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ANTI-JEWISH PROPAGANDA IN THE NDH AND THE SLOVAK STATE 1939 – 1945

By Madeline Vadkerty

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"It is in the Church's interest to solve the Jewish question as quickly as possible. We cannot be indifferent to the fact that some foreign element constantly threatens us materially and morally. Every town should have its own ghetto. Jews should be marked so everyone can avoid them....The Jew who studies the Talmud is dangerous." February 2, 1939, interview of Jesuit priest R. Mikuš, Slovák newspaper (Bratislava, Slovakia)

"Judaism, capitalism and freemasonry are all closely connected. Not only here but all over the world. ...Having power and money, Judaism was the master of economic and political life...for decades, Judaism, capitalism and freemasonry have been leeches of Croatian blood....The Ustaša spirit views Judaism, capitalism and freemasonry as an irreconcilable enemy...The Croatian people lost a lot of blood. It would be good to know who drank that blood." (Zagreb, NDH) "Dangerous Leeches of Croatian Blood," *Hrvatski narod*, no 18, 1941:1.

Introduction

The use of the word "propaganda" has gone through some interesting changes over time. According to the dictionary, its earliest use was in reference to "*Congregatio de propaganda fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of Faith)," an organization established in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV as a means of advancing Catholic missionary activity in the world. From the Latin verb *propagare*, which means "to propagate, spread or disseminate." The word was not used widely for two hundred years or so, when it began taking on the connotations that are more familiar

today. In modern parlance, the word propaganda refers to “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause or a person.” It can also refer to “ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately in order to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause; also, a public action having such an effect.”¹

This paper examines the nature of the anti-Semitic propaganda used by the Slovak State and the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska -- NDH) during World War II, taking into account the two countries’ unique and common objectives, evolving political contexts, strategies, and tactics. The paper also analyzes how those activities fit into the wider strategy of nation building and the attempt to create a new collective identity which was to be predicated on the concept of exclusivity and racial/cultural superiority.

Though established under very different circumstances, both countries owed their respective existences to Nazi Germany and came under their tutelage. Slovakia and NDH were essentially puppets which embraced the Nazi’s race-based value system. They took their cues from Berlin and tailored German-produced propaganda and messaging to suit their specific citizenries, cultures, and political prerogatives in cooperation with the German embassies in Zagreb and Bratislava.

This author’s contention is that the anti-Jewish propaganda of the Slovak wartime state and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was only one aspect of a wider campaign employed by both entities to inculcate ideology as well as define and legitimize their new national identities and social orders to the satisfaction of their Nazi sponsor. Simply put, this meant doing away with non-approved media outlets (which both countries swiftly did), censorship and identifying and communicating publicly the criteria that made someone acceptable or unacceptable in the new society so as to bring about the desired social change.

The second conclusion made in this paper shows that in both countries, the threat allegedly posed by the Jews was ever-present, but propaganda evolved based on milestones attained both domestically and internationally. These markers included:

- The establishment of the two countries
- The ensuing stigmatization of Jews and others and the elevation of "Aryans"
- Exposing citizens to the ideologies of the new regime in order to define the new society

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/propaganda#note-1>

- Preparing the public and explaining anti-Jewish measures and legislation before, during, and after they took place
- The shifts that took place in the world war with Germany as enemies changed, and the identification of new enemies to be accompanied by the supposed linkage of new enemies with world Jewry.

Having control of the media, access to financial means, and an apparatus to create fear in anyone who opposed these changes, were key for both nations.

In the case of NDH, Serbs (Orthodox Christians), Jews, and Roma were unwelcome. In Slovakia, Jews, Roma, and Czechs were the groups considered undesirable. In other words, propaganda accorded one group superiority, couching the identity of that group in terms of racial purity and/or cultural preeminence, while at the same time discrediting the groups deemed undesirable as being racially impure and/or culturally inferior. The concerted vilification of Jews through the use of propaganda leveraged evocative rhetoric and imagery to reinforce official anti-Semitism. There was no place in either country for Jews or other seemingly less worthy groups of people. They did not belong, they could not—whether they wanted to or not. Jews were unwelcome for perceived racial and biological reasons. One can change one’s religion, but not one’s racial (or ethnic) makeup, which left them with few options.²

Similarities and Differences between Slovak and NDH Propaganda

The Slovak State was created upon the split of Czechoslovakia. After a brief Autonomy Period from October 6, 1938 to March 14, 1939, the Slovak State was formed.³ Croatia was established through direct military intervention by the German Army on April 10, 1941. Despite their different beginnings, both countries had authoritarian governments that suppressed pluralism, free speech, and any form of opposition. Both countries were formed at a time when Hitler’s power was growing. They were both predominantly Catholic, had similar societal structures and important agrarian sectors.

There were, however, some significant differences between Slovakia and the NDH. The Hlinka Slovak People’s Party had been in existence as a traditional political party for over twenty

² Both regimes had exemption policies for Jews.

³ To understand the Autonomy Period, see this link: <https://www.ehri-project.eu/report-ehri-workshop-slovak-autonomy-1938-%E2%80%93-1939-initial-phase-holocaust-and-persecution>

years and had been in the governing coalition of the previous regime. When its founder Andrej Hlinka died, he was succeeded by Jozef Tiso, who was well known and charismatic. The fact that he was a Catholic priest provided an added, positive dimension to his ascendancy. On the other hand, Ante Pavelić, *Poglavnik* [Head, equivalent to the German word, *Führer*], the leader of the Ustaša movement, had been in exile since 1929 and only returned to Croatia a week after the NDH was established on April 10, 1941. He was not a well-known figure. Pavelić needed to become identified with the new regime. In order to do that, he traveled throughout the country, reporting on his visits in every issue of *Hrvatski narod* newspaper.⁴

Another difference between the two countries was that the majority of the Slovak population was Christian, with Jews representing 4% of the population. The population in NDH was more varied, especially because Bosnia and Hercegovina, with its Muslim population, was annexed to wartime Croatia. Unlike Jews, however, Muslims were not put in a negative light in the NDH. The regime called them “the purest Croats.”⁵ This benevolent attitude was based on the idea that “Muslims were descendants of the Croatian medieval nobility.”⁶ Serbs, on the other hand “carried a specific Serbian soul emanating from centuries of bad breeding. They could not be allowed to ‘defile’ the Croatian ‘national body.’”⁷ Roma were simply considered “subhuman.”⁸

There was also a noteworthy difference between the Jewish communities in the two countries. There were approximately 89,000 Jews in Slovakia. The majority were Orthodox Jews who lived in the eastern part of the country, far from the capital of Bratislava. They were recognizable because of their caftans, beards, and side locks. On the other hand, there were approximately 40,000 Jews in NDH. They were mostly Reformed Jews, many of whom lived in Zagreb and had become more assimilated.⁹ Many Jews in Croatia did not speak the Croatian

⁴ Michala Lončíková, *Ideologický nepriateľ Hitlerových satelitov* (Bratislava, História, číslo 3-4, 14.ročník, 2015) p. 26.

⁵ Tomislav Dulić, *Gacko Massacre, June 1941* (Paris: SciencesPo Mass Violence and Research Network, 2011), pp. 1-2, also see <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/gacko-massacre-june-1941>. (pls. state when accessed, whenever you use an internet source.

⁶ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941 – 1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 488-491.

⁷ *Hrvatski narod* newspaper, July 31, 1941.

⁸ Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p. 54.

⁹ Michala Lončíková, *Ideologický nepriateľ Hitlerových satelitov* (Bratislava, História, číslo 3-4, 14.ročník, 2015), p. 27.

language but used German, though increasingly, they used Croatian. And in Slovakia, they were perceived of as Hungarian speakers, which reinforced the notion that they were foreign.

Propaganda was an important priority in both nations and the two governments invested significant means and energy into the effort to garner public support and to gain followers. The Slovak government established *Úřád propagandy* as an independent agency within the Prime Minister's Office (*Úřád předsednictva vlády*). In the NDH, the responsibility for generating propaganda evolved over time. The Main Directorate for Propaganda (*Glavno ravnateljstvo za promidžbu – GRP*), was headed by Ivo Bogdan. There were personnel and administrative changes that took place over time and eventually, propaganda was issued under the auspices of the Ministry of People's Enlightenment.

Both countries had German advisors for propaganda who worked at the German embassy. Dr. Anton Endrös in Slovakia and Dr. Robert Katschinka in the NDH prepared strategies to increase the propaganda's effectiveness, wrote instructions for the newspapers and influenced the hiring and firing of journalists. They judged the appropriateness of the propaganda that was being generated in Berlin for the countries where they were stationed. The German Foreign Office distributed posters, brochures, and flyers and relied on the advisors to determine whether the materials would be effective in the countries where they were posted.¹⁰

Propaganda evolved after the Nazis broke the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on June 22, 1941, and attacked the USSR and after the US joined the war. NDH and Slovakia both sent soldiers into the conflict. Neither country had previously supported Marxism, but they had not criticized it as openly until after Operation Barbarossa began. Operation Barbarossa was Nazi the code name for the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union, which started on Sunday, 22 June 1941. The operation put into action Nazi Germany's ideological goal of conquering the western Soviet Union so as to repopulate it with Germans. There was a marked increase in propaganda about this external threat, which both countries linked to world Jewry. The Slovak State was entering its third year of existence, but the NDH was in its third month.

The end of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact created an opening for propaganda about Judeo-Bolshevism in both countries. Croatia reacted more quickly, the day Operation Barbarossa began, when it printed an article in *Hrvatski narod* on June 23, entitled, "*The Beginning of the End of*

¹⁰ Lončíková, *Ideologický nepriateľ*), p. 28.

Bolshevism – Germany Defends Europe from Jewish Bolshevism.” The article continues to explain that

The USSR had exemplified the unification of the Jewish system of corrupting a small nation and the principles of Tsarist political politics. The Jews were the ones who brought about the Bolshevik Revolution so they could put Tsarist leaders in place. The Soviet Union is led by Jews and foreign elements that understand race and intentionally began this war and waited for its time to come to attack a weakened Europe and achieve its plan.¹¹

Interestingly, Slovak newspaper in Bratislava printed a special edition, but it did not immediately note any connection with Judeo-Bolshevism. That did not happen until Alexander Mach¹² made a statement on June 25, 1941:

Since we have begun our struggle with plutocracy and Judeo-Capitalism, we must also fight against Judeo-Bolshevism, because they are both connected, and it is completely logical that Bolshevik Moscow and Plutocratic London have joined together. The mother of poverty and modern slavery is Judeo-Capitalism. Judeo-Capitalism creates material poverty and Judeo-Bolshevism takes economic advantage of the poverty of working people and even worse, spiritually. Today we too are joining in the fight against this common enemy, against Judeo-Capitalism and Judeo-Bolshevik insanity.

The symbiotic connection between Communism and plutocracy became a common theme in political cartoons in both countries. The Slovak magazine *Kocúr* and its Croatian equivalent *Bič* both lampooned Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden (the British Minister of Foreign Affairs) and the British Cabinet on a regular basis. The cartoons also featured the US once it joined the fighting. American Jews were blamed in the propaganda for bringing the USA into the war. There were also cartoons of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor Roosevelt. A caricature of a supposedly naked Eleanor Roosevelt being squeezed in the grip of a huge, powerful snake in the Garden of Eden, a snake bearing Jewish stars on its body and the head of a Jew with a hammer and sickle on its forehead, is particularly strong. (See Appendix)

The threat of international Jewry was a dominant theme in Croatian anti-Semitic political cartoons. *Kocúr* in Slovakia in 1941 and 1942 was focusing its energies on such domestic issues as the aryанизation¹³ of Jewish property and the deportation of Jews. However, in *Bič*, there are international themes. It is worth noting that the violence perpetrated on Croat soil against Jews,

¹¹ Lončíková, p. 29.

¹² Alexander Mach (1902 – 1980) was Minister of the Interior of the Slovak State.

¹³ Term for the transfer of Jewish property to non-Jewish hands.

Serbs, Roma, and political opponents is not depicted in Bič, most likely because of the scope of the brutality with which the violence was carried out.

The fight against Bolshevism was closer to home. Partisan units under Tito represented a constant, ever present threat for the Pavelić regime. There is nothing related to the partisans in Slovakia until after the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising in August of 1944. The anti-partisan themes appeared earlier and more frequently in NDH propaganda. This propaganda also features anti-Semitic content. The Croats dreaded a partisan victory because of the connection to Bolshevism. Posters and flyers stimulating fear about partisans were distributed to the public saying: “Tito’s Balkans would be the grave of freedom. Workers and farmers would be imprisoned in labor camps. And it would be heaven for Jewish and Bolshevik commissars!”¹⁴ (See Appendix)

Anti-Semitic propaganda appeared under the Slovak regime as early as 1938 and continued with varying degrees of intensity until 1945. In NDH the timeline was shorter because the new regime did not come into place until April 1941. It is not a coincidence that the strategies and tactics of the two regimes were remarkably similar because they were taking direction from Nazi advisors and using German-generated source material.

Strategies and Tactics¹⁵

The media employed to propagate mistrust and hatred toward Jews included film, newspapers, speeches, posters, art, and radio. I delved into selected themes, using as many examples from different types of media as possible, in order to show how well both regimes utilized them strategically in the service of their objectives. It is clear that the governments of both countries had a comprehensive strategy in what today would be called an “information war” which they could control, thanks to the undemocratic nature of their regimes and their monopolies on power and public communication.

Strategies included:

- The deployment of specifically anti-Jewish themes, stereotypes and tropes
- The use of “nation-building” themes¹⁶

¹⁴ Lončíková, p. 30.

¹⁵ I distinguished between strategy and tactics using this definition from the www.strategyskills.com: “Strategy is long term and tactics are short term. They are both how one achieves goals and objectives. Strategy is our path or bridge from where we are today to our goal. It is our general resource allocation plan.”

¹⁶ These are themes that do not mention Jews specifically, but are designed to elevate the “acceptable” group- MV

- Leveraging all available media
- Playing on fear (both about the Jews themselves and about helping Jews)¹⁷
- Relying on the psychological desire of people for belonging, a universal human need¹⁸

Tactics included:

- Harsh anti-Semitic rhetoric and making that rhetoric ubiquitous to reinforce messaging
- A focus on youth
- Slogans (such as *Sieg heil* in Germany, *Bog i Hrvati -- Za dom spremni* in Croatia (God and the Croats – Prepared for the Homeland)¹⁹ and *Za Boha, za národ* in Slovakia (For God and Country)²⁰
- The use of lexical triggers. These are word pairs that carry an opposite cognitive association and which are intuitively appealing, for example, enemy/friend, good/evil and innocent/guilty.²¹
- Lying.²²

Numerous common themes I identified that the two countries shared regarding the undesirability of the Jews in their societies. I also found themes designed to propagate a positive image of the new countries that do not mention the Jews (who seem conspicuous by their absence):

Anti-Jewish Themes:

- The Jews are an undesirable race of people and are biologically inferior
- They are our eternal enemy
- They are responsible for the death of Jesus
- The Jews thrive on chaos and war

¹⁷ <https://sites.psu.edu/aspsy/2014/04/13/our-need-to-belong/> - This link has some interesting theories about the human need to belong. It describes this need as being deeply rooted in our psyche and related to evolution.

¹⁸ In Slovakia, there was a term “*Biely Žid*” or “White Jew” which was used to denigrate those who sympathized with Jews. I have found no such term denoting Jewish sympathizers in Croatia.

¹⁹ Slavko Kvaternik and Ante Pavelić proclaimed this statement at the end of the speech announcing the creation of the NDH on April 10, 1941 on Radio Zagreb. There is a recording of the speech at: <https://youtu.be/xV1YCQ-6xfA>

²⁰ The expression for God and Country in Slovakia came from Andrej Hlinka (1864 – 1938), a charismatic Catholic priest who believed that Slovaks deserved to have their own country.

²¹ Darko Gavrilović, *How the Ustasha Regime Exploited Prejudices and Stereotypes About Jews in Creating the Myth about Enemy* (sic), Novi Sad, 2016, YDK page 79.

²² The expression “big lie” was coined by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. It refers to manipulating people by telling a lie so ludicrous that it must be true.

- For our society to be healthy, we must purge ourselves of unwanted elements; the Jews are likened to a germ, worm, or leech
- The Jews caused our current problems, and when they are gone, all of our problems will disappear along with them
- The Jews took away our wealth, the riches of the country are unjustly concentrated in their hands
- The Jews are Communists, Bolsheviks, Freemasons, and capitalists who are responsible for the spread of liberalism
- Jews are foreign agents of Judeo-Bolshevism and Judeo-Capitalism
- Jews participate in a conspiracy for world domination
- Jews are foreign
- Jews may look human, but they are agents of the Devil
- Anyone who helps a Jew is harming the national interest

Nation-Building Themes/Strategies:

- Our nationhood was long denied, and we suffered greatly, but we are no longer victims
- We are building a new, healthy society based on racial purity and cultural superiority
- Who belongs in the new social order and the development of an “us vs. them” attitude
- National identification with Catholicism in both countries
- Aryans are superior racially
- Focus on youth and inculcating them with ideology
- The elevation of the peasantry and farmers
- A return to traditional values and Catholicism
- Denigration of the previous regime, which had allowed all kinds of dangerous “isms” into society The portrayal of Nazi Germany, and by extension, Adolf Hitler as a friend.

Jews and Race: Blood and Biological Unworthiness

Looking at this issue is essential for analyzing the underpinnings of the anti-Jewish propaganda in the NDH and Slovakia. Identifying the so-called “Jewish Question” as a *racial* issue was part and parcel of Nazi ideology. It changed the conversation about anti-Semitism, a phenomenon that was nothing new in Europe. Previously, however, Jews had been mainly

identified on a confessional basis and to some degree a cultural one. In shifting public discourse to the notion of race, Hitler skillfully had tapped into something that transcended national boundaries. The concept of race worked across borders.²³ Racism and the principle of cultural exclusivity and superiority had helped Germany define its own “German-ness.” The support of Ante Pavelić²⁴ and Jozef Tiso²⁵ for this concept contributed to their ascent to power.

Certain conditions needed to be in place to make the “race card” effective: 1) increased ethno-centrism, 2) in-country racial segregation, 3) creating an image of the perceived enemy through stereotyping and dehumanization, 4) promoting the idea that this enemy was participating in some type of conspiracy – for example, Jews, Communists, capitalists, freemasons or American imperialists, 5) the demonization of the enemy group and the sanctification of one’s own group, 6) failed economic conditions, and 7) fear and uncertainty about the future.²⁶ The rhetoric used by politicians presented the conjured positive identity of being associated with having “pure blood” as being primordial and of primary importance.²⁷ The “race card” offered fertile ground for stigmatizing Jews and others deemed unworthy.

Generating Fear

Fear is an essential element of political propaganda. It has an important influence on thinking and human behavior and has played a key role in human history and in individual and group behavior. It is also an important tool for dominating others. Fear has been employed for millennia as a tactic. It is deeply rooted in human neurobiology and belongs to the basic experiences of every human being. Fear is an essential tool used by totalitarian regimes, and it is skillfully spread through propaganda. Propaganda would lose its hold on people if not for the element of fear.²⁸

²³ Jakub Grygar, *Stín Šoa nad Evropou* (Prague, Židovské museum v Praze, 2001) p. 8.

²⁴ Pavelić (1889 – 1959) “Poglavnik” who founded the Ustaša movement and governed the NDH from 1941 – 1945.

²⁵ Jozef Tiso (1887 – 1947), President of the Slovak wartime state from 1939 – 1945.

²⁶ Grygar, *Stín Šoa nad Evropou*, p. 17.

²⁷ Grygar, p. 15.

²⁸ Natalia Veselská, *Storočie propagandy, Slovensko v osídlach ideológií, Strach: Nástroj moci* (Bratislava, AEP, 2005), p. 181.

Jews are the Enemy

Umberto Eco, in his essay on “Inventing the Enemy” stated that “having an enemy is important, not only for defining our identity, but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our values system and, in seeking to overcome it, to demonstrate our own worth. So, when there is no enemy, we have to invent one.”²⁹

Both countries depicted Jews as internal and external enemies. In Slovakia, the slogan “Jews are and always will be our greatest enemy” is often seen in speeches and in print. In Croatia the repeated references are to Jews as an “irreconcilable enemy.”

In his 1936 paper, Ante Pavelić listed the Croats’ enemies as being “The Serbian government, international Freemasonry, the Jews and Communism” (in that order). NDH’s anti-Jewish legislation referred to the protection of Croatian “blood and honor,” suggesting that Jewish blood polluted their society, and that Croats needed to be protected.

Ante Pavelić wrote “The Croat Question” in 1936. This manifesto identified the Croats’ enemies and established the Croats as the superior group:

Today, practically all finance and nearly all commerce in Croatia is in Jewish hands. This became possible only through the support of the state, which thereby seeks, on one hand, to strengthen the pro-Serbian Jews, and on the other, to weaken Croat national strength. The Jews celebrated the establishment of the so-called Yugoslav state with great joy, because a national Croatia could never be as useful to them as a multi-national Yugoslavia; for in national chaos lies the power of the Jews... In fact, as the Jews had foreseen, Yugoslavia became, in consequence of the corruption of official life in Serbia, a true Eldorado of Jewry...The entire press in Croatia is also in Jewish-masonic hands...No one not of Croat race and Croat blood may participate in Croat state and national leadership.³⁰

In Slovakia, the elimination of the Jews and other enemies of Slovakia was also portrayed as a necessity. The Jews were an internal enemy that was also associated with external enemies (USA, Great Britain, USSR). Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler were depicted in propaganda as a friend of Slovakia and the NDH.³¹ This quote from a speech delivered by Jozef Tiso in Holič on August 14, 1942, depicts this Jewish threat and explains why neutralizing that threat is not in violation of Christian principles:

²⁹ Anca Andriescu Garcia, *Inventing the Enemy: When Propaganda Becomes History* (Valdosta, Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica, 5, 1, 2013): 59-66.

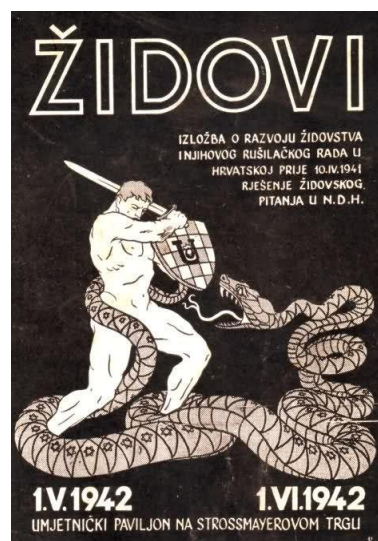
³⁰ <http://chnm.gmu.edu/history/faculty/kelly/blogs/h312/wp-content/sources/pavelic.pdf>

³¹ Eduard Nižňanský, *Obráz neprijateľ'a v propaganda počas II. Svetovej vojny na Slovensku*, (Banská Bystrica, Muzeum Slovenskeho národného povstania a Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2018), pp. 5 – 6.

People ask whether what is being done with the Jews is Christian. Is it human? Is it not robbery? ... I ask is it Christian when the nation wants to free itself from its eternal enemy—the Jew? ... Love of self is a command from God, and this love of self commands me to remove ... everything that damages me or that threatens my life. I don't think I need to convince anyone that the Jewish element threatened the lives of Slovaks. ... It would have looked even worse if we hadn't pulled ourselves together in time, if we hadn't purged them from us. And we did so according to divine command: Slovak, cast off your parasite.³²

Dehumanization of Jews

Dehumanization is a technique used to marginalize an enemy. Posters depicted Jews as animals in Croatia to make them appear unhuman/ animal-like: The above image was part of an exhibition that took place on May 1, 1942 in Zagreb called “On the Development of Judaism and its Destructive Undertakings in Croatia before the 10th of April, 1941 and Solution to the Jewish Question in NDH.” In Croatian propaganda, in addition to the image of a venomous snake, there were posters depicting Jews as a spider with its legs wrapped around the globe. In Slovak propaganda, depictions of Jews consisted of caricatures of Jews’ facial features with exaggerated noses who were fat and homely.



Jews were also depicted so as appear to be devilish. (See Appendix) A statement issued by the Ministry of the Interior in Slovakia (undated):

³² Rajcan, Vanda; Vadkerty, Madeline; Hlavinka, Ján, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933 – 1945*, Volume III (Bloomington, Indiana University Press and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2018), p. 847.

There is a stupid phrase that Jews are also people – but Jews are agents of the Devil. The Devil, when he wanted to make his agents look like people, created the Jew. The Jew is not a creation of God, but of the Devil, and that is why the Jew is not a person, he just looks like one. God will not forgive anyone who helps a Jew in any way.³³

Singling out internal and external enemies conversely means identifying friends. In the case of Croatian and Slovak propaganda, Hitler and Nazi Germany, and the relationship between the two countries and their Nazi sponsor were frequently highlighted in propaganda.



Nation Building

I view this category as trying to forge a common identity in the societies of the new regimes. The last section focused on what Croats and Slovaks were not. This section focuses more on what aspect was being elevated in propaganda.

³³ Ivan Kamenec, "Ked' striel'ajú aj slová: Storočie propagandy: Slovensko v osidlach ideológií, (Bratislava, AEP, 2005), p. 104.

The Catholic Church and Traditional Values

There is a religious component in both Slovak and Croat national identification. The Catholic religion imbued both countries as the most basic form of national differentiation influencing culture and traditions. The propaganda of both regimes stressed a return to traditional values, something that pleased the Catholic Church. The Church wanted to weaken the trends that had lessened its influence after the 1848 revolution, and which had produced liberalism, Communism, Freemasonry, capitalism and other “ills” that had had a deleterious effect on Church authority.

Some clergy in the Catholic Church promulgated anti-Semitic propaganda in both countries. They portrayed the Jew as an enemy who had killed Jesus and did not accept him as the Messiah. It should be noted that some clergy tried to help Jews. Others distanced themselves from the two regimes. It is not possible to assess an entire institution and its contribution to the Holocaust as if the Church were a monolithic entity.

The fact that Tiso was a Catholic priest with a following who saw no moral conflict when it came to anti-Jewish persecution in Slovakia certainly impacted public thinking. He stated several times that the persecution of Slovak Jews was in alignment with Christian morality. It is interesting to note that most rescues of Slovak Jews by Christians did not take place during the deportations carried out by the Slovak State in 1942, but after the Nazis invaded the country and resumed the deportations in 1944. There may be no connection, and certainly, by the time of the Slovak National Uprising, it was also clear that the Nazis were losing the war.

The Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac, played an important role.³⁴ However, there is much conflicting material about him and his stance toward the Jewish population in NDH. He is quoted as having stated in a letter to Minister Andrija Artuković³⁵,

I had the honor of addressing you with a petition saying that I prayed that, when adopting anti-Jewish laws, one should take into account those members of the Jewish race who converted to Christianity. However, the laws that were passed on April 30 ignore religious affiliation. We were informed that for reasons independent of us, the laws needed to be promulgated in that form, but that their application in practice would not be so cruel.

³⁴ Alojzije Stepinac (1898-1960) is a controversial figure and it is not possible within the scope of this paper to make an in-depth study of his activities under the Ustaša regime. After World War II he was tried by the Communist government and placed under house arrest - MV.

³⁵ Andrija Artuković (1899-1988), Ustaša Minister of the Interior.

However, we see on a daily basis that there are stricter and tougher provisions that strike both the guilty and the innocent.³⁶

In a speech given on 24 October 1942 Stepinac, after having received direction from Rome, condemned the brutal actions of the government. A speech he gave on 24 October 1942 stated in part:

All men and all races are children of God; all without distinction. Those who are Gypsies, black, European, or Aryan all have the same rights.... For this reason, the Catholic Church had always condemned, and continues to condemn, all injustice and all violence committed in the name of theories of class, race, or nationality. It is not permissible to persecute Gypsies or Jews because they are thought to be an inferior race.

In addition, according to historian Martin Gilbert, Stepinac, who in 1941 had welcomed Croat independence, subsequently condemned Croat atrocities against both Serbs and Jews, and that he himself saved a group of Jews in an old age home.³⁷

Fanaticized priests were so enthused by the declaration of NDH independence that many joined the Ustaša, not only condoning their gruesome work but even joining in the killing. Franciscan Miroslav Filipović was a commander in Jasenovac (he was later defrocked). However, not everyone condoned the violence against Serbs and Jews. Bishop Alojzije Mišić of Mostar condemned Ustaša crimes, saying: "The Holy Church will not accept the confession of all those who against God's laws are killing and sin against human life, as well as those who deliberately are destroying or taking property of others, nor can it nor will it forgive their sins."³⁸

However, the Catholic Bishop of Sarajevo, Ivan Šarić, published in his diocesan newspaper that, "the movement to free the world of Jews, represents the movement for the restoration of human dignity. Omniscient and omnipotent God is behind this movement".³⁹ And in July 1941, the Franciscan priest Dionysius Juričev, in *Novi list* wrote that "it is no longer a sin to kill a seven year-old child."⁴⁰ An examination of the Croatian Catholic newspapers reveals extensive demonization of Jews using very harsh language.

In Slovakia, Tiso couched his statements about Jews not only in terms of the economic needs of the state, but the actual survival of the nation. He claimed that this process was totally aligned with Christian teachings:

³⁶ Ibid. Attributed to Artuković, source uncertain.

³⁷ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London:, Collins, 1986), p. 147. The conversation about this topic and the attitude of the Vatican toward Stepinac is too broad for this article.

³⁸ Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p. 64.

³⁹ Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 35.

⁴⁰ Phayer, p. 34.

People are concerned whether what is happening to the Jews is Christian. It will be the most Christian when things with them are put in order. I will not allow our people to fail because of Jewish society. The people mean more to me than the Jews. It is the most Christian to say me first, then you. It would be terrible if Germany lost the war. All of the Jews would come back. This whole war is about the social struggle against Jewish capital. The curse of the Jews is that they asked Pilate for the death of Christ.⁴¹

This quote would be used multiple times in public speeches by other Slovak officials.

Two interesting examples of the omnipresence of the Catholic Church can be viewed from Croatian and Slovak propaganda films from the period. I view these as “nation building” films. There is no mention of an enemy, only happy Croats and Slovaks enjoying their lives in their new state. The Croatian film celebrates the opening of a new hospital and the Slovakian film shows the opening of a new railway line in Prešov, from the same railway station where thousands of Jews from eastern Slovakia were deported only a year earlier.

NDH: In the film “*Solemn Anniversary of the Founding of NDH: April 10, 1942*” (*Svečanosti prve godišnice osnivanja NDH, 10.travnja 1942*), we see the use of traditional dress, the flag, smiling young girls, hymns and traditional music, Pavelić (and others, including children) making the Nazi salute, soldiers marching in unison, uniformed youth, clapping masses, church bells ringing, a sign saying “*Za dom spremni*,” much pageantry, military music and throngs of men, women and children.⁴² Despite what the film makes it look like, the Ustaša regime did not enjoy widespread support. They always remained a fanatical minority that had grabbed dictatorial powers with the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.⁴³

This seven-minute Slovak film⁴⁴ has no sound but we see Tiso opening a new railway line in Prešov on September 5, 1943. There are smiling women and men in traditional Slovak dress (*kroj*) and flag waving, smiling crowds. We see Hlinka Youth playing music and girls in uniform. There is a large Slovak flag and shots of several churches. In neighboring villages, we see people going about and enjoying their daily lives.

Both of these films feature considerable footage of clergy, church buildings and masses being celebrated, portraying the Church as an integral aspect of the two nations’ and their success.

⁴¹ Slovák, August 10, 1940, September 29, 1940 and October 1, 1940.

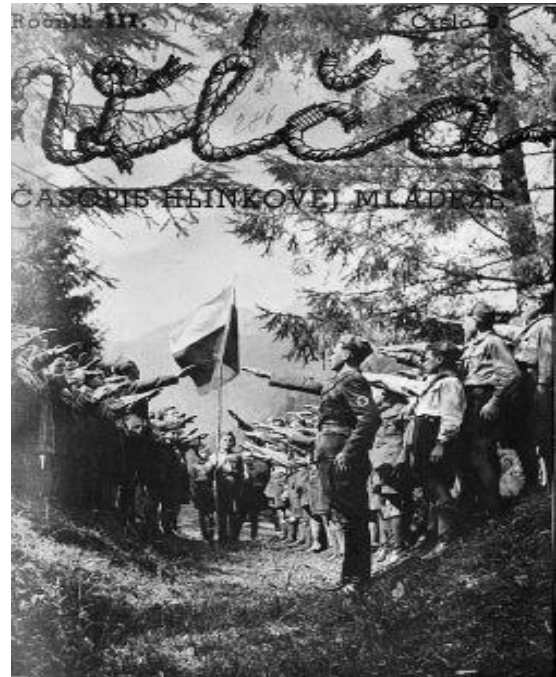
⁴² Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYvz4VhBM3c>. In this film, we also see a nod to the Muslim population including some minarets and two smiling Muslims - MV.

⁴³ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, p. 55.

⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxE0x1QdJY>

Youth

Propaganda was not only directed at adults in both countries. In Slovakia, the Hlinka Youth, teachers in school, and youth-oriented magazines like *Vl'ča* and *Nová mládež* targeted children as early as elementary school. The magazines were ideologically oriented and included poems dedicated to Tiso, to the soldiers at the front, and Catholic priests. The goal of these magazines was to inculcate in children the desire to become good citizens. They focused on honoring Slovak soldiers and the army.⁴⁵



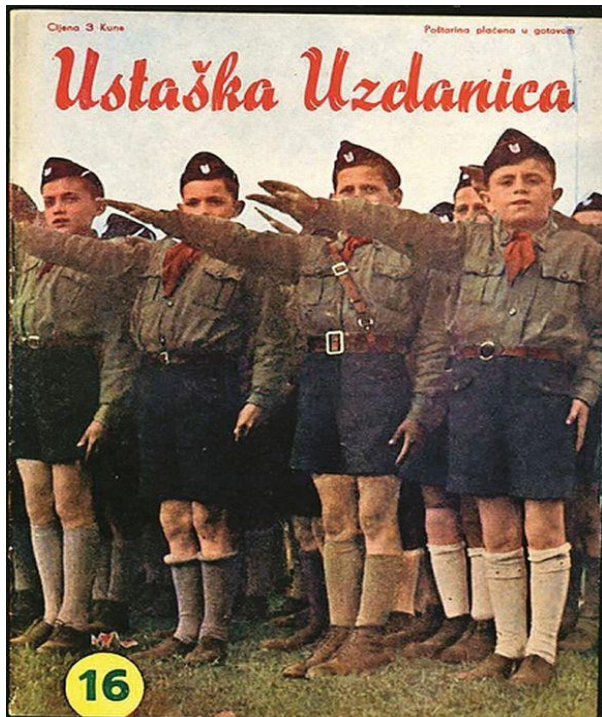
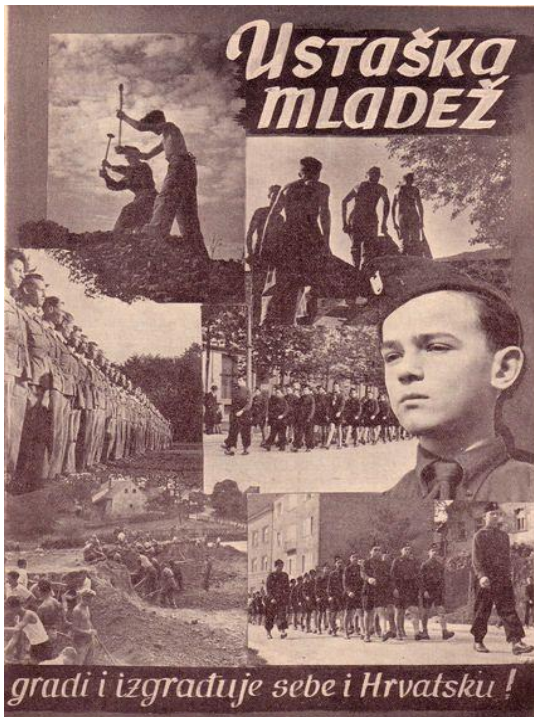
The Hlinka Youth was established in December of 1938, and drew from the infrastructure of the Catholic scouting organization. Like the Ustaša Youth, its purpose was to inculcate the values of “the new person” who would become the leaders and proponents of the regime. In addition to its ideological component, there was schooling and lessons on gun use, camps, salutes, and connections with youth in Germany and its allied countries. It also had an age break down. Boys were wolves (age 6 – 11), eagles (age 11 – 16) and heroes (age 16 – 20). Girls were fairies (age 6 – 11), Tatranky (age 10 – 15) and Devy (15 – 20).⁴⁶ After the Slovak National Uprising in

⁴⁵ <https://domov.sme.sk/c/7134743/na-straz-vlcata-a-tatranky-propaganda-utocila-za-tisa-aj-na-deti.html>

⁴⁶ Tatranky is a reference to Slovakia’s mountains and Devy is a reference to young ladies or girls - MV.

August of 1944, older boys in the Hlinka Youth were given such tasks as guard duty and digging ditches and reinforcements for Slovak soldiers.⁴⁷

Below are covers from two Ustaša youth magazines:⁴⁸



The goals of the Ustaša Youth were to: indoctrinate youth about Ustaša ideology, cultivate future leaders, enable males to participate actively in the NDH's military efforts, educate female members in a spirit of obedience as future mothers and educators, ensure the loyalty of the next generation, and to ensure the absolute authority and obedience to the Chief of the NDH as the sole authority and holder of the sovereignty of the Croatian state.⁴⁹ There were three categories of Ustaša youth: *Ustaška Zdanica* (trust) 7 – 11 years old, *Ustaška junaka* (hero) 11 – 15 years old and *Ustaška Starčevićeva mladež*, 15 – 21 years old. All youth were required to participate and their indoctrination was carried out through education, sport, manual labor, camping, special schools and ties with Fascist youth organizations in other countries.

⁴⁷ Michael Milla, *Hlinkova Mladez 1938 – 1945* (Bratislava, Ustav pameti naroda, 2008) p. 181

⁴⁸ <https://sk.pinterest.com/pin/444097213247311891/?lp=true>

⁴⁹ <https://blog.vecernji.hr/zvonimir-despot/ustaska-mladez-10528>

Final Country-Specific Notes

The Slovak State

The role of anti-Jewish propaganda in Slovakia was to: 1) provide a rationale for the ever increasing amount of anti-Jewish legislation issued as more and more people started questioning whether the anti-Jewish measures were just, 2) assure the public that resolving the Jewish problem would solve the country's social and other ills quickly, easily and painlessly, 3) convince the public that the Jews were responsible for all of the challenges the country was facing, 4) systematically cultivate anti-Semitism and xenophobia.⁵⁰

The first pieces of anti-Jewish propaganda in Slovakia appeared in 1938, when Jews were accused of causing the loss of Slovakia's southern lands to Hungary in the Vienna Award⁵¹. After September of 1939, Slovak propagandists blamed "world Jewry" for the war in a further development. The party newspaper *Slovák*, on September 23, 1939 stated:

We have reason to view Jews with suspicion and we can blame them for catastrophe and failure which has affected us. That is why it seems even stranger to us when we hear that the Jews are being harmed, and that we should be more humane toward them, etc. However, Jews have no honor. We must therefore see the radical solution to the Jewish problem as necessary if we want to save our nation.

By the summer of 1940, and through 1941, anti-Jewish propaganda continued to intensify to promote public support for Aryanization. It was mainly successful because people perceived Jewish economic influence to be too great, and something which needed to be corrected.

Below is the front page of *Ludové noviny* newspaper which described the Jewish Code to Slovak citizens. The Jewish Code was a 270 paragraph decree that was issued on September 9, 1941. It was a harsh law that stripped Jewish of their civil and human rights. This one-page newspaper was displayed on special billboards in every town and village throughout the country.

⁵⁰ Ivan Kamenec, *"Ked aj slova strielaju, Storočie propagandy: Slovensko v osidlach ideológií"*, (Bratislava, AEP, 2005), pp. 103-104.

⁵¹ On November 2, 1938, Germany and Italy gave Hungary lands along Slovakia's southern border.



The article (pictured above) is entitled “The Bells have already Told for the Jews: Slovakia has the Strictest Racial Laws in all of Europe.” A caption states that “Jews will no longer be allowed to feed off the body of the Slovak people.”⁵²

In 1942, the public became concerned about how the Jews were being treated as deportations began. Propaganda was used to assure people that the Jews were going away to work. In the beginning, this was used for the earlier transports of men and women of working age, but when the government created “family transports,” press articles indicated that the Reich had generously prepared places for Jewish families to live in the East. By the fall of 1942, there were press articles, along with photographs, showing happy resettled Slovak Jews in their new home. In reality, they had already been murdered.⁵³ Later propaganda promoted the fear that the Judeo-Bolsheviks would return and ask for their property back. The regime was failing and the propaganda sought ways to blame the Jews. There were roughly 20,000 Jews remaining in Slovakia after the 1942 deportations of approximately 58,000 Jews. Press articles threatened that they would also be forced out. Articles stated that the Jews were “a dangerous sore on the body of Slovakia...and why should we injure ourselves on their behalf? The Jewish question does not

⁵² By the time the Jewish Code was issued, Jews had been deprived of their livelihoods and businesses. The Jewish Code basically grouped together previous anti-Jewish measures and stripped the Jewish population of their human and civil rights. It defined Jews using the Lösemer principle (three Jewish grandparents). It set the precedent for the deportations, because it gave the Ministry of the Interior the right to call Jews to work at any time and place at its discretion. Like Croatian Jews, they were forced to wear a yellow Star of David - MV.

⁵³ Deportations of Slovak Jews by the regime of the Slovak State took place from March 25 – October 20, 1942. There was a pause in the deportations, which were resumed under Nazi control after the Slovak National Uprising in the fall of 1944 - MV.

concern humanity or religion, but it is a question of political hygiene. Judaism is a germ that brings on the death of every national organism.”⁵⁴

Jews were held responsible for the Nazi invasion of the country in 1944, stating that they were the reason that the German army needed to come in to save the regime. They spread fear in articles that stated that

Jews released from labor camps are taking over, they are forming People’s councils, they are stealing and murdering, Judeo-Bolshevik Satanism is attacking our intellectuals, they want to silence the clergy and do away with religion, Jewish terror knows no bounds, bestial murderers, the Jewish Bolshevik wants the death of all Slovaks. Bands of Jews are destroying, killing and murdering.⁵⁵

NDH

Upon the establishment of NDH in April of 1941, the new government quickly initiated intensive anti-Semitic propaganda. Within just a couple of weeks, the regime passed anti-Jewish legislation. Between March of 1941 and October of 1942, the Ustaša passed 17 laws and decrees, mostly against Jews. Ustaša ideologues claimed that Croats were descended from Goths rather than Slavs, making them an Aryan race.⁵⁶ The Law on the Protection of Aryan Blood and Honor of the Croatian People was issued on April 30, 1941.

A day after the signing of the main race laws on 30 April 1941, the newspaper *Hrvatski narod* (Croatian Nation), published across its entire front page: "The Blood and Honor of the Croatian People Protected by Special Provisions." Two days later, the newspaper *Novi list* concluded that Croats must “be more alert than any other ethnic group to protect their racial purity. We need to keep our blood clean of the Jews.” The newspaper also wrote that Jews are synonymous with “treachery, cheating, greed, immorality and being foreigners. The Croatian people always despised the Jews and felt towards them natural revulsion.” *Nova Hrvatska* (New Croatia) added that the Talmud was a “toxic, hot well-spring of Jewish wickedness and malice, the Jew is even free to kill Gentiles.”

One of the main claims of Ustaša propaganda was that the Jews have always been against an independent Croatian state and the Croatian people. In April 1941, the newspaper *Hrvatski*

⁵⁴ *Gardista*, February 1943, April 1943, and *Slovák*, May 14, 1943 and June 6, 1944.

⁵⁵ *Slovák*, September 3, 1944, September 5, 1944, September 28, 1944, October 1, 1944, October 8, 1944, October 19, 1944.

⁵⁶ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, p. 54.

narod (Croatian Nation) accused Jews of being responsible for the “many failures and misfortunes of so many Croatian people.” A *Spremnost* article stated that the Ustaša movement defines “Judaism as one of the greatest enemies of the people.”⁵⁷

Propaganda promoting violence toward Jews started to ramp up right before the first wave of arrests of Jews on May 27-29, 1941,⁵⁸ but by 1942, the anti-Semitic campaign waned, since most Jews had been killed inside the NDH itself or deported.

Was Anti-Jewish Propaganda Effective in NDH and the Slovak State?

The propaganda generated by both regimes was designed under Nazi supervision. Its objective was to manipulate the thoughts and emotions about the respective regimes’ perceived enemies in public opinion. It played into extant prejudices and stereotypes about Jews that had existed for centuries, and introduced the “race card” as a core strategy in both nations. Both regimes took advantage of their monopoly on power and their control of all media in order to determine the nature and amount of propaganda to generate. Much of the propaganda was crude and primitive, but it is hard to know whether people believed it or not.

Conclusion – Why is it Important to Study this Topic?

Today, we live in a world where there is “fake news” and Holocaust denial. In both Croatia and Slovakia, there are people and movements that openly glorify the regimes of the NDH and the Slovak State. There are efforts in both states to promote nationalist ideologies. Nowadays, propaganda is more subtle, making it all the more dangerous. Studying the trajectory from inciting violence with words to committing genocide has intrinsic value as we learn to watch for warning signals and strive to give meaning to the words “Never Again.”

Since World War II, technologies for spreading information in society have been revolutionized by the television set, the Internet, and social media. However, the purpose of propaganda has not transformed all that much. It occupies a permanent place in political discourse. It has become more sophisticated and less crude but it still relies on subterfuge.⁵⁹ Examining the propaganda associated

⁵⁷ Boško Zuckerman, *Prilog proučavanju antisemitizma i protužidovske propagande u vodećem zagrebačkom ustaškom tisku (1941-1943)* (Zagreb, Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, vol 42, 2010), p.?

⁵⁸ Ivo Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu*, (Zagreb, Novi Liber, 2001) p. 249,

⁵⁹ The collected works of Ante Pavelić have been published in Zagreb, as are other books on Ustaša leaders. “Stepinac is on the way of becoming a saint.” “*Za dom spremni*” is a slogan fairly widely used.

with the Holocaust sheds light on the very dark place where hatred and prejudice can lead and the dangers of totalitarianism and extreme nationalist ideology. *“In Slovakia and Croatia the (Jewish) matter is no longer complicated, because the essential, fundamental problems in this matter have already been solved there.”* SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Cf. Besprechungsprotokol, 9. http://www.ghwk.de/fileadmin/user_upload.pdf-wannsee/protokoll-januar1942.pdf

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