”.¹¹⁹ The Croats had been “physiologically” assimilated by the Slavs, but their “soul” or “psyche” remained uniquely (Iranian-) Croatian: even in the seventh century, the Croats were “no barbarians, but a cultured element, an element of order and statehood, by which they rose high above all their other neighbours in the north at that time, particularly the Slavic masses”.¹²⁰

The writer Ante Tresić-Pavičić noted (in 1942) that the “heroic tribe of Croats” from White Croatia were “of Aryan descent” as their ancestors were

¹¹⁴ Dr. Stjepan Sakač, “Historijski razvoj imena “Hrvat” od Darija I. do Konstantina Porfirogeneta (522. pr. Kr. do 959. posl. Kr.), *Hrvatska na novom putu* (Zagreb: Nakladna knjižara Velebit, 1943), pp. 71-72.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 71.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Dr. Ivo Guberina, *Državna politika hrvatskih vladara* (Zagreb: Nakladna knjižara Velebit, 1944), pp. 32-36.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 20, 186-187. According to Guberina, the Croats were saved from becoming Slav in a national sense, because the Slavicized Iranian Croats accepted the Latin based Christian culture of formerly Roman Split. See *ibid.*, pp. 50-64, 146-155, 186-187.

“Iranian Persians”.¹²¹ The Croats, who had “enjoyed the mild climate of the Persian gulf or the north Indian ocean” in their Iranian “proto-homeland”, had felt “an atavistic yearning for the sea”, which eventually brought them to the shores of the Adriatic.¹²² To be sure, not all proponents of the Iranian theory traced the ethno-linguistic roots of the Croats to ancient Persia itself. In a chapter on Croatian military history in *Naša domovina* (1943), Slavko Pavičić and Franjo Perše argued (similarly to Mladen Lorković) that the “traces of Croatdom lead to the Caucasus”, where the *prahrvati* (proto-Croats) “appear as an eminently military and state-building people”.¹²³

Other intellectuals emphasized the Nordic-Germanic component in Croatian racial history. Dr. Božidar Murgić explained in the German language Ustasha newspaper *Neue Ordnung* (in May 1942) that “the ancient autochthonous culture” of the Croats came from the “high north” and was related to the *urgermanisch-nordische Kultur* (“the original Germanic-Nordic culture”).¹²⁴ Even in their “southern homeland” along the “blue Adriatic”, the Croats “have remained a Nordic people”, as they had retained “their Nordic soul, their Nordic bravery...their honour and their Nordic art”; the historical “cultural connections” between Croats and Germans were thus based on a “blood relationship”.¹²⁵ In a similar vein, an article from 1941 in *Hrvatski narod* stated that “the ancient Croatian blood” had adapted “its art forms carried from the North to stone” in the new Adriatic homeland.¹²⁶

Josip Horvat, for his part, argued in 1942 that both the Gothic and Iranian elements were found in the Croatian *Herrenschicht* (“master stratum”). Together these two components of “warriors” and “conquerors” formed the ruling class of a population of “Slavic agriculturists” north of the Carpathians.¹²⁷ In

¹²¹ Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola iz Hrvatske*, p. 14.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ Dr. Slavko Pavičić & Ing. Franjo Perše, “Hrvatska vojna povijest”, sv. 1, Filip Lukas (glavni urednik) *Naša domovina: Hrvatska zemlja – hrvatski narod – hrvatska povijest – hrvatska znanost* (Zagreb: Tiskara Matice hrvatskih akademičara, 1943), p. 186.

¹²⁴ Dr. Božidar Murgić, “Die Kulturbeziehungen des kroatischen und deutschen Volkes”, *Neue Ordnung*, 26 May 1942, p. 13.

¹²⁵ Murgić based his arguments on the work of J. Strzygowski. See *ibid.*

¹²⁶ See “Hrvatska država i nacionalistička misao”, *Hrvatski narod*, 8 June 1941, p. 14.

¹²⁷ See Josip Horvath, “Kroatiens Werdegang” in Clemens Diederich (Herausgeber), *Die Kroaten* (Zagreb: Verlagsbuchhandlung Velebit, 1942), pp. 69-72. To back his claims of a Gothic-Croatian racial link, Horvat also relied on the authority of the English historian H. M. Chadwick, who argued that Scandinavia and northern Germany had formed the cradle of a *Herrenschicht* that ruled over Europe for two thousand years, and that the Goths had formed one of the branches of this ruling class. According to Horvat, Chadwick’s argument confirmed the theory of “the Gothic heritage of the Croats”, because the Croats shared the same living space as the Goths, shared similar personal names (e.g. Gothic leaders were named Filimer, Viscimir, Theodemir, the leaders of the Croats, Branimir, Zvonimir, Trpimir, etc.), while some researchers also asserted that the Croatian Glagolitic script was similar to Gothic runes. See *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

a 1943 article in *Spremnost*, Dr. Ivan Krajač wrote that the “old Croats” who conquered Dalmatia and Pannonia had assimilated their “kin by language, the Slavic Wends”, and also received

“the first class racial components of the Goths and old Illyrians, which could only strengthen even more their blood quality and national traits from a warrior and from an organizational perspective...during this time, the Goths are a capable noble nation, while the Illyrians are a strong, heroic, highland and maritime nation”.¹²⁸

The Gothic theory had enabled the first Croatian ambassador to Berlin, Dr. Branko Benzon, to claim, in a German interview in July 1941, that the “friendship” between the Croatian and German peoples was based, in part, on “racial kinship”.¹²⁹

Those Croatian academics who did not unreservedly accept either the Iranian or Gothic theories, such as the historian Živko Jakić, still pointed out (in a secondary school textbook on Croatian history in 1941) that the White Croats were not “of pure Slavic race and therefore had more capability for creating a state than the other remaining Slavs”.¹³⁰ In his chapter on Croatian history in *Naša domovina*, another leading Croat historian, Dr. Lovre Katić, also did not specify to which ethno-linguistic group the White Croats belonged, but he asserted that north of the Carpathians,

“the Croats adopted a Slavic language from their subjects and they subjugated even more Slavs in their new homeland. That was during the third decade of the seventh century. The Croats are masters of the land, while the vanquished Slavs and Romans [together] with the Illyrians cultivate the land for them”.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Dr. Ivan Krajač, “Kulturna sposobnost Hrvata”, *Spremnost*, 6 June 1943, p. 9.

¹²⁹ “Naš poslanik u Berlinu dr Benzon o prijateljstvu hrvatskog i njemačkog naroda, *Hrvatski narod*, 5 July 1941, p. 1.

¹³⁰ Cited in Jareb, “Jesu li Hrvati postali Goti?”, p. 880.

¹³¹ Dr. Lovre Katić, “Obća poviest Hrvata”, svezak 1, Filip Lukas (glavni urednik) *Naša domovina: Hrvatska zemlja – hrvatski narod – hrvatska poviest – hrvatska znanost* (Zagreb: Tiskara Matice hrvatskih akademičara, 1943), p. 166. In 1943, Katić, along with the Croatian historians Miho Barada and Jaroslav Šidak, edited and wrote the history textbooks for the eighth grade of secondary schools in the NDH. In the section on the earliest history of the Croats, the authors examined the Iranian and Gothic theories, cautiously refraining from uncritically accepting either theory. Nevertheless, the authors also included the proto-Croats among the people referred to as Antes. See Jareb, “Jesu li Hrvati postali Goti?”, p. 880. The Antes were probably of Iranian origin. In any case, they had a separate identity, distinct from the Slavs. According to M. Lorković, the Antes were a “branch of the Caucasian Iranians”. See Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata*, p. 7.

As the descendants of the White Croat “warriors” and “conquerors”,¹³² the Croats were born soldiers. Accordingly, the Poglavnik claimed in an interview to a German newspaper in May 1941 that the martial nature of the Croats was “evidence that the old primordial Croatian blood is still, 1300 years after the arrival in our present day homeland, the dominant factor in the physical and spiritual structure of the Croatian people”.¹³³ The Croats were clearly “a nation of the Slavic language group”, but their racial origins were quite distinct from those of other Slav speaking peoples.¹³⁴ An article in *Novi list* (from May 1941) explained that

“the appearance of the first monuments of the Croatian name in the area of Iranian tribes instructs us that the Croats are also a part of the Iranian community of peoples...the Croatian name and the Croatian nation have a separate origin and position among the remaining Slavic peoples”.¹³⁵

The Ustasha racial ideal and German National Socialism

The Ustasha ideal “Nordic-Dinaric” racial type became a sort of counterpart to the ideal Nordic man in National Socialist Germany. The Ustasha racial ideal was not a product, or a consequence, of the alliance with the German Reich, as some historians have argued,¹³⁶ but a component part of Ustasha ideology, which helped to further strengthen the ideological bonds between the NDH and German Reich. This was clear to Berlin from the beginning; in November 1941 Adolf Hitler told the NDH’s foreign minister Mladen Lorković that “he was particularly happy to learn that the Croats were able to shift their development away from denominations and toward the racial idea, for after all the Christian and Mohammedan Croats were one race”.¹³⁷

¹³² The Croat herald and historian Viktor Antun Dujšin noted that, “having arrived in the South as warriors and conquerors” the Croats were able to impose their aristocratic rule over the subjugated Slavs and Romans. See V. A. Dujšin, “Poviest hrvatskog plemstva i heraldika”, svezak 1, Filip Lukas (glavni ur.) *Naša domovina: Hrvatska zemlja – hrvatski narod – hrvatska poviest – hrvatska znanost* (Zagreb: Tiskara Matice hrvatskih akademičara, 1943), p. 205.

¹³³ Pavelić made the above comments to the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*. See “Temelji, na kojima se izgrađuje nova Hrvatska”, *Novi list*, 8 May 1941, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Ivo Bogdan, “Slavenski kongres’ u Moskvi”, *Spremnost*, 26 April 1942, p. 1.

¹³⁵ “Sveto ime Hrvat ne može se zamijeniti nikakvim drugim imenom”, *Novi list*, 22 May 1941, p. 5.

¹³⁶ Yeshayahu Jelinek, for example, writes that the Ustasha idea of an Aryan Gothic-Iranian racial identity was “for external consumption”, in other words a straightforward attempt to gain German political sympathy. See Y. Jelinek, “Nationalities and Minorities in the Independent State of Croatia”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, 1984, pp. 195-196.

¹³⁷ Hitler cited in Vol. XIII, “The War Years: June 23 – December 11, 1941” in Series D (1937-1945) in *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 866.

An alliance with the National Socialist Reich did not necessarily demand from a nation that it “acquire” an impeccable Aryan racial identity, even if it might prove favourable to that country’s political relationship with Germany. Two other Slav speaking countries, Slovakia and Bulgaria, were allies of Germany, and though some Slovak nationalists did claim “Aryan status”, they did not deny their Slavic national character, while the Bulgarian King Boris III claimed that the Bulgars were racially descended from the Huns.¹³⁸ Hitler did not have a high opinion of the non-Aryan “Turkoman” Bulgarians, but at the same time he accepted Bulgaria as an ally.¹³⁹ In the case of the NDH, Hitler was partially sympathetic to the Croats because of his racial theories that held them to be “more Germanic than Slav”.¹⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, the Poglavnik also claimed that the Croats were Gothic in origin at his first meeting with the Führer.¹⁴¹ For his part, the German ambassador to the NDH, Siegfried Kasche, encouraged German agencies in Croatia to support any “tendencies that emphasize the non-Slav origin of the Croatian nation”.¹⁴²

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the National Socialists actually argued, at least in theory, that there was no such thing as a “Slavic race”, even if they did often refer to the “Slavs” generically in racial terms.¹⁴³ Hitler thus considered the Croats to be predominantly Dinaric and “for that reason”, argued in May 1942 that “the germanization of the Croats would be welcome from the racial point of view”.¹⁴⁴ This was theoretically possible for

¹³⁸ On the subject of Slovak nationalism, see Nadya Nedelsky, “The Wartime Slovak State: A Case Study in the Relationship between Ethnic Nationalism and Authoritarian Patterns of Governance”, *Nations and Nationalism* 7, 2, April 2001, p. 224 and 11n, p. 233. On Bulgaria, see Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Zagreb-Sofija: Prijateljstvo po mjeri ratnog vremena 1941-1945* (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2003), p. 68.

¹³⁹ See Adolf Hitler, *Hitler’s Table Talk 1941-1944*, translated by Norman Cameron & R. H. Stevens (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953), p. 473 and Norman Rich, *Hitler’s War Aims: The Establishment of the New Order* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1974), p. 260.

¹⁴⁰ See *Hitler’s Table Talk*, pp. 8, 95. In a meeting with the German Plenipotentiary General in Zagreb, Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, on 17 April 1941, Hitler noted that there were indeed real racial differences between the Croats and Serbs, since the “racial foundations” of the Croats were different to those of the “Orientals”. See Peter Broucek (ed.), “Band 3: Deutscher Bevollmächtigter General in Kroatien und Zeuge des Untergangs des “Tausendjährigen Reiches“” in *Ein General im Zwielficht: Die Erinnerungen Edmund Glaises von Horstenau* (Wien-Köln-Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1988), p. 89.

¹⁴¹ This meeting occurred on 6 June 1941 at the Berghof. See Vol. XII, “The War Years: February 1 – June 22, 1941” in Series D (1937-1945) in *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, p. 980.

¹⁴² Kasche was concerned with combating pan-Slavism among the Croats. See Bogdan Krizman, *Ustaše i Treći Reich*, Vol. 1 (Zagreb: Globus, 1983), p. 240.

¹⁴³ See John Connelly, “Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice”, *Central European History*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1999, pp. 16-17, 26-27.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 17. Hitler noted, however, that “from the political point of view it [i.e. the Germanization of the Croats] is out of the question”, because Croatia was, until September 1943, formally within the Italian sphere of influence. See *ibid* and also see Rich, *Hitler’s War Aims*, pp. 276-277, 315.

a sizeable percentage of the German population, particularly in Bavaria and Austria, was also classified as Dinaric by German race theorists.¹⁴⁵ The Führer had earlier noted in November 1941 that, “here and there one meets amongst the Arabs men with fair hair and blue eyes. They’re the descendants of the Vandals who occupied North Africa. The same phenomenon in Castile and Croatia. The blood doesn’t disappear”.¹⁴⁶

German academics and writers also shared Hitler’s assessment. The historian and director of the Reich “Institute for Border and Foreign Studies” (*Institut für Grenz und Auslandsstudien*), Prof. Karl C. von Loesch, described the Croats as a “warrior and seafaring people of Slavic tongue and Gothic heart”, also noting that the “Nordic-Dinaric” Croatian Muslims were distinguished by their “tall figures and blond hair”.¹⁴⁷ Loesch’s institute appointed Mladen Lorković as one of its honorary members in May 1942 (while Lorković’s book, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata*, was translated into German).¹⁴⁸ In his 1944 study of Croatian history, Emil Robert Gärtner argued that the “racial genotype” separated the “Nordic-Dinaric” Croats from the “Near Eastern-Eastern” Serbs.¹⁴⁹

The National Socialists thus considered the Croats racially valuable in comparison to most other Southeast and East Europeans. Accordingly, in late June 1941 the Führer approved the selection of up to one hundred young Croats between the ages of 18 and 20, and of “strong character and intelligence”, for training with the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) in Germany.¹⁵⁰ As Dr. Benzon informed the Poglavnik from Berlin, “particular discretion” was needed in the matter

¹⁴⁵ H. F. K. Günther estimated that 15-20% of the Germans were of Dinaric race. See Fritz Brennecke (ed.) *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth*, translated by Harwood L. Childs (1938; reprint, New York: Ams Press, 1966), pp. 33-34.

¹⁴⁶ See *Hitler’s Table Talk*, p. 110.

¹⁴⁷ Karl C. von Loesch, *Croatia restituta* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni tiskarski zavod, 1942), pp. 9-11. For more on Loesch’s academic work during the Third Reich, see Götz Aly & Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London: Phoenix, 2002), p. 71 & 39n, p. 310.

¹⁴⁸ See Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Mladen Lorković: Ministar urotnik* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 1998), p. 58.

¹⁴⁹ Emil Robert Gärtner, *Kroatien in Südslawien* (Berlin: Junker und Dürnhaupt Verlag, 1944), p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ See Bogdan Krizman, *Pavelić između Hitlera i Mussolinija* (Zagreb: Globus, 1980), pp. 171-172. Pavelić and the Ustasha police chief, Eugen Dido Kvaternik, sought SS instructors for the Ustasha police and the Ustasha party army, the Ustasha Militia. As a result, SS-Untersturmführer Scheiber arrived in Zagreb in 1941 to assist in training the elite “Poglavnik’s Bodyguard” brigade (*Poglavnikov tjelesni sdrug* – PTS). For his services, Scheiber received NDH citizenship (along with the Croatian surname of Grodić) and became an Ustasha officer. See Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1964), pp. 71-72.

in relation to other Axis countries, for “this is the first time that [the SS] has accepted members of a foreign nationality into its service for training”.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

During the short period of the NDH’s existence, the Ustasha regime’s ideologists and intellectuals devoted considerable attention to the question of race in their books and articles. An examination of these texts demonstrates that a broad ideological and intellectual consensus existed in the NDH among various Ustasha ideologists, Croatian historians and writers regarding the question of the Croatian people’s racial identity. A more detailed study of race theory in the NDH would have to further explore how the Ustasha state defined both the “spiritual” qualities of the ideal Croat (i.e. the Croat as a heroic warrior) and how the regime defined the “counter-type” (i.e. the Balkan/Asiatic race/s) to the ideal Croatian racial type.¹⁵²

This article has highlighted that a clear picture emerged of the ideal Croatian physical type in the NDH’s cultural media: the ideal Croat was of Dinaric type with a Nordic strain or “Nordic-Dinaric” (i.e. tall, broad-headed with a long face and light pigmentation), descended from both the Nordic “Slavic-Gothic-Iranians” of White Croatia and the predominantly Dinaric “Celtic-Illyrians” of Dalmatia. The Croats may not have specifically become Goths in the NDH, as Mario Jareb has recently argued,¹⁵³ but as distinguished members of the “European racial community” they were certainly true Aryans under Ustasha rule.

The intellectual origins of the Ustasha idea of an ideal racial type can be traced to the pre-war studies of Croatian academics and writers interested in racial science. One should be cautious, however, in trying to establish a direct link between pre-war Croatian racial anthropology and the actual policies of the Ustasha regime toward non-Aryans in the NDH.¹⁵⁴ Thinkers such as Truhelka,

¹⁵¹ Krizman, *Pavelić između Hitlera i Mussolinija*, p. 172. Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler placed strict entry requirements for German SS applicants: SS officer candidates had to show pure Aryan ancestry back to the year 1750 (1800 for soldiers and NCOs). See Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (London: Pimlico, 2004), pp. 34-35.

¹⁵² The author of this article has already addressed this question in some detail in Bartulin, “The Ideology of Nation and Race”, pp. 86-95.

¹⁵³ Jareb, “Jesu li Hrvati postali Goti?”, pp. 879-881.

¹⁵⁴ For example, Rory Yeomans argues that the “philosophies” of intellectuals such as Truhelka and Šufflay “directly inspired the racial notions of Croatian fascism, and, more importantly, their writings created an intellectual atmosphere in which genocide could be legitimated”. See Yeomans, “Of ‘Yugoslav Barbarians’ and Croatian Gentleman Scholars”, p. 117. Although the ideas of Truhelka, Pilar, Šufflay and others certainly influenced the “racial notions” of the Ustasha, there is little or no connection between these conservative academics and intellectuals and the actual political system that established the Jasenovac concentration camp. Šufflay, for one, was

Pilar, Šufflay and Lukas did not personally subscribe to the extreme type of nationalism espoused by the Ustashe, but rather, articulated a conservative nationalist ideology.¹⁵⁵ These intellectuals were not solely concerned with the question of race in their scholarly works and were, in any case, primarily interested in racial anthropology and not racial politics.

On the other hand, the Ustasha regime certainly used race theory to justify racial policies. The Ustasha state was, in law and in practice, based on a racial *Weltanschauung*.¹⁵⁶ One cannot examine the legal, political and cultural functioning of that state without undertaking a serious analysis of the racial ideas permeating Ustasha ideology and the cultural politics of the NDH, including the idea of an ideal racial type. As this article has made abundantly clear, terms such as “blood”, “race”, “Aryan” and “Dinaric” became important words in Ustasha ideology and propaganda in a manner similar to the way in which “Nordic” and “blood” were “key words” in National Socialist ideology and were “forever reiterated” in the German Reich.¹⁵⁷

an “aristocratic pacifist” and was assassinated by Yugoslav government agents in 1931. His brutal murder “provoked an international outcry and condemnation of Yugoslav white terror by some of the era’s most notable exponents of human rights, including Albert Einstein and Heinrich Mann”. See Banac, “Zarathustra in Red Croatia”, pp. 181, 193. Ivo Goldstein similarly describes Šufflay as a “humanist” who would have “certainly disagreed” with “Hitlerism and Ustashism” had he lived to experience National Socialist and Ustasha rule. See Ivo and Slavko Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2001), p. 90.

¹⁵⁵ Banac writes in the case of Milan Šufflay, “that his writings...offer a unique insight into the ideology of conservative Croat nationalism, mid-way between its classic Frankist form and its disintegration with the rise of Ustaša radicalism, conceived and charged with fascist ideas by Ante Pavelić”. See Banac, “Zarathustra in Red Croatia”, p. 193.

¹⁵⁶ In a recent article the Croatian historian Nada Kisić-Kolanović, an authority on the NDH, aptly notes that “from the perspective of its creators, the NDH was a nation-state in which...the Croatian nation was considered homogeneous by origin and race”. See N. Kisić-Kolanović, “‘Islamska varijanta’ u morfologiji kulture NDH 1941.-1945.”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, God. 39., br. 1, 2007, p. 94. As with other historians dealing with the NDH, Kisić-Kolanović refrains from analyzing Ustasha racial ideas in any detail.

¹⁵⁷ Adam, *Art of the Third Reich*, p. 23.



The ideal Croatian man in the NDH: comparing the heroic Aryan Croatian soldier with the lawless Asiatic-Balkan Partisan and/or Chetnik enemy.

Mijo Bzik, Ustaški pogledi 1928-1941-1944

(Zagreb: Ustaša, 1944), pp. 76-77.

Der ideale nordisch-dinarische Rassentypus: Rassenkunde im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien

Zusammenfassung

Im Beitrag wird ein Aspekt der Rassentheorie der Ustascha im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien untersucht, und zwar wie das Ustascha-Regime versuchte Kroatien im anthropologischen Sinne zu definieren. Auch wenn die ideologischen Vordenker der Ustascha-Bewegung ihre Rassenideen unter dem Einfluß des deutschen National-Sozialismus entwickelten, so wird in vorliegendem Artikel doch argumentiert, daß die Rassenideologie der Ustascha trotzdem mehr oder weniger eigenen Ursprungs war, da die "Rassenfrage", schon lange Bestandteil der Ustascha-Ideologie war. Dies steht im Gegensatz zu den überwiegend in der Historiographie anzutreffenden Auffassungen, welche den Stellenwert der Rassentheorien der Ustascha ignorieren bzw. als gering veranschlagen. Die Ustascha betonte eine von ihr so bezeichnete rassische Komponente bei der Definition der kroatischen Nation, und suchte nachzuweisen, daß pan- und/oder jugoslawische Auffassungen einer vermeintlichen "rassischen" Einheit aller slawischen Völker unbegründet waren. Im Gegensatz zu einer so verstandenen slawischen Einheit behaupteten Ustascha-Anhänger, daß die Kroaten eine harmonische Mischung verschiedener indogermanischer oder "arischer" Völker darstellen würden ("Rassenmerkmale" der Iraner, Slawen, Goten, Illyrer und Kelten eingeschlossen). Nach Ustascha-Rassentheorie gehörten die Kroaten größtenteils zum "nordisch-dinarischen Rassentypus".