

JASENOVAC

**THE FIFTH
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OF THE CROATIAN STATE
FOR THE EXTERMINATION OF
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USTASHA IDEOLOGY AND GENOCIDE AGAINST SERBS

By its nature, position and role it had during World War II, the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was a typical example of pseudo-state that emerged through wholehearted support of the Axis Powers, sustainable not only by their support, but also by the terror and genocide it committed on innocent population. It was an evident clerical-Nazi-fascist state¹. Academician Milorad Ekmečić had right when he said that the NDH was a country of Catholic dictatorship, where the principle of religious intolerance was built into the foundations of the Croatian society². The so-called Independent State of Croatia was based on the postulates of Ustasha ideology, but at the same time it aspired to, and was willingly called The God's State (Civitas Dei), as it relied upon the principles of Roman Curia and the Catholic Church. To reach its primary objective, namely the creation of an independent, indigenous and sovereign state, in which the Croatian people would be the only master of the Croatian ground, it was necessary to eliminate the Serbs, which according to different estimates in Croatia there were between one million two hundred and one million nine hundred thousand. The Serbs in Croatia were usually regarded as the greatest enemy of the Croatian people, therefore such a regressive policy had, in addition to the support from Ustashas, a strong support and blessing of the Catholic Church and the Vatican. It is not surprising, as the creation of Independent State of Croatia made a decades-long dream of Vatican come true: to finally destroy Yugoslavia and orthodoxy, an eyesore to the papal Curia. At the same time, the creation of the NDH was a centuries-old embodiment of Vatican's idea of Croatia as the "antemurale hristianitatis", i.e. a strong rampart of Christianity against backward eastern Byzantinism. Perishing of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on April 15th, 1941, marked a historical triumph of Catholic separatism.³

The emergence and development of the Ustasha movement is closely connected with political conditions in the first-established Yugoslavia. These conditions were marked by unsolved Croatian national question, which came up from the first moment of creation of the new state. The backbone of the

¹ V. Dedijer, *Vatikan i Jasenovac. Dokumenti*, Beograd 1987, 149.

² M. Ekmečić, *Crkva i nacija kod Hrvata, u Ogledi iz Ibidemrije*, Beograd 1999, 139.

³ *Isti*, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja. Ibidemrija Srba u Novom Veku 1492-1992*, Beograd 2007, 437.

struggle for a solution to this issue was the Croatian People's Peasant Party, or the Radic's Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS). In contrary to HRSS, the Croatian national ideology and struggle to solve the Croatian national question and to forcibly create an autonomous Croatian state independent from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was by the time more and more articulated by the extreme nationalist movements, primarily by the Ustasha. The Ustasha ideology was rooted and directed by the policy of the Croatian Party of Historical Rights, where from at the same time started to emerge future Ustasha leaders. Ustashes' ideological guru was Dr. Ante Starcevic, the founder of the Party of Rights, who advocated the creation of a separate, i.e. independent state of Croats⁴. Besides him, the name of Joseph Frank, the leader of frankists, became unavoidable in shaping of Ustasha ideology, from whom the Ustasha took over and incorporated into their ideology a large part of the thesis about creation of a Croatian state and the rule of the Catholic Church. Frankists, as well as later did Ustashes, incorporated into their ideology the principle of creating a separatist and cleric-National Croatia.

When talking about Ustasha ideology, it should be remarked that it was based on several main principles. First and foremost was the principle of promotion of Croatian nationalism and continuous statehood of the Croatian people. Ustashes, as well as their predecessors "pravashas" (*members of the Party of Rights, t.n.) and "frankofurtimeashes", instituted the creation of an independent Croatian state on Croatian statehood and historical rights⁵. Such a basic Ustasha postulate was first launched in a Pavelic's brochure published in 1929, titled "Establishment of the Croatian state - a lasting peace in the Balkans", whereat he emphasized that Croatia possessed a thousand-years long statehood right, which was interrupted but not annihilated by the establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This principle was later elaborated in detail in the Principles of the Ustasha movement, published in 1933, when the movement was formally constituted. The Ustashes were defined as "the Croatian revolutionary organization" whose main goal was to liberate Croatia by armed uprising, in order to make it independent and autonomous "all over its people's and its historical area". Bosnia and Herzegovina would have necessarily entered into such a re-created and restored Croatian state⁶.

This first principle unavoidably rejected Yugoslavhood as the mortal enemy of the Croatian state and the Ustashi. Therefore, in accordance with the first principle of Ustasha ideology, it was bound to come to final showdown

⁴ M. Gross, *Povijest pravaške ideologije*, Zagreb 1973, 69, 85.

⁵ V. Krestić, *Velikohrvatske ideje*, u *Velika Srbija. Istine, zablude, zloupotrebe*. Međunarodni naučni skup (International Symposium, t.n.) SANU, 24-26. oktobar-October 2002, Beograd 2003, 258.

⁶ F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i nezavisna država Hrvatska 1941-1945*, Zagreb 1977, 22.

with the idea of Yugoslavhood, understood by them as an initial error replacing the title "Croatian" with an Illyrian name, and casting doubt on the "Croatian national autonomy."⁷ The Ustasha movement found the base for their nation-building concept in Ante Starcevic's Party of Rights, since Ante was even declared the ideological founder of Ustashes, the father of the nation (*pater patrie*), and the forerunner and inspiration of later coming Headman Pavelic. However, Ustasha leaders crudely rearranged Starcevic's Greater Croatia ideology, adapting it to their goals. They expanded Starcevic's exclusivity, i.e. rejection of Serbian and Slovenian nation, with the right of Croats to be the sole masters and governors of their own territory. According to the Ustasha ideology, creation of Yugoslavia in 1918 was the culmination of the negation of the Croatian national identity. Special significance in the "principles" was given to the defense of Western culture against the East, specifying the river of Drina and the Croatianhood as supposed borders (*antemurale hristianitatis*) between the two worlds, the eastern and the western.

Using propaganda to glorify the creation of the NDH as a "historical event", the Ustashes, after they came to power, unlike they did in the emigration era, commonly highlighted "the Croatian statehood" and the role of Ustashes in that regard, as well as the necessity of building a new social order. From the very beginning, the Ustasha ideology emphasized historical significance of Ustashes' struggle for preservation of the thousand-years long Croatian statehood, i.e. they would constantly point out that the Ustasha movement was just a natural continuation of the centuries-long struggle of Croatian people for independence and the creation of their own state⁸. They created specific views on the Croatian history to explain the actions of Ustasha movement. The idea of establishing a Croatian state was hence spotlighted, starting with the fact that soon after they had arrived to their present homeland, the Croats established a government, which, according to Ustasha ideologist Ivo Bogdan, is an argument proving the non-Slavic origin of Croats, who unlike the others managed to preserve their statehood.

Within the arguments speaking in favor of the Croatian statehood, there is the theory of non-Slavic origin of Croats and their difference from other South Slavs, especially the Serbs, as well as the theory of impossibility of co-existence between Croats and Serbs. One of the fundamental principles of the Ustasha ideology is reflected in the theory of creation of an independent Croatian state as the sole habitat of Croats, while further ideological development of that theory is based on Western culture and civilization, and alike is the position about the crucial role of Croats in the defense of the West. This thesis was exploited as a political slogan launched by the Catholic Church, speaking

⁷ *Ibidem*, 23.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 137.

about the Croats as *antemurale hristianitatis*, i.e. as safe and the only rampart of Christianity. Moreover, they claimed that the eastern border of Croatia should be set on Drina river. In order to achieve a large-scale division and confrontation with other nations, they launched extremely senseless thesis, such as the one contained in Pavelic statement: "The pan-Slavic movement has spread the belief that we and the Serbs are one nation. This is not true, because the Croatian race doesn't belong to the Slavs, but to the Goths, or - they are just Croats, and nothing more." Ustashes' propaganda also spread morbid slogans, saying that Muslims were the purest Croats, they emphasized the Croatianhood of Muslims, as well as historical connection between the territory of BiH and the Croats, with an aim to incite inter-ethnic intolerance and to recruit Muslims as the "Flowers of Croatianhood" for achieving the most obscure objectives. Ustasha theorists developed the idea of autochthonism and statehood of the Croats, whereat the period between 1918-41 was considered the most critical period for that statehood.

A very important element of this first principle was to insist on autochthonism of the Croatian nation, and the necessity of their domination. Such an obsession with autochthonism is evident in the Ustasha principles. Thus, for example, the first clause reads: "The Croatian nation is an autonomous ethnic unit, it is a specific nation and in ethnic terms it is not identical with any other nation, and it is neither a part nor branch of any other nation."⁹ The second clause further elaborates the thesis of Croatian autochthonism: "The Croatian nation bears its original historical name of a Croat, under which it appeared in an early historical period, under which it 1,400 years ago came to its present homeland, and under which it lived ever since."¹⁰

Another important postulate of the Ustasha ideology was cleric Nazism – cleric fascism, as well as close relationship between the Catholic Church and the Ustasha movement as a fascist and exclusivist ideology. Participation of the Catholic Church in the Ustasha movement and involvement of prominent Catholic priests in the realization of the principles of Ustasha ideology and state gave the NDH and the Ustasha movement required legitimacy. The "Frankster-way" and the clericalism gave birth to Ustasha movement, wholeheartedly trying to keep it alive from 1941. until 1945.¹¹ For the Catholic Church, an Ustasha headman was a God's chosen one on earth, sent to the Croatian people to restore the Croatian state in the form of NDH. Perhaps that strong symbiosis between the Ustasha ideology and the Catholic Church, their cleric fascism, was best illustrated in the article *Croatia and the Cross*, published on July 6th, 1941 at the "Sunday" journal of the Great Crusader Brother-

⁹ B. Krizman, Pavelić i ustaše, Zagreb 1978, 117.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 118.

¹¹ V. Novak, Magnum Crimen, Beograd 1989, 807.

hood. The article emphasized that the "Christ and Croats, as well as Christ and Ustashi, have always been going together through the Croatian history, and from its constitution the Ustasha movement has been fighting for the victory of Christ's principles, for the victory of justice, freedom and truth ... and that is why the new Ustashes' Croatia will be Christ's, ours and nobody's else's. All the Croatian people, from our dear Headman to the smallest child, could these days feel the hand of Christ guarding our people. We shall take that hand to the last one, being aware that only with her help we shall be able to achieve much more."¹²

Dr. Mile Budak, the Ustasha Minister of Religion and Teaching, spoke openly about this unbreakable bond between the Church and the Ustasha movement. At the assembly in Karlovac, held on July 13th, 1941, while explaining that the entire Headman's work was focused on the creation and sustainability of the NDH, he said openly: "The entire Ustasha movement is based on faith. This is primarily a great faith in our just cause, and a great faith in the Almighty who never abandons the righteous. Our entire work is based on our loyalty to the Church and the Catholic religion. That is why Ustasha movement preaches about the senses of faith, as those are important conditions of our soul and the foundation of Ustasha movement."¹³

The most expressive example of cooperation between the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Ustasha regime could be found in military matters. We should not forget that every Ustasha and Home Guard unit had a padre assigned, as to provide the best interpretation of Ustasha principles. Major part of the Catholic priesthood in the NDH actively engaged in achieving of Ustashi objectives and participated in committing of mass crimes over Serbs, Jews, anti-fascist Croats, and also led systematic campaigns for conversion of Serbs to Catholicism. For all these activities they had a full blessing of the Catholic Church. Many of them became prominent Ustasha officials, such as: Fr. Miroslav Majstorovic Filipovic, Zvonimir Brekalo, Viktor Gutic. The statement of father Mate Mogus that "we have been fighting with a cross and a prayer book by now, and from now on we shall fight with a gun and a rifle" indicates the true nature of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Ustasha.¹⁴

The Catholic Church has played an especially important role in the conversion of the Serbs, so even for that heinous act they got an "authorization" from the papal state through the famous decree on faith swapping given by the Holy Congregation for Eastern Europe. The role of the papal legate Ramiro Marconi was also important. Already after his arrival to the NDH, he joined

¹² Krist i Hrvatska. Nedjelja, 6. VII 1941.

¹³ V. Novak, nav. delo, 604.

¹⁴ V. Dedijer, nav. delo, 186.

and hailed the work of the Ustasha state. Especially important were his "apostolic journeys" made in 1943, the least of a religious, but primarily of a political significance. His stay in Bosnia, Slavonia and Herzegovina, and especially in Siroki Brijeg, Mostar, Ljubuski, Capljina, the cradle of Ustasha movement, was just a moral encouragement and blessing of the Catholic Church to continue with the realization of a monstrous statement of Mile Budak given in Gospić in July 1941: "One part of the Serbs we shall kill, the other part shall be dispersed, while the rest we shall convert to Catholicism, and so assimilate them with Croats." After their meeting in October 1941, Luca Pietromarchi, an official of the Italian Ministry of foreign affairs, spoke very illustratively about the intention of this Ustasha leader to carry out the conversion of Serbs. According to Pietromarchi, the Croatian leader focused "all his hope onto the movement for conversion of the Orthodox people to Catholicism," and he came out with a theory that the Orthodox Church is not a religious, but a political body. The conversion has been carried out at large scale, and two hundred and fifty thousand people have already been forcibly converted into Catholicism.¹⁵

In such a conjunction between the Catholic Church and the Ustasha movement and their state, the position of the Vatican towards Ustashes played an important role. From the first day of establishing of the Yugoslav state, the Vatican started to show their hostility and to support all clericalist and nationalist forces that fought for the destruction of Yugoslavia. This hostile policy continued during the papacy of Pope Pius XII, and especially during the WWII. From the very beginning and the creation of the NDH, the Catholic Church enjoyed a special treatment. Top of the clergy expressed their intolerance towards Orthodoxy, thus they supported the Ustasha position that the conflict between the Serbs and Croats can only be solved by their final division. Such a position was also taken by the Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac, who already in 1940 said: "All in all, Croats and Serbs are two different worlds, the north and the south pole that shall never get close. Orthodoxy is the greatest curse of Europe, almost greater than Protestantism. There is no morality, truth or integrity in it." Stepinac also called on to the Serbs to return to the faith of their ancestors. Creation of NDH provided the conditions for realization of Stepinac's idea, and Stepinac struggled himself to make it actually happen. It is no wonder that immediately after the proclamation of the NDH, Stepinac visited Kvaternik and Zanic, and lately the Headman Pavelic, congratulating them with the creation of the new state, calling on for loyalty to the newly formed country, and urging the priests to fulfill their duties towards the young nation, one of the most important of which was the conversion of Serbs.¹⁶

¹⁵ M. Ekmečić, *nav. delo*, 139.

¹⁶ S. Simić, *Prekrštanje Srba za vreme Drugog svetskog rata*, Titograd 1958, 33.

In such a conjunction between the Vatican and Ustashas, recognition of the NDH was imposed as a very important task to accomplish. Therefore the Archbishop Stepinac zealously advocated for the pope to recognize the new state, in which he succeeded.¹⁷ First step in this direction was Pope's audience of Pavelic on May 18th, 1941. This visit, although described as private, was a step towards the recognition of Ustasha state by the Vatican. We should not forget that the Pope had high affinity toward Pavelic, as well as toward the Ustasha movement and their state, which could be substantiated by numerous facts and documents. For example, Pius XII received in an official audience on July 22nd, 1941 a group of hundred Croatian gendarmes led by the notorious Eugen "Dido" Kvaternik, the chief of police, and blessed them on that occasion, and on the admission of Prince Lobkovic, the NDH representative in Vatican, on January 31st, 1943, he received the Latin translation of the Ustasha principles and expressed joy over the present handed to him.¹⁸ Assignment of the apostolic visitator Ramiro Marcone as the Papal Curia representative in Zagreb was understood as de facto recognition of NDH by the Vatican, although de jure it was never done. This very detail shows itself that the Vatican was deeply fond of the Ustasha state. The appointment of the abbot Marconi had a deeper meaning reflected in the documentation of dismemberment of Yugoslavia by the Axis Powers and their satellites, moral support to the cleric-Ustasha regime before the Catholic masses, and deepening of the relationship between the Curia and the Croatian Diocese.

At the same time, the arrival of Marconi to the NDH meant an equalizing of Ustashi with Croats, and the NDH with "state", as well as providing international legitimacy to the NDH and the Ustasha regime in general. Of course, it was a strong support to the realization of objectives set before the Ustasha. The support was given by sending telegrams and letters of congratulation to the Ustasha regime. We can freely say that the Vatican openly put itself in service for achieving the most obscure goals reflected in the Ustasha policy. By such a position, the Vatican violated the principles of moral and political justice, proved that it was biased in favor of the NDH and the Axis Powers, and thus should bear much of the responsibility for stirring up Catholic religious hatred and intolerance among the people.

The third element of the Ustasha ideology was national exclusivity and chauvinism, as well as hatred towards the Serbs, whom they intended to eradicate as a nation from the territory of so-called independent Croatian state. Starting from the Croatian statehood and historical rights, according to which only one political or diplomatic nation existed within the territory of Croatia, Ustashas would emphasize that no other nation but the Croats could be re-

¹⁷ V. Dedijer, *nav. delo*, 92-93.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 133.

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garded as politically relevant, which least of all could be the Serbs. Therefore, the core of the genocidal Ustasha policy toward the Serbs in Croatia and BiH was rooted from the Croatian statehood and historical rights.¹⁹ Serbian people in Bosnia and Croatia were marked as the source of all evil and suffering of the Croatian people throughout history, so they had to bear the consequences as such. The leader of Ustasha movement clearly and publicly manifested his animosity towards the Serbs already in summer of 1927, when in Rome he met with Roberto Davanti, one of the most influential figures in Mussolini's government. During that meeting, Pavelic showed himself as a bitter opponent of Serbhood in Croatia. In a memorandum that he prepared for Mussolini, he pointed out, inter alia, the pursuit of Croatian independence, the irreconcilable differences between Croats and Serbs, and also that the Croats would help Italians in a possible conflict between Yugoslavia and Italy.²⁰

Immediately after founding of the NDH, the principle of national exclusivity and chauvinism came to the fore, as reflected in a law provision outlawing the Serbs and leaving them without rights completely. One of the first discriminatory decisions was brought already on April 25th, 1941, prohibiting the use of the Cyrillic alphabet. Next was the law provision on racial affiliation, the Circular on conversion of Serbs to Catholicism, along with law provisions on faith swapping, confiscation of property of Serbian institutions, agencies, etc. All that was just a prelude to mass slaughter and genocide against the Serbian people, demonstrated through mass slaughters and executions (Glina church, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Kozara Potkozarje), murders and extermination in concentration camps (Stara Gradiska, Jasenovac, Jadovno etc.), or through faith swapping, forced evictions, lootings.

The statements that Ustasha officials were regularly giving from the first date of establishing of the NDH, supported the thesis on genocidal character of the Ustasha ideology, movement and government toward the Serbs. Here, for example, belongs the famous one in a series of Pavelic's statements: "We do not have and we never had anything to do with the Serbs. We also differ from the Serbs by our religion and our physical appearance. It is hard to confuse Croats with Serbs. We are not Slavs." Along with that came the famous thesis brought forth by Mile Budak in Vukovar on July 8th, 1942, that the Serbs in Croatia were not real Serbs, but the intruders, "beggars and immigrants" from the East, who had been brought to Syrmia by Turks as their carriers and servants.²¹ In his verbal attacks on Serbs, Budak, alike the other

¹⁹ V. Krestić, *Genocidom do velike Hrvatske*, Novi Sad - Beograd 1998, 5, 60, 145, isti, *Državno i istorijsko pravo Hrvatske - osnov sukoba sa Srbima*, Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju 51, Novi Sad, 1995, 7.

²⁰ B. Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*, Zagreb 1978, 10-16.

²¹ V. Novak, *nav. delo*, 605.

Ustasha leaders, followed the example of Ante Starcevic, who in his famous pamphlet *The Name of Srb*, published in 1868, in its amended edition from 1876, titled *The Slavic-Serb breed in Croatia*, and in pravas' journal *Hervatska*, had denied the existence of Serbian nation.²²

He was famous for his derogatory names for Serbs, whom he called Slavoserbs, or animal villains of the Croatian people, or a dirty breed.²³ Budak at the same assembly uttered an ominous message to the Serbs, telling them either to bow down or to go away, remarking it was an Ustasha parole.²⁴

Constantly launching anti-Serb slogans, Budak was one of the most passionate Ustasha spokesman and supporters of Ustasha policy of eradication of the Serbs from Croatia. His words, spoken at the Ustasha assembly in Pakrac on July 20th of that year, sounded shockingly when he uttered the following famous sentence: "One Vlach (*derogatory term for Serbs, t.n.) you should offer to seat down with you and eat at your table, but the other one you should bind in a sack and sit over it. The one at the table and the one under the table would wish the same thing to you. So remember this as well. Together with a Vlach you may only eat until you half-empty the bowl, and when the bowl is half-empty, hit him with the bowl and kill him, otherwise he will kill you..."²⁵

Unfortunately, other prominent members of the Ustasha government would also come forth with similar anti-Serb messages. On June 3rd, 1941 in Nova Gradiska, Minister Milovan Zanic uttered his famous words that "Croatia is a country of Croats and of no one else, so there is no method that us, the Ustashes, would not use to make this country truly Croatian, and to clean it from Serbs, who had been threatening us for hundreds of years, and who might start to threaten us on first occasion." In addition to these terrible words, he acknowledged that the policy of elimination of Serbs from Croatia was the Croatian government policy, and one of the principles of the Ustasha movement.²⁶ Such extremely racist thesis were also spread by Dr. Mirko Puk, the Ustasha Minister of Justice, who at a meeting in Krizevci on July 6th, 1941, pronounced his famous warning to the Serbs: "Either you shall go away from our beloved fatherland willingly, or we shall drive you out by force ..." ²⁷ The same Puk, justifying forcible expulsion of sixty-five thousand Serbs from Slavonia, stated at the Croatian National Parliament on February 25th, 1942, that

²² M. Gros, nav. delo, 134.

²³ Ibidem, 145-147.

²⁴ Ibidem

²⁵ V. Novak, nav. delo, 605.

²⁶ V. Novak, nav. delo, 605.

²⁷ Ibidem, 606.

the duty of the Croatian government was to return that element, i.e. the Serbs, who settled in that area against every natural law and against the will of the Croatian people, to the place they had come from.²⁸

Interestingly, the Italian intelligence agency uncovered an order that local Ustasha authorities received from the Ustasha Headquarters, reading that from August 31st to September 6th, 1941, they had to wipe off and slaughter Orthodox population within the territory under Italian occupation, then to bring and settle Muslim and Croat families into their villages. Horrified by the extent of crime, the Italian Second Army Headquarters reported already on the 10th of June 1941 that the "Croatian ultra-nationalism, losing every sense of restraint, established a regime of violence and terror, intensity of which is continuously growing up. Their political struggle has been inspired by religious struggle and got merged with it ... Such a Croatian political-religious struggle is getting some truly wild aspects, exposed by Ustasha engagement in reprisals and repression which can only be compared with the most obscure Medieval times."²⁹ Also, on August 9th, 1941, the Italian intelligence agency reported that the Ustashes wanted to remove Serbs from Croatia once and for all by extinction.³⁰

The fourth Ustasha principle was the racism, because the future and independent Ustasha state had to be based on strict principles of racial affiliation and purity, which practically meant that in such a future creation no person could make important decisions if he was not for generations or by bloodline belonging to the Croatian people, as precisely defined in the first clause of the Ustasha principles: "No one who by generations or by bloodline does not belong to the Croatian people may not make decisions about Croatian governmental and national affairs. Nor shall any foreign nation or people take decisions about the fate of the Croatian people and the Croatian government."³¹

In the new Croatian state they had to create a pure Croatian state territory to provide the existence for pure Croatian nation, but to make it possible they had to fulfill the base condition, which was to exterminate Serbs and Jews, who were declared the greatest enemies of the Croatianhood. This principle of the Ustasha ideology was soon realized after the declaration of NDH, through adoption of law provisions on people's and country defense (on 17th of April), racial affiliation and protection of Aryan blood and honor of the Croatian people (30th of April), protection of national and Aryan culture of the Croatian people (4th of June), and finally by adoption of the order on organi-

²⁸ Ibidem, 606.

²⁹ V. Krestić, *Genocidom do velike Hrvatske*, 84.

³⁰ M. Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje od klanja do oranja*, 446.

³¹ Isti, *Crkva i nacija kod Hrvata*, 140.

zation and scope of work of the Racial-political Commission.³² At the same time, across the territory of the NDH they founded extraordinary people's courts, kangaroo-courts, and mobile kangaroo-courts, which were a sort of cover for mass crimes and genocide against Serbs and Jews, as they were mainly formed to try them.

The fifth postulate of the Ustasha ideology was totalitarianism, i.e. specific social organization of the Ustasha state based on totalitarianism and authoritarian government, which was not the original feature of the Ustasha ideology, but a true copy of Mussolini's and Hitler's system based on so-called "New European order" spirit. Ustasha state was essentially totalitarian, based on a strong cult of personality and state, embodied through the Headman Pavelic. Within the totalitarianism of the Ustasha state there was no space for individuals, individualists, or personal freedom and rights. Everything was subordinated to, as Ante Pavelic would say, "the generality of the community".³³ In the totalitarian and authoritarian Croatian state there was no room for ideas of liberalism or those from the French Revolution.

The sixth principle of Ustasha ideology was demagoguery, primarily directed toward drawing up of certain social categories, especially the peasantry, to whom they paid primary role, because in the opinion of the Ustasha ideologists the peasantry was the foundation and source of all life, which was the real holder of power in the Croatian state. This reference to the peasantry was primarily of advertising character, as Ustashi leaders, taught by experience of the HSS, which had enormous influence among the peasants in Croatia, were passing off the thesis that all true Croats came from peasant families, by which they wanted to draw up peasants for themselves.

Thus, for Ustasha ideologists, the foundations on which their movement was based were: Croatian "historical" statehood right, Croatian "European" life orientation (i.e. opposition to socialism, Pan-Slavism, Balkan and Yugoslav influence) and developed sense of integrity. The essence of the Ustasha ideology and movement was maybe best sublimated in the *Rulebook on tasks, organization, work and guidelines of the Ustashi-Croatian liberation movement* from August 1941. According to the provisions of this Rulebook, Ustasha movement is: 1 People's, 2 nationalist, 3 political, 4 military, 5 working, 6 social, 7 moral, 8 didactic, 9 educational movement.³⁴

³² B. Krizman, nav. delo, 118.

³³ Zakonska odredba o obrani naroda i države, Narodne novine, 17. travnja 1941, Zakonska odredba o rasnoj pripadnosti, Zakonska odredba o zaštiti arijske krvi i časti hrvatskog naroda, Narodne novine 30. travnja 1941, Zakonska odredba o zaštiti narodne i arijske kulture hrvatskog naroda, Naredba o ustrojstvu i delokrugu rada rasno-političkog povjerenstva, Narodne novine, 4. lipnja 1941.

³⁴ A. Seiz, Put do hrvatskog socijalizma, govori i članci, Zagreb 1943, 283.

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As for the character of the NDH, we can say that it belonged to a group of states "without a constitutional charter", which practically means that it did not have a single and a written constitution, but its constitutional provisions were contained in various laws, treaties, i.e. the constitution was flowing out from different legal springs, and was gradually built up. The basic constitutional norms in the Ustasha state were the constitution (UHRO), the principles of the Ustasha movement, and other law provisions made in the later period. Both the legislative and the administrative power were concentrated in the hands of Pavelic and the Ustasha. A special role in thus conceived state had the "Croatian State Assembly", which began operating in February 1942, while in December of the same year it was dissolved. It was not an arena for party fights, but it was an agency of Croatian national classes. It was in fact a governmental body at which they proclaimed Pavelic's and Ustasha policy, and it was an instrument in his hands. Severity of the NDH could best be described by statement of an Italian diplomat: "The serious and true Croats, as well as those outside the political struggle, consider Pavelic and his miserable party an artificial creation that does not reflect either the Croatian spirit nor belief, because Pavelic's party of four and a half million Croats has 20-30000 supporters at the most."

The epilogue of the Ustasha ideology and their four-year reign of terror is more than appalling. Besides immeasurable material damage, far more devastating is the number of killed opponents of Pavelic's regime - Serbs, Jews, anti-fascist Croats, Gypsies. Only the number of victims in Jasenovac would be enough to illustrate terrible consequences of the Ustashahood. The number of victims ranged from twenty-five to forty thousand, as claimed by the former Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and the Archbishop of Zagreb Franjo Kuharic, up to hundreds of thousands, or even a million of people. For example, Dr. Herman Neubacher, special envoy of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs for South-Eastern Europe from 1941 to 1945, claimed that in Jasenovac concentration camp they murdered over two hundred and twenty five thousand people; German general Glaise von Horstenau mentioned the number of three hundred thousand killed, while the Commander of the Southeast Alexander Lehr estimated that in Croatian concentration camps they killed about four hundred thousand Serbs. Ernst Fick, an SS Major-General, estimated that in the concentration camps in Croatia they killed between six to seven hundred thousand people. According to a U.S. intelligence officials assessment, already between April 1941 and August 1942 the Croats had killed six hundred thousand Serbs.³⁵ Vladimir Dedijer and Antun Miletic also came forth with the number of six hundred thousand killed. The Croatian State Commission for identification of crimes of the occupiers and their supporters submitted on November 15th, 1945 a report titled "Crimes in Jasenovac con-

³⁵ F. Jelić-Butić, *nav. delo*, 153.

centration camp", submitting the number of five to six hundred thousand killed.³⁶

Interestingly, the actual perpetrators of the murders in Jasenovac and Stara Gradiska also displayed an estimated amount of several hundred thousand people killed. Referring to the statements of Maks Luburic, Miroslav Filipovic Majstorovic, the notorious commander of Jasenovac and Stara Gradiska camps, mentioned the number of half a million Serbs killed, while Ljubo Milos considered that several hundred thousand people have been killed there.³⁷ The figures about two hundred thousand Serbs converted to Catholicism, and more than two hundred fifty thousand displaced, should be added to those horrific figures exposing one of the most brutal genocides committed during the first half of the twentieth century.³⁸

RESUME

The so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was a typical example of cleric-Nazi-fascist state that will be remembered for the genocide it committed against the Serbian population. A plan of complete extermination of Serbs, who had to be partially annihilated, or Catholicized, or moved away, was carried out with the wholehearted blessing of the Catholic Church and the clergy, who got involved in the implementation of that plan to a great extent. As for the Ustasha movement, it based its ideology on the Croatian statehood and historical rights, developed by Dr. Ante Starcevic, the founder of the Croatian Party of Historical Rights. The Ustasha ideology was characterized by several basic principles. First and foremost was the principle of Croatian nationalism and continuous statehood of the Croatian people. The thesis about autochthonous Croats, or of their non-Slavic origin, had an important role in the development of this principle. According to the Ustasha ideologues, the Croats were different from other South Slavs, especially the Serbs. The second Ustasha principle was the cleric Nazism-fascism, which included strong relationship and cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Ustasha, or so-called NDH. The third principle of the Ustasha ideology was national exclusivity and chauvinism, and hatred towards the Serbian nation, who, as the greatest enemy of Croats, had to be eradicated from Croatia. This principle was expanded with racism, understanding that the Ustasha state had to be based on strict principles of racial affiliation and purity. It practically meant that in the so-called NDH no person could make important decisions if he was not for

³⁶ M. Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje od klanja do oranja*, 482.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 450.

³⁸ V. Dedijer, *nav. delo*, 643-666.

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generations or by bloodline belonging to the Croatian people. The Ustasha also supported the principle of totalitarianism and the cult of state and personality. Finally, the principle of social demagoguery was aimed at drawing up the Croatian peasants, for whom they claimed to be representing genuine Croats. The balance of four-year Ustasha rule was disastrous. Genocide against the Serbian people has taken to death more than six hundred thousand people, while two hundred thousand Serbs have been converted to Catholicism, and more than two hundred fifty thousand have been displaced to Serbia.