**Goran Miljan. *Croatia and the Rise of Fascism: The Youth Movement and the Ustasha During WWII*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2018. x + 278pp. ISBN: 9781788312097. English.**

At first nothing more than a journal published by a handful Croatian politicians who found themselves in exile after the establishment of the royal dictatorship in January 1929, during the 1930s the Ustasha grew into one of the most extremist fascist movements in Europe. An anonymous journalist wrote in the pages of *Ustaša* in February 1932 that “THE GUN, REVOLVER, BOMB AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE are idols which shall bring back the land to the peasant, bread to the worker and freedom to Croatia […] those are the bells which shall be the harbinger of a new dawn and of the RESURRECTION OF THE INDEPENDENT CROATIAN STATE.” (Quoted in Miljan 2018:34-35) The movement’s leader, Ante Pavelić, had opposed the multiethnic Yugoslav state since its creation in 1918. He and his followers celebrated violence and death in the service of the Croatian nation, including an attempt to assassinate the king. The Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941 put Pavelić in power as the head of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). While in power Ustasha activists murdered between 300,000 and 400,000 Serbs and other minorities (Levy 2009: 826) before they themselves were killed by Partisan forces in 1945.

 A number of recent studies have examined the wartime history of the Ustasha regime (Tomasevich 2001; Dulić 2005; Yeomans 2013; Dinu 2013; Korb 2014; Greble 2016), but most of these dedicate a chapter at most to the movement before it came to power. Miljan’s detailed analysis of Ustasha politics, rhetoric, and practice from 1927 to 1944 is thus a welcome addition to the literature. Based on extensive research in Croatian archives and a vast array of newspapers and magazines from the period, Miljan contextualizes the movement’s history within the story of Yugoslav politics. He provides a healthy number of direct quotations from his sources, providing English speaking readers and students with increased access to Ustasha writings.

 Miljan draws on Max Weber’s concept of ‘charisma’ as developed by Constantin Iordachi (2004) and Aristotle Kallis (2006). He argues that “interwar charismatic nationalism was based and structured on the idea of a chosen, glorious national community led by its charismatic leader’s divine mission towards salvation.” (2018:15) Miljan points out that Ustasha nationalism presupposed a particular relationship between Pavelić and his followers. Calling him “Poglavnik” (The Prophet), Ustasha activists wrote about Pavelić in messianic terms. What is particularly interesting is that Pavelić’s charisma was established primarily through writing and at a time when he was not even in the country. The Ustasha had very few members inside the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the mid-1930s, and activists developed Ustasha ideology primarily in exile. The writers who created the myth of the Poglavnik were “those who belonged to [his] initial group of followers, who joined and followed the Poglavnik for more than a decade before the achievement of his ‘mobilizing myth’ the independent Croatia, who developed an emotional bond with him, and who entrusted him with their lives.” (Miljan 2018:58) The image of the charismatic leader was thus already fully formed by the time Pavelić arrived in Yugoslavia, and his individual personality played a relatively minor role in its development.

 The majority of the book is dedicated to a study of the Ustasha youth wing. Similar studies exist on the Hitler Youth (Klaus 1980; Littlejohn 1988; Kater 2004) and the Italian Youth of the Lictor (Koon 1985; Ponzio 2015), and Miljan builds on and extends the earlier literature. He draws frequent comparisons with both movements, showing how the organization and practice of Ustasha youth was modelled heavily on foreign examples. Moving beyond asymmetrical comparison, Miljan draws out transnational connections between fascist youth movements. Entangled transnational histories of fascist movements and regimes have become increasingly popular in recent years (Reichardt & Nolzen 2005; Finchelstein 2010; Hofmann 2015; Roberts 2016). As a result, historians are coming to see fascism as a collection of movements and regimes interacting with one another across the globe rather than as a single ideology that manifested itself differently in different circumstances. Miljan’s research supports this trend, situating the Ustasha youth within the context of the European Youth Association, an international gathering of fascist youth from 14 European countries in 1942. Whereas this association received little press coverage inside Germany, it was a major news item in the NDH, where Ustasha leaders worked to emphasize Croatia’s place within a new, fascist Europe. Despite their sympathies for Mussolini and Hitler, Miljan demonstrates that the closest model for the Ustasha youth organization was neither Italian nor German, but Slovak. He notes that Slovak and Croatian newspapers wrote extensively about each other, and points out that the two fascist regimes shared a number of similarities. Not only did the organization of the Ustasha Youth show distinct similarities with that of the Hlinka Youth, but the two groups interacted with each other in a sustained manner over a period of several years. In particular, representatives of the Hlinka Youth visited Zagreb in October 1941, followed by joint summer camps and training schools throughout the war.

 Not everyone in the NDH joined the Ustasha, and Miljan pays particular attention to the relationship between state school teachers and the Ustasha youth. He notes that fascist students were not allowed to physically intimidate their teachers as they were in Germany, but that the relationship was strained nonetheless. Nor did the Ustasha attempt to reorganize the school system as Mussolini had done. The regime failed to mobilize teachers as its supporters, and had to resort to threatening deportation some to concentration camps to get its way. Miljan describes Ustasha youth camps and schools in some detail, explaining how the regime attempted to militarize young people and impose its specific gender roles on the next generation. Despite his discussions of militarization, the book pays surprisingly little attention to the genocidal activities of the regime. Whether this is because “youth” – vaguely defined throughout – did not participate in the killings or because doing so would have distracted from the book’s clear focus on the organization, rhetoric, and practice of activities focused on “youth” is not clear. Regardless, Miljan’s study is a well-researched contribution to the growing literature on the Ustasha that treats a number of hitherto unexplored topics.

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