

# INTRODUCTION

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**O**N 8 SEPTEMBER 1942, the third Zagreb economic and trade exhibition in the Independent State of Croatia was officially opened. The press portrayed it as an unparalleled triumph for the young state: newly constructed trams took visitors to the entrance of the Zagreb fairground; the city's travel office was open late for visitors from abroad needing accommodation for the duration of the exhibition; and thousands of citizens, many of them workers carrying trade union flags, bought tickets and wandered with "great attentiveness," curiosity, and interest around the exhibits. As one Zagreb newspaper concluded, despite the difficult wartime economic conditions, the warm and pleasant autumn weather and the influx of foreign visitors meant that this year's fair would be visited in "record numbers." Opening the exhibition, Dragutin Toth, minister for commerce, crafts, and agriculture, called it a "mirror of Croatian economic life."<sup>1</sup>

Among the many exhibits visited by Toth and his official party was one organized by the Ustasha Supervisory Service (*Ustaška nadzorna služba*—UNS). This was no ordinary trade exhibit: inside a square building the UNS had replicated the "typical living quarters" of what the state euphemistically termed "collection and work camps." The UNS display was part of a wider series of propaganda exhibitions aimed at educating the general public about the social utility of the Ustasha state's concentration camps and the UNS section responsible for their operational running: Bureau 3, the Ustasha Defense

Unit (Ustaška obrabena zdrug). This exhibit, like a number of others held in Zagreb that year, aimed to show the healthy and productive lives led by inmates in its “peaceful work camps.” In an exhibition organized by the Ustaša Defense Unit in central Zagreb in the same year, for example, to showcase the achievements of the largest concentration camp, Jasenovac, photographs of smiling inmates were combined with exhibits of the products and artifacts manufactured by inmates in the camp’s workshops. This exhibition, commissioned by the unit’s notorious commander, Vjekoslav Luburić, was aimed at convincing the Croatian public that Jasenovac was a benign reeducation camp transforming ideologically degenerate and anti-national individuals into valuable members of the national community through the dignity of labor, not a factory of death dedicated to the extermination of predominantly Serb, Jewish, and gypsy citizens. As the newspaper *Hrvatski narod* put it: “Their former labor was political; our present politics is based on labor.” Yet the wholesome disposition of the exhibition was at violent odds with the brutal reality of life and death in Jasenovac. By the time the state collapsed in 1945, at least one hundred thousand inmates, including large numbers of women, children, and babies, had perished as a result of starvation and malnutrition or at the hands of the camp’s guards.<sup>2</sup>

The ideology of the Ustaša movement, the fascist organization that founded and ruled the Croatian state from 1941 to 1945, was inherently contradictory. On the one hand, the Ustaša movement saw itself as an elite body of patriotic fighting men—“revolutionary warriors,” as one of their leading ideologues wrote—struggling for an independent Croatian state.<sup>3</sup> To achieve this aim, they were prepared to employ the most uncompromising methods necessary, including mass murder. This is the familiar image of the movement. However, there was another aspect that has been little discussed: the importance its ideology placed on cultural concerns. In fact, Ustaša ideology was shot through with notions of culture. In the years before it came to power, Ustaša leadership often stressed that their movement was one of culture that sought to liberate the Croatian people from the barbarism and backwardness of their Serbian oppressors.<sup>4</sup>

Conventional wisdom suggests that fascism and culture do not belong together. The novelist Thomas Mann wrote of the Nazis as “heralds of a world-rejuvenating barbarism” and the Hitler regime as a “dictatorship of the scum of the earth.”<sup>5</sup> The definitive statement on the relationship between the two was summed up by the character in a Hanns Johst play who exclaimed: “When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver!”<sup>6</sup> However, fascist movements were above all national movements with national ideologies. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that they gave primacy to cultural concerns. As Anthony Smith and Ernest Gellner have argued, nationalist regimes insti-

tute a “cultural and educational revolution” in which ecclesiastical authority and tradition are replaced by the new deity of the state. Culture thus becomes “the necessary shared medium, the lifeblood or, perhaps, rather the minimal shared atmosphere with which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce.”<sup>7</sup>

*Visions of Annihilation* is the story of how one fascist movement tried to use this necessary shared medium as a means of regime legitimization. In particular, it examines how the Croatian Ustasha regime used popular culture and notions of culture to legitimize its campaign of mass murder, deportation, and persecution against what it considered racial aliens and “foreigners” in pursuit of a nationalist utopia. There is now a large and growing scholarship examining the Ustasha regime’s campaign of mass murder.<sup>8</sup> There is also a growing literature on cultural politics in the Independent State of Croatia. However, up to now relatively few scholars have placed the two elements together.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, existing studies have tended to separate cultural politics from the Ustasha regime’s wider genocidal policies and, as a result, arguably created a distorted and unrealistically benign impression of both the nature and the role of cultural politics in the Independent State of Croatia.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, few studies of the Ustasha regime have attempted to situate the regime in the comparative framework of other European fascist regimes; nor have they utilized the innovative social, intellectual, and cultural methodologies common to studies of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in the past three decades pioneered by scholars such as George Mosse and Ze’ev Sternhell.<sup>11</sup> The culturalist approach is not unproblematic. At its most self-indulgent, as Sergio Luzzatto has pointed out, it reduces fascism to “nothing more than a series of linguistic expressions or a collection of symbols,” a creation of “rhetoric and fancy” in which social, economic, and ideological ideas play little or no role.<sup>12</sup> Yet in spite of its misuse and overuse in recent years, at the very least it attempts, as Mosse argued in 1999, to see fascism “as it saw itself and as its followers saw it, to attempt to understand the movement on its own terms.”<sup>13</sup> The failure to apply such a framework to the Ustasha regime has meant that an understanding of its worldview, appeal, and mechanics of rule have been limited.

This book aims to examine the way in which art, literature, ceremonies, and festivals, as well as social ideas and intellectual arguments, were utilized in the pursuit of a new society in which the nation would be purified and regenerated, relations between the classes reinvented, and aging democratic notions replaced by the energy of youth. At the same time, it considers how radical-right and nationalist artists, writers, intellectuals, and commentators interpreted that vision to a wider population. Through an examination of

the Ustasha regime's use of cultural politics, this book aims to gain a greater understanding of the way in which the regime, its activists, and its intellectual supporters viewed the world and hence the rationale for their destructive policies. When the Ustasha regime talked about culture, it did not just mean the rituals, festivals, art, and symbols through which societies and individuals represent the world around them: culture also signified a code of conduct by which the nation lived. For Julije Makanec, the minister of education, Croatia, through virtue of its traditions and history, its Catholicism, and its geopolitical position and alliances, belonged to the culture of the West and Europe. Croatia, he wrote, had been developing for one hundred years in the heart of Europe; only by retaining its Western European culture and resisting the Asian culture of the East could it survive. The Ustasha movement, he wrote, was struggling for the Europe of Sophocles, Plato, Dante, Ruder-Bošković, Pascal, and Goethe.<sup>14</sup> Although Makanec's cultural references somewhat resembled a Croatian, radical-right version of T. S. Eliot's definition of Englishness—"Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the Twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar"—there is little doubt that the Ustasha regime took the project of remaking the nation in European terms extremely seriously.<sup>15</sup>

Some scholars of the Ustasha regime have long made a distinction between its ideology and that of other radical-right European regimes. Aleksa Djilas contrasts the permanent dynamism of fascism and Nazism with the Ustasha regime, which was, he argues, "ultimately a static movement since [it] aimed for a stable state of affairs: the creation of a homogeneous nation state." If fascism was largely a reaction to class and social conflicts within advanced European societies, a means of addressing the crises of political institutions and problems of modernity, then the Ustasha regime's ideology was far more rudimentary. It had "no developed program for internal affairs and only a rudimentary idea of what the state should be like" because "the nation and the national state were the supreme goals."<sup>16</sup> But it wasn't as simple as this. First, the Ustasha regime was not ideologically monolithic. On the contrary, it was an uneasy coalition of different interest groups and individuals struggling for power and influence with the movement's leadership and hoping to make their plans and dreams reality. Another layer of complexity was added by the often sharp regional differences in attitudes toward the new regime. This meant that while the central Ustasha authorities attempted to ensure conformity and regularity, regional branches of the movement often ignored the official line, implementing statutes and laws as they saw fit. Moreover, for many of the movement's members, ideologues, and cultural

theorists, the foundation of the state marked the starting point, not the culmination, of their aspirations. As much as the foundation of a nation-state, many within the movement aimed to create a state that would reverse the tide of secular, modernizing principles. From the perspective of young nationalist artists, poets, and novelists struggling to be published in cultural journals; radical students battling against an oppressive Yugoslav state; Catholic intellectuals watching with dismay as their nation collapsed into the mire of secularism and degeneracy; and workers' unions and syndicates battling against the inequity of the "Jewish" capitalist system, the Ustasha regime could look very different. The tenth of April 1941 represented liberation not just from the "prison" of Yugoslavia in which the Croatian nation had been incarcerated, but from its liberal democratic capitalist ideals too. National revolution would be joined by cultural revolution.

Second, under the Ustasha regime there was a symbiotic relationship between cultural politics and racial ideology. The campaign of mass murder against Serbs, Jews, and gypsies in pursuit of a homogeneous nation-state was as much driven by social goals and pressures as by racial or national ideology. The Ustasha regime's program of racial and national purification was, to use Zygmunt Bauman's elegant formulation, genocide with a purpose, "an element of social engineering, meant to bring about a social order conforming to the design of the perfect society."<sup>17</sup> The Ustasha regime viewed the eradication of all "foreign" influences and populations as one path to national regeneration. It believed that the racial and national purification of the Croatian state would act as a collective panacea for the nation's cultural, moral, and social ills, which would disappear as soon as the contaminating effect of centuries of foreign influence was eradicated. Only with the completion of this first, national revolution—the "revolution of blood"—could a "second" social and cultural revolution make sense. As a result, even the regime's most utopian social and cultural experiments were frequently framed in the language of purification and annihilation. Since cultural politics was a legitimating tool of the regime's campaign of mass murder, its evolution both mirrored and, to a great extent, was dependent on the wider direction of the movement's leadership. Following the official abandonment of the regime's "revolution of blood," many of the more radical cultural and social projects were also either modified or completely forgotten and were only revived much later when the original revolutionary project was relaunched in 1944.

### **THE 1930S AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE USTASHA MOVEMENT**

The Ustasha movement, according to its own mythology, was born in the heat of national struggle as a secret army of men dedicated to liberating the oppressed Croatian nation from Yugoslavia, in which it had been enslaved since

1918. The Ustasha Croatian Revolutionary Organization, or Ustasha movement, was formed, probably sometime in 1930, from radical student societies and militant youth activists of the Croatian Party of Right (Hrvatska Stranka Prava—HSP). They had gathered under the leadership of Gustav Perčec, a nationalist journalist, and Ante Pavelić, a lawyer and deputy for the HSP. That said, there are indications that Pavelić had been considering the formation of some kind of nationalist insurgency group as early as 1928.<sup>18</sup> Ironically, in 1925 Pavelić had led negotiations with Nikola Pašić's Radical Party that would have seen the Croatian Party of Right become the Croatian branch of the Radical Party in Zagreb and King Aleksandar accede to King Zvonimir's crown. In return, Croatia would have received full cultural and political autonomy. This initiative, Pavelić contended, was the only way to prevent the betrayal of the Croatian national cause. Yet negotiations broke down, and the assassination of Stjepan Radić, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, and the king's subsequent decision to impose a royal dictatorship rendered reconciliation between nationalist Serbian and Croatian politicians impossible. The assassination and the violent student protests that followed seemed to signal to Croatian separatists that peaceful methods would not achieve their aim of an independent state.

The Ustasha movement's overriding aim was the establishment of a greater Croatian state, including Croatia and Bosnia, purified, by force if necessary, of all racial "aliens," primarily Serbs, present on the territory of the future Greater Croatia in large numbers. Although initially anti-Semitism was not a primary concern of a movement that attracted to its ranks a number of radical-right Croatian-Jewish students and intellectuals, this began to change in the 1930s under the influence of National Socialism. In 1933, the movement set down its ideological program in a document called the "Ustasha Principles." The main features of the seventeen principles were the creation of an independent Greater Croatia; the construction of a society based on the values of the peasant *zadruga* (community), traditional morality, and the patriarchal family unit; and a campaign of "balanced breeding" and eugenics to render the nation racially pure. This set of principles was admittedly basic. However, it was supplemented by theoretical discussions in Ustasha journals that sought to develop many of these rudimentary ideas and by the voluminous contributions of radical-right Croatian intellectuals and writers in mainstream nationalist cultural and intellectual journals, effectively constituting an unofficial and informal intellectual cadre of the movement.<sup>19</sup>

Equally, while the Ustasha movement drew on National Socialism and Italian fascism for much of its ideological inspiration, it was also influenced by a cohort of Croat intellectuals, anthropologists, scientists, and philosophers, many of whose ideas were rooted in an extreme form of Croatian

nationalism. This was especially true of the movement's attitude toward the state's Serb minority, which was profoundly shaped by Croatian intellectuals and scientists writing in the 1900s, including the anthropologist Ivo Pilar and the archaeologist Ćiro Truhelka, director of the Agronomical Museum in Sarajevo. Specifically, the regime appropriated Truhelka's and Pilar's theories regarding the foreign nomadic "Vlachian" origins of the Serb population. The regime's belief in Croatia as a Western stronghold struggling against an "Asiatic" and Balkan East, embodied in Serbia and the Serbs, similarly owed far more to the writing of Croatian scholars such as the anthropologist and HSP intellectual Milan Šufflay and radical-right and separatist intellectuals than it did to Nazi race theorists or fascist philosophers.

The movement also attempted to appropriate a number of Croatian historical and intellectual figures with whom they had a far less easy and unambiguous relationship. For example, it early on claimed the politician Eugen Kvaternik, who had led an insurrection against Austro-Hungarian rule in Rakovica in 1871, as a kindred spirit. Likewise, it embraced the nineteenth-century essayist, politician, and father of the Croatian nation Ante Starčević, the founder of the first nationalist party in Croatia, as a progenitor of the Ustasha ideology. In neither case, however, were such dubious claims to intellectual lineage uncontested.

Shortly after forming the movement, Pavelić, Perčec, and their followers fled the kingdom of Yugoslavia, finding sanctuary in a number of European countries. The leadership established a series of terrorist training camps in Italy and Hungary where recruits drawn not just from Croatia but also from the large community of young émigré workers in Europe were transformed into ruthless terrorists. Pavelić also founded a propaganda center in Berlin run by two of the movement's young intellectuals, Branimir Jelić and Mladen Lorković. The focus of Ustasha activity, however, was the training camps, especially the camp on the Isle of Lipari in Italy, since this was not only where Pavelić settled but also where the movement's council, the Main Ustasha Headquarters (Glavni Ustaški Stan—GUS), was situated. From the GUS, the leadership issued edicts and commands, printed propaganda leaflets and newspapers, and formulated plans. The camps themselves were run on strict military lines, and all recruits were obliged to take an oath of loyalty to both the movement and Pavelić: the penalty for violating it was death. According to one salacious account of the camps published in Yugoslavia by Perčec's ex-fiancée, Jelka Pogorelec, disputes, hunger, womanizing, conflicts, killing, and even suicide among recruits were common.<sup>20</sup> The social structure of the émigré Ustasha movement abroad was similar to that of other fascist movements in Europe. Although students and intellectuals were present, the rank and file of the movement was dominated by workers, peasants, and sailors. The edu-

cational level of rank-and-file Ustashas was basic, and most of the small number of students in the émigré organization had not completed their university education. By contrast, among activists and supporters of the Ustasha movement who remained in Croatia (the so-called home Ustashas), there was a far higher proportion of intellectuals and students: one of its major strongholds was at the University of Zagreb. Generally, home Ustashas, as befitted their “cultured” air, were more politically moderate than their pugnacious émigré comrades, who for their part denigrated home Ustashas as dilettantes and flâneurs and certainly not real Ustasha men: self-serving opportunists rather than elite self-sacrificing warriors.

One of the main differences between home Ustashas and émigré Ustashas was in their method of political struggle. While home Ustashas, led by radical students, engaged in violent protests against both their political opponents and the Yugoslav state, less frequently did their methods become explicitly terroristic. This was in contrast to the émigré Ustashas, who repeatedly carried out bombing campaigns and assassinations in an attempt to destabilize Yugoslavia and tended to have a terroristic mindset. From the early 1930s, a wave of violent attacks convulsed Yugoslavia. Although the majority of terrorist attacks targeted security personnel, prominent regime supporters, or infrastructure, Ustasha operatives did not shrink from bombing public transport, venues, and events, and an ethos of official vigilance and paranoia became a fact of everyday Yugoslavism in the 1930s. Nonetheless, the Ustashas were also prepared to sacrifice their own lives, including committing suicide. In a failed uprising in the Lika in 1932, the Ustasha insurgent Stipe Devčić blew himself up with his hand grenade rather than face the ignominy of capture by Yugoslav gendarmes.

### **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA**

The Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska—NDH) was formally created on 10 April 1941, following the invasion of Yugoslavia by Axis forces in March of that year. The new state comprised Croatia, Bosnia, and parts of Srijem in the Vojvodina region, with the capital in Zagreb. A condominium state, it was divided into two zones of occupation, with one side of the state controlled by the German authorities and the Dalmatian Coast, the “cradle” of Croatian culture, annexed by Italy and placed under the control of Fascist forces. In return, the Duke of Spoleto, the brother of the Italian king, was created King Tomislav II, the head of a putative new Croatian royal dynasty. Despite this unpromising beginning, the Independent State of Croatia did have some popular support. In his memoirs, Maček recalled that “a wave of enthusiasm pervaded Zagreb at this time, not unlike that which had



swept through the town in 1918 when links with Hungary were severed.”<sup>21</sup> In a prize-winning essay of 1942, Aleksandar Žibrat wrote that with the proclamation of an independent Croatia, “fear and worry disappeared. Croatia had become free and happy. Our house, which through many years had been a place of silent family tragedy, experienced on that day, one could say, a heavenly joy.”<sup>22</sup> Although Žibrat was a member of the nationalist student movement and later a high-ranking cultural commissar, independent accounts from foreign diplomats appear to confirm the euphoria the declaration of the new state provoked. On 13 June 1941, looking back on the events leading up to the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia two months earlier, an American diplomat in Zagreb, James John Meilly, portrayed it as a popular national revolution. According to him, shortly after Colonel Slavko Kvaternik’s announcement on Ustasha radio that the Independent State of Croatia had been created, German troops entered Zagreb to be greeted by “thousands of enthusiastic citizens” who “wildly acclaimed” the first units of the German mechanized forces. In the meantime, a small group of local Ustashes, aided by members of the Civil Defense Peasant Party militia and an Ustasha army major, took over public offices, the railway, and the radio station. “The bloodless severance of Croatia from the Yugoslav state was thus consummated,” Meilly recorded.<sup>23</sup> Late editions of the evening newspapers on the evening after independence was declared reinforced the mood of national elation: reports described strangers kissing each other, students marching in triumphant processions, and Croatian soldiers throwing off their Yugoslav army uniforms.<sup>24</sup> However, not all Croatians, even in the early euphoric days, welcomed the new state. For those Croatians who had been supporters of Yugoslavism and even more so the former Yugoslav regime, there was little to cheer about, and many of them must have known the grim fate that awaited them. While some chose to flee into exile, others, such as the writer Ivan Mažuranić and the journalist Ivan Nevišić, committed suicide.

The structure of the state was both centralized in the sense that power was located in the capital Zagreb, concentrated in the hands of a few select members of the movement, and regional in the sense that the state was split up into a series of counties and regions subject to the authority of powerful and influential Ustasha regional governors, commissioners, and leaders. Whereas in theory the Poglavnik, or supreme chieftan—the title Pavelić gave himself after he came to power in 1941—enjoyed ultimate control over all state decisions, in reality regional governors, commissioners, and leaders implemented their own rules and regulations responding to the local situation or their own prejudices. Although the movement aimed to build a new kind of Croatian consciousness that would unite the nation and eradicate the divisions of the

past, in reality, due to the structure of the state and the effective autonomy of local leaders, Croatia under the Ustasha regime was characterized by a high degree of regional variation and difference.

Beyond the Poglavnik, the real seat of power was GUS, composed of seven deputy chiefs of staff, the Corps of Adjutants and Commissioners, and an extensive and active propaganda department. Ustasha authority in the state was divided into three branches. The first branch, civilian, referred to registered members of the Ustasha movement. Adult males were organized in the male Ustashes, females in the female Ustashes, and youths up to the age of eighteen in the Ustasha Youth. There was a separate Ustasha student organization, with its headquarters at the University of Zagreb. A central syndicate, the Main Alliance of Syndicates, led by Aleksandar Seitz, systematized the relationship between workers and the state. The regime established a corporate economic system predicated on the concept of “Croatian socialism,” although its most prominent theorists sometimes disagreed over its nature. The second branch of the state was the military, which comprised the elite Ustasha army; the regular Croatian army, commanded by Slavko Kvaternik; various paramilitary units and death squad militias, such as the Black Legion of Colonel Jure Francetić; and the elite party militia, the Poglavnik Bodyguard (Poglavnikov tjelesne sdrug—PTS). The third branch of the state, the security service, was overseen by the UNS; a parallel agency, the Directorate for Security and Public Order (Ravnateljstvo za sigurnost i javni red—RAVSIGUR), was located inside the Interior Ministry and headed by Eugen Dido Kvaternik. UNS contained three main bureaus in addition to a personnel bureau, all of which were led by militant Ustashes: Bureau 1, the Ustasha police, commanded by Božidar Čerovski, which was tasked with the arrest of political opponents and the suppression of anti-regime dissent; Bureau 3, Luburić’s Ustasha Defense Force, which administered the state’s concentration camps; and Bureau 4, the Ustasha intelligence service, headed by Viktor Tomić, whose network of agents monitored, reported on, and rooted out sedition. In January 1943, this agency was disbanded and its duties transferred to RAVSIGUR, with the exception of Bureau 4, which was incorporated into the PTS. For its part, RAVSIGUR, in addition to these expanded functions, already operated a number of departments dealing with Serb and Jewish issues and communist and anti-state sedition, as well as the secret police.

Equally important was the creation of cultural institutions. In January 1941, the regime established a department for national enlightenment within the Ministry of National Education, headed by Mile Starčević. Initially known as the State Institute for National Enlightenment, before being renamed the Main Directorate for Mass National Enlightenment, its mission was to pro-

mote education, bring culture to the general public, and supervise the creation of a mass national culture. In April 1941 the Ustasha regime also created its first censorship and propaganda directorate. Like many other ministries, Ustasha propaganda agencies and directorates experienced frequent changes of name, ideological direction, and leadership, often reflecting which factions were in ascendancy at the center of the Ustasha power structure. As such they became primary sites for the struggle over cultural politics and ideology in the Ustasha state. Meanwhile, the visual paraphernalia of regime propaganda, such as posters, advertising, and marketing campaigns, was disseminated through the Ustasha regime's own public relations company, located on Ban Jelačić Square.

The organization of the Ustasha state was based on the structure of the Ustasha movement itself, which was both highly centralized and organic. According to the movement's 1929 constitution, there were four basic organizational levels. Below GUS stood the largest organizational unit, the center (*štozer*), which was comprised of a number of camps (*logor*). These, in turn, were made up of concentrations (*tabor*). The base unit was the swarm (*roj*). After the founding of the state, regional branches of the party were organized into centers, camps, concentrations, and swarms. The organizational units of the new state replicated this structure. The state was divided into twenty-two provinces, the equivalent of centers; these were subdivided into 141 districts, which replicated camps; underneath these were 1,037 communes performing the role of concentrations; and at the base level was the swarm, which was represented in villages as well as city neighborhood quarters, streets, and apartment blocks. This parallel structure of party and state had two aims: to create a party system that would incorporate all social classes in its ranks and to ensure that all those within the national community were under surveillance by the state even in their own neighborhoods and homes.<sup>25</sup>

The idea of the Ustasha state as not only a regenerated nation-state but one in which citizens would be under constant observation was woven into the very fabric of the state. Thus in July 1941 the Ministry of the Interior introduced a law stipulating that all landlords, building supervisors, janitors, and fellow tenants had to report new guests within three days or risk appearing before the courts. Similarly, those who moved address were required to report to the authorities within three days or risk appearing before the courts with the ultimate sanction of a death sentence. The idea of the Ustasha state as a surveillance state was also a frequent theme of the writing of party journalists and ideologues. As an editorial in the party journal *Ustaša* reminded its readers, wherever party members or ordinary citizens were, they were under its control. "Nothing escapes the eyes of the Ustashas!" This was backed up

by the imposition of general curfews in many of the larger cities and towns on businesses and nighttime activities, especially as the regime became more suspicious about the threat of resistance activities.<sup>26</sup>

In an initial wave of enthusiasm, the Ustasha movement received an influx of new members, and by the end of 1941, the movement had more than 150,000 new registered members. In August 1941 a right-wing faction of the Croatian Peasant Party, led by Janko Tortić and Lovro Šušić, formally joined the Ustasha government, an event that did not please radical Ustashas, who feared that the entry of non-Ustashas into the movement would weaken its ideological purity and elite spirit. Stjepan Radić's widow, Marija, as well as his son and daughter, also gave their unqualified support to the new state.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the summer of 1941 local branches of the Peasant Party pledged their loyalty to the movement.<sup>28</sup> Significant numbers of workers from regional branches of the Croatian Workers' Union did the same.<sup>29</sup> For their part, the Peasant Defense and Civil Defense militias had already joined the movement en masse in April 1941.

In an attempt to demonstrate its popular legitimacy, the regime reconvened the Croatian parliament, the Sabor, with its mystical connections to the medieval Croatian kingdom. However, it only sat for a few months, and its members, chosen by the regime rather than being elected, were not allowed to make any decisions. Despite its totalitarian nature, the Ustasha regime's rule was chaotic and subject to constant improvisation. Since laws and statutes were imposed arbitrarily without consent of or discussion with rank-and-file activists, these same laws and statutes could be easily adapted to suit a changing situation. Like all totalitarian movements, the Ustasha regime was actually a multiplicity of pressure groups whose influence rose and fell according to the fortunes of the state and the whims of the Poglavnik. The enduring rivalry involved a struggle for dominance by two factions. On one side were the tough émigré Ustashas and their supporters. They tended to be ideologically militant and culturally radical, seeing the Ustasha movement as an elite warrior organization. On the other were Ustasha activists who had largely remained in the homeland throughout the 1930s and, although extreme nationalists, were more intellectual, more willing to open the movement to a wider diversity of views, and more culturally and ideologically "moderate."

Of course, the factionalism in both the regime and the movement was more complicated than this: some of the most hardline Ustasha ideologists advocating the most violent and extreme solutions to the national and political challenges confronting the state had never been émigrés; meanwhile, there were also some relatively moderate elements within the émigré faction. Officials also regularly transferred their loyalties between the two factions. Moreover, in addition to this basic division, there were numerous other rival-

ries: clerical conservatives against secular racists; “socialists” against rightists; supporters of Nazi Germany against sympathizers with Fascist Italy; revolutionary women against “primitive” Ustasha men. There were also numerous regional and intergenerational struggles and divisions. Finally, since the Poglavnik frequently rotated his administration, meaning that ministries magically appeared and then vanished and that ministers and officials could, under pressure, suddenly change faction and outlook overnight, many of the regime’s racial, social, and cultural policies were inherently ambiguous, unstable, and subject to sudden reversals.

### **SERBS, JEWS, AND GYPSIES IN THE USTASHA STATE**

What did national revolution mean? The Ustasha regime interpreted it as a final solution to rid the state of the dangerous alien populations living within its borders, without whose eradication a process of national regeneration could not be put into effect. In the first six months of Ustasha rule, the regime’s racial, cultural, and social aspirations were given their most totalizing and revolutionary expression. Following the creation of the state—in the Ustasha regime’s view, a national revolution—it embarked on a “revolution of the blood” aimed at the violent and forcible eradication of the foreign groups residing in Croatian living space. While the Ustasha movement, in common with much of the Croatian radical right, had long considered the Muslims of Bosnia to be the racially purest of Croats, the native Jewish population and the large Serb population were to be removed from national soil permanently through a combination of deportation, execution, and mass murder. Only then could the state be truly independent.

Beginning in April 1941, the regime introduced a series of laws that were to serve as the legal basis for the persecution, removal, and destruction of the Serb, Jewish, and gypsy communities. They included laws barring Serbs and Jews from public-sector employment and the dismissal of those already employed in it; the confiscation and “nationalization” of Serb and Jewish businesses in the service of the national economy, a process overseen by specially appointed commissars; and the closure of cultural and community organizations. Jews and Serbs living in major cities were evicted from their homes by the Ustasha police and security services and settled in ghettos, where they were subject to strict curfews and restrictions on freedom of movement. They were also banned from leaving the city. In many cities, such as Zagreb, they were required to register with the Ustasha authorities or face arrest and incarceration.<sup>30</sup> There were also limitations on where they could shop and the amenities they could use: some municipal authorities banned Serbs, as well as Jews, from using cinemas, parks, cafés, restaurants, and swimming baths; from attending all public events; and from buying food at market.<sup>31</sup>

Some Ustasha municipalities, meanwhile, not only banned Serbs and Jews from owning radios and Croats from sharing radio news with them but went as far as to ban Serbs from even visiting the homes of Croats.<sup>32</sup>

Beginning in May 1941, the regime introduced a series of Aryan laws setting out “race membership” in the new state. Jews and gypsies were banned from marriage with “Aryan” Croats, and Jews were forced by law to wear a “Ž” (Židov—Jew) insignia on their back and front identifying them as Jews. In some regions, Ustasha authorities introduced similar statutes compelling Serbs to wear a “P” (Pravoslavac—Orthodox), although they were not directly affected by the Aryan race laws. In order to afford the new anti-Semitic laws scientific legitimacy, the newly created Ministry of National Education established the Racial Political Commissariat, composed of scientists and racial experts who were tasked with ensuring that legal statutes were in harmony with the principles of racial politics. The commissariat also arbitrated in all cases where there was disputation about racial membership, something that was of particular importance in deciding the racial eligibility and continued suitability of public servants and state employees in the bureaucracy and military. In spite of such academic bodies, the experience of most Serbs and Jews, even in the first few weeks, was more often one of humiliation and straightforward abuse. In many cities and towns, Ustasha authorities forced local Jews to carry out physically arduous labour such as breaking rocks, watched with bemusement by people they had gone to school with, shared workbenches with, or called neighbors. In some cities, the authorities forced Jews to take part in the destruction of their own synagogues. Simultaneously, regional Ustasha councils closed Serb orthodox churches and cathedrals en masse and transferred their assets to the Catholic Church or the state.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the initially similar treatment of Serbs and Jews, their collective fates increasingly diverged. By the summer of 1942, the vast majority of Jews had been deported to one of the numerous Ustasha concentration camps or to Nazi death camps in Eastern Europe. The only exception was made for a category of Jews classified according to a clause in the legal statute on race membership as “honorary Aryans.” Theoretically, under this clause any Jews who could prove before 10 April 1941 “their service to the Croatian nation, especially to its liberation, as well as their spouses with whom they were joined in matrimony,” could petition the Interior Ministry to be granted “honorary Aryan” status. They would not be made subject to the state’s anti-Semitic laws and would enjoy “all the rights that belong to people of Aryan origins.”<sup>34</sup> While the Interior Ministry received hundreds of thousands of applications, the majority were refused. Successful petitions were generally restricted to relatives of high-ranking officials (some of whom had Jewish wives) and the

movement's small number of prominent Jewish activists and ideologues and their families.

Nevertheless, it was the Serb "problem" that the regime was keenest to solve and that it embarked on with the most brutality. Throughout the spring and summer of 1941, officials gave inflammatory speeches calling for the annihilation of the Serb population. For example, in a speech at an Ustasha rally of 29 May 1941, Viktor Gutić, the leader of the Ustasha movement in Eastern Bosnia, told his followers: "I have published drastic laws for their complete economic destruction, and new ones will follow for their complete extermination. Don't be generous toward any of them. Bear in mind that they were always our gravediggers and destroy them wherever they may be found, and the blessings of the Poglavnik and myself will be upon you. . . . Let the Serbs hope for nothing. For their sakes it would be best if they emigrate. Let them disappear from this region of ours, this homeland of ours."<sup>35</sup> Similar pronouncements were made by government ministers in speeches and rallies throughout the early summer. Milovan Žanić, speaking on 6 June, explained that the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia meant that those who had come as "immigrants" would have to leave. "This is a Croat land and nobody else's, and there are no methods that we would not use to make this land truly Croat and cleanse it of all Serbs," he vowed. Likewise, at a rally on 27 July the new foreign minister, Mladen Lorković, stated that Ustasha Croatia's mission was to "cleanse itself of all those elements that are the misfortune of the nation, that drain healthy forces in our nation. These are our Serbs and Jews."<sup>36</sup> In a speech at Dugo Selo, meanwhile, Professor Aleksandar Seitz, one of the movement's leading social theorists, promised: "Never fear: neither the Serbs nor the Jews will return, and neither will those who served them. The Serbs and the Jews will not exist, and nor will those who served them because our Croatian army and Croatian Ustashes are guaranteeing it."<sup>37</sup>

Although unlike Jews and gypsies the Serbs were never defined in law as racially impure or non-Aryan, the regime's spokesmen and ideologues aggressively promoted the image of the Serbs as dangerous, alien, nomadic immigrants. For example, in a speech at Varaždin, Mile Budak, the novelist and minister for religion and education, compared Croatia to a house that was occupied by a stranger who refused to leave. "In such a situation, you would not call for a nun or priest for help, but chase him out with an ax." He also evoked the racial inferiority of the Serbs. They had come here as "Balkan trash," brought here from the East by the Turks, "who used them as vassals and servants, water carriers and beggars who fell on the deserted hearths of Croats like locusts." Now it was time for them to leave. The Vlach Serbs, he prom-

ised, would if necessary be driven out of Croatia to the other side of the Drina to protect this “purest of Croatia’s regions” and this “purest of Croatian elements.” According to Budak, “they must leave now, whether willingly or not,” or else the Ustashas would “force them out of the state.”<sup>38</sup> In a newspaper interview of September 1941, his colleague Lorković explained that the Serbs in Croatia were mostly “the remnants of Balkan-Romanian and Gypsy half-breeds,” who, while “racially” neither Serbs nor Croats, “represent an unstable element open to foreign influences who, because they belonged to the Serbian Orthodox Church, succumbed to political Serbianization.”<sup>39</sup> To make matters worse, from the perspective of Ustasha officials and theoreticians, their high birthrate threatened the very survival of the Croatian nation: Milovan Žanić declared that they had spread like “hedgehogs” after arriving in Croatia and, as a result, had begun “to threaten us and soon will endanger us.” The Ustasha movement knew that as long as the “problem of the Serbs is not resolved, our state will be unstable.”<sup>40</sup>

Finally, Ustasha officials constantly emphasized the crimes—some of them real but many of them imagined—committed against the Croatian nation in the 1920s and 1930s at the hands of Yugoslav officials and security forces as justification for the regime’s envisioned eradication of the Serbs. In their eyes, they were collectively to be held responsible, and until they disappeared, they would always endanger the Croatian nation. In his speech of 27 July, for example, Lorković made direct reference to the injustice of the Yugoslav state as a legitimating factor: “You know for sure that the Ustasha movement is using a strong arm to solve the Serb problem in Croatia. Those who during the past twenty-two years used fire and word here, those to whom no cruelty was too small, those who have beaten, mutilated, and massacred tens of thousands of Croatian peasants, those who put tens of thousands of Croats in jail, those who shot tens of thousands of Croats and annihilated countless Croatian lives . . . those across the Sava and Drina now shout.”<sup>41</sup>

Whether these speeches were the prelude to a preplanned campaign of mass murder is almost impossible to say, although the postwar testimony of a number of Ustasha officials suggests they were. Vladimir Židovec, the former ambassador to Bulgaria, recalled that at a banquet attended by the leadership on 12 May 1942 Mile Budak stated explicitly that the extermination of the Serbs and the Jews would be the overriding priority of the new regime. Similarly, at his war crimes trial in 1946, Ljubo Miloš, the young commandant of Jasenovac, testified that plans for both the creation of a network of concentration camps and a campaign of extermination against the Serbs had been drawn up by Pavelić and the Ustasha leadership long before 1941. While the movement hoped that its seizure of power would lead to an uprising among



the new state's Serbs, if a rebellion did not break out, then the movement intended to provoke one as a pretext for its campaign of genocide.<sup>42</sup> As early as 14 April 1941, the movement's official daily newspaper warned that the "resurrection" of the Croatian state after eight and a half centuries could only be achieved through "bloodily confronting our eternal enemies, our native Serbs."<sup>43</sup>

Evidence that the campaign of mass murder was premeditated, at least in some regions of the new state, is also supported by a number of speeches made by Viktor Gutić in the early summer of 1941. In a speech to friars at the Franciscan Petrićevac friary on 12 May 1941, Gutić stated that "every Croat who today takes the side of our former enemies is not only not a good Croat but an enemy and saboteur of our planned and well-thought-out blueprint for the purification of Croatia from all unwanted elements," suggesting that the campaign had been planned for some time.<sup>44</sup> Gutić also gave the impression that these plans were quite advanced. In a reply to a question from the newspaper *Hrvatska krajina* (Croatian frontier) regarding what the local Ustasha authorities intended to do with "foreign" populations, Gutić boasted that the initial killings of Serbs were only the first step. The "grandiose work of cleansing Croatian Bosnian *krajina* from undesired elements" would be implemented with the introduction of the harshest and "most energetic" measures possible. "Everything I have done so far is nothing; it is such a trifle that it can only be seen through a microscope, so you can imagine what more awaits the enemies of the Independent State of Croatia in our beautiful Croatian Bosnia. In this respect my hands are untied. I want to serve the will of God and the nation. All undesired elements will soon be destroyed in our *krajina*, so that soon all trace of them will be wiped out, and only a bad memory of them will remain."<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1941, in an echo of the regime's speeches and statements, Ustasha militias and death squads swept through the countryside, burning down whole villages and indiscriminately killing thousands of ordinary Serbs in a variety of sadistic ways. Armed with axes, knives, scythes, and mallets, as well as guns, they slaughtered men, women, and children, who were hacked to death, thrown alive into pits and down ravines, or locked into churches that were then set on fire. In addition, regional branches of the newly established State Directorate for Regeneration (*Državni ravnateljstvo za poncvu*) and Institute for Colonization (*Zavod za kolonizaciju*) initiated the program of appropriating the property and assets of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, while its special militia organized their expulsion and deportation to Serbia. Others—predominantly members of the affluent Serb middle-class intelligentsia—were incarcerated in brutal makeshift concentration camps in

which torture and murder were common and that few survived. Orthodox priests were a particular target for the wrath of Ustasha militias and regional Ustasha officials.<sup>46</sup>

To facilitate the liquidation of opponents and alien nations, the regime brought into being a series of emergency and mobile Ustasha courts throughout the state, the most notorious of which, in Zagreb, was presided over by the fanatical Ustasha judge Dr. Ivo Vignjević. Under his administration, the courts implemented arbitrary justice against Serbs and other “enemies” of the state. This invariably meant a show trial followed by summary execution. Although the Ustasha regime had established a number of temporary concentration camps in the spring of 1941, in the autumn it laid the groundwork for the construction of a network of permanent concentration camps. The largest and most notorious of these, constructed between August 1941 and February 1942, was the Jasenovac-Stara Gradiška camp complex on the banks of the rivers Una and Sava. The regime also established camps in other parts of the state, earning it the dubious distinction of being the only satellite state in Europe to have erected concentration camps specifically for the incarceration and extermination of children.<sup>47</sup> Although estimates of the number of Serbs murdered by the regime vary, even the most conservative figures suggest that out of a pre-war population of 1.9 million, at least 200,000 and possibly as many as 500,000 died at the hands of Ustasha death squads, were executed, or perished in the state’s concentration camps.<sup>48</sup>

### **FROM THE “REVOLUTION OF BLOOD” TO THE “REVOLUTION OF THE SOUL”**

National revolution and regeneration quickly turned into national catastrophe and imminent state oblivion. As a result of the campaign of mass murder and deportation, by the middle of the summer of 1941 many parts of the countryside, in particular those regions with a large Serb population, were in a permanent condition of armed insurrection. So serious did the situation become that the German and Italian occupation forces feared it might lead to the state’s early collapse. The regime faced pressure both from “above,” in the form of the occupation powers, and from “below,” from activists and supporters concerned about the anarchic violence and the future viability of the state to change course. According to German Wehrmacht officials meeting with Ustasha counterparts in Sarajevo on 20 June 1941, the actions of Ustashes there had “grown into brutality of the worst kind, creating a horrible impression on the inhabitants and horrifying many conscious Croats.” Ustasha colonel Petar Blašković, who attended the meeting, argued that the movement’s authorities in Bosnia and Hercegovina, in particular, had to be given “strict instructions” regarding a more tactical approach toward the Serbs since their brutality and indiscriminate killing had fomented rebellion among Serbs and

outraged local Croats. “They work too openly,” he complained, “and attract resentment from the population and vigilance from foreigners, who speak unfavorably about the organization and think it is not equal to the situation.”<sup>49</sup> Some Ustasha officials had already conceded that the methods being used were counterproductive. In a circular of 18 June 1941, Marko Roša, commander of the Ustasha units in Knin, Drniš, and Promina, instructed his troops to “refrain from any acts of violence” in the presence of Italian troops, with all arrests of Serbs to be carried out “without undue struggle and commotion, as quietly and calmly as possible.” There were to be no mass arrests, only individual ones, “so that it is not obvious”; they could not be beaten “in public places,” and the “pillaging” of Serb property had to be prevented.<sup>50</sup> In a speech to regional heads and Ustasha officials on 30 June 1941, the Poglavnik gave the first indication that the leadership shared some of the same concerns, declaring that arbitrary decisions were being taken against the Serbs without permission being sought from relevant ministries or agencies, creating unrest and chaos. While their aims were in line with state thinking, he explained, their methods were wrong: there had to be a “system.”<sup>51</sup>

Pressure for a rethinking of the methodologies used to solve the Serb “problem” was largely tactical and driven by pressure from above. There was no suggestion that the campaign of killing should stop—simply that it should be carried out in a more orderly and discreet way. Nevertheless, this reflected divisions within the movement itself. The debate about the efficacy of the regime’s campaign of mass murder and expulsion coincided with a campaign to purge the movement’s ranks of unwanted elements, which were blamed for all the crimes of the militias and death squads. On one level, this campaign, played out in public in the movement’s journals and newspapers, was intrinsically propagandistic, providing scapegoats for the violence, chaos, and criminality of the new state to an increasingly hostile public and simultaneously rescuing the honor of the movement and its leadership. However, it also provided the regime with an opportunity to ideologically cleanse its ranks of those deemed disloyal or seen as representing a threat. At the same time, the campaign of purging, expulsion, and punishment accurately reflected not only the movement’s internal power struggles and divisions but the state’s first crisis. In August 1941, the movement established a disciplinary court to punish members of the movement guilty of abuses of power with penalties including death.<sup>52</sup> The Ustasha disciplinary court ensured that “all those who don’t think in an Ustasha way” would “feel the weight of Ustasha gravity and justice.” Newspapers duly printed lists of Ustasha soldiers and militia members who had been tried in Ustasha disciplinary courts for a variety of crimes, ranging from corruption and sexual vice to the murder of civilians, to suggest that the regime took crimes within its ranks seriously.<sup>53</sup>

Ustasha journalists and ideologues argued that the depredations associated with the regime in the spring and summer of 1941 had been carried out by renegade Ustashes: above all those who had joined the movement after 1941 and had not made the sacrifices the original cohort of revolutionary Ustasha warriors had in the 1930s: “idlers, Johnny-come-latelies, Slavoserbs, and ne’er-do-wells” who had nothing in common with the majority of the movement’s members.<sup>54</sup> As early as July 1941, a symbol for this renegade Ustasha was found in Josip Smolčić, a low-ranking Ustasha lieutenant accused of raping a girl and bringing his uniform into disrepute. He was executed by firing squad. Simultaneously, all Ustasha regional leaders were dismissed, and under the slogan “Out with them!” the movement launched what it portrayed as a war of real Ustashes against renegades, or as Mijo Bzik put it, the small number of “criminals, drones, thieves, and idlers.” In an editorial of August 1941 in *Ustaša*, the student Milivoj Karamarko vowed that the movement would destroy all those who besmirched its good name. “The case of Smolčić should be an example for enemies and Ustashes,” he wrote. “There are others who will share Smolčić’s fate, there are other Smolčićes. Renegade Ustashes will no longer be able to conceal themselves or pretend. The sentence will be painful and merciless. Death!”<sup>55</sup>

When new Ustasha regional leaders were appointed in November 1941, the movement’s ideologues portrayed this shift as the ending of one kind of revolution and the beginning of another. The idea of a new soft line toward the Serbs, in particular, and a second revolution became an important theme in their propaganda. In this “post-revolutionary period” the Ustasha movement would transform the revolution of blood into the revolution of the soul, the revolution of man. As far as *Ustaša* was concerned, revolutions destroyed and created, but since they were founded on “militant struggle,” they could not build. In this second revolution, the ideology of the Ustasha movement would become the ideology of the entire nation. In flyers, public pronouncements, and leaflets, regional branches of the movement called on ordinary members of the public to join in the second stage of the revolution, aimed at the “internal strengthening and organization of our young state.” Since the Ustasha movement was not just a political party but a “national faith, the living philosophy of the Croatian people,” all patriotic Croats had to be in the Ustasha movement. Only in this way could the movement build on and secure what had been achieved through “the sweat of muscles and the shed blood” of the movement’s “best sons.”<sup>56</sup>

If the immediate past had been defined by the sacrifice of blood, the national revolution had also opened the way to new visions of the future and a new way of living informed by the “revolutionary dynamism” of the Ustasha revolution.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to the violence of the “revolution of blood,” the “sec-

ond” revolution aspired to promote civilized values, remaking the nation in a more “cultured” form. It necessarily denoted a dilution of the radical Ustasha ideology. The ethos of the second revolution applied to racial politics, as well as cultural and social programs. By the autumn of 1941 a position in the Ustasha leadership was evolving that the campaign to eradicate the Serbs through mass murder, deportation, and execution was not likely to succeed. This did not mean that a cessation of the campaign of mass murder was imminent. What it did indicate, though, was that other approaches to the Serb “problem” were emerging. If mass murder could not eradicate the Serb presence, the regime hoped that a campaign of forced assimilation might. Specifically, the regime intended to accelerate and systematize a program of mass conversion to Catholicism, something that the regime had been thinking about and preparing for since the spring of that year but had not implemented widely. A program to convert the Serb peasant masses to Catholicism would, the regime believed, be attractive to Serbs when it became clear that converting to Catholicism would save them from further persecution, stopping their armed insurgency in its tracks. It would also transform the state’s Serbs overnight into Croats and solve the “problem” of a “foreign” population in the heart of Croatian living space. The evolution of a new policy was signalled by a change in the way the Ustasha press redefined the Serbs. No longer characterized as racially alien immigrants, the Serbs were instead largely portrayed as apostate Catholics, long-lost Croatian brothers, forced to convert to Orthodoxy under pressure from the Serb Orthodox Church centuries previously.

In the meanwhile, officials from the Ministry of Justice and Religion—for the most part Catholic priests—developed a conversion program and a set of regulations and procedures. Overall responsibility for the program was given to a young Franciscan priest in the religious section of the State Directorate for Regeneration, Dionizije Juričev, while a Ministry of Justice and Religion official, Radoslav Glavas, another young Franciscan and committed Ustasha activist, took responsibility for its procedures and regulations. Glavas’s regulations betrayed the conversion program’s ultimate aim: the eradication of the Serb identity in Croatia. They stipulated that no educated or middle-class Serbs or Orthodox clergy could be accepted into the Catholic faith. They were to be killed, deported, or otherwise removed. Regime officials and ideologists hoped that without an intelligentsia, ordinary Serb peasants would quickly abandon their Serb identity and “become” Croats. Throughout the late summer and autumn of 1941, zealous young Catholic “missionaries” were sent into the countryside to conduct mass conversion ceremonies. While many ordinary Serbs were anxious to convert to Catholicism and secure their lives and property, the intimidating presence of regional Ustasha officials and local Ustasha militias made it clear that there was little choice in the matter. For

their part, many regional Ustasha officials resented and actively ignored the conversion program, continuing to order the persecution of Serbs, even after they had converted. When it became apparent to ordinary Serbs that conversion to Catholicism would not save their lives, the campaign rapidly sank into irrelevance. By the beginning of 1942 only about two hundred thousand Serbs had been converted, and conversion ceremonies became ever less numerous and well attended; forced conversion was effectively abandoned as a policy shortly afterward. The intimidating and violent conduct of some missionaries, especially younger radical priests from Hercegovina, combined with the arbitrary nature of the conversions, which often involved no religious catechism and were completed in a matter of minutes, did little to lend the procedure any kind of legitimacy.<sup>58</sup>

After this failure it became clear that only some kind of official rapprochement with the Serb population, at least in the short term, was likely to be viable. The final approach to the Serb "problem" emerged in February 1942. In that month, at the opening of the Sabor, Minister of the Interior Andrija Artuković announced the creation of a Croatian Orthodox Church. Henceforth the state's Serbs were to be considered Croatians of the Orthodox faith. A Croatian Orthodox Church was established, a Russian prelate named Germogen was appointed patriarch, and churches shut in 1941 now reopened. The regime also made limited moves to readmit the Serbs to public life, although the extent of this varied from region to region: a small number of Serbs were appointed to positions in the central and regional bureaucracy, special Orthodox battalions were created in the home guard, and Orthodox cultural organizations were created.<sup>59</sup> The University of Zagreb founded an Orthodox section in the Faculty of Religion for the training of the next generation of Orthodox priests, and Serb children were allowed to return to school. Some Serbs even asked for permission to join the Ustasha movement and applied for their children to join its youth section. It was at this point, too, that the Ustasha leadership brought a significant number of officials from the movement's moderate wing into the central bureaucracy, ministries, and agencies. Key members of the moderate faction in the regime's inner circle included Foreign Minister Mladen Lorković and Minister for Traffic and Public Works Ante Vokić. They were joined in the wider bureaucracy by younger party technocrats such as the economist Vladimir Košak, appointed minister of finance, and the journalist Matija Kovačić, a public relations adviser in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Simultaneously, a new cadre of able bureaucrats such as Vjekoslav Vrančić were brought into the regime from outside the movement.<sup>60</sup> By contrast, many members of the radical émigré faction, while still exerting influence, were either moved to military positions where their ideological fanaticism was useful or effectively marginalized. Initially,

the views of radical Ustasha ideologues and intellectuals were dominant: they had argued that the Ustasha movement represented a warrior elite whose élan would be diluted if large numbers of ordinary and possibly not ideologically conscious individuals were allowed to join. But from the autumn of 1941 onward, many local branches of the movement as well as GUS made a conscious effort to broaden both the appeal and the membership of the movement. The movement launched a campaign in the media and on public placards emphasizing that even those who were not and could not become sworn members of the movement could be supporters of the broader movement if they shared its aspirations and aims. The campaign to refashion the movement as a national organization encompassing the entire population was given formal definition with the Ustasha regulations of August 1942. In its statute, the movement defined itself as a national, social, and working movement that gathered “in its ranks the whole nation” without “regard to class or profession,” advancing the prosperity “of all classes of the Croatian national community” and teaching all classes that the prosperity of the community “always comes before the prosperity of the individual.” Along with formal members it also established a secondary category of “supporter,” defined as someone who supported the movement and its aims and wanted to visibly demonstrate their support but could not carry out “the onerous duties” of a full member. Like members of the movement, supporters applied through their local camp or swarm and were tasked with “practically and morally assisting the Ustasha organization in their region and the Ustasha movement more widely.” They also signed an oath giving their “solemn word” that they would live their life according to Ustasha principles. In return, they enjoyed the right to wear party insignia and uniforms; attend its celebrations, shows, performances, and ceremonies; and use its libraries and bookshops.<sup>61</sup>

Cultural politics was also adjusted to the new line. As well as broadening the appeal of the movement, the second revolution took the form of a series of initiatives to make the nation more “cultured”: citizens were given lessons in how to use their radios in a more “cultured” way; cinema and theater goers were advised on how to watch films and plays in a more “refined” manner; footballers and athletes were lectured about behaving in a gentlemanly way on the soccer pitch and athletic track. As well as making ordinary Croatians more “cultured,” the new line in cultural politics aimed to bring culture to the people: the general public was called on to take an active part in the construction of a cultured state through participating in people’s theaters, attending libraries, and improving literacy. Ustasha activists, militia men, and soldiers were also targeted for these improvement programs, and the regime and its cultural ideologues devised campaigns to encourage ordinary Ustasas to drink less; be sexually virtuous; express themselves in poetry, mu-

sic, and literature; visit church more often; and abstain from swearing. At the same time, regime officials also wanted to make cultural life accessible to a wider range of artists, writers, and cultural figures, bringing to the state's cultural organizations, institutions, and journals a more diverse spectrum of cultural perspectives, including those of some liberal and leftist intellectuals. As with the state's racial politics, the introduction of the new line in culture was facilitated by the leadership's decision to bring young intellectuals from the movement's moderate faction into the mainstream of official life in large numbers at the end of 1941. The promotion of party intellectuals such as Tias Mortigjija and the group of writers, theorists, and journalists around the newspaper *Spremnost*; the appointment of cultural moderates like Mile Starčević to influential positions in key cultural institutions at the expense of cultural hardliners; the emergence of the *Plug* movement of students, young poets, and writers from within the Ustasha Student movement: all these developments caused deep resentments.

But changes in the cultural or racial sphere should not be exaggerated. Some scholars have tended to overstate or interpret benignly cultural politics in the Independent State of Croatia. For example, in his article about cultural politics in the Independent State of Croatia, Dubravko Jelčić admonished Yugoslav-era historians for interpreting Croatian national and state life in the Independent State of Croatia through a biased Yugoslav prism that conflated the Independent State of Croatia with the Ustasha regime. Arguing for the autonomy of the Croatian state from the Ustasha regime, he wrote that the European "idealistic and creative" values of Croatia were embodied in the state and its cultural politics. This fact demonstrated not only that Croatian culture in the 1940s was an "authentic expression" of the national consciousness but that the Ustasha regime, while repressive in its national politics, was "visibly tolerant" in the cultural sphere, encouraging a "free spirit" in art and literature. Specifically, he argued that the regime's cultural politics, characterized by a "high degree of freedom," aimed to "rectify or at least ameliorate their mistakes in the political field." Similarly, Ana Antić has recently argued that Ustasha discourse changed after 1942, transforming itself from its "initial conservatism, traditionalism (in both sociopolitical and cultural matters), pseudo-feudal worldview of peasant worship and anti-urbanism, anti-Semitism and rigid racialism in relation to nation and state into an ideology of increasingly inclusive, culture-based and non-ethnic nationalism and with an exceptionally strong leftist rhetoric of social welfare, class struggle and the rights of the working class." After 1942, she concluded, the regime exhibited increasing "humanism," as well as "openness, liberalization, and inclusiveness."<sup>62</sup>

However, as this book illustrates, many of these supposedly progressive



social and cultural policies were arguably not a reflection of the increasing liberalization of the state or regime. Rather, they were both a kind of compensation directed at the tough working-class faction of hardliners whose influence had been sidelined after September 1942 and a form of social control that would mobilize ordinary citizens behind an increasingly unpopular state, ensuring their compliance if not their support. Also, since there was no simple separation between cultural politics and the regime's wider ideology, after the introduction of a "soft" line in 1942, popular culture and literature represented mediums through which the Ustasha movement's original annihilatory visions could continue to be explored, discussed, and debated. Ideas about the envisioned utopian Ustasha state were refracted by writers, poets, soldiers, students, and playwrights through cultural journals, poetry anthologies, and agitprop theater productions at the same time as they were ostensibly removed from the ideological sphere. Cultural politics, intended as a compensation for the retreat from radicalism, ultimately became a metaphor for it too, exposing the profound divisions that existed at all levels of the regime and more widely in the movement itself. Of course, the state's cultural politics was not only utilitarian: it also reflected the regime's genuine commitment to refashioning society and remaking citizens in the image of the Ustasha weltanschauung.

That a change in cultural politics did not necessarily reflect a transformation in state ideology is demonstrated by the fact that long after the launch of the second revolution, the state remained committed to its original campaign of national and racial purification. It was in July 1942, in fact, that one of the bloodiest actions against the Serb population occurred when, with German troops, Ustasha forces launched an assault on the Serb population on Mount Kozara. As a result, thousands of Serb men were executed or deported as forced labor to Germany, while tens of thousands of women and children were incarcerated in appalling conditions in concentration camps where many of them starved to death, were murdered, or died of disease. It was also in summer 1942 that gypsies were deported en masse to the Jasenovac camp. Their collective fate was directly affected by the aborted campaign of genocide against the Serbs, since after the mass armed uprisings by Serbs in the summer of 1941, a plan for resettlement was transformed into one of deportation and genocide.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, the persecution of Jews continued relentlessly. Few of them benefitted from "honorary Aryanism," and even some of those who did were later murdered. On 24 February 1942, in the same speech to the Sabor in which he announced the founding of the Croatian Orthodox Church, Andrija Artuković heralded the imminent destruction of the state's Jews, promising that the Ustasha regime would deal with the final solution of the Jewish question even more radically than the Nazis had, taking "healthy

and decisive action” to destroy the “insatiable and poisonous parasites” and writing “the newest and most glorious pages” of Croatia’s history. This speech signaled the beginning of the systematic campaign for the Jews’ mass deportation to Ustasha concentration camps and Nazi death camps in the East that summer.<sup>64</sup> Nor should it be assumed that the changes were necessarily sincere: for example, on 4 September 1941, only days before the new regime announced a general amnesty for Serbs, the Poglavnik had stated in a speech in front of influential Ustasha commissioners and officials, including Nikola Mandić and Jure Francetić, that “all the Serbs should be exterminated!”<sup>65</sup>

Totalitarianism and violence remained woven into the very structure of the state. The campaign of mass murder against ordinary Serbs continued at least until the autumn of 1942. In September 1942, Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, the German general in Zagreb, reported Eugen Dido Kvaternik saying in conversation that “in a certain period of time he would kill the remaining one and a half million Serbs, including women and children.” In conversation with Glaise von Horstenau a few weeks later, the Poglavnik denied he had any intention of annihilating the Serbs—something the German general strongly doubted. At the time he made this statement, the Poglavnik was preparing the dismissal of both Eugen Dido Kvaternik and his equally hardline father, Colonel Slavko Kvaternik. While after their removal the leadership increasingly blamed the state’s atrocities on them, as well as on other hardline officials replaced or sidelined at the same time, it also reflected the fact that even in September 1942 there were still influential voices within the regime committed to the implementation of the final solution. This second opportunistic purging of Ustasha ranks by the Poglavnik in September 1942 suggests that the new line and the accompanying personnel purge in favor of a more moderate cadre of bureaucrats reflected less a decision to abort the campaign of mass murder and more a short-term tactical maneuver—under pressure from the occupation forces—to postpone the revolution of blood.<sup>66</sup>

In any case, many Ustasha agencies, authorities, and activists remained bitterly opposed to the new line toward the Serbs and simply ignored its strictures. This hostility was also reflected in the new soft line on culture, which, even at its height, could never entirely conceal the incipient radical resentment of many Ustasha cultural commissars and ideologues bubbling just beneath the surface. Ultimately, the “second” revolution in both cultural and racial politics was considered contingent, viewed as temporary and unwanted, forced on the state by the course of events and intraparty divisions. The regime leadership intended that once Germany and its allies had been victorious and the state stabilized, it would return to its radical racial and cultural agenda.

The crisis between late summer 1941 and the winter of 1942 and the sub-

sequent relaunch of the Ustasha project should be put into context. Although the struggle between extremists and moderates in this period was probably a defining one, the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustasha regime were, in fact, characterized by a series of crises and relaunches. One example of this was the collapse of Italian rule in Dalmatia in September 1943, the reintegration of the region into the Croatian state, and the beginning of a second ostensible campaign to purge Ustasha ranks of hardliners. The movement's moderate faction also needs to be qualified. With few exceptions, it was in no sense liberal and was "moderate" only in comparison to the extremism of the tough radical émigré Ustashes and their supporters. Many of its representatives, both in the higher echelons and at lower bureaucratic levels, shared many of the cultural and racial goals of hardliners, although they frequently disagreed about how these could most effectively be achieved. In fact, some of those capable technocrats brought in from outside the movement and unburdened by ideology proved themselves to be the most ruthlessly efficient in the implementation of the regime's final solution and the most loyal new regime cadre, since promotion depended on obedience and efficiency, not questioning and theorizing. One of the many reasons why Vjekoslav Vrančić rose so rapidly through party and bureaucracy ranks, eventually becoming a key member of the Poglavnik's inner circle, was his diligence and pragmatic single-mindedness, as undersecretary of the interior, in ensuring that measures against Jews and Serbs were thoroughly implemented. Likewise, as finance minister, Vladimir Košak, a close colleague of Lorković and a member of the moderate faction, utilized his economic knowledge and skills to oversee the confiscation and nationalization of Jewish and Serb property. For his part, Ante Vokić, with his friend Jure Francetić, was a founding member of the Black Legion. Ultimately, regime conflicts were always as much about power struggles and personality clashes as ideology. Furthermore, not all ideological and cultural aspects of the Ustasha program evolved, and some did not essentially change at all.

Even this limited revision of ideology was deemed a step too far by militant factions. Tensions reached an apex in the autumn of 1944. The previous September, following the reoccupation of Dalmatia by Ustasha forces and the abolition of the Croatian "monarchy," the state had been renamed the Independent Republic of Croatia, an allusion to the revolutionary workers' and peasants' republic that Ustasha ideologues always claimed they wanted to establish. This fired the ideologically utopian fervor of activists, especially student leaders, who called for a return to the movement's socially radical roots. But it also had the effect of mobilizing the militant faction of the regime. If the events of September 1943 proved to be the high watermark of regime moderates, then September 1944 proved to be their nadir. By the middle

of the next year, Ustasha radicals and their ideas were back in fashion. In September 1944, with the state facing imminent collapse, the leaders of the moderate faction, including Lorković and Vokić, were arrested on charges of sedition, as were many of their key supporters among students, the bureaucracy, and the intelligentsia. The radical émigré faction returned to favor and ascendancy in both the ministries and the leadership's inner circle and, after a brief interlude of two years, their ideology too. Anxious to relaunch their original revolutionary program in cultural and racial politics, they set to work reviving the defining revolution of blood, especially against the Serb population. Resentful and vengeful, hardliners also instigated a campaign to purge the movement of traitorous elements, principally leading advocates of the "soft" line on race and culture who had held sway since the middle of 1942. By the time the state collapsed, the regime was once more permeated by the "hard" values of apocalyptic fervor, fanaticism, and mass murder. Radicalism also returned to cultural politics. Many cultural projects abandoned by the regime at the end of 1941 were revived. There was a renewed campaign for language cleansing; the idea of female militancy and activism within the movement that had briefly flourished in spring 1941 was relaunched; numerous experimental sociocultural ideas were likewise revived. Cultural politics was joined to racial politics, once again in revolution.