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“Why We Have Become Revolutionaries and Murderers”: Radicalization, Terrorism, and Fascism in the Ustaša–Croatian Revolutionary Organization

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ABSTRACT

This article advances an interdisciplinary and multifactorial socio-cultural approach to the fascistization of the Ustaša in interwar Yugoslavia, leading to terrorism and racial cleansing. It concentrates on the life-trajectories of Mijo Babić and Zvonimir Pospišil, two nationalist activists notoriously known as the first Ustaša terrorists. Drawing on the previously unknown political memoirs of Pospišil and Babić, the article argues that the two activists bridged several phases of cumulative radicalization in the Ustaša organization, from the adoption of political violence at the grass-root level in the 1920s to international terrorism in the 1930s and then state-sponsored genocide in the first half of the 1940s. The article points out that Ustaša underwent most forms of political radicalization to terrorism identified by McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008), but it also adds to their typology a case of radicalization to mass violence in the regime phase. Ustaša's trajectory thus illustrates a rare process of transition from the radicalization of an oppositional, non-state group to mass radicalization leading to racial genocidal policies under a fascist-totalitarian regime. It is hoped that the biographical approach to radicalization advanced by the article contributes to a better understanding of politically motivated terrorism and mass violence in post-1918 Europe.

KEYWORDS

Radicalization; terrorism; violence; fascism; Holocaust; charisma; martyrdom; Ustaša; Yugoslavia; Croatia

Radicalization, terrorism, and fascism: New perspectives

In the last decades, scholars have intensively debated the “nature of fascism.” Although heuristically useful, the ongoing effort to elaborate Weberian ideal-type models of “generic fascism” has estranged itself from empirical research on the history of “real existing” fascism.¹ In addition, the debate has focused on defining the fascist ideology, neglecting the social-political history of fascist *movements* and *regimes*. The current article pleads for a redirection of the research focus from static and abstract models of fascism to processes of “fascistization” of extremist movements, leading to the adoption of “cleansing violence” as a mode of political action.²

This article explores the fascistization of Ustaša–Croatian Revolutionary Organization (*Ustaša–Hrvatska revolucionarna organizacija*) as part of interwar Yugoslavia's “family of authoritarians”³ leading to terrorism and racial cleansing. By focusing on this under-researched case-study, our goal is to set into conversation two fields of studies which, although intimately related, have developed in relative isolation from each other: interwar fascism, on the one hand, and studies of terrorism (including contemporary), on the other. It is our contention that the two fields could benefit from methodological cross-fertilization, hopefully leading to explicit diachronic comparisons and testing of common research hypotheses.

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Our approach builds on two inter-related concepts: radicalization and fascistization. *Radicalism* is an “essentially contested concept,” its meaning constantly shifting as a function of the socio-political context. Each historical period produced its own forms of radicalism, so that, during the time, newer and newer political forces have been classified as radical, from the liberals in the mid-nineteenth century to the socialist in the second part of the twentieth century, the fascists in the interwar period, the far right in the postwar period and Islamic terrorism after 1980. The verb “radicalization” is more recent; it does not denote a static attribute of a political actor, but the non-linear *process* of adopting values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns that go against the status-quo and lead to group conflicts. Lately, “radicalization” has been predominantly associated with *extremist* political values and violent behavior and modes of combat, such as terrorism.

The politicized nature of the concept of radicalization and its contested content has generated arduous debates.⁴ Traditional historiography has tended to treat radicalism as an intrinsic characteristic of a person or group, highlighting the role of aggressive personal attributes, traumatic motivations, and conversion to extremist ideologies as primary triggers of violence. In a departure from this perspective, new studies emphasize the importance of group dynamics in the process of radicalization, based on common grievances but also on a collective belief-system and mode of violent action.⁵ In line with the latter trends, this article promotes a multifactorial socio-cultural approach to *processes* of political radicalization to fascism, focusing on the triad *ideology-movement-regime*.⁶ To understand the dynamics of radicalization in time and space and the multiple facets of this process, we take into account the paramount role played by prejudice, economic deprivation, and the breakdown of social institutions in fueling grievances against an existing socio-political system, potentially leading to violence. But we also explore the importance of intergroup dynamics and ritual socialization in the adoption and internalization of extreme political beliefs, and the role played by the international transfers of extremist ideas and violent modes of combat in accelerating and channeling domestic processes of radicalization.

Political scientists have advanced various models for understanding possible paths to radicalization to political violence, in general, and to terrorism, in particular, as an accelerating process: an “assembly line,”⁷ a staircase,⁸ a “pyramid,”⁹ or a path with four¹⁰ or eight¹¹ non-linear yet interrelated stages. We follow Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko’s understanding of radicalization as a “change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the ingroup.”¹² They identified twelve mechanisms of individual, group, and mass radicalization.¹³ We point out that, during its history, Ustaša underwent most forms of political radicalization to terrorism identified by McCauley and Moskalenko; nevertheless, based on this case study, we propose several amendments to their approach. First, we argue that these mechanisms of radicalization should be discussed together with a process of ideological maturation leading to the development of a charismatic community of sacrifice based on martyrdom.¹⁴ Second, we note that, although McCauley and Moskalenko account for forms of individual, group, but also “mass radicalization,” they focus solely on the radicalization of non-state groups as oppositional politics; as such, they do not capture mechanisms of radicalization to *mass violence* in the transition from oppositional to ruling organizations, despite the fact that, in history, there existed cases of terrorist movements capturing power.¹⁵ Using the case of the Ustaša, we add to McCauley and Moskalenko’s typology two mechanisms of—top-down as well as grass-roots—radicalization to *mass violence* and *genocide* in the regime phase.

The article is concerned with *fascistization* as a form of radicalization leading to violent cleansing. The word *fascistization* entered the English language in 1925, being first employed in *The Glasgow Herald*; it is generally used to denote “the action or process of making a country, people, etc., conform to fascist principles or ideology; the process of becoming fascist in this way.”¹⁶ Fascistization has been primarily used to denote the forceful, top-down indoctrination of the masses by a ruling fascist party,¹⁷ the cooptation of traditional elites to a fascist regime, or the mass conversion to fascism under the influence of, or coercion by, foreign or occupational fascist parties and regimes (for reverse processes, see defascistization).¹⁸ We treat fascistization as one possible outcome of far-right political

radicalization, triggered concomitantly by local as well as transnational factors and influences. To substantiate this argument, the article focuses on both ideological radicalization and organizational consolidation in the history of the Ustaša, leading to the elaboration of a fascist ideology and practice. Despite decades of historiographical investigations, the nature of Ustaša is still subject to debate. One key controversy concerns Ustaša's ideology: was this organization an example of radical, separatist nationalism or of fascism? If the latter is true, when and how the process of fascistization took place? Was this a case of ideological transfer from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany at top level, or a process of movement-building at the grass-roots level?¹⁹ Another controversy concerns the nature and intensity of Ustaša's campaigns of political violence. As it is well known, the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, hereafter NDH, April 10, 1941-May 15, 1945) set up its own concentration camps and was responsible for the extermination of large numbers of Jews, Serbs, and Roma, as well as dissident Croats, thus turning into the second most murderous fascist regime, after Nazi Germany. How can one account for the extremely violent nature of the Ustaša regime?

To answer these research questions from fresh theoretical and methodological perspectives, we focus on processes of political radicalization in interwar Yugoslavia and link radicalization at the grass-roots level in the 1920s with the transnational terrorist activities of the Ustaša in the 1930s, and with the radicalization of the state agenda of the NDH leading to genocide and participation to the Holocaust in the early 1940s. We point out that the driving forces behind Ustaša's fascistization were not exclusively external and context-driven but also home-grown, self-driven, and idiosyncratic. We propose a comprehensive treatment of Ustaša's radicalization to terrorism and fascism, covering: 1) personal grievances and the individual psychology of terrorists; 2) identity-group issues leading to inter-ethnic conflicts; 3) common socialization and intra-group dynamics within the organization; 4) violent confrontations with the state authorities; 4) transnational exchanges with, and influences from, kindred terrorist organizations; and 5) inter-state conflicts and war, leading to mass violence at regime level.

To illustrate the process of individual and collective radicalization in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS)/Yugoslavia, the article concentrates on the life-trajectories of two militants, notorious for being the first terrorists of the Ustaša, Mijo Babić and Zvonimir Pospišil. We follow them across several decades, from their political beginnings to their terrorist career abroad and then—in the case of Babić—positions of power in the NDH.

We document the activities of Babić and Pospišil, with the help of an exceptional, previously unknown source: their double political memoir, entitled *Zašto sam danas u tuđini* [Why I am in a Foreign Land Today].²⁰ The manuscript consists of two parts. The first part, written by Babić, narrates the activities of Babić and Pospišil in the 1920s within the *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* (Croatian Party of Rights, hereafter HSP) and its youth organization *Savez hrvatske pravaške republikanske omladine—SHPRO* (The Union of Croatian Rights Republican Youth, renamed *Hrvatski domobran*, Croatian Home Guard in 1928), culminating in the assassination of Toni Schlegel, the manager of the publishing concern *Jugoštampa* (Yugopress), in March 1929. The second part, written by Pospišil, describes his experience in Belgrade, where he settled in 1923. This document is important on several grounds. First, while most memoirs on the NDH were written in the post-1945 period,²¹ “Why I am in a Foreign Land Today” was authored in 1930, at the very time when the Ustaša was being established. As such, the manuscript offers a contemporary perspective, arguably of greater historiographical value than the exculpatory overviews written in the post-1945 period. Second, the double memoir presents the views and experience of two grassroots *activists* (and not higher-ranking ideologues, as were Slavko Kvaternik or Mile Budak, for example) involved in terrorist actions in Zagreb during the 1920s, a formative decade that is still under-researched. At personal level, the double memoir functions as a *Bildungsroman*, a book of becoming prominent militants through the use of violence that could be entitled “How I became a terrorist,” or—in Babić's own words—“Why we've become revolutionaries and murderers.”²²

The double memoir documents the major changes that occurred in the two protagonists' lives during the 1920s, from workers in Zagreb to nationalist activists and then political criminals convicted for murder and forced into exile. After escaping from Yugoslavia in 1929, Babić and Pospišil joined

Ante Pavelić in Italy and became founding members of the new Ustaša organization. Both played leading roles in terrorist and guerilla activities during the 1930s. In 1932, Pospišil was transferred to the Ustaša training center at Jankapuszta, in Hungary. In October 1934, he took part in the assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseille but was captured and died in a French prison in 1939. Babić survived the exile and returned to Croatia in 1941, taking up key official positions in the NDH until his death on July 3, 1941.²³ We argue that figures such as Pospišil and Babić bridge several phases of cumulative radicalization in the Ustaša organization, from the adoption of violence at the grass-root level in the 1920s to international terrorism in the 1930s and state-sponsored genocide in the first half of the 1940s. Babić, in particular, played a triple role within Ustaša: first as a primary agent of radicalization in the pre-power stages of the movement, then as an Ustaša statesman in the regime-phase, and finally as a fascist martyr in his political “afterlife.”

The way of the gun: Political radicalization in the Kingdom of SCS

The emergence of the Ustaša can be best understood against the background of the postwar process of nation and state-building in the Kingdom of SCS (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929). The new state was built on the idea of the South Slav unity, promoted during the nineteenth century in intellectual and political circles in Austro-Hungary and the Kingdom of Serbia.²⁴ The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires after the Great War provided an opportunity for the implementation of that idea in practice, in a democratic polity.

Conceived as “the state of the trinomial Yugoslav ‘nation,’”²⁵ the new political entity was an amalgamation of disparate historical provinces, each of them with distinct socio-political and cultural legacies. The postwar democratic consolidation and political-administrative integration of these territories proved long and arduous. The overlapping processes of economic recovery and nation- and state-building in a multi-ethnic environment caused rivalry among political elites, who advanced divergent projects on the future organization of the new state.²⁶ Such tensions were common to newly (re)created or greatly transformed “composite” postwar states, most notably Romania or Poland. However, in the Kingdom of SCS, political-ideological confrontations took ethnic connotations and were gradually reframed as national conflicts, thus further exacerbating ethnic-based mobilization. A plethora of rival nationalist organizations mushroomed throughout the country, militating either for the political integration of disparate territories into a *unified* Yugoslav nation or for territorial *separation*. Their increasingly radical actions generated a string of reactive acts of revolt, revenge, and repression, that was to lead to the demise of the pluralistic political regime in 1929.

The escalation of street violence and the rise of paramilitarism pushed the new state into a perpetual social-political crisis.²⁷ On June 20, 1928, in a culmination of these tensions, Puniša Račić, a member of the Serbian Radical Party, fired shots at the leaders of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) during a session of the parliament in Belgrade. He killed Pavle Radić and Đuro Basariček and wounded Ivan Pernar, Ivan Granda and Stjepan Radić. Radić, the leader of the HSS and the most prominent Croatian politician of the time, died a few weeks later, on August 8.

This terrorist act marked a turning point in the life of the Kingdom, prompting mass demonstrations in Zagreb and violent clashes with the gendarmerie. In early August, Josip Šunić, a HSS member, killed the Serbian journalist Vladimir Ristović, for advocating the assassination of Radić in *Jedinstvo*.²⁸ The events culminated with Radić’s funeral on August 12, in Zagreb, which turned into a massive anti-Belgrade protest.²⁹

In response to the aggravation of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Kingdom, King Aleksandar decided to establish a personal regime.³⁰ He assumed authoritarian powers, abolished freedom of the press, and banned political parties. To combat secessionist nationalism, the King renamed the state Yugoslavia, refounding it on the idea of a unified Yugoslav nation.³¹

It was in this context of violent interethnic conflicts that Pospišil and Babić arrived in Zagreb in early 1920s. Pospišil and Babić were coevals and shared a similar social background, originating in rural areas near Zagreb. Born in 1904 in Vukovina, Pospišil moved to Zagreb in 1923 and started to

work as a mechanic.³² He soon joined HSP circles and took part in street battles against rival nationalist organizations. He ran into trouble with the police and eventually served one year in prison for an illegal break in into a Belgrade café in May 1924. In his memoirs, Pospšil claimed he was “forced” to trespass into the café to survive an attack by members of the Serbian National Youth—SRNAO.³³ Arrestment and detention amplified Pospšil’s anti-establishment attitude: the police “tortured me,” he claimed, “until I have finally undersigned all they asked from me.”³⁴ After liberation in 1925, he served into the army and then made his return to Zagreb.

Mijo Babić was born in 1903 in Nova Bukovina, in Croatia Slavonia.³⁵ Just as Pospšil, Babić moved to Zagreb in the early 1920s and worked as a chauffeur in the *Siemens* factory. He also joined Croat nationalist circles associated with the HSP and then entered SHPRO under the influence of another friend, Marko Hranilović.³⁶ There, Babić met Pospšil, who was already an experienced nationalist activist. The two youngsters became close friends; they took part in street fights and then planned together terrorist actions.

As in other cases of radicalization in post-war Europe, the physiological mechanisms of radicalization in Croatia can be explained, at least partially, by the relative deprivation theory. In their memoirs, Pospšil and Babić document the anomie and frustration experienced by two nationalistic-minded countryside youngsters moving to the conflict-ridden Zagreb. They elaborated stories of personal and collective victimization based on political grievances and perceived threats to the Croatian national community. Babić was deeply disappointed with the status of political “inferiority” and even powerlessness of Croats in Zagreb, “in their own house”: “There’s no concord or weapons or army; never has Croatia looked as sad as it does now.”³⁷ He experienced feelings of humiliation and disempowerment at the hands of a perceived ruthless oppressor, the Belgrade-based Serbian political elites. His disappointment grew stronger in view of the Croats’ national indifference and passivity: “I hoped to find only Croats made of steel. Unfortunately, my disappointment was tremendous [. . .] Those people were not prepared to sacrifice everything for the national cause.”³⁸ Babić was deeply “angered and saddened by the use of violence” against demonstrators in Zagreb, following the June 1928 shootings in the Parliament. But he also refused to accept that “hundred people ran away from a few police officers, and citizens cannot confront them for they have no weapons; oh, sad Croats without arms, sons of infortune.”³⁹

The youngster confessed, time and again, his longing for national unity, and pleaded for a combatant, militant attitude that would bring “justice” and freedom to the Croats. Babić lamented he could no longer “bear the slavery and humiliation of the Croatian people.” This allegedly subordinated status generated feelings of frustration and anger that were channeled into a violent direction.⁴⁰ He was convinced that the only way by which the Croats were to obtain their freedom was “by swimming through a river of blood.”⁴¹ Babić and his comrades were ready to sacrifice their life for the national cause: “if our lives will be necessary for getting a step closer to freedom, we will give them away.”⁴²

Babić’s memoirs also document the process of *gradual* radicalization through common socialization and inner group dynamics. The narrative of radicalization is constructed in a teleological way: the reader witnesses the transformation of a naïve, would-be nationalist into an experienced, cold-blooded terrorist. The activist depicts his first experience of street fighting—the so-called “baptism” of the street—and his understanding of the central role violence could play in reaching radical political aims. The memoir reveals the importance Babić attached to the emerging charismatic community of ultranationalist fighters, based on love and camaraderie. He argued that only the HSP and its youth branch, the SHPRO, offered a radical solution to the national question, due to its readiness to fight for independence by military means: “In April of 1926, I concluded that only the ‘Party of the Rights’ can bring freedom, because until now it was the one which worked most honestly and because it was more combative, despite its small size.”⁴³

Babić’s depiction of his encounter with Ante Pavelić illustrates the role played by an emerging charismatic leader as a role model in the process of radicalization. While attending his first street demonstration in Zagreb, Babić recalled hearing someone shouting, “Croats, come together!” He

learned that was Dr. Pavelić, the HSP's leader.⁴⁴ His testimony proves that the roots of Pavelić's charismatic cult were already present among the Croat nationalists: After setting up explosives in front of the gendarmerie station "we sang 'We are with you,' and mumbled in ourselves 'Dr. Ante Pavelić,'" recalled Babić.⁴⁵

On April 22, 1928, Babić took the oath of allegiance to the SHPRO and "was getting ready to travel, so that I could receive training with weapons."⁴⁶ Babić's accession to the SHPRO functioned as a rite of passage to another identity, followed by the acquisition of a gun and by intensive paramilitary training. Soon, the two men participated in the planning and execution of several terrorist attacks, the most important of which were the assassination of Toni Schlegel, an attack at a gendarme station in Zagreb, the killing of two police agents in a Siemens garage, and the shooting of two other agents near Hranilović's house.

By choosing the way of the gun, Babić and Pospíšil consciously assumed the role of political outcasts. In their mind, the stigmatic identity of being "murderers" was counterbalanced by that of being "political revolutionaries," agents of a new world in the making. Babić's narration reveals the anti-establishment aims of SHPRO: the movement did not fight only against Belgrade and the Serbs as an ethnically-distinct enemy, but also against leading Croat politicians, most notably the HSS, whose leaders were portrayed as traitors of the national cause: "I knew there was no reasoning with 'the Vlachs' [the Serbs], since they were our great enemies and even greater liars. And then came the betrayal. I was angry, I wanted to kill him [Stjepan Radić], and would have done so if I had the chance and a trusted friend. I believed this to be the only way towards our freedom, to make it come quicker."⁴⁷ Babić's aggressive discourse and his satisfaction over the assassination of Radić highlights the sharp ideological divisions among Croatian politicians. For Babić, Radić's death meant a new beginning for the Croats' national struggle: "What we have not been able to accomplish, Puniša has done. I rejoiced in my soul. For he took down the greatest coward the history of Croats has ever witnessed. I felt there was a double benefit: 1) There were no more crooks and liars cheating the people, and 2) I was convinced that the Croat people would get better and more aggressive leaders who will not buy musical instruments but weapons."⁴⁸

Following this logic, the first terrorist plots planned by Babić and Pospíšil targeted four Croat ministers, who were to be assassinated as "Croat traitors who worked for the Serbians, against the interest of their own Croatian people."⁴⁹ Ultimately, however, the two men decided to first target Schlegel, the press magnate accused of being "the main advisor to King Aleksandar, the one who persuaded the king to introduce dictatorship, and the one who led Belgrade to believe that Croats would succumb to pressure."⁵⁰

The assassination of Schlegel was a teamwork: it was planned by Pospíšil, Hranilović and Mate Soldin and executed by Pospíšil and Babić.⁵¹ After several preliminary nocturnal visits to Schlegel's house for identification, on Friday evening, March 22, Pospíšil and Babić went again to Schlegel's house and waited patiently behind the chestnut trees towering the street, with the intention of killing him. Around 21:00 o'clock, Schlegel arrived home. As he walked towards the entrance door, Babić approached and fired a shot at him, killing him instantly. The two terrorists ran away in haste, and circled the suburbs to detract eventual followers, before returning safely to their homes.⁵² According to the Italian police depositions of Pospíšil and Babić, the two assassins intended to commit suicide rather than being captured by the Yugoslav police and imprisoned in Belgrade, given the latter's "horrible Balkan methods" consisting of "torture and death."⁵³ After escaping from the crime scene, Babić and Pospíšil spent several days in hiding, but then cautiously resumed their work and even engaged in social activities "of course, with pistols in our arms to defend ourselves."⁵⁴ Soon, however, the police managed to identify their group members as main suspects of the assassination and placed them under close surveillance. On October 30, 1929, while arriving by car to their working place, the two men were approached by two police agents outside the Siemens garage. Sensing the danger, Babić hastily executed the two agents: "I thought I was in peril, so I quickly grabbed my pistol and shot him [the first agent]. He fell to the ground, and at that same moment, the other man started to walk towards me, so I fired the second shot at him, and immediately shouted out to Pospíšil: 'Run!'"⁵⁵ The two wanted men understood they needed to flee

Yugoslavia. Since they lacked money, they went to their comrade Hranilović's home, in the outskirts of Zagreb, to appeal for help. Upon entering his house to get money, Hranilović was approached by two police agents. In close proximity, Babić was again quick to act: "I saw he [Hranilović] was in some sort of peril, I was quick to warn Pospíšil, and we both reached for our revolvers and fired at those two men who both fell to the ground, while Hranilović used the opportunity to run away. We also turned back and fled, and we traveled for a couple of weeks until we reached Sušak and crossed over the bridge to Rijeka."⁵⁶

In their memoirs, the two outcasts portray their employment of guns as an act of legitimate self-defense. Describing the incident that led to his imprisonment in 1924, Pospíšil claims: "I took out the gun to make my way because I knew they [the authorities] will beat me and perhaps even kill me, since that was not a rare occurrence."⁵⁷ But carrying a gun was also part of a process of emancipation through de-feminization and *masculine* empowerment: "there was no great danger" in being approached by a police agent, claims Babić ironically, "since I had the revolver in my hand, and the agent thought he was dealing with a 'milady' so he acted 'politely' and wanted to get me by 'charm' and thus spoke so quietly and nicely as if he'd been asking me out to a party."⁵⁸ Babić notes, however, that the process of empowerment through armed combat was arduous. His first attempt to employ a gun during a street demonstration in mid-1920s was especially frustrating:

Suddenly, we heard shootings, ended the meeting at once and ran towards Jelačić square to see what was happening. When I heard shootings, I thought there might be good people, maybe it will get serious, I will go and maybe shoot someone in the leg, to settle the debt with the police, at least. I reached my pocket and squeezed the pistol, ready to shoot [...] I noticed a group of police and agents and took out the pistol, aim but fail, the second bullet fires, the third one fails, and so out of 5 cartridges, only 2 fired, because the ammunition was old and humid. At this point, the tram arrives. I jumped on it and drove among police and agents to the university. There, we were bombarded with rocks; I tried to shoot, but I kept failing. I got angry at the weapon and went home, took an ax, smashed the pistol, and threw it in the canal.⁵⁹

The two activists were persistent in improving their training and their ammunition, convinced that only armed combat would liberate the Croats. The memoirs illustrate Babić's and Pospíšil's transformation into professional political assassins, who enjoy the dangerous game of "hide and seek" and of inflicting death to their enemies by ax, guns, or explosive. "Ha, here we go, this'll be fun" exclaimed Pospíšil during the altercation with the Yugoslav policemen. The tragic end of that confrontation is narrated by Babić with the cold-blooded temper of an experienced killer: "I quickly jumped around one meter away and pulled out my revolver, looking him [the police agent] in the eyes. I took a bead on him, looking at the heart and 'boom.'"⁶⁰

The self-justificatory narratives put forward by Babić and Pospíšil illustrate their effort of reconciling the dissonance between positive self-image and criminal behavior. The two nationalists construct their own, peculiar ethical code of conduct to exculpate their crimes as heroic acts of self-defense. Babić's black-and-white narrative portrays Croats as innocent victims and the terrorists as "defensive nationalists." He argues that Croats were forced to take up violent action by the corruption of the Belgrade elites. Babić insisted that Schlegel's assassination was not a personal vengeance but was dictated by nationalist convictions, which he described in religious tones: "I had nothing against him as a person, but the sacred Croatian cause called for his head."⁶¹ By the same token, he portrays the Yugoslav police agents he killed as "Serbian bandits." Lawless repression and the idea of Croatian national interest alleviated the nationalists from the moral sin of committing murder: "I slept peacefully, the sleep of the righteous," confesses Babić, with disarming innocence, after murdering Schlegel.⁶²

From home-grown terrorism to transnational guerilla struggle

Pospíšil and Babić's memoirs and their police depositions reveal the mode of operation of the terrorist branch of SHPRO, as well. They provide detailed descriptions of a sum of other terrorist plots organized in the late 1920s, such as the planting of explosives on the bridge across Lomnica on the Zagreb-Belgrade railway and on a bridge in Brezovica ahead of the King Aleksandar's prospective visit, the setting up of a bomb in front of a gendarmerie station in Zagreb,⁶³ and a plot to assassinate the

mayor of Zagreb. At the beginning, these grass-roots initiatives were organized in an ad-hoc manner and with poor resources and technical means but with much enthusiasm. Gradually, terrorist attacks become more audacious and complex, as the activists gained experience and improved their training.

Transnational connections played an important role in their paramilitary education. The main partner in terrorism was the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—VMRO. Their collaboration was cemented in 1927, when the lawyer Pavelić defended a group of nine students, members of VMRO, indicted for treason and terrorism in Skopje. In a culmination of these exchanges, in April 1929 Pavelić and Gustav Perčec traveled to Bulgaria, where they met Georgij Kondov and Ivan Hadžev, members of the Macedonian National Committee, and signed the so-called “Sofia Declaration,” calling for the “freedom and complete independence of Croatia and Macedonia.”⁶⁴ For these subversive activities, Pavelić and Perčec were charged with conspiracy against the Yugoslav state and sentenced to death *in absentia* on July 17, 1929.⁶⁵

Babić welcomed the fact that Pavelić and Perčec visited the Macedonian militants: “We knew the Macedonians were serious fighters and that it was good we were allied with them, so we together could ‘make it hot’ for the Vlachs,” he confessed. “We knew each other well, one look was enough for one to understand the other, in soul and heart we were together with our leaders and our new allies.”⁶⁶ This partnership continued during the 1930s, leading to common terrorist actions.

Revolutionaries in exile: Ustaša and transnational terrorism, 1929–1934

After committing a string of assassinations, Babić and Pospišil fled to Italy, via Sušak, Rijeka, knowing that prominent members of the HSP, including Pavelić, had found haven there.⁶⁷ They were welcomed by Pavelić at the Arezzo police station: “We went to eat with Ante [...]. Around 3 o’clock in the afternoon, we moved on. Ante gave us each 1,000 liras.”⁶⁸

In the meantime, the Yugoslav authorities tightened security measures.⁶⁹ By the end of 1929, twenty-nine HSP members were arrested and charged in connection to the murder of Schlegel. On May 4, 1931, the authorities set up a trial against four of the assassins’ accomplices: Hranilović, Soldin, Stipe Javor, and Mijo Bzik. On June 30, 1931, Hranilović and Soldin were sentenced to death. Javor was sentenced to long term imprisonment and hard labor; he died in 1936, allegedly because of torture.⁷⁰ Bzik received a shorter prison sentence; after liberation, he joined the Ustaša and became Pavelić’s trusted collaborator and one of the main ideologues of the Ustaša.⁷¹ In 1932, Babić and Pospišil were sentenced to death *in absentia* by a Yugoslav court, a fact that made their return to Yugoslavia highly risky.

The establishment of King Aleksandar’s dictatorship in 1929, the ban on political parties, and state-repression against separatists opened a new stage in the process of ultranationalist radicalization. On the one hand, forced into exile, the HSP had to sever its open ties to the masses (mostly the students) and activate underground. On the other hand, radicalization to violence was accelerated by a new group dynamic within a condensed yet more cohesive community of like-minded activists in exile. As McCauley and Moskalenko point out, isolated terrorist communities under threat tend to both increase their internal cohesion through cultivating behavior compliance and values conformity and to scale up demands for violent revenge.⁷²

To reorganize the Croat separatist struggle in exile, once in Italy, Pavelić set up a new paramilitary group called “Ustaša–Croatian Revolutionary Organization.” According to one of the new entity’s founding leaders, the influential politician and military man Slavko Kvaternik, Ustaša marked a new, escalating stage in the fight for Croatian independence: “[t]he goal and purpose of this organization was a violent fight against the Yugoslav state and the creation of the independent Croatian state with Italian assistance.”⁷³ Ustaša’s first training camp in Italy was established in Bovegno, Lombardy, with support from Mussolini.⁷⁴ During the time, the camp was moved to several locations such as Borgotaro, Vischeto, Olivetto, and others.⁷⁵ In addition, in summer 1931, Gustav Perčec leased an

estate in Jankapuszta, near Nagykanisza, Hungary, near the border with Yugoslavia, where Ustaša recruits received paramilitary training so that “in case of a revolution taking place in Croatia, each of us would know how to lead 250–300 people.”⁷⁶

Paramilitary training went hand in hand with ideological preparation. Pavelić tried to turn the erratic, small-scale terrorist actions into an organized fight for liberation. To this end, a textbook entitled *Techniques of Revolution*, published in 1932, underscored the importance of sabotage and assassinations, and provided detailed instructions on the proper execution of terrorist attacks and on how to conduct reconnaissance missions targeting public buildings, railway stations, and post offices, to stage uprisings, produce and use bombs, set an arson, etc.⁷⁷

Pavelić also provided organizational guidance. Adopted in 1932, the “Ustaša Constitution”⁷⁸ organized Ustaša as a totalitarian organization shaped by the charismatic principle of total devotion to Pavelić as its supreme leader (*Poglavnik*). Enrollment in the Ustaša was a lifelong commitment. The charismatic bond of unconditional submission to the leader was consecrated by a mandatory oath of allegiance performed by all members. The only way out of the organization was either by a decree signed by the *Poglavnik*, or by death.

To provide a firmer ideological basis for his organization, Pavelić published programmatic articles on the first page of *Ustaša—vjesnik hrvatskih revolucionaraca*, the “official” journal first published in 1932.⁷⁹ He encouraged the Croats to “use of the bloodiest and most cruel means” against the Belgrade tyranny including “guns, knife, machine gun, and the bomb.”⁸⁰ In January 1934, Pavelić further argued that “the blood of enemy shall flow in spurts and rivers.” “Yes, for the freedom of Croatian homeland and Croatian people [. . .] not a single tool shall be discarded, even the most horrible and most dreadful, because the holy goal sanctifies every tool, even the most horrible ones.”⁸¹ He was convinced that, despite its brutality, Belgrade will not succeed in obliterating the idea of the Croatian statehood: “Croatian Ustašas, our duty is the greatest and the heaviest. [. . .] When the call comes (we) must promptly and without hesitation come, with iron, flame, and blood over the corpses of our enemy, towards our free and independent Croatian state.”⁸²

Pavelić’s vision of the Croatian nation was further encapsulated in *Ustaško-domobranska načela* (The Ustaša-Home-Defender Principles), an ethical code of conduct published in 1933 (and republished in 1942).⁸³ This messianic-nationalist charter affirmed the Croats’ distinct national existence and defined the basic elements of their collective identity. The Principles were an ultranationalist charter but they also included, in embryo, fascist and eugenic elements concerning the future organization of the Croatian society and of the would-be independent Croatian state.⁸⁴ Membership in the Croatian nation was defined on a political as well as an ethnic-racial basis, as part of a “Gothic race,” different from the Slavic origin of the Serbs.

Babić and Pospišil integrated quickly into the nucleus of ultranationalists led by Pavelić and were kept in high esteem given their pioneering terrorist credentials. Their high status is confirmed by the fact that in 1932 Babić became a commandant at the training camp in Bovegno, having Pospišil as his deputy. However, later during 1932, Pospišil was transferred to Jankapuszta, where he oversaw the training of recruits to handle explosives and fire weapons.⁸⁵

According to witness accounts, this transfer was necessitated by a sort of rivalry Pospišil developed with Babić.⁸⁶ The crisis in the interpersonal relations between the two friends is symptomatic for the tensed power dynamics in violent communities that undergo “radicalization by condensation.”⁸⁷ Although in theory, Ustaša’s community of sacrifice was founded on charismatic ties of voluntary devotion and camaraderie, in practice the camps’ cohesion was also kept together through coercion; the fissions or dissents resulting from the inner personality clashes and competition for power were resolved through violent removal, including killing.

Both Babić and Pospišil played sinister roles in disciplining followers. Babić became, from the outset, a key figure in Pavelić’s inner circle of loyalists. He gained Pavelić’s trust as a collaborator willing to blindly obey the most difficult or controversial orders, including the murder of disobedient elements. Ante Moškov mentions in his memoirs that Babić bragged about eliminating “spies” within the organization.⁸⁸ In his annotation on Moškov’s memoirs, editor Petar Požar argued that Babić and

the Bulgarian VMRO member Vlado Chernozemski (born Veličko Georgijev Kerin), who acted as a trainer in the Ustaša camp, were in charge of executing death sentences passed against Ustaša “dissidents.”⁸⁹ Historian Jareb also argued that Babić stood behind “many negative occurrences in the Ustaša camps.”⁹⁰ Jareb lists eighteen cases of murders occurring in the Ustaša camps attributed to Babić and Chernozemski by a report on the Ustaša emigration written by Vladeta Miličević in 1941.⁹¹ Miličević also stated that Babić “conducted acts of torture in his garage and disposed of the corpses by taking them into the hills where he buried them.”⁹² Likewise, historian Ivo Goldstein argues that Babić was responsible for the death of around twenty Ustaša members during their internment at the Lipari Islands.⁹³

In addition to policing the Ustaša, Babić also contributed to the organization’s publications. Although Babić was not a leading ideologue, his writings confirm his continued adherence to Ustaša’s program of overturning Yugoslavia through violent combat. In October 1932, in *Ustaša*, Babić praises one of the first and most important anti-Yugoslav guerilla actions, the so-called “Velebit uprising” in early September 1932, when an Ustaše unit attacked a gendarme outpost in the Lika/Velebit area.⁹⁴ He points out that, contrary to the expectations of defeatist “sissies and sheep,” revolutionary battle “elevates the reputation and the honor of Croatian people” throughout the world.⁹⁵ Babić reiterates his conviction that Yugoslavia was “built on lies, mockery, and lawlessness.” The time of “paper and mouth struggle” has passed, concludes Babić; he calls—in a fascist spirit—for *violent cleansing*: “sacrifices, guns, bombs, and sharp Ustaša knives, shall clean and cut off all that which is rotten from the healthy body of the Croatian people.”⁹⁶

While Babić managed to become part of Pavelić’s inner circle, Pospišil remained engaged in paramilitary training in Jankapuszta, serving as camp leader Gustav Perčec’s chauffeur and deputy. In 1933, Jelka Pogorelec—Perčec’s former lover—testified to the regime of terror that reigned in Jankapuszta. She depicted, in dramatic terms, the violent coercion against “disobedient Ustashas”⁹⁷: “Pictures of beaten faces went through my mind; walls of the houses at Jankapuszta where Perčec, together with the Hungarians [authorities], holds under the greatest terror those unfortunate persons whom he managed to drag here with his tricks; I can still hear the moaning of those locked up and tortured in that house [. . .].”⁹⁸ Repression culminated in summary, cold-blooded executions by the camp leader: “One day, upon his arrival to Puszta, it seemed to him [Perčec] that one of the emigrants—who at that moment was cleaning a machine gun and whom Perčec suspected he was plotting against him—awaits a proper moment to assassinate him. In a moment of crazy fear, as he told me later, Perčec took out a gun and shot this innocent man, who fell dead on the spot.”⁹⁹ Apparently, this tense atmosphere of mistrust affected Pospišil’s mental health, as well, who, “after those conflicts at Puszta has problems with his nerves.”¹⁰⁰

Ustaša and transnational terrorism

In 1934, the Ustaša took part in the planning and execution of the most spectacular and consequential terrorist crime of the interwar period: the assassination of King Aleksandar I in Marseille. Organized in cooperation with the VMRO and with tacit Italian assistance, this complex transnational operation took the French Police by surprise, a proof of Ustaša’s logistical capabilities. The core of the terrorist team originated from Jankapuszta: in September 1934, Pospišil, with Ivan Perčević, the trainees Mijo Kralj and Ivan Rajić, and Chernozemski—who had been transferred from Borgotaro to Jankapuszta, securing also the link with the VMRO—met Eugen Kvaternik in Zurich to plan the action. After intense preparations and phone consultations with Pavelić, the plotters traveled to Paris with false Czechoslovak passports. There, Kvaternik divided them into two groups: the “Marseille group” with Chernozemski and Rajić, and a reserve “Paris group” with Pospišil and Kralj.¹⁰¹ On October 9, Chernozemski managed to execute the assassination of King Aleksandar, by attacking the official column upon its entry into Marseille. In the chaos generated, fifteen other people were injured or killed, including the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Louis Barthou, while Chernozemski was mortally wounded by police and the angry crowd. Captured on film and widely reported in the

press, this bold terrorist attack conducted on French soil shocked the public opinion and became a landmark in the history of international terrorism, in view of its audacity, complexity, and deep implications.¹⁰² The wide and largely sensationalist international press coverage of the attentat increased Ustaša's notoriety, but made its position more vulnerable to state repression.

Fascistization: Anti-communism, anti-Semitism and racism, 1934–1940

The assassination of King Aleksandar did not lead to the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, as Ustaša had unrealistically hoped for; yet it had a strong international impact, affecting Yugoslavia's relations to France, Italy, and Hungary and generating calls for novel legal-political means of combating transnational terrorism. Capitalizing on the increased awareness of the growing impact of transnational terrorism, Yugoslavia was instrumental in the adoption of two pioneering conventions for the "Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism" and for the "Creation of an International Criminal Court" by the *League of Nations* at Geneva on November 16, 1937.¹⁰³ The twenty-five signatory states pledged to forbid and repress any terrorist activity on their territory directed at other states.

In addition, Yugoslavia started a vigorous diplomatic offensive to bring the culprits to trial and to neutralize Ustaša's guerrilla networks abroad. Its campaign at the League of Nation forced Italy and Hungary to formally repudiate their support for Ustaša. All training camps in the two countries were closed, while Ustaša activists in Italy were disarmed and relocated on the Lipari island.¹⁰⁴ Pavelić was imprisoned in Torino until 1936, after which he was placed under surveillance in Siena.¹⁰⁵

Ustaša members were neutralized in other European countries, as well. Pospišil, Kralj and Rajić were arrested by the French authorities and sentenced to life imprisonment. The same sentence was passed, *in absentia*, on Pavelić, Kvaternik, and Perčević, as key actors behind the assassination.¹⁰⁶ Pospišil died in August 1940 in the prison *Maison Central de Caen* due to complications after an appendix surgery.¹⁰⁷

Due to these coordinated measures, after 1934, Ustaša's activities in exile experienced a major setback. Although effectively paralyzed, the organization underwent a process of ideological crystallization that moved it firmly within the emerging fascist camp. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Pavelić went through a process of personal radicalization, from a nationalist parliamentary deputy to the leader of a terrorist organization in exile, and finally to an ideologue who embraced fascism as the new dominant force in Europe. Pavelić's adherence to fascism was spelled out in the second half of the 1930s. Thus, in an antisemitic treatise published in 1936, entitled *Die Kroatische Frage*, Pavelić accused the Jews of controlling the financial system of Croatia, of assisting the communists in making proselytes, and of being the key actors behind the establishment of Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁸ He elaborated his extremist ideas in a second and most-read book, *Errori e Orrori. Comunismo e bolscevismo in Russia e nel mondo*, written under the impact of the Spanish Civil War.¹⁰⁹ In it, Pavelić criticized democracy for failing to stand-up against communism. He argued that "[t]here had to come something new, something stronger and capable of fighting against Bolshevism, capable of defeating it. And that trend has found its outcome in fascism."¹¹⁰ For Pavelić, fascism was a "movement of ideas, a movement of nations," while Bolshevism stood as the symbiosis of "barbarism and destruction."¹¹¹ Fascism was, in his opinion, the only barrier to Bolshevism's world domination:

It is in vain to claim that fascism is not for export. Bolshevism is a universal evil and wants to reign everywhere. Fascism stands in a fight for life and death with it, and therefore must contest it everywhere, in every corner of the Earth, and the unavoidable consequence of this is that fascism thus becomes, general, 'universal' [...] It is of this particular issue that the cannons in Spain speak today, where the history of the fight between the two worlds is being written in blood.¹¹²

In 1937, after almost three years of stagnation, Ustaša's fortune took another abrupt turn. On March 25, under pressure from France, the Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović and Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano signed the *Italo-Yugoslav Political Agreement*, normalizing the diplomatic relations between the two countries. The two governments expressed their "commitment

not to support any activities directed against the territorial integrity or the existing order of the other Contracting Party.”¹¹³ To honor the Agreement, Italy pledged to share with Yugoslavia information about the circa five hundred Ustaša members detained in Italy; those members who had not taken part in violent actions against Yugoslavia were allowed to repatriate under the condition that they had not been previously engaged in terrorist activities.¹¹⁴ Following the Agreement, Pavelić released the Ustaša members from service in Italy and recommended their return to Yugoslavia.

Although on paper the new Italian-Yugoslav agreement was anti-Ustaša, in practice the organization was able to take advantage of the new political opportunities. Since Yugoslav authorities did not take efficient measures to monitor, arrest or de-radicalize the returnees, the Ustaša managed to intensify its recruitment in Croatia. The exact number of the activists who returned to the country is difficult to determine, but the action “was planned, far-reaching, and indeed the most important move of the Ustaša leadership after the Marseille assassination.”¹¹⁵ The returnees established kindred organizations to serve as legal platforms for their activities, distributed newspapers and leaflets, and formed *rojevi* [swarms] as basic organizational units throughout the country. Writer Mile Budak returned to Croatia in July 1938 and played a major propagandistic role.¹¹⁶ Budak’s circle, revolving around the newspapers *Hrvatski narod*, *Hrvatska smotra*, *Hrvatska revija*, and *Hrvatska pošta*,¹¹⁷ disseminated Ustaša ideas and praised Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, in an attempt to prepare the ground for Ustaša’s political takeover.¹¹⁸

From terrorist to statesman and martyr: Babić as an exemplary Ustaša, 1940–1941

Ustaša’s political trajectory took another dramatic turn in April 1941, when the organization was brought to power by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in a newly carved Independent State of Croatia. Upon its advent to power, Ustaša engaged in a violent process of nation- and state-building, with the aim of forging a homogeneous national community, politically organized in a totalitarian state. A central part of Ustaša’s fascist “regenerative” project was the idea of cleansing the nation by removing the unwanted elements that allegedly “invaded” the Croatian national land. The Ustaša was, first and foremost, anti-Yugoslav and thus implicitly anti-Serbian, as Serbs were the leading proponents of Yugoslavism and therefore perceived as main enemies of the Croatian national project. Although the Jewish population of Croatia was small, making up circa 24,000 people (of which around 20,000 were murdered by Ustaša during the war), the role of antisemitism grew in importance in the late 1930s, functioning as a major ideological catalyst tying together the main parts of Ustaša’s ideology, most importantly its ultranationalism, its anti-Bolshevik orientation, and the idea of racial superiority. Racial cleansing played a central role in Ustaša’s vision of national salvation, being most manifest in the adoption of anti-Jewish and anti-Roma laws.¹¹⁹

The process of fascist cleansing was implemented at two inter-related levels: from above, through setting up top-down legal-political campaigns of extermination, and from below, through unleashing violence by ad-hoc killing squads at local level.¹²⁰ These inter-related processes of grassroots mass violence and state-sponsored genocide were oftentimes in tension, due to the anarchy that characterized Ustaša’s early rule.¹²¹ Babić played a paramount role in the implementation of a state-sponsored system of cleansing, while being also a role-model of violent revenge through terrorist actions. It is unclear when Babić returned to Croatia, either during 1938 or—most probably—in April 1941, together with Pavelić.¹²² Babić became a key Ustaša official: he was first appointed Chief Adjutant and Captain in the *Poglavnik*’s “Bodyguard Brigade,” and then First Commander (*prvi zapovjednik*) of all Ustaša concentration camps. In this capacity, he was entrusted the major task of establishing a camp system in the NDH. Babić was thus able to enhance his experience of political violence. He was personally involved in setting up camps on the Adriatic Island of Pag. In June 1941, Babić visited the island and met officials to discuss the location of the camps. He decided to establish a female camp near Metajna¹²³ and a male camp at Slana.¹²⁴ The northern part was reserved for the Serb prisoners, while the Jewish detainees were interned in the southern part. The number of Jews in the camp is estimated at “between 200 to 400 internees,” and that of the Serbs at “about 800 to 2,000.”¹²⁵ Don Joso

Felicinović, one of the officials Babić met in Pag, stated that Babić deceived him by pledging that “people would be treated well in the camp and it would only be a ‘cleansing and correctional’ institution [. . .]. He deceived me bitterly! [. . .] Slana became an Auschwitz-Birkenau in miniature, a camp in which innocent men, women, and children were killed in all kinds of bestial ways.”¹²⁶ The proliferation of camps led to the establishment of the Gospić-Velebit-Pag Island camp system in June 1941, supervised by the Directorate of Public Order and Security (RAVSIKUR).¹²⁷ The first mass executions in the NDH took place in these early camps.¹²⁸ They provided a pattern that was followed in other parts of the country.

On July 3, 1941, three months after the regime’s establishment, Babić’s life and career ended abruptly: the high NDH official was killed in clashes with local insurgents in Herzegovina, where he was acting as a commissioner of the Ustaša Main Headquarters. Babić’s violent death presented the Ustaša leadership with an opportunity to capitalize on his figure as an exemplary fighter who embodied the virtues of the “new” Croat—the Ustaša. Babić was given an official state funeral and symbolically included in the Ustaša pantheon of martyrs, joining other fallen fighters such as Stipe Javor, Matija Soldin, and Marko Hranilović, and later Jure Francetić.¹²⁹

The funeral ceremony was used to reconstitute the Ustaša as a community of sacrifice. In Sarajevo, Ustaša Youth escorted Babić’s silver coffin to the cathedral for a holy service.¹³⁰ On July 4th, the coffin was carried by car to Banja Luka, where it was welcomed by Ustaša officials and escorted by the phalanx of the Ustaša Youth for a religious mass in the city cathedral attended by thousands of inhabitants.¹³¹ “In front of us lies the body of the fearless Ustaša fighter Mijo Babić,” stated solemnly the city major.¹³² From Banja Luka, the coffin was driven to Zagreb, where it was taken to the city cathedral and mourned by leading Ustaša officials.¹³³ The coffin was buried with honors in the Mirogoj cemetery. According to official estimates, Babić’s funeral was attended by circa 10,000 people.¹³⁴ The regime propaganda turned Babić into a role-model for the Ustaša youth.¹³⁵ Every Ustaša member had to emulate this behavioral pattern.¹³⁶ Babić’s obituary, published in *Hrvatski narod*, emphasized the exceptional qualities of the “new” Croat: “The Ustaša, endeavored in his fight, ready in every moment for the toughest punches that life can bring, ready to lay down his life for the homeland and the *Poglavnik* in any given moment, cannot and must not cry.”¹³⁷ To enhance the importance of Babić’s sacrifice, the depictions of his deeds employed religious metaphors, meant to suggest that the hero became immortal.¹³⁸ It was claimed that his martyr spirit “guides us; that spirit strengthens us,” teaching us “to remain relentless, to remain faithful to the shadow of contemporary martyrs.”¹³⁹ Babić’s heroic death “confirmed the sanctity and the greatness of His [the *Poglavnik*’s] idea” and that “martyrs are needed because martyrs [. . .] become eternal and timeless in their greatness.”¹⁴⁰ Babić’s entrance into the pantheon of martyrs testifies to the fact that violent combat and sacrifice were key values in Ustaša’s fascist ideology of national rebirth through cleansing.¹⁴¹

Conclusions

This article argues that processes of “radicalization” to terrorism and fascism in interwar and wartime Europe are an important chapter in the global history of radicalization. The study of the multiple and complex “laboratories” of fascistisation that can be found all over Europe but also beyond it, sheds additional light on the dynamics of radicalization in various historical contexts and fine-tunes our interdisciplinary approaches to terrorism.

To substantiate our claim, this article focuses on Ustaša’s radicalization to terrorism and mass violence from its pre-power, oppositional stage to a ruling power. In the following, we highlight several analytical lessons to be learned from this case study that could prove useful for studying analogous extremist movements across time and space.

First, the article argues for a shift of emphasis in fascism studies from abstract ideological concepts (such as generic fascism) to an actor-centered and practice-oriented approach focusing on individual and collective biographies. To this end, we trace the life trajectory of a sum of Croat nationalists who raised to political prominence through cultivating violence. The genre of biography, and, in particular,

Pospišil and Babić's memoirs—the novel historical source presented in the article—provide a window into the protagonists' identity formation, motivations, creed, socialization, and mode of political action.

Second, this case study underscores the fact that radicalism is not an in-born or ready-made personality trait of political actors. Instead, we confirm that radicalization is a complex—mental but also socio-cultural and political—process, consisting both of the adoption of radical political values and of socialization in a like-minded community through participation in collective rites, rituals, and communal actions. We have found that the radicalization to terrorism of Croat nationalists took place at grassroots level, in a politically-tensed urban setting. The two countryside youngsters were not student activists but were recruited to a nationalist organization in working-class circles through personal connections. They underwent a process of steady persuasion and indoctrination, accompanied by progressive tests of violent street combat. Radicalization to terrorism was stimulated both by their integration in a fraternity of likeminded activists and their internationalization of identity-group grievances, leading to violent interethnic conflicts.

Third, we promote a rounded approach to causes of radicalization that refutes “uni-factorial” theories but accounts for the complex interaction between terrorists and the state, the press, the public opinion—both at home and abroad—and various international actors and organizations. We show that interwar Yugoslavia, and the Balkans in general, was a hothouse of political radicalization. The deep social and ethno-religious cleavages generated by long-lasting Ottoman and Habsburg imperial legacies were further exacerbated by ideological tensions, corruption, and economic crisis in the Kingdom of SCS. These tensions undermined political stability, leading to the emergence of rival ideological projects and their radicalization to separatism and terrorism in far-left or far-right ideological variants. In this context, the radicalization of Croat nationalists was fueled by both structural conditions related to issues of social status, unfulfilled expectations, and perceived crisis and marginalization, and the emergence of a cohesive counterculture forged by shared nationalist values and a common way of life shaped by collective rites and rituals and paramilitary violence.

A major driver accelerating the adoption of terrorism as a prevailing mode of combat was the confrontation with state authorities, perceived by the Croats as serving the interests of a rival ethnic group, the Serbs. The Yugoslav state denounced—but in the process also “constructed”—terrorism as a grave societal threat, through official discourses but also in domestic and international legislation. At the same time, the state's violent and often lawless repressive actions played an important role in amplifying violence. Mutual escalation led to a spiral of violence, shaping the nationalists' transformation from socially marginal activists to terrorists and then to outcast guerrilla fighters in exile. Our analysis underscores the fact that Yugoslavia, and interwar unconsolidated democracies, in general, did not have proper legislation or socio-political mechanisms for coping with radicalism. Instead of attempting to foster de-radicalization through de-tensing inter-ethnic conflicts, de-centralizing power, devolution and further democratization, Yugoslavia, just like other Eastern European states of the time (see Romania and Poland), opted for further centralization, curtailing pluralism and increasing repression.

Fourth, we also point out that cumulative mechanisms of radicalization cannot be understood without the emergence of a charismatic leader, acting as the cement gluing together the radical cells of activists at grassroots level. This important factor is often obscured in studies of radicalization. We treat charisma as a specific set of discourses and practices of legitimizing, organizing, and exercising unconditional authority. The elevation of Pavelić to the rank of an undisputed charismatic leader allowed him to act as a unifying but also coercive force within Ustaša. Charismatic authority established a personal emotional bond between the leader and his followers but it also led to the creation of a charismatic community of violent sacrifice based on a nationalist belief-system and a set of internal ethical norms and values. This new messianic faith offered followers a symbolic-ideological justification for crimes, attenuating the cognitive dissonance between the terrorists' positive self-image and their criminal deeds.

Fifth, we point out that the practice of terrorism was not simply a form of violent combat but was instrumental in building an underground conspiratorial movement based on a culture of martyrdom and geared toward capturing power. The transformation of Croat nationalists from an oppositional fringe party into an outlawed separatist movement in exile led to membership condensation but also to further radicalization.¹⁴² Ustaša's training camps in Hungary and Italy became sites of experimentation with new organizational and guerilla practices, including violent coercion and assassination. Although, from a military viewpoint, Ustaša's sporadic guerrilla attacks against Yugoslavia were fiascos, these terrorist missions forged a combative spirit, created martyrs, and provided behavioral models for the rank-and-file members, being thus additional steps in the process of radicalization.

Last but not least, we emphasize the strong connection between fascism and the rise of transnational terrorism in interwar Europe; this aspect is often neglected by the literature in the field, which tends to focus on fascist terror in the regime phase. The collaborative 1934 Marseille assassination, in particular, was the culmination of a wave of fascist terrorism throughout Europe, illustrated also by the assassination of Romania's Prime Minister I. G. Duca by the Iron Guard in December 1933, and the innumerable anti-Polish acts of sabotage and assassinations committed by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.¹⁴³ This wave shares common characteristics with the larger second anti-colonial wave of terrorism (1920s to 1960), identified by David C. Rapoport—namely its concentration on police targets, its guerilla tactics, and its aspiration to form new nation-states, free from colonial control—but should be classified as a distinct sub-type, given its more transnational and revolutionary character, conferred by its drive toward violent cleansing and the elimination of the “old” political elites.¹⁴⁴ As a transnational mode of action, terrorism was instrumental in forging new forms of cooperation among fascist movements and regimes, contributing to the rise of a new type of fascist internationalism, based on innovative techniques of conspiracy and “communication” through violence. In this context, Ustaša's radicalism and practice of terrorism placed it in the camp of extremist movements in exile, under Italian (and later also German) patronage, and thus paved its way to fascistisation. In the second part of the 1930s, Ustaša took decisive steps toward fascistization, marked by the adoption of anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and racism. In so doing, Ustaša turned from an ethno-nationalist to a revolutionary form of terrorism, aimed at regenerating society through violent cleansing. Despite being able to repatriate in late 1930s, Ustaša did not manage to forge mass radicalization but reached its goal of establishing a separate state only in the context of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy's military hegemony in the Balkans. In April 1941, from outcast fighters, the Ustašas became statesmen and were placed in a position to implement their visions of violent purification. NDH embarked on a process of fascist nation-building characterized by attempts at cultural homogenization, mass indoctrination and large-scale racial cleansing. Ustaša's activity in power thus illustrates a rare process of transition from the radicalization of an oppositional, non-state group to mass violence and genocidal policies under a fascist-totalitarian regime. By exploring the multiple continuities and ruptures in the process of Ustaša's pre- and in-power radicalization and by highlighting the key role played by pioneering figures of radicalization of the 1920s in building NDH's repressive system in the early 1940s, we illuminate successive phases of fascist radicalization from a terrorist movement to a murderous regime.

In sum, we argue that, in order to fully understand the history of terrorism as a global modern phenomenon, more historical-comparative research is needed on radicalization to fascism, on the role played by terrorism in the process of fascistization, and on transnational exchanges among laboratories of radicalization. By tackling the antecedents of terrorism in interwar Balkans and its association with fascism, this case study contributes to a better understanding of the emergence of fascist terrorism as a transnational phenomenon, the way states and international organizations have dealt with this new challenge in the 1930s, and its long-term legacy and impact on current approaches to terrorism.¹⁴⁵ In addition, the insights gained on the evolution of lesser-known terrorist movements in interwar Europe, such as Ustaša, and on their experiments in building long-lasting regimes during World War II can, *mutatis mutandis*, further our understanding of analogous processes of building extremist movements of change promoting violent sacrifice and striving to establish stable regimes.

Methodologically, the complexity of this study case underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to radicalization that factors in structural sociopolitical conditions, the role of personalities, group dynamics, the disruptive role played by state violence, and transnational ideological exchanges. It is our conviction that additional research on the interwar wave of fascist terrorism would enable diachronic comparisons between pre- and post-war processes of radicalization.¹⁴⁶

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Notes

1. On this point, see Constantin Iordachi, "From 'Generic' to 'Real-Existing' Fascism: Towards a New Transnational and Historical-Comparative Agenda in Fascism Studies," in Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis, eds., *Beyond the Fascist Century: Essays in Honor of Roger Griffin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 283–307. On generic fascism see, selectively: Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Roger Eatwell, "On defining the 'Fascist Minimum': The Centrality of Ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, no. 33 (1996): 303–19; Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Penguin, 2004); Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Constantin Iordachi, ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009).
2. Our approach is in line with the praxeological study of fascism: see Sven Reichardt, "Fascist Communities of Action and Violence: A Praxeological Approach," in *Beyond the Fascist Century*, edited by Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis (London: Palgrave, 2020), 51–71.
3. On this concept, see Mann, *Fascists*, with reference to the Hungarian, Romanian and Spanish cases.
4. On radicalization, see Peter R. Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873–93; and Mark Sedgwick, "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (2010): 479–94.
5. See Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass and Richard W. Maass, "Groupthink and Terrorist Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 5 (2014): 735–58; Eitan Y Alimi, Lorenzo Bosi, and Chares Demetriou, *The Dynamics of Radicalization: A Relational and Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Willem Koomen and Joop Pligt, *The Psychology of Radicalization and Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2016); and Michael A. Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate, and Patrick A. James, "Radicalization to Violence: A Pathway Approach to Studying Extremism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 5 (2020): 1067–90.
6. On this triad, see Iordachi, "Introduction," in *Comparative Fascist Studies*, 1. On the evolution of fascism from movement to regime, see Robert O. Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1988): 1–23. Paxton engaged with the concept of radicalization but saw its relevance only in the fifth phase of

- fascism, that of mass murder, illustrated by Nazi Germany (20–21). For a more systematic application of the concept of radicalization to fascism, see Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt Und Gemeinschaft Im Italienischen Squadrismus Und in Der Deutschen SA* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002).
7. Zeyno Baran, “Fighting the War of Ideas,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2005): 68–78.
 8. Fathali M. Moghadam, “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005): 161–9.
 9. Clark McCauley, “Jujitsu Politics: Terrorism and Response to Terrorism,” in *Collateral Damage: The Psychological Consequences of America’s War on Terrorism*, ed. Paul R. Kimmel and Chris E. Stout (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 45–65.
 10. Paul Gill, “A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Suicide Bombing,” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 1, no. 2 (2007): 142–59; and Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
 11. Michael Taarnby, *Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe: Trends and Perspectives* (Danish Ministry of Justice, 2005), www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/58.pdf.
 12. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): 416.
 13. These are: “1. Personal victimization; 2. Political grievance; 3. Joining a radical group—the slippery slope; 4. Joining a radical group—the power of love; 5. Extremity shift in like-minded groups; 6. Extreme cohesion under isolation and threat; 7. Competition for the same base of support; 8. Competition with state power—condensation; 9. Within-group competition—fissioning 10. Jujitsu politics; 11. Hate; and 12. Martyrdom.” Ibid, 418.
 14. On terrorism (mostly Islamic) and culture of martyrdom, see D. Cook and O. Allison, *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); M. A. Khan, *The Culture of Martyrdom* (Delhi: Sumit Enterprises, 2008); and Domenico Tosini, “A Sociological Understanding of Suicide Attacks,” *Theory Culture Society* 26, no. 4 (2009): 67–96.
 15. See, the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) and their homonymous ISIS (or Daesh) proto-state formation.
 16. “Fascistization” in Lexico.com Dictionary, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/fascistization> (accessed September 8, 2020).
 17. E.g. the National Fascist Party in Italy; see also the related term Nazification, in Germany.
 18. On fascistization as an “approximation of ‘fascism’, not adoption of fascist ideology” by traditional élites, leading to cohabitations with genuine fascist parties, see Aristotele Kallis, “‘Fascism’, ‘Para-Fascism’ and ‘Fascistization’: On the Similarities of Three Conceptual Categories,” *European History Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003): 219–49.
 19. For works that denied the fascist nature of Ustaša, see Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat: 1941–1945* (Stuttgart: München Oldenbourg, 1964); and James J. Sadkovich, *Italian Support for Croatian Separatism, 1927–1937* (New York and London: Garland, 1987). Stanley Payne argued that the Ustaša was a proto-fascist movement that developed into full-fledged fascism only in 1936–1937: see *A History of Fascism: 1914–1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 326. Roger Griffin claimed that, while extremely violent, the Ustaša lacked a palingenetic vision of mass mobilization for the post-destructive phase, thus remaining a proto-fascist organization: see *The Nature of Fascism*, 120. For an informative work that misses a discussion of the fascist character of Ustaša, see Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret od nastanka do travnja* (Zagreb: Školska Knjiga, 2007). More recent works argue that Ustaša was a fascist movement: see Constantin Iordachi, “Fascism in Southeastern Europe: A Comparison between Romania’s Legion of Archangel Michael and Croatia’s Ustaša,” in *Entangled History of the Balkans*, ed. R. Daskalov and D. Mishkova, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 355–468; Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustaša Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941–1945* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013); and Goran Miljan, *Croatia and the Rise of Fascism: The Youth Movement and the Ustasha during WWII* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018).
 20. The documents can be found in *Hrvatski državni arhiv—HR HDA, Zbirka zapisa upravnih i vojnih vlasti Nezavisne Države Hrvatske i Narodnoslobodilačkog pokreta—ZIG NDH—1549*, Group VI/Box no. 205 (hereafter HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205). The original Croatian text was published in Goran Miljan and Ivica Šute, eds. *Revolucionari i ubojice. Iz povijesti hrvatske nacionalističke emigracije* (Srednja europa, 2017), 53–139.
 21. For memoirs on the NDH, see Slavko Kvaternik, *Vojskovođa i politika: sjećanja Slavka Kvaternika* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 1997); Ante Moškov, *Paveličevo doba* (Split: Laus, 1999); Ivo Rojnica, *Susreti i doživljaji: razdoblje od 1938. do 1990. u mojim sjećanjima*, 3 vols., (München and Barcelona: DoNeHa, 1983, 1994, 1999); Vjekoslav Vrančić, *Branili smo državu: uspomene, osvrti, doživljaji* (Zagreb: HB Press, 2006); Tomislav Jonjić and Stjepan Matković, eds., *Iz korespondencije dr. Mile Budaka: 1907.–1944* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2012); Vladko Maček, *In the Struggle for Freedom* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1957); and Ante Pavelić, *Doživljaji: kako sam osnovao Nezavisnu Državu Hrvatsku* (Zagreb, Croatia: Despot Infinitus, 2015).
 22. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 52.
 23. Ivo Goldstein and Slavko Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 251.
 24. Dejan Djokić, *Yugoslavism: Histories of failed Idea, 1918–1992* (London, UK: Hurst, 2003).

25. Mark Biondich, *The Balkans: Revolution, War, and Political Violence since 1878* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96.
26. On these tensions, see mostly J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934–1941* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962), 1–9; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 118; Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2007), 41; Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska povijest* (Zagreb, Croatia: Novi Liber, 2003), 249; Ljubo Boban, *Maček i politika Hrvatske seljačke stranke, 1928–1941* (Zagreb, Croatia: Novi Liber, 1974), 19; and Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).
27. Biondich, *The Balkans*, 99–102.
28. Miljan and Šute, eds., *Revolucionari*, 26.
29. Goldstein, *Hrvatska*, 249; and Boban, *Maček*, 19.
30. See the Royal Proclamation in Snežana Trifunovska, ed., *Yugoslavia Through Documents: From its Creation to its Dissolution* (Dordrecht; Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1994), 73.
31. See Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 327; Goldstein, *Hrvatska*, 249–51; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, 163–70. For the failure of this process, see Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
32. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Italy, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, *Ispettorato Generale di Pisa retto da Ercole Conti, 1930–1943*, Busta 3. Fasc. 19, 152–3.
33. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Doživljaji iz Beograda*, 3.
34. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Doživljaji iz Beograda*, 5.
35. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Doživljaji iz Beograda*, 3–4.
36. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 3.
37. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 2.
38. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 1.
39. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 4.
40. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 50.
41. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 8.
42. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 50.
43. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 3.
44. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 2.
45. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 23.
46. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 3.
47. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 3.
48. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 3.
49. Hrvatski državni arhiv—HR HDA, Zbirka zapisa upravnih i vojnih vlasti Nezavisne Države Hrvatske i Narodnoslobodilačkog pokreta—ZIG NDH—1549, Group III/Box no. 166 (hereafter HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166), *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Mije Babića*, 7.
50. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166, *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Mije Babića*, 8.
51. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166, *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Mije Babića*, 8; and HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 8–9.
52. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166, *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Mije Babića*, 3; HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 14–15.
53. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166, *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Zvonimira Pospšila*, 12.
54. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 17.
55. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166, *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Mije Babića*, 2.
56. *Ibid.*, 3; and HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 27–31.
57. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Doživljaji iz Beograda*, 3.
58. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 30.
59. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 4.
60. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 30.
61. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, III/166, *Prepis prijepoda preslušnog zapisnika Mije Babića*, 9.
62. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 15.
63. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 18–25.
64. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 81–2.
65. Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 32; Miljan, *Croatia*, 32; and Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 40 and 81–2.
66. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 18.
67. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 8.

68. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 49.
69. HR HDA, ZIG NDH—1549, VI/205, *Zašto sam danas u tuđini?* 33–35.
70. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 97.
71. “POČETCI KRVAVIH PUTEVA USTAŠKE BORBE,” *Nova Hrvatska* no. 198 (November 4, 1941): 5; also Yeomans, *Visions*, 298.
72. McCauley and Moskalenko, “Mechanisms,” 423–4. On the social-psychological dimensions of the “groupthink mechanism” leading to terrorist radicalization, see Tsintsadze-Maass, Maass, “Groupthink,” 735–58.
73. Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Vojskovođa i politika: sjećanja Slavka Kvaternika* (Golden marketing, 1997), 86.
74. R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Fascist Dictatorship* (Penguin Books, 2006), 284.
75. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 257.
76. HR HDA, Služba Državne Sigurnosti Republičkog Sekretarijata za unutrašnje poslove Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske, SDS RSUP SRH—1561, *Materijal o Janka Pusti*—013.2. Further on HDA, SDS RSUP SRH—1561, MOJP—013.2.
77. *Ustaša* (February 1932): 3–4; *Ustaša* (April, 1932): 6; *Ustaša*, May, 1932, 3–4.
78. The constitution was signed on January 7, 1929, in Zagreb by the movement’s founders, and issued by Pavelić’s decree in 1932. Reprinted in “Ustav Ustaša,” *Hrvatski Narod* no. 109 (May 31, 1941): 1.
79. This journal, together with *Grič*, was widely distributed within the Kingdom. See HR HDA, *Režimske i reakcionarne organizacije, 1919–1941*, Grupa VII—1354, box no. 3/1095-1932, “*Grič* i *Ustaša* pronadjeni,” August 22, 1932.
80. *Ustaša*, (February, 1932): 1.
81. *Ustaša*, (January, 1934): 1.
82. *Ustaša* (May, 1932): 1.
83. Danijel Crljen, ed., *Načela hrvatskog Ustaškog pokreta* (Matice Hrvatskih Akad, 1942), 117.
84. Crljen, ed., *Načela hrvatskog*, 32.
85. Vladimir Šadek, “Logor Janka-Puszta i razvoj ustaške organizacije u Podravini do 1934,” *Podravina: časopis za multidisciplinarna istraživanja*, Vol. 11, No. 21 (2012): 47–56.
86. Ante Moškov, *Pavelićeva doba* (Laus, 1999), 91; Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i Ustaše* (Globus, 1978), 114.
87. McCauley, Moskalenko, “Mechanisms,” 426.
88. Moškov, *Pavelićeva doba*, 114.
89. Moškov, *Pavelićeva doba*, 114, fnt. 266.
90. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 265.
91. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 264–65.
92. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, fnt. 827, 264.
93. Unfortunately, Goldstein does not provide archival references to back his claim, which is thus difficult to verify. See Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska, 1918–2008* (EPH Liber, 2008), 146.
94. Mijo Babić, “*Neka znaju oni, koji se tiče!*,” *Ustaša* (October, 1932): 3.
95. Babić, “*Neka znaju oni, koji se tiče!*,” 3.
96. Babić, “*Neka znaju oni, koji se tiče!*,” 3.
97. Jelka Pogorelec, *Tajne emigrantskih zločinaca: o Gustavu Perčecu i drugovima, koji u tuđoj službi rade protiv vlastite domovine grozote na Janka Puzti/ispovijest Jelke Pogorelec* (Zagreb, Croatia: Jugoslovenska štampa, 1933), 25. Pogorelec’s account was highly publicised in the Yugoslav press, but was vehemently denied by Hungarian authorities, who argued she was a Yugoslav secret agent. On that claim, see Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 250.
98. Pogorelec, *Tajne emigrantskih*, 9.
99. Pogorelec, *Tajne emigrantskih*, 30.
100. Pogorelec, *Tajne emigrantskih*, 27.
101. Later on, Kvaternik moved Rajić to the “Paris group” and Kralj to “Marseille group.” Krizman, *Pavelić i Ustaše*, 158.
102. Ben Saul, “The Legal Response of the League of Nations to Terrorism,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4, no. 1 (2006): 78–102; and Michael D. Callahan, *The League of Nations, International Terrorism, and British Foreign Policy, 1934–1938* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
103. League of Nation, *Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism* (bilingual edition, 1937).
104. Šadek, “Logor Janka-puszta i razvoj ustaške organizacije u Podravini do 1934”: 5.
105. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, 33–5.
106. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, 33–34.
107. Krizman, *NHD*, 44; Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 332.
108. Ante Pavelić, *Die Kroatische Frage* (Berlin-Steglitz Privatdr. des Inst. für Grenz- und Auslandstudien, 1936), republished in Croatian as Ivo Bogdan, ed., *Dr. Ante Pavelić riješio je Hrvatsko pitanje* (Zagreb, Croatia: Nova Europa, 1942).
109. The book was published in Italian in 1938 in Sienna under the pseudonym A. S. Mrzlodolski but was confiscated by the Italian authorities. It was published in Croatian as *Strahote zabluda—komunizam i boljševizam u Rusiji i svijetu* (St. Kugli, 1941).

110. Pavelić, *Strahote zabluda*, 261–2.
111. Pavelić, *Strahote zabluda*, 266.
112. Pavelić, *Strahote zabluda*, 273.
113. See Appendix A in Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, 301–2.
114. HR HDA, SDS RSUP SRH—1561, *Dosje Mile Budak*—013.0.52. (hereafter HR HDA, SDS RSUP SRH—1561, DMB—013.0.52.).
115. Višeslav Aralica, *Matica hrvatska u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za Povijest, 2009), 85.
116. HR HDA, SDS RSUP SRH—1561, DMB—013.0.52.
117. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 538.
118. Miljan, *Croatia*, 42–3.
119. On violent cleansing in the NDH, see Tomislav Dulić, “Mass Killing in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945: A Case for Comparative Research,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 255–81; and Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *The Independent State of Croatia 1941–45* (London: Routledge, 2007).
120. See Alexander Korb, “Nation-Building and Mass Violence: The Independent State of Croatia, 1941–45,” in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, edited by Jonathan C. Friedman (Routledge, 2011), 291–302.
121. For the role of grassroots intercommunal violence in forging new group identities in the NDH, see Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Cornell University Press, 2017). Bergholz argues that a better integration of the macro and micro levels of empirical research can provide novel insights on the relationship between nationalism, ethnicity, and violence.
122. See Miljan, *Croatia*, 40–7; and Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 538.
123. Jaša Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941–1945. Žrtve genocida i učesnici Narodnooslobodilačkog rata* (Beograd: Jevrejski istorijski muzej, 1980), 122–3.
124. Goldstein, Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia*, 250.
125. Goldstein, Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia*, 253.
126. Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, 122–3.
127. For details, see Tomislav Dulić, *Utopias of Nation—Local Mass Killings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1941–1942* (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2005), 80–84; and Goldstein, Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia*, 144–52.
128. Goldstein, Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia*, 245.
129. On the elevation of these members into the Ustaša pantheon of martyrs, see Yeomans, *Visions*, 295–344.
130. Yeomans, *Visions*, 319.
131. Yeomans, *Visions*, 319.
132. “POČAST MRTVOM USTAŠKOM BORCU MIJI BABIĆU U ZAGREBU,” *Hrvatski narod*, July 6, 1941, 142, 5.
133. “POČAST MRTVOM,” 5.
134. “DIRLJIV POGREB USTAŠE MIJE BABIĆA,” *Hrvatski narod*, July 6, 1941, 142.
135. “ON NE ŽALI KRVCE VRELE,” *Ustaša* (July 19, 1941): 4, 1.
136. Ivo Korsky, “Ustaška mladež u novoj državi,” *Ustaški godišnjak* (Zagreb: 1942): 207.
137. “Mijo Babić,” *Hrvatski narod* (July 5, 1941): 141, 3.
138. Yeomans, *Visions*, 300.
139. “Krv i žrtve naših boraca—VELIČINA ŽRTAVA USTAŠKIH BORACA BABIĆA I POGORELCA,” *Hrvatski narod*, July 9, 1941, 145: 3.
140. Pejnović, “MIJO BABIĆ,” 7–8.
141. Rory Yeomans, “Cults of Death and Fantasies of Annihilation: The Croatian Ustasha Movement in Power, 1941–1945,” *Central Europe* 10, no. 2 (2005): 121–42.
142. On this phenomenon, see McCauley, Moskalenko, “Mechanisms,” 425–6.
143. Constantin Iordachi, “Fascism and Terrorism: The Iron Guard in Interwar Romania,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Terrorism*, edited by Carola Dietze and Claudia Verhoeven (Oxford University Press, online edition Sep 2020), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199858569.013.40.
144. On the Second Wave of terrorism, see David C. Rapoport, “Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, edited by A. K. Cronin and J. M. Ludes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46–73.
145. On the link between international discourses on terrorism after the Marseille assassination and current discourses after the 9/11 terrorist attack, see Ondrej Ditrych, “‘International Terrorism’ as Conspiracy: Debating Terrorism in the League of Nations,” *Historical Social Research* 38, no. 1 (2013): 200–10.
146. In fact, the post-1945 history of Ustaša activists and the activity of Ante Pavelić in exile, until his death in 1959, provide a bridge between interwar and postwar terrorism: see Mate Nikola Tokić, “The End of ‘Historical-Ideological Bedazzlement’: Cold War Politics and Émigré Croatian Separatist Violence, 1950–1980,” *Social Science History* 36, no. 3 (2012): 421–45.