


from Rangelov's careful analysis of some of the key concepts in political science – nationalism, citizenship, and law – and their application in the context of the Balkans.

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Visions of annihilation: the Ustasha regime and the cultural politics of Fascism, 1941–1945, by Rory Yeomans, Pittsburgh, PA, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013, 456 pp., \$29.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0822961925

In *Visions of Annihilation*, Rory Yeomans considers how the Croatian Ustasha movement, which came to power in 1941 after Axis forces dismantled Yugoslavia, used popular culture in an effort to gain popular support and legitimize the leadership's brutal campaign of national purification against perceived racial, national, and political enemies. The mere effort to examine how the Ustasha movement used cultural politics during their four-year rule distinguishes *Visions of Annihilation* from most scholarly works on World War II Croatia. Instead of treating the Ustashes as a small clique of extremely violent fanatics, Yeomans takes the movement seriously and attempts to situate it within a broader framework of mainstream European fascism. Only such an approach, Yeomans argues, can enhance our understanding of the Ustasha regime's ideology, policies, and historical legacy. By considering the Ustashes as a mainstream European fascist movement, Yeomans' study moves beyond conventional accounts, which depict the Ustashes as a marginal group of poorly organized Italo-German puppets whose propensity for extreme violence antagonized most of the population and resulted in the Ustashes' eventual demise at the hands of Josip Broz Tito's multiethnic Communist partisans.

Yeomans' approach is bound to generate criticism from scholars who have retained some aspects of the Titoist historical narrative about World War II, which the partisan leadership developed during the war and strictly enforced until Yugoslavia's dissolution in the 1990s. Partisan propagandists presented the Ustashes as a handful of Croatian "degenerates" (*izrodi*) who loyally served their Axis masters while working against the interests of the Croatian masses on whose behalf they claimed to rule. Such an oversimplified depiction of the Ustasha period has influenced some otherwise excellent works on World War II Yugoslavia, leading several scholars to conclude that the Ustashes maintained power solely through terror and cared little about how the population perceived their policies. The extensive source materials Yeomans reveals indicate otherwise. Yeomans' discussion of regime-sponsored newspapers, radio broadcasts, ceremonies, poems, novels, films, festivals, and several programs through which the movement sought to engage the public reveals that Ustasha leaders and activists took their project of remaking the Croatian nation very seriously. They cared deeply about how the public viewed the new state and devoted tremendous resources to presenting the leadership's campaign of national regeneration and purification in a manner they hoped the public would support.

Visions of Annihilation also demonstrates that the Ustasha movement was not an ideological monolith comprised solely of sadistic fanatics who appear unopposed in most other accounts of World War II Croatia. Yeomans reveals that a more moderate current of Ustasha leaders and activists challenged the visions of hardline returnee émigrés who had become radicalized during their interwar exile on Italy's Isle of Lipari. In 1942, the moderates managed to direct the leadership toward a course that permitted more flexibility, mitigating the regime's cultural policies, and slightly curtailing the harsh measures the movement initially deployed against Croatia's large Serbian Orthodox minority. By 1944, favor had once again shifted to the radicals, allowing them to reassert the movement's initial traditionalist peasant-warrior ethos and scale back the reforms initiated by the moderates.

While Yeomans effectively demonstrates how the Ustasha regime sought to present itself and its aims to the public, his sources cannot reveal much about how the public responded to the movement's programs and policies. Still, Yeomans considers how the economic circumstances young people confronted during the economically turbulent interwar years might have radicalized youthful nationalists, many of whom went on to commit heinous crimes against civilians during World War II. While Ustasha propagandists might have inspired some people with an ideology that centered on youth, regeneration, and valorized death, Yeomans suggests that the Ustasha movement failed to fully accomplish most of their cultural-political aims. Recognition of such failures might have deterred other scholars from considering the Ustashes as a legitimate fascist movement. Yet, Yeomans' analysis suggests that contradictions within the Ustasha cultural program remained consistent with many of the paradoxes that other fascist movements displayed. His extensive discussions of the inconsistencies embedded in Ustasha gender policies and Ustasha anti-Serbian ideology are welcome contributions to scholarship on World War II Yugoslavia.

Yeomans' chapter on Ustasha conceptions of gender, "Merciless Warriors and Militant Heroines," shows that the Ustasha movement, despite its authoritative and violent nature, permitted some room for maneuver and allowed for a certain degree of dissent. Some female supporters of the movement resented plans intended to restore women to their allegedly natural maternal roles; these women worried that such an approach would preclude them from participating in the national revolution. While Ustasha ideologues viewed female emancipation as a negative consequence of degenerate liberal capitalist rule, the movement eventually provided several ways through which women could more actively participate in the new state. Such an approach, however, revealed several contradictions inherent in Ustasha cultural politics. The idea for a new type of warrior woman, for example, sat uneasily with goals aiming to restore women to the traditional household. Similar contradictions appeared in Ustasha policies toward men. Ustasha ideologues wanted to create a new man who would simultaneously embody a ruthless warrior and caring husband and father. Yet, Ustasha soldiers' martial obligations to the national community often precluded them from effectively fulfilling their family responsibilities.

Yeomans' discussion of the contradictions inherent in Ustasha cultural politics extends to his analysis of the inconsistencies implicit in the way the Ustashes attempted to define Croats against the Serbian Orthodox "other." As a result, his volume contributes to the scholarly debates initiated by the works of Maria Todorova and Milica Bakić-Hayden about Balkan self-perceptions. In designing their plan for the new Croatian man that would eliminate all Serb influence from a Croatian state, the Ustashes had to confront stereotypes about Serbs and Croats that had become crystallized during the interwar

period. These stereotypes portrayed Serbs as an anti-intellectual warrior people while depicting Croats as westernized bourgeois-type gentlemen scholars. The Ustasha portrayal of the Croats as defenders of Western civilization from the eastern barbarism represented by the Serbs clashed with the Ustashes' demand that Croats jettison their reputation as bourgeois dandies and themselves become ruthless warriors ready to spill the blood of foreign tormentors and internal enemies.

Yeomans' groundbreaking approach to the Croatian Ustashes allows him to consider aspects of the Ustasha movement that other scholars have overwhelmingly neglected. His book is a necessary contribution to the history of World War II Croatia and should inspire researchers to continue exploring aspects of the Ustashes' rule that the prevailing scholarly portrayal of the movement as an irrelevant puppet regime had previously inhibited.

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