

Genocide in Satellite Croatia Chapter IV. The Massacres Begin



Graves of the murdered Orthodox Serbs

Continued from [Chapter III. The Fall of Yugoslavia and the Creation of the Satellite State of Croatia.](#)

One NIGHT, at the end of April, a few hundred Ustashi encircled the Serbian villages of Gudovac, Tuko, Bresovac and Bolac, in the district of Bjelovar. The Serbian Orthodox priest, Bozin, the school teacher, Stevan Ivankovic, and 250 peasants, both men and women, were forced by them to dig a long trench in a field, and then, with their hands tied behind their backs, they were buried alive in this tomb. This sadistic cruelty even made the Germans indignant. They disinterred the bodies and these documents were filed in their archives under the heading: "Ustachen Werk bei Bjelovar" (What the Ustashi did at Bjelovar) .

At Sisak, the chief of police, Roko Faget, with his henchmen, flayed alive a Serbian industrialist, Milos Teslic, well known for his philanthropic work.

In the village of Otecac, 331 Serbs were massacred by the orders of Ivan Sajfer, an Ustashi officer, and the Serbian Orthodox priest, Branko Dobrosavljevic, was forced to pray before the tortured and dying, while his young son lay literally cut to pieces before his eyes. Then the executioners attacked the father, pulling out his hair and beard, putting his eyes out and torturing him at length, before he drew his last breath. At Svinjica, in the province of Banija, the same thing happened. An Orthodox priest, Dane Babic, was buried half alive, with his tormentors dancing around him, cannibal fashion, each in turn cutting off a strip of flesh as he passed.

Approximately, 60 Orthodox Serbs from Drvar and Bosanski Petrovac were imprisoned and then led to the forest of Risovac. They were killed with knives and thrown into deep crevices. Many were tortured and the Ustashi put salt on their open wounds. The first to be martyred was the Serbian Orthodox priest, Milan Banjac, and then Bogdan Bobo-Kreco. The latter was ordered by the Ustashi to cry: Long live Pavelic! but he insisted on crying: "Long live King Peter! Long live Serbia!", and then he was savagely slashed to pieces.¹

¹ The information in the next several paragraphs was published by Mile Vujinovic, in a series of articles in *The American Srbobran*, August 1951.

On April 30, 1941, the Ustashi captured Lipovo Polje near Kosinj. They took away two young girls, Milica Pocuca and Marija Stakic and cut their throats.

Right in Kosinj, the Ustashi assembled about 600 Serbs— men, women and children—and turned the place into a slaughter house. A mother was forced to hold the basin to catch the blood of her four sons.

Ljubica Radinovic was hung at the window of her house and in another window her husband, Mile, and their son.

This slaughter was organized by Joso Fadljevic and his accomplices, Ivan Plesa from Gornji Kosinj, Joso Plesa and Ante Bencic, also from Gornji Kosinj.

At Bosanski-Novci, other terrible massacres took place. Among the noted martyrs were Djordje Todic and Jovo Milanovic. Both had their noses and ears cut off, and their eyes put out. The villages of this district; Jablanica, Blagaj, Hrtic, Javoranj, Vanic, Djare, Bobera, Vrpolje, and others besides, were decimated.

If these first exploits did not affect the high esteem which His Grace Stepinac had for them, they at least made such an impression on the former president of the Yugoslav Senate, Dr. Zelimir Mazuranic, that he committed suicide in Zagreb, hoping that such a sign of protest would, in some way, efface the shame that such crimes reflected on the Croat nation.

THE CROATIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE MASSACRES

The first Ustashi government was constituted April 16, 1941, and was composed of the following:

President of the government and Minister of Foreign Affairs: Ante Pavelic
Vice-president: Osman Kulenovic from Bihac
Army: Slavko Kvaternik from Zagreb
Justice: Mirko Puk from Glina
Interior: Andrija Artukovic from Ljubuski
Public Health: Ivan Petric from Solta
National Economy: Lovro Susic from Mrkopolje
Cults and Public Education: Mile Budak from Sveti Rok
Forests and Mines: Ivica Frkovic from Licki Novi
Propaganda: Jozo Dumandzic from Ljubuski
President of the Legislative Council: Milovan Zanac from Senj.

On April 15th, the Independent State of Croatia was recognized by Germany and Italy, on the 16th by Hungary and Slovakia; on the 22nd by Bulgaria; on May 7th by Romania; and on June 7th by Japan. The Pavelic government immediately declared war against Great Britain, the USSR, Free France, and later the USA.

A dictatorship similar to the fascist model was established, which ordered the dissolution of all political parties. Liberals, socialists and communists were imprisoned or sent to concentration camps. The trade unions were also dissolved and liberty of speech and the press forbidden. Only the Ustashi and Catholic press remained, while Catholicism became the official religion of

the state.

The Ustashi, on coming into power, as has been observed, had, by a few inhuman acts, given some idea of the bloody regime which was in store for the country during the next four years. Eugen Kvaternik-Dido, son of Marshal Slavko Kvaternik, and one of the organizers of Alexander's assassination at Marseilles, was named Chief of Police at Zagreb. Soon he was to surpass in brutality the celebrated Yagoda, who had left such a sinister memory and who had directed the G.P.U. in the USSR during Stalin's reign of terror. Moreover, the horror of Eugen Dido Kvaternik's crimes was more than his mother could bear and preferring to end her life committed suicide.

The Minister of the Interior, Andrija Artukovic, another notable terrorist, known as the Croatian Himmler and now living in the United States, ordered the Serbs and Jews of Zagreb to leave their homes within forty-eight hours. Once outside the town they were "liquidated" on the spot, or sent to concentration camps. The establishment of these camps had been one of the first secret measures of the new regime. It was only much later that their existence became officially recognized. Naturally, these arrests and assassinations were accompanied by spoliations and pillages, as house to house visits were made throughout the country. The Ustashi and SS agents, under the pretext of hunting down Freemasons, communists and Serbs, went into the homes of wealthy and well-to-do Jews and carried away all objects of value.

On April 19th the first decrees of racist inspiration, copied after the Hitlerian originals, and which quickly multiplied, were promulgated. One of these decrees concerned the nomination of commissaries in private enterprises owned by Serbs and Jews. Needless to say, these commissaries, once appointed, had the right to dispose of the goods entrusted to them as they saw fit.

On April 20th, there was the "Decree forbidding alienation of any means of motorized transportation," which marked the beginning of the confiscation of all vehicles belonging to Serbs and Jews.

On April 25th, the decree-law, No. XXV-33Z, proscribed the use of Cyrillic (Serbian) letters in public and private life. There was even a ridiculous and macabre detail concerning the funeral notices in Serbian letters which had to disappear within a period of three days.²

² *Narodne Novine* (Official Gazette), Zagreb, April 25, 1941.

New measures were taken with accelerated speed by this superlatively pure Ustashi government to avoid further pollution of the race. The Serbs were forced to wear a blue armband with the letter P, the initial for Orthodox (Pravoslavac). The Jews had to wear the Star of David on their sleeves, and later, across their backs. Neither one nor the other, including the Gypsies, were allowed to circulate on the sidewalks. In the local administration offices, in public places, stores, restaurants, buses and street cars there were posters put everywhere with the inscription: "No Serbs, Jews, Nomads and dogs allowed."

Furthermore, a decree was issued on April 30, 1941 (No. XLV67-Z-p. 1941) concerning "The protection of Aryan blood and the honor of the Croatian people." Another one on the same day (No. XLV-68-Z.p.1941) on "Belonging to the same race," worded in the purest Nazi style and leaving not the slightest doubt to the public as to the rights of the "elite" and the duties of the "inferior races," nor on the genealogical precision that must be shown before being classified in the right category. Mixed marriages were forbidden, as well as the employment of Aryan servants in non-Aryan homes (No. 103-Z-p.1941). These were only repetitions of the vexatious treatment of the "inferior" based on the social-philosophical theories of Rosenberg, the well-known "thinker" of the Hitlerian regime in Germany.

A little later, on June 4th, 1941, a new decree (No. 342-Z-p. 1941) forced all the functionaries of the state, employers of private enterprises and members of liberal professions to make a declaration concerning their racial origin and that of their mates.³

³ Texts of these laws may be found in *Narodne Novine* (Zagreb), April 30, May 6, and June 5, 1941.

Professor Stavrianos has written:

The worst situation prevailed in Croatia, where the slogan of the Pavelich regime was "Za dom spremni" or "Ready for the Fatherland." By this was meant that there was no room for Serbians in the new Croatian state. The Ustashi accordingly set out to exterminate one portion of the Serbian population and to force the remainder to become Croats. There followed a series of St. Bartholomew's nights against Orthodox Serbians and also against the Jews. Some members of the Croatian Catholic hierarchy endorsed the butchery and participated in the forcible conversion of Serbians to Catholicism. The Muslims joined in the massacres, so that Yugoslavia was rent by a virtual religious war with Catholics and Muslims allied against the Orthodox and the Jews. In 1942 Pavelich boasted that "Great deeds were done by Germans and Croats together. We can proudly say that we succeeded in breaking the Serb nation, which, after the English, is the most thick-headed, the most stubborn and the most stupid." The Serbians, needless to say, retaliated wherever they could, and they exacted bloody vengeance, especially in Bosnia Herzegovina and the neighboring Sanjak. (Op. cit., p. 772.)

Naturally, there were many enlightened and liberal citizens who knew very well who Pavelic and his followers were, but there were not many who raised their voices against the criminal deeds of Pavelic and his gang. Unfortunately, *important segments of the Croatian Peasant party and the Catholic Church were in full collaboration with the Ustashi.* (Emphasis from the Webmaster.)

The Croatian masses let themselves be drawn into the collective movement that had been so carefully organized, being urged to acclaim the alleged liberation, while the supreme representative of the Catholic Church and the hierarchy, with its followers, praised the Poglavnik to the skies as if he

were the Messiah.

CHURCHMEN GLORIFY NAZI-FASCISM

From the pulpits of the churches, and over the radio, the pastoral letter was read to the people in which His Grace Stepinac acknowledged the Ustashi government with enthusiasm, assuring it of his confidence and co-operation, and appealing to all of his loyal followers to collaborate with him. Besides the Te Deum sung on this occasion, masses were celebrated on the 10th of April every year, commemorating the founding of the national state. And the name day of St. Anthony was even given as a pretext for the Archbishop of Zagreb to organize political manifestations in honor of Pavelic, whose name was that of the patron saint.

The entire Catholic press hastened to keep in step with its pastor. Among these were: *Eparhijski List*, *Jeronimsko Svijetlo*, *Svetiste su. Antuna*, *Krscanska Obitelj*, *Katolicki List*, *Gospa Sinjska*, *Za vjeru i Dom*, *Salezijanski Vjesnik*, *Djevojacki Svijet*, *Vijesnik pocasne straze Srca Isusova*, *Nedjelja*, *Nasa Gospa Lurdska*, *Katolicki Tjednik*, *Glasnik*, and others.

The Catholic press also made use of every possible opportunity to express its appreciation for the Ustashi movement. During the unveiling of a plaque on house No. 4 of the "*Capitol*," where the Ustashi met and organized their plots against the state of Yugoslavia, Archbishop Stepinac's newspaper, *Katolicki List* published an extensive article about this celebration, as well as the inscription on the plaque, which read: "The foundations of the Ustashi Movement were laid in this building, where the first Ustashi units were formed among adherents of the Croat Revolutionary Youth Organizations." *Katolicki List*, October, 1942, p. 479.

The newspaper of the Sarajevo Archbishopric wrote the following concerning Ustashi Croatia: "We salute the new and free Croatia, as a Christian and Catholic State. Freedom is granted by God and therefore it is blessed by God." *Katolicki Tjednik*, April 27, 1941 (Sarajevo).

The same newspaper wrote in the following issue:

Above our new, young and free Croatia the image of the Virgin Mother, this beautiful, shining image, has appeared in the heavens as a sign—signum in cielo—(oktr.12.1). The Lady comes to visit her Croatia, within her maternal mantle she wishes to enfold her young, reborn Croatia exactly in the thousandth year of the Catholic Jubilee. Again she descends on the flags of our freedom to occupy her ancient place; in order to protect us and to defend us as she did at the time when our Bans and Princes went into battle under the flag bearing her image. The Croatia of God and Mary of olden time is resurrected. *Katolicki Tjednik*, May 11, 1941.

The Catholic newspaper *Croatia Sacra*, wrote: "By the miraculous providence of God and after more than eight centuries, the State of Croatia is resurrected, free and independent, exactly in the year when the Catholic Croats are celebrating their Anniversary of 1300 years of their relationship with the

Holy See." *Croatia Sacra* (Zagreb, 1943), No. 20-21, p. 5.

The *Katolicki List* made Satellite Croatia part of the "Celebration of the Thousandth Year Jubilee." This was represented as follows: "The great Eucharistic Congress which was scheduled had to be postponed. However, in its place, by the favor of Providence, we have been bestowed with the resurrection of the Independent State of Croatia, the greatest gift a nation could receive."

Photographs of Pavelic covered the first page of newspapers and reviews, as well as the text of his speeches, with laudatory editorial articles, and even a poem which Archbishop Ivan Saric dedicated to the great man: "Kada Sunce sija" (When the Sun Shines) *Vrhbosna* (Sarajevo), April-May, 1941. And in *Glasnik Svetog Josipa* (May 1941) on one side of the half page Pavelic could be seen sitting in his office, while on the opposite side was St. Joseph holding the Christ Child. And all the "Big Bosses," Italian as well as German, were not overlooked. Each had his share of adulation. Their praises were sung in the name of morality and religion, and their totalitarian doctrines were lauded in defiance of such an anathema as western democracy. Hitler was considered "The Crusader of the Lord" by the clerical papers, and the priest, Felix Niedzielski, leader of the "Crusaders" (in Croatia), was chosen among all the incense-burners, as the one elected to praise his great Senior. He acquitted himself fluently and concluded: "Glory to our Lord! Gratitude to Hitler, and infinite honor and glory to our leader Ante Pavelic." *Nedelja* (Zagreb), April 27, 1941.

The members of "Catholic Action" and its various affiliated organizations, such as the "Great Brotherhood of Crusaders," the academic society "Domagoj," the Catholic student association "Mahnic," the "Great Sisterhood of Crusaders," and many others, were, in most cases, well-known priests or secretly sworn members of the Ustashi. All these forces were mobilized for concerted action with the openly professed aim of spreading fascist ideology. This propaganda persuaded the faithful that it would be a good deed, in the highest interests of Croatia and the Catholic Church, to kill or convert the Serbs and to exterminate the Jews. How boldly this propaganda was published in the Catholic press will be shown.

The Crusaders had their own "athletic courses" for military drill.

The periodical *Krizar* (Crusader) of February, 1942, wrote that the Crusaders organizations served the Croatian youth from 1929 to 1934 as a place of refuge in the difficult struggle, and that a large number of young men learned for the first time in the dark Crusader halls about the Ustashi precursors, Starcevic and Kvaternik, about Ante Pavelic and the Lika uprising—an uprising against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ten years before World War II led by Andrija Artukovic. Regular meetings were held in Pozega in 1940, before the attack on Yugoslavia, under the fictitious name of "Mary's Congregation," in the Crusaders' home,

The Catholic periodical *Nedelja* of April 27, 1941, carried an article entitled "The Crusaders Extend Greetings to the Croatian State And Its Poglavnik" (Fuehrer). This article reads, in part, as follows:

The Great Brotherhood of Crusaders has sent through the Ustashi army chaplain, Dr. Ivo Guberina, and through Their Graces Cvitanovic and Vitezic, the following greetings to the Poglavnik:

Our rejoicing and happiness is indescribable over the fact to greet in the name of the Great Brotherhood of Crusaders and of the entire Crusader organization our Poglavnik, the liberator of the Croatian people, the founder and chief of the Independent State of Croatia. Raised in the spirit of radical Catholicism, which knows no compromises so far as principles are concerned, they never knew what it meant to give in and abandon any part of the program of Croatian nationalism.

Chieftain! The Crusaders greet you and express to you their great love and devotion. *Nedelja*, April 27, 1941.

From the pulpit and in their own press, sections of both higher and lower Catholic clergy propagated Nazi-fascist ideas, under the cloak of religious and moral teachings. They sang the praises of Germany and Italy and simultaneously castigated the Western democratic powers. They told the faithful that Hitler was a crusader for the Lord and that Pavelic and the Ustashi had been sent by God to the Croatian people.

Furthermore, it was His Grace Stepinac who named the presidents and executive commissaries of these groups over which reigned a mystico-warlike atmosphere, which has perpetrated to the present time this medieval conception of "Fighting for Christ" with the sword and fire. With this as a starting point, the next step was either to "liquidate" or convert the Serbs, and to exterminate the Jews, all in the higher interests of the Croatian fatherland and the Catholic Church. This anachronistic fanaticism did not seem to surprise the troops, for their "spiritual" leader was imbued with it, as the following phrase, extracted from his personal diary, testifies: "All in all, the Croatians and the Serbs are two worlds, the North and South poles, which can never come closer without a miracle from God. Schism is the greatest of evils in Europe, almost greater than Protestantism. In it there is no moral, no principle, no truth, no justice, and no honesty." Extract from Stepinac's Diary (in own hand), p. 176, Book IV.

EXTERMINATION OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CLERGY

Briefly speaking, this is, after all, but a paraphrase of the famous slogan of Starcevic, "God and the Croats." Beyond that, no salvation was possible. The only solution was to separate the grain from the darnel, without thinking too much about how it would be done.

Furthermore, in *Nedelja*, His Grace Stepinac, noting his first interview with the Poglavnik, relates how the latter confided in him his intention of exterminating the Old-Catholic sect and the Serbian Orthodox Church as well. And then His Grace continued, with the utmost simplicity: "During our whole conversation the Archbishop (meaning himself) had the impression that Pavelic was a sincere Catholic and that the Church would have complete freedom of action... ."

Certainly, it not only had complete freedom, but the Ustashi reciprocated by offering help that was as precious as the help which the Church had offered them. It could hardly have been otherwise, since "croatization" and "catholicization" had become one and the same thing, and since Croatia had replaced Austria-Hungary, in miniature, as the advance-guard bastion of the Roman Catholic Church in the Balkans. With the consent of the Catholic hierarchy, the promulgation of racial decrees was begun on April 30, 1941.

They were followed, on May 3rd, by measures which made them quite conclusive from a religious standpoint: e.g. The decree on conversion from one religion to another, by which preceding regulations on the subject were repealed. Mile Budak, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, sent the text to the "ordinariats" of every diocese.*

* Several major ones were as follows: Preservation of Aryan blood and honor to Croatian people, Ne 44.67-2, April 30, 1941; Racial affinity, Ne 45468-2, April 80, 1941; Nationalization of Jewish property and business enterprises, CL-348-2, June 1941; Preservation of national and Aryan culture of the Croatian people, N° CXLVII338-Z, June 1941; Employment of female persons in non-Aryan households, NSeveral major ones were as follows: Preservation of Aryan blood and honor to Groatian people, Ne 44.67-2, April 30, 1941; Racial affinity, Ne 45468-2, April 80, 1941; Nationalization of Jewish property and business enterprises, CL-348-2, June 1941; Preservation of national and aryan culture of the Croatian people, N° CXLVII338-Z, June 1941; Employment of female persons in non-aryan 103-2, May 6, 1941; 'The changing of Jewish last names and identification of Jews and Jewish firms, Ne 336.2, re 4, 1941; Prevention of concealment of Jewish property N° CLI-847-Z, June 5, 1941; Identification of racial origin and administrative officials of autonomous bodies and persons holding free academic titles, No 342-2, June 5, 1941; Confiscation of Jewish property and enterprises, N° CCCXXXVI-1699-Z, October 1941.

Thenceforward, the Catholic Church cleared the way for the full development of proselytism in Croatia. The office of the ecclesiastical Court of the Archbishop of Zagreb settled on the principles which should be observed by the clergy as to the conversions. The procedures thus adopted were sent to the "Ordinariat," as was also the governmental decree which emphasized the enforcement. The text appeared in the newspaper *Katolicki List*, May 15, 1941.

It is not necessary to reproduce this long document "in extenso" but a résumé of the different articles is as follows:

1. Adhesion to the Roman Catholic Church can be granted to those who sincerely desire it and who are convinced of the truths of our Holy religion. "Faith is a question of free choice."
2. The new catechumens must have sufficient knowledge concerning the truths of the faith, and during their instruction they must attend services assiduously and indulge in prayer.
3. Persons who are not living according to the matrimonial regulations recognized by the Church cannot be accepted. (This rule was evidently aimed at the married priests of the Serbian Orthodox religion.)
4. Married people who wish to be converted must promise to be baptized and raise their future children in the Catholic Church, as well as convert those already born.

5. The clergy is instructed to submit the complete dossier to competent ecclesiastical authorities so that the requests may be examined without delay.

And finally article 6 was textually worded as follows: "The attention of the parish clergy is drawn to the necessity of treating these delicate problems concerning the human soul, strictly in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church while safeguarding its dignity and prestige and while refusing *in limine* (in the beginning) all persons who seek to belong to the church only for material interest or selfish motives." *Katolicki List*, May 15, 1941.

These instructions given to the priests were simply to remind them of the prescriptions of the canon law on these questions.

It can be seen, later on, how the Catholic Church "safeguarded its dignity and prestige" in practice, and how the massive conversions concerning "the delicate questions of the human soul" for which the Archbishop of Zagreb showed such respect, were undertaken by the method of "do or die."

The nearly simultaneous publication of the Ustashi government and the Catholic hierarchy, concerning the conversions, left no doubt as to the collusion in this matter between the temporal and spiritual powers.

With relation to the campaign against the Serbs and the Orthodox Church, a broadcast from the Croat Radio Station at Zagreb should be recalled: The transmission of July 29, 1941, among other things, said: "In the Independent State of Croatia there are no Serbs and no so-called Serbian Orthodox Church . . . There can be no Serbs or Orthodoxy in Croatia, the Croats will see to it that this is made true as soon as possible." *Hrvatshi Narod*, July 80, 1941.

Somewhat later a German newspaper wrote:

An extraordinary ecclesiastical struggle is going on in Croatia. The Ustashi Government is persecuting the Orthodox Church and is trying to convert as many Orthodox people as possible to Catholicism by means of intimidation and all kinds of devices. At the opening of the so-called Croat Assembly, Pavelic said that religious freedom did exist in principle, but that it did not include the Orthodox Church. Apart from nationalistic reasons, Pavelic endeavored to represent himself as a missionary by virtue of his work on behalf of the church, thus desiring to acquire greater prestige. We still recall his visit to the Pope at the time when he was just organizing his "State." *Die Zeitung* (Berlin), April 2, 1944.

It seems hardly credible that these measures of segregation, so hastily adopted by the government, as well as the explosive articles published by the Ustashi press against the Jews, the Serbs, and the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the articles, quite as virulent, in the Catholic press, that the public did not become aware, from the very beginning, of the criminal intentions that were being cogitated by the masters of the hour. But such was the case! At first, these brutal measures were considered just methods of intimidation, destined to discourage any attempt to oppose the "new order" which was being

imposed upon the country. They were supposed to be motives for frightening the people and, above all, the minority groups which might cause trouble. Such were the illusions cherished by the future victims. The Serbian Orthodox population, moreover, considered the Independent State of interest exclusively to the Croats. In their estimation, it was only an ephemeral institution, a vicissitude which they would have to bear as patiently as possible, while awaiting the victory of the United Nations, in which it had never failed to believe, confident that it would mean the rescue of their liberty and their state.

They naively thought that all that was needed was to behave loyally toward the new leaders and play safe through such difficult times.

It was easy to see how deep-rooted their confidence really was by the haste with which the Serbs obeyed the government orders, for all civilians in possession of firearms handed them over to the authorities. War guns, machine guns, and rifles remaining in the hands of the soldiers after the defeat, which they had taken home, and even hunting rifles, were thus transferred to the Ustashi arsenal to be used, without delay, against those who had so innocently given them up.

For it was only shortly after this preliminary disarmament that the massacres started in certain Serbian areas. (Emphasis the Webmaster's) And then it was that the Serbian intellectuals and representatives of the Orthodox Church clearly realized the true intentions of the extremist government and the episcopacy. This was definitely no momentary crisis or just some chauvinistic religious explosion of words, but the realization of a well-calculated plan which had taken some time to ripen to perfection; the same kind of plan that Hungary and the Roman Curia had been unable to carry out during the middle ages, namely the biological extermination of the "schismatics," meaning all the Serbian Orthodox population settled in Croatia since the fifteenth century. The Jews also were destined for the same fate, which was called the "permanent solution," according to the racist plan of the Nazis.

The Ustashi government rapidly got organized for its great mission. Andrija Artukovic, Minister of the Interior, and the right hand man of Ante Pavelic, took charge of the "Ustashi Service of Control" (Ustaska Nadzorna Sluzba), imitated after the Gestapo and the fascist Ovra. The two decree-laws had, therefore, to be promulgated (those mentioned above), assuring the Minister of the Interior the control of twelve police corps and the constabulary, each having its own attributions (Ustashi police, Intelligence Service, Defense Police, Security Service, Office for Public Order and Security, County Police, Defense squads, Security Service of the Poglavnik (a body guard), Police Guard, Industrial Police, Gendarmery, and Military Police) .

1. The decree on the establishment of the Office for Public Order and Security of the Independent State of Croatia No. 112. Pr. M.U.P. 1941, May 4, 1941 (Official Gazette, *Narodne Novine*, May 7, 1941), which reads as follows:

Office for Public Order and Security of the Independent State of Croatia falls under the Ministry of the Interior as a special department, and is directly subordinated to the Minister of Interior.

Office for Public Order and Security of the Independent State of Croatia has supreme control over the activities of police department in all branches and over the public employees.

2. The decision of the Minister of Interior of May 25, 1943, No. 310 V.M. 1948, on the internal organization and division of competences within the Ministry of Interior Affairs, No. 1659-D.V. 1943 (Official Gazette Narodne Novine, of July 16th, 1943), A paragraph of this decision reads as follows: "Affairs falling under the competence of the Minister of Interior are performed by: the Minister's Office, Supervisory Department, Head Office for Interior Administration, and Office for Public Order and Security."

Each one of these two regulations merely suffice to indicate clearly and unambiguously that the whole police service and authority were in the hands of the Minister of Interior.

These measures, in a detailed form, were completed by organizing special courts: *Prijeki Sud* (Extraordinary Court) ; *Pokretni Sud* (Mobile Court) ; *Izvanredni Narodni Sud* (Special People's Court), and *Veliki Izvanredni Narodni Sud* (Grand Extraordinary People's Court). Decrees No. LXXXII-148-Z of May 17th, 1941, *Narodne Novine*, May 20, 1941. and No. CLXXII-508-P. of June 24th, 1941, *Narodne Novine*, June 24, 1941. and CLXXXVI-643-Z-p. 1941. *Narodne Novine*, July 10, 1941.

Thirty-four similar courts covered all of Croatia to enforce the reign of terror. The sentences pronounced were based on the principles of collective responsibility. There was only one punishment—death. It is superfluous to add that any defense before the judges was impossible, for they had all taken an oath as Ustashi and were consequently under orders.

A new law was enacted concerning the war tribunals—No. CXCIV-1553-Z-1942. *Narodne Novine*, July 6, 1942.

Thus all was ready for methodical action; the first being the destruction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Deprived of their leaders, the Serbian Orthodox were thought to be tractable to conversion or else easier to "liquidate."

On May 3, 1941, the Ustashi killed the brother of Milos Buncic from the village of Dodosi, who was mayor of Kraljevcane and Council Deputy, and tortured his wife and his father.

Buncic had fled, and the Ustashi were threatening to burn down his home and kill everyone in it if he did not report to the Ustashi command in 24 hours. In order not to expose his family to those tortures, Buncic reported to the Ustashi authorities, who tortured him for eight hours until he fell unconscious. Thinking that he was dead, the Ustashi threw him into a cellar where there were five bodies, among whom he recognized Adam Resanovic, a shoemaker from Glina, and Stojan Slepcevic, a farmer. The other three were disfigured to the extent that he could not recognize them. After regaining his senses, Buncic escaped through the cellar window, and the dead men were thrown into the Glinica River.

In Glina on May 8th, the Ustashi killed Ilija Letic, together with his two sons and two assistants, Damjan Metikos, a merchant from Glina, and Professor Mehandjija.

The arrests continued and in a short period of time 560 Serbs were killed in that region.

On May 11, a train stopped at Glina with 120 Serbs, who were taken to the courtyard of the Jewish merchant Cohen. There a part of them were killed and the rest were taken off to an unknown destination. Among those known to have been killed were Jovan Krajcinovic, a roadkeeper from Jabukovac, and Nikola Lelic a farmer from Dragotinci.

On May 4th, Bishop Platon, from Banja Luka, was ordered by the Ustashi Prefect, Viktor Gutic, to leave town immediately. Thereupon he implored his brother, the Catholic Bishop, Jozo Garic, in the name of Jesus Christ, to intercede so that he would be-granted two or three days' delay, so as to prepare his departure. His Grace, Garic, gave his promise and told him there was no need to hurry. But during the night, at three in the morning, six Ustashi, led by the executioner, Djelic, with the police agent, Tomic, and another functionary, called Krmpotic, arrested Bishop Platon. Accompanied by the Serbian Orthodox priest, Dusan Subotic, from Stara Gradiska, he was led six kilometers away to the village of Vrbanja. Judging by the appearance of their mutilated faces, the Bishop and the priest had been shaved with a blunt knife. Their eyes had been put out, and their noses and ears cut off, while a fire was lighted on their chests. Finally, when they had sufficiently suffered, they were given the *coup de grace*, which ended their martyrdom. The bodies were found May 23rd, in the Vrbanja River.

A few days later, the Metropolitan, Peter Zimonjic, of Sarajevo, an octogenarian, was arrested (by order of the Minister of the Interior, Andrija Artukovic) by Bozidar Brale, who in his accumulation of functions, had become Prefect of Eastern Bosnia, curate of St. Joseph's Church at Sarajevo, and secretary to Archbishop Ivan Saric, the "poet." The old gentleman was ordered to forbid the use of cyrillic lettering in the Serbian Orthodox parishes, and when he refused, he was thrown in prison in Zagreb. Afterwards he was sent to a concentration camp at Jasenovac where he was rapidly "liquidated."

Bozidar Brale's zeal in extirpating the "schism" was stimulated by a new distinction which was added to his numerous positions. Through the influence of his Archbishop, a year after his nomination as Prefect, he became honorary president of the ecclesiastical Court of the Archbishopric, with the right to wear the purple sash. This dignitary of the Church later was responsible for the massacre of the Serbs at Reljevo and at Alipasina Most.

These executions of Serbian Orthodox priests, accompanied by horrible tortures, became even more frequent after Pavelic's trip to Rome.

A CROATIAN KING

The Poglavnik and his acolytes wanted to name a king as Head of their State, and it is curious to note that these ultranationalists wanted to offer the

crown to Otto of Habsburg, a descendant of their old Austro-Hungarian masters. But Hitler could not bear the family, and Pavelic already had given other promises, so a member of the House of Savoy was decided upon.

A Croatian delegation, headed by Pavelic went to Rome on May 18, 1941, with this idea in view. His Grace, Salis-Sewis, the Vicar-General of the Archbishopric of Zagreb, was there as a representative of His Grace, Stepinac, as well as the curate of Ogulin, Ivan Mikan, the priest Vilim Cecelja, and the Franciscan Radoslav Glavas, who will be mentioned later.

The Croats were received with great pomp at the Quirinal where the former lawyer of Zagreb made an eloquent discourse, in which he begged the emperor and the King, Victor-Emmanuel to "kindly designate one of the Princes of his House, as the one to wear the Crown of Zvonimir."

His Italo-Ethiopian Majesty acknowledged this request with ingratiating benevolence, and, in replying, said:

Italy has now, in a tangible way, shown her deep understanding and her interest in the desires of the Croatian people in choosing you as her intrepid representative. Today the secular need of the Croatian people for the resurrection of its own State has been realized, thanks to the victory of the Axis powers. We are very happy to profit from this occasion, during such an impressive and fatuous manifestation, to assure the delegates of the Independent State of Croatia that Italy, as the unfailing and staunch friend of its distinguished neighbors, is ready to lend its fraternal co-operation in all future projects and activities. Inspired by such sentiments, we are happy to be able to accept the offer of the Croatian people and to allow our well beloved nephew, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Spoleto, to set the crown of Croatia upon his head. *Hrvatski Narod*, May 19, 1941.

It would not be superfluous to add, that on that same evening of May 17th, the Duke was received by Pope Pius XII.

In accepting the crown of Zvonimir, the new King took the name of Tomislav II. This was perhaps the only historical act of his reign, for the improvised monarch had the good taste never to set foot in a kingdom of bloodshed.

After having solicited Italian sovereignty for his country, the Poglavnik went with the delegates to the Pantheon where he laid a crown on the tombs of Victor Emmanuel II and Humbert of Savoy.

Then, on that same day at six in the evening, he was received by Pope Pius XII in a private audience. The delegation was admitted later on, at 7:30. A detachment of the Swiss pontifical guard rendered the honors, reserved for the Head of a State, to Pavelic. All in all, this was a tacit recognition of Satellite Croatia by the Vatican. It should not be forgotten that at this period there still existed a Yugoslav legation, with a charge d'affaires, at the Holy See.

This event was extensively publicized in the country by the official Croatian Catholic press: "The warm welcome extended to the Poglavnik and the

delegation of the Croatian State, by the Holy Father Pius XII reveals that by receiving them so rapidly and with such whole-heartedness, the Church considers the representatives of our National State of International importance." *Hrvatski Narod*, May 20, 1941.

And still again: "Those who are well acquainted with the traditions of the Vatican say that on Sunday, above all in the evening, the Holy Father was never known to have given an audience to any group, which explains why the courtesy extended by His Holiness Pope Pius XII was considered as such a special mark of attention in regard to the Croatian people." *Katolicki List*, Nos. 21-22, 1941.

* * *

However, Pavelic's trip to Rome had quite a different objective than just an interview with the Pope and the illusory offer of the throne of Zvonimir. It could even be supposed that these two spectacular manifestations, which flattered Croatian self-respect, were organized for the purpose of swerving public attention from the question of expense. The sum was naturally quite appreciable and Mussolini, by sending for the Poglavnik and his good friends from Zagreb, had not done so gratuitously. They would have to pay the price for the honor of having him as their Head. Once the Ustashi were in power, the financial aid and the patronage which the Duce had granted them over a certain length of time constituted a substantial compensation. Needless to say, it had been settled upon a very long time in advance.

Therefore, Pavelic went through a very simple formality when he counter-signed, while waiting for Mussolini at the Venezia Palace, the Italo-Croatian Treaties.

The first of these dwelt on the boundary lines between these two countries. Italy was ceded the districts of Kastav, Susak, Cabar; the islands of the Adriatic, Saint Marc, Krk, Rab; and the Territory extending from Cape Privlaka to Novigrad and which followed the coast up to the Isle of Krk; with, in addition the islands of Ciove, Brvenik, Solta, Vis, Bisevo, Saint-Andrej, Jabuka, Korcula and Mljet, Boka Kotorska and their rocky areas.

In the second treaty, the Ustashi government agreed not to build military bases on the remainder of the Adriatic coast and its islands, not to have a navy, and to allow Italian troops to pass freely throughout Croatian territory.

Finally, after a third diplomatic agreement, concluded for the duration of twenty-five years, Italy guaranteed to protect Croatian territory, while the government of the latter promised not to contract any engagement with anyone else unless it was for Italy's common interest. It also accepted the collaboration of the Italian army in organizing technical training for its own army.

In addition, a close agreement was anticipated concerning finance and communication.

After exchanging signatures, the Duce and Pavelic appeared on the balcony,

acclaimed by enthusiastic crowds, especially by those who had been summoned for such occasions. A banquet then closed this ceremony which consecrated Italy's complete hold on the so-called Independent State of Croatia.

The dates of May 12th and 24th, 1941 should be mentioned, when the Yugoslav government in exile at London raised an official protest against the dismembering of Yugoslavia and the foundation of Satellite Croatia. On this occasion, Mr. Sumner Welles, then Under-Secretary of State in the U.S.A., stated that he wished "to reiterate the indignation of this government and the American people at the invasion and mutilation of Yugoslavia by various member states of the Tripartite Pact." The Under Secretary of State to the Minister of Yugoslavia, May 28th, Department of State, vol. IV, n°102, June 7, 1941, p. 683.

HOLY SEE AND PAVELIC'S CROATIA

It was not without reason that the official Catholic press gave the public to understand that the Holy See had recognized the new Croatia *de facto*.

Another pontifical measure soon added significance to the event of Pavelic's ceremonious welcome at the Vatican, usually given only for the head of a government. The Pope on 13 June (Pavelic's name day, "Antunovo") designated His Grace, Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone, a Benedictine of the Monte Vergine congregation and a member of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, to represent him at the Croatian episcopacy. But in the matter of attributions His Grace, Marcone, singularly surpassed those of an "apostolic visitor," that being his official title. So, according to the protocol of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Zagreb, he was classified, with his secretary, Masucci, another Benedictine, under the heading: "Delegation of the Holy See," and in official ceremonies he was placed ahead of the representatives of the Axis, being considered the Dean of the diplomatic corps. Furthermore, His Grace, Marcone, in his correspondence with the Ustashi government, called himself "Sancti Sedis Legatus" or "Elegatus," but never "apostolic visitor."

The Croat hierarchy, as well as the press, referred to Ramiro Marcone as the Pope's Legate, giving him the title of "His Excellency," and never specifically mentioned him as the Pope's observer or envoy to the Croat Catholic Episcopacy.

During the ordaining of the new Bishop, Janko Simrak in Krizevci, on August 18, 1942, "the Pope's legate to the Independent State of Croatia, Mgr. Ramiro Marcone was present with his secretary." *Katolicki List*, August 27, 1942, p. 409.

In reporting on the Pontifical Requiem which was held in Zagreb after the death of Maglione, Secretary of the Vatican, on August 24, 1944, the *Katolicki List* wrote that Mgr. Ramiro Marcone, the delegate of the Holy See in the Independent State of Croatia, *Ibid.*, August 25, 1944, p. 426. was also present.

Another article published in the Christmas issue of the *Katolicki List* mentions again that "the Honorable Fra. Ramiro Marcone, was the delegate of the Holy See in Zagreb." *Ibid.*, August 25, 1944, p. 426.

In an article on apologetics, which appeared in the *Katolicki List* in

connection with the "celebration of the name's day of the honorable legate," it is clearly seen that Mgr. Ramiro Marccone was the "legate of the Holy See in the Independent State of Croatia." *Ibid.*, March 8, 1945, p. 79.

Katolicki List wrote how the clero-Ustashi group looked upon Fra. Marccone, and said the following in that regard: "This was more than was needed for establishing the recognition *de facto*, since as the name indicated, it was not conferred by international law, or by any explicit declaration, but was deducted from an ensemble of facts, which in themselves were amply significant. His Grace, Stepinac, understood this perfectly when he noted in his journal on August 3rd, the day the Pope's representative reached Zagreb: 'By this act, the Holy See has recognized *via facti* the Independent State of Croatia.'"

Katolicki List also wrote the following regarding Ramiro Marccone's position and mission: "We, the Croats, see in Fra. Marccone a high diplomatic representative of the Pope, our Holy Father. . . . May the Lord bless his sacrificing work, may it bear the richest fruits to the benefit of the Holy Church and the State of Croatia." March 8, 1945, p. 79.

It is natural that such a political introduction given to Fra. Marccone was bound to affect the Catholic masses in the Independent State of Croatia, as well as the Ustashi government. It must have reflected on the religious feelings and political orientation of the Catholic masses. By interpreting Fra. Marccone's role in such a manner, a conscious and intentional influence acted on the Catholic masses invoking in them the desire to preserve the Independent State of Croatia.

In exchange, Pavelic sent two unofficial representatives to the Vatican, Nikola Rusinovic, and then Erwin Lobkowitz, the Pope's secret chamberlain. Although they had no titles, they were diplomatic agents, and implicitly recognized as such, since His Grace Canali, the great manipulator of finances at St. Peter's, provided them with Vatican ration tickets, *carta annonaria*, to which all accredited diplomats of the Holy See were entitled.

It can thus be observed that there were close ties between the Vatican and Satellite Croatia, where Giuseppe Ramiro Marccone remained until the debacle, transmitting instructions from Rome to the Croatian clergy and episcopacy, principally concerning the conversions, and often traveling from one region to another, where the battle was raging between the resistance and the Ustashi. The "apostolic visitor" was on excellent terms with the latter, and also with the officers of the Axis, as can be proved by many photographs, showing him in their midst during the official ceremonies. He can be seen in the Poglavnik's intimate family circle, looking most paternal and benevolent.

The cordiality of these public as well as private relationships remained untouched by the assassination of the Serbian Orthodox priests, which continued to multiply.

On May 21st, the same day that the Croat delegation returned triumphant from Rome, the Bishop of Plaski, Sava Trlajic, was arrested by the Ustashi officer, Josip Tomljenovic, and his palace pillaged and demolished. He was

taken in a truck to Ogulin with three other priests, Jasa Stepanov, Milan Rajcevic, and Bogoljub Gakovic, and also thirteen Serbian notables. All of them were shut up in a stable, beaten and tortured, and then taken away to Gospic. From there, about Aug. 15th, they were sent away by convoy, with two thousand Serbs, to the Island of Pag where a general "liquidation" took place.

Even in Zagreb, where His Grace Stepinac and the "visitor" Marcone resided, the Serbian Orthodox Bishop Dositej, was beaten and tortured to such an extent that he became insane.

There were four Serbian Orthodox Bishops with those from Bosnia-Herzegovina, to which should be added approximately 171 priests and religious followers, who, like the first Christians, met the fate of martyrs upon the ruins of their profaned churches. Others were deported to Serbia. Only those of the mountainous regions, controlled by the guerrillas, were able to escape.

The Serbian population, thus bereft of the traditional leaders, became an easier prey for the converters, as well as for the assassins. Massive massacres took place after their death and torture in the bishoprics of the two martyrs, Trlajic and Dositej, which served as a prelude to equally massive conversions.

Parallel to the onslaughts made against the Serbs, was the extermination of the Jews, which continued with a vengeance, and applauded by the Catholic Croatian press. Just as the terrorism had nearly reached its climax, the *Katolicki Tjednik*, the organ of Catholic Action and specifically of Archbishop Saric of Sarajevo, published an article signed by the priest Franjo Kralik, entitled: "Why Are THE JEWS BEING PERSECUTED?" Among the items is the following text:

The descendants of those who hated Jesus, who condemned him to death, who crucified him and immediately persecuted his disciples, are guilty of greater excesses than those of their forefathers. Greed is growing. The Jews who led Europe and the entire world to disaster –morally, culturally and economically–developed an appetite which nothing less than the world as a whole could satisfy. . . . Satan helped them to invent Socialism and Communism. Love has its limits. The movement for freeing the world from Jews is a movement for the renaissance of human dignity. The all-wise and Almighty God is behind this movement. *Katolicki Tjednik* (The Catholic Weekly), Sarajevo, May 25, 1941.

The "renaissance" of human dignity in Satellite Croatia reached its peak with the deliberate mass slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

A little later the same paper gave further emphasis: "The greatest enemies of the Croatian people are the Serbs and, as in all Europe, the Jews, Free Masons, and Communists." *Katolicki Tjednik* (The Catholic Weekly), Sarajevo, June 15, 1941.

This was, at least, what Roman clericalism had preached in all the countries of Europe, even before it had fallen beneath the yoke of Hitler. The following is an excerpt from the pastoral letter of the primate of Poland,

Cardinal Hlond: "It is an actual fact that the Jews fight against the Catholic Church. They are free-thinkers, and constitute the vanguard of atheism, Bolshevism and revolution. The Jewish influence on morals is fatal. It is also true that the Jews are committing frauds, practicing usury and dealing in white slavery." *Time*, July 22, 1946.

The Ustashi exterminated 80% of Yugoslav Jews.

These warm-hearted testimonials of approbation, cited by the Catholic-Croatian authorities who had adopted the policy of racial and religious purges practiced by the Ustashi, could be multiplied without end.

Still again the following quotation: "Blessings upon the first national Croatian banner in Bosnia took place in the convent of Nazareth before the Sisters of Christ's precious Blood . . . near Banja Luka. The standard-bearer was Viktor Gutic." *Hrvatska Krajina* (Croatian Frontier), June 12, 1941.

It so happened that Viktor Gutic was none other than the Ustashi prefect who, a month before, had ordered the "liquidation" of Bishop Platon, of Banja Luka, with all the refinements of cruelty which have, heretofore, been described. Perhaps Christ's blood was cherished by the good sisters of Nazareth but the blood of Christians, such as the Serbian Orthodox was worth nothing to them.

NO MORE SERBS

Viktor Gutic is to be remembered for another reason. It was he who, as governor of western Bosnia (Veliki Zupan), first officially announced in public the intentions of the Ustashi government in regard to the Serbian minority of Satellite Croatia. On May 26th, he made a speech at Banja Luka in which he said: "All undesirable elements will be exterminated so that no trace will remain." And the following day, during a meeting at Sanski Most, he was still more explicit:

The Serbian army is finished. Serbia does not exist anymore! That Karadjordjevic Gypsy Dynasty has fallen, and will end for us soon. The highways will be waiting for the Serbs to pass, but the Serbs will be no more there! I have published drastic orders for their total economic destruction, and other orders will follow for their complete annihilation. Do not be weak toward anyone of them . . . destroy them wherever you get a chance, and the blessings of our Leader and mine will be upon you... . Anyone who protects them becomes by this very fact an enemy of the Croat freedom. . . . Let the Serbs do away with their hopes. . . . By these methods we shall be fulfilling the will of God and that of our Croatian people. Newspaper *Hrvatska Krajina* (Banja Luka), May 30, 1941. Gutic was captured by the British in Italy and was turned over to Tito. While in prison in Italy, waiting extradition, he went out of his mind, with symptoms of religious mania.

That same day, at Prijedor, a town he was obliged to pass through on his way to Banja Luka, he became indignant on not seeing any Serb hanging on the gallows. At Sanski Most, from whence he had come, twenty-seven corpses had been hanging on the trees of the public square for two whole days. In order to spur on the indolent inhabitants, he again proclaimed his desire to wipe

out the abhorrent race; part would be sent to the concentration camps, others would be thrown into the river "without boats," and the rest would serve as fertilizer "for our fields which will become forever Croat."

In this district three churches were in the past taken away from the Croat people, one of which is located in Prnjavor. You should take them over tomorrow and write upon them "Hrvatski Dom" (Croat Center). Those who accepted the Orthodox religion should at once be converted back to Catholicism, otherwise I will be forced to pass special regulations regarding this matter. I am sending this message to the Serbian nest in Prnjavor: I will come and annihilate it myself in only 24 hours, I will do the killing and you will follow me. Speech delivered by Dr. Viktor Gutic, Chief Official of Banja Luka, on June 9, 1941 in Prnjavor, before the District Municipal Building.

He had also declared during an official manifestation: "Either we shall conquer and the damned Serbs will be forever out of the way, or if, by some mishap, Yugoslavia were reintegrated, at least we shall have reduced the statistical numbers in favor of the Croats." These quotations are from the same article, "Triumph of Dr. Viktor Gutic on the way to Sanski Most," *Hrvatska Krajina*, May 80, 1941.

On June 11, 1941, the Ustashi arrested all the Serbs in Bihac under the pretext that some kind of celebration would take place on the next day, and in order to preserve peace they had to be arrested. On June 17, about twenty of the most respected Serbs were driven through the city, from the prison to the Municipality, tied to one long chain. There they were interrogated by Eugen-Dido Kvaternik personally. That same evening, between 10 and 11 P.M., these men were taken by truck to an unknown destination. Some of the Ustashi said that they were taken to Zagreb, others said that they were taken to the Drnja Camp, near Koprivnica, and others said that they were massacred in the vicinity. The third supposition seemed to be right, because the truck on which they were taken returned to Bihac that same evening. The rest of the Serbs, who were held in the Bihac prison, were tortured and beaten atrociously by the Ustashi.

And so the massacres continued here and there in Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the month of May, as a prelude to the massive extermination prophesied by Gutic. At Korita, 176 Serbs were killed and thrown into a grotto called Koritska Jama.

Andrija Artukovic, Minister of the Interior, just to prove his zeal in exterminating the Serbian Orthodox, set an example for others by ordering the massacre of the Serbs in his native district of Ljubuski. Juro Borota, leader of the Ustashi organization in Ljubinje, sent a report to Artukovic informing him that 4,500 Serbian Orthodox had been massacred on the territory of his district in the villages of Vlahovici, Kateza, Grebci, and Ljubinje.

Abdulah Camo, head of the organization, had imprisoned 65 Serbs of Capljina who were killed in the station of the same locality, according to personal order by telephone from Artukovic.

Stipe Varvaric, head of the Ustashi for the district of Mostar, massacred 135 Orthodox Serbs and a number of Jews in the town of Mostar. Artukovic rewarded

him by making him Ustashi commissar for the province of Sarajevo.

Franjo Vego, right hand man of Andrija Artukovic, massacred approximately 5,000 Orthodox Serbs in the district of Capljina. Artukovic promoted him to the rank of a Ustashi captain.

It was by the order of Artukovic that Geza Togonal killed 20 people at Gacko, 70 at Korito, 19 at Golubnjaca, and 5 monks in the monastery of Zitomislic.

Sporadic massacres also took place in other regions.

In June 1941, a detachment of 250 Ustashi reached Kupres, commanded by Raphael Boban and Avdo Voluder. The Serbs from the villages of Begovo selo, Gornji Malovan, Blagaj, Vukovsko Donje, Vukovsko Gornje, Rili, Zanoljena, and Ravno, were ordered to go to Kupres. In the order of their arrival, the Ustashi led them, group by group, outside of the town in a region where numerous deep crevices abound. They were all killed and thrown into the crevices. This information was found by Mile Vujinovic and published in a series of articles which were published in the *American Srbobran*, August 1951 (Pittsburg, Pa.).

A group of 280 persons, the greater part from Donje Vukovsko, were led into a field between the villages of Sujice and Livno where an aviation camp had been set up before the war. The Ustashi killed all these prisoners, threw them into the cisterns which had been previously dug, and poured quick lime over them. The village of Galinjevo, in the district of Duvno, lived through an indescribable tragedy. There were about 20 Serbian homes in this village. An Ustashi, named Kapulica, one of the former maniacs of the party, marched into the village with an armed unit. All the inhabitants were bound with wire and taken to the Prisoj bridge. There they were killed and thrown into the rapids.

The tension mounted from day to day. It began to affect those of the upper level who were considered immune to brutality. Political personalities, as well as those of art and letters supported the Pavelic regime by their personal prestige, such as the sculptor, Ivan Mestrovic who organized Ustashi exhibitions in Zagreb, Italy and Germany.

Even the great Croatian poet, Vladimir Nazor, who later joined Tito was carried away by mass hysteria. It was at this time that he wrote:

"This is no time for music or mandolines.
Now is the time for each of us
To live as wolves, and lions,
In other words, as Croats!"

On June 2nd, in a speech given at Nova Gradiska, Milovan Zanic, the Minister of Justice and author of many legal decrees, revealed quite clearly the government plan: "This state, our country, is only for Croats and for no one else. There are no ways and means which we Croats will not use to make our country truly ours, and to cleanse it of all Orthodox Serbs. All those who came into our country 300 years ago must disappear. We make no attempt to conceal our intention. It is the policy of our state, and during its realization we shall do nothing else save follow the principles of the

Ustashi." *Novi List*, June 3, 1941.

BLESSING OF ASSASSINATIONS

The sinister Poglavnik, while addressing the Ustashi army at Zagreb, pronounced these atrocious words: "A good Ustashi is he who can use his knife to cut a child from the womb of its mother."

By referring to the newspaper *Nedelja* of June 6, 1941, which published an article (entitled) "Christ and Croatia," it is obvious how the Catholic press reacted, and it is highly edifying to read: "Christ and the Ustashi, Christ and the Croats, march together through history. From the first day of its existence the Ustashi movement has been fighting for the victory of Christ's principles, for the victory of justice, freedom and truth. Our Holy Saviour will help us in the future as he has done until now. That is why the new Ustashi Croatia will be Christ's, ours, and no one else's." *Nedelja*, June 6, 1941.

A considerable number of the Catholic Croatian clergy were imbued with this incredible exaltation. The episcopacy and just ordinary priests tried to out-do each other in fanaticism. Numerous were those who, like the curate of Ogulin, Ivan Mikan, had become a sworn Ustashi even before the war, and who traveled throughout the country to spread their politico-religious ideology. Mikan, fully deserves the eulogy which appeared in the press: "From the time of his arrival at Ogulin he pursued the national policy in the true Ustashi spirit." *Nova Hrvatska*, June 1, 1943.

The words of the French author, Jean Hussard, refer to these challenging remarks: "The lower clergy not only tolerated these massacres but was often an accomplice. Young priests enlisted, gun in hand. Is there anyone who believes that religious mysticism, however extreme and primitive, can be associated with assassinations?" Jean Husard, *op. cit.*, p 159.

Yet such a thing seemed quite compatible, not only among the lower clergy, but also, and first of all, among those higher up in the hierarchy. Archbishop, Ivan Saric, who has already been mentioned, praised (in his review, *Katolicki Tjednik*) the use of revolutionary methods in the name of truth, justice and honor, and stated that it was "stupid and unworthy of the disciples of Christ to think that struggling against an evil could be done nobly with gloves." *Katolicki Tjednik*, June 15, 1941.

To give greater liberty to assassins and torturers would have been impossible. This prelate showed on many an occasion his "Christian spirit," notably when the Catholic wife of Dr. Dusan Jeftanovic, who had been arrested by the Ustashi, begged him to intercede. His Grace Saric replied that since Jeftanovic was an Orthodox Serb he regretted not being able to comply. So the poor man was tortured and then killed in the Zagreb prison.

The "Large cross bearing a Star," which Pavelic conferred on this saintly man was, therefore, more than deserved, as was the flattering citation which accompanied it: "As Archbishop of Bosnia, for his Ustashi Croatian spirit and his work among the clergy and the people." *Novi List*, Nov. 10, 1942.

But it was in the *Katolicki Tjednik*, review of His Grace, Saric, that could be noted in all its ecclesiastical unction this justification of genocide:

Certainly, it is very hard on those who are paying the price (ie., Serbs) and on whose back the operations are being carried out. We are all human. We are most sensitive to matters that concern our skin, our existence and our families. Such tragedies hurt the most. It is a matter of piercing live flesh. Hearts tighten, eyes fill with tears, gasps as well as curses spring from the lips. . . But politics is different. It demands, for the general good and the public interest, a rigid, brutal and iron discipline. It is the men who govern who assume responsibility. This does not concern the individual! Neither does it concern our religious and Catholic consciences! We have another area of action, an area which is small and private. For it we are fully responsible. . . . to God and our Christian consciences. *Katolicki Tjednik*, June 15, 1941.

Terrorism, massacres, and tortures did not seem to interest the Church in the least, nor the consciences of its congregation. Such things were beyond the bounds of their "field of action" and, at that time, as witnesses of so many horrors, their only duty was to say Amen.

His Grace, Pavao Jesih, was no less explicit. As Head of the group of Catholic Action, he presented gifts and congratulations to Ante Pavelic in the names of all the branches of the different organizations, and there was considerable reaction to his words, into which he put the proper seasoning: "We have every reason to think that the Lord has given you His help, for you have succeeded in cleansing our new field of Christianity in Croatia. Guided by the spirit of Christ, and by Ustashi principles, we are now ready for any battle in defense of our beloved Croatia." *Hrvatski Narod*, June 24, 1941.

Thus encouraged, blessed and incensed by the highest prelates, the Poglavnik could but redouble his efforts in the "mopping-up" process which he had undertaken.

In essence, practically everyone knew about the massacres (including the Vatican), yet no one did anything about it, or even seemed openly concerned.

* * *

In occupied Serbia, an important event was in the offing, concerning the resistance. The Communist party, in joining the game, was bound to modify fundamentally the situation in Yugoslavia, divided into several zones of occupation.

On June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the USSR. The 27th of the month, Tito, who was known by the name of Walter, came from Zagreb to Belgrade, where he organized his headquarters in the villa of his friend Vladimir Ribnikar, the owner-director of the *Politika*, largest and most influential Yugoslav daily paper. In his proclamation, he said:

Proletarians from all parts of Yugoslavia,—to arms! Rally round your vanguard, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Fulfill your proletarian duties without fear or faltering. Make ready for the final and fateful struggle! You

cannot stand idly by whilst the precious blood of the heroic people of Soviet Russia is shed.

Then Tito addressed these secret instructions to the Communist groups:

The Yugoslav Communist party is now in a position to take an active part in the overthrow of the present monarchical regime and to this end will render assistance to all elements regardless of their ideological outlook and character which are bent on the same purpose. Yugoslavia must first be dissolved into its component parts, and the party will then be able to pursue its work within each of them in accordance with the directives already issued.

Render any assistance necessary to Ustashi, Macedonian, Albanian, and other nationalist organizations, in so far as they may contribute toward the speedy overthrow of the present regime. Stephen Clissold, op. cit., p. 27.

At that time, Colonel Mihailovic had already organized the first guerrilla movement of the Second World War. His Chetniks (the official name was "The Yugoslav Army in the Homeland") were in the mountains of Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Lika, Banija, Kordun and Dalmatia. The mountains were crowded with Serbian people who managed to escape the murderous Ustashi. Many clashes soon occurred, but the Serbs had few arms, with the result that Ustashi attacks often resembled a wolf-pack descending on a flock of helpless sheep.

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