CHAPTER EIGHT

THE IDEAL RACIAL TYPE: THE ARYAN CROAT

Introduction

The racial narrative presented in the NDH stressed the select and exceptional racial (physical and spiritual) qualities of the Aryan Croat. As centuries of foreign rule were thought to have seriously corrupted a large portion of the Croatian people, the Ustashe regarded it as their main mission to ‘reawaken’ the racially authentic Croat (koljenović). The Ustasha movement thus described its attainment of power in April 1941 as the beginning of a ‘Croatian revolution.’ This particular ‘revolution’ was similar to the ‘revolutions’ taking place in National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy. The National Socialists and Fascists spoke of the revolution that would bring about the ‘new man’, who in many respects was simply a stereotype of the ancient Germanic or Roman heroes.1 The Nazis had a clear idea of the physical type of the ideal German (i.e. the Nordic racial type), while the Fascists focused on moulding a modern ‘fascist man’ of action informed by the eternal Roman past.2 For the Nazis, ‘the man of the future had always existed, even in the past, for the race was eternal, like the trunk of a tree, while the ideal man of Italian fascism created new values.’3 Otherwise, the Nazis and Fascists shared the vision of the ‘new man’ being masculine, athletic, brave, spartan and spiritual, ‘the very opposite of muddleheaded, talkative, intellectualizing liberals and socialists.’4

The Ustashe had a similar vision of the new Croatian man as a type who both represented the future and reflected the past:

Ustashism is creating the new man in the new order. The new Croatian man, meaning the Ustasha, must be a man of duty, responsibility, work, struggle, honesty, heroism, zeal, [for] he has to be a complete man and Croat. This new man, the Ustasha, must, in his work and in his public and private life,

1 Mosse, Fascist Revolution, 31–33.
2 Ibid., 31–32.
3 Ibid., 32.
connect all the new virtues of Ustashism with the virtues of the old Croats, the eternal fighters and warriors.\textsuperscript{5}

\textit{The New (Old) Croatian Man}

The task of creating, or rather reawakening, the new (old) Croatian man was clearly spelled out soon after the Ustashe set up government. On 26 April 1941, in an article in \textit{Hrvatski narod} under the title, ‘The Meaning of the Croatian Spiritual Revolution’, the writer and journalist Ivo Lendić (1908–1982) sought to explain how the enemies of Croatia had tried to extinguish the Croatian ‘spirit.’ Spirit was the ‘source of strength’ for both individuals and communities and that is why ‘all those who want to enslave man [and] the nation seek to enslave their soul, for he who has preserved inner freedom, the freedom of one’s soul, is not a slave.’\textsuperscript{6} The enemies of the Croats had sought to destroy the Croatian spirit or soul by plundering and appropriating the cultural wealth of Croatia. As Lendić argued:

\begin{quote}
We had our own Old Croatian language, our own Old Croatian alphabet, our own Old Croatian Glagolitic literature, like no other so-called Slavic people. However, we Croats were not allowed to be proud of this. Along came Czech, Serbian, Russian and Yugoslav scholars who proclaimed that language as Old Slavic, the Glagolitic literature as Old Slavic, the Glagolitic alphabet as Old Slavic.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

The same appropriation occurred in the case of Croatian folk poetry, which

\begin{quote}
…by its quality belongs to the best products ever created by the common spirit of one people on this earth. Our folk ballads surpass the worth of Ossian’s ballads. For Goethe, one of the greatest geniuses of the modern age, the Croatian Muslim ballad of The Wife of Hasan-Aga, which was otherwise preserved by Croat Catholics, shined as [an amazing] discovery.\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

Lendić noted how the Serbs, ‘a people without a cultured tradition’, even wanted to claim the old Croatian city of Dubrovnik as Serbian, this despite the fact that the Ragusan Republic had actually forbidden any

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\textsuperscript{6} Ivo Lendić, ‘Smisao hrvatske duhovne revolucije’, \textit{Hrvatski narod}, 26 April 1941, 8.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
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