The Historical Journal, 56, 4 (2013), pp. 1007–1039
doi:10.1017/S0018246X13000204

THE 'MUSLIM QUESTION' IN HITLER'S BALKANS*

DAVID MOTADEL
Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge

ABSTRACT. *This article examines Germany's efforts to instrumentalize Islam in the Balkans during the Second World War. As German troops became more involved in the region from early 1943 onwards, German officials began to engage with the Muslim population, promoting Germany as the protector of Islam in south-eastern Europe. Focusing on Bosnia, Herzegovina, and the Sandžak of Novi Pazar, the article explores the relations between German authorities and religious leaders on the ground and enquires into the ways in which German propagandists sought to employ religious rhetoric, terminology, and iconography for political and military ends. Interweaving religious history with the history of military conflict, the article contributes more generally to our understanding of the politics of religion in the Second World War.*

I

Advancing into the kingdom of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941, German troops were surprised by the enthusiastic welcome they received from large parts of the Muslim population. Anton Bossi Fedrigotti, liaison officer of the Foreign Office to Maximilian von Weichs's invading 2nd Army, reported that the soldiers had been utterly astonished to be greeted jubilantly by the Muslims, though he quickly explained that this reaction was 'only natural' as the Muslims had always been the fiercest opponents of the Orthodox Serbs.[1] In Sarajevo, Fedrigotti noted, Islamic leaders had called upon their followers to decorate the streets with flags to express their joy at the German invasion.[2] The day after the occupation of the city, a Muslim crowd cheered on as the Germans tore down the plaque commemorating the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Afterwards, they participated in a German military parade that took place along

Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, CB2 1TA dm408@cam.ac.uk

* The author wishes to thank Ivo Banac, Richard J. Evans, Rachel G. Hoffman, Noel Malcolm, Nicholas Stargardt and the anonymous referees for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

[1] Fedrigotti to Foreign Office, 27 Apr. 1941, Belgrade, Political Archives of the Foreign Office, Berlin (PA), R 60681.

[2] Fedrigotti to Foreign Office, 21 Apr. 1941, Sarajevo, PA, R 60681 (also in PA, R 27363).

the banks of the Miljacka. 'The entire mood of the Muslim population on this day demonstrated that here, too, far away from Germany, exists a tremendous adoration for the Führer', Fedrigotti rejoiced.[3] A few days later, on the occasion of Hitler's birthday, Muslim leaders organized mass rallies and celebratory prayers in the mosques, to which the German military authorities were invited. To be sure, German reports about the enthusiasm of the Muslim population need to be read with caution. The Germans could only record what they saw, and those Muslims who were opposed to Axis aggression stayed silent or expressed their concerns in private. But although attitudes of the Muslims towards the invasion can hardly be generalized, most felt little loyalty to the collapsing kingdom.

As, over the following months, the Balkans became more and more engulfed by civil war and partisan insurgency, German officials began to think about the Muslim population as potential allies to support their pacification efforts in the region. Considering the Muslims as both a religious and a political community, German authorities ultimately began to promote the Third Reich as the patron of Islam in the Balkans. Religion in fact became central to German policies towards Muslims in the region. In their attempts to seek Muslim support, the German army command and, more importantly, the SS, made significant efforts to employ religiously charged propaganda and to engage with religious dignitaries and leaders on the ground. Focusing on Bosnia, Herzegovina, and the Sandžak, the following pages examine the German involvement with the Islamic community during the war years.

Scholarship has addressed Nazi Germany's military campaigns in the Balkans for decades.[4] The works of historians like Jozo Tomasevich, Enver Redžić, and Marko Attila Hoare have provided profound insights into German political and military involvement in the region, particularly in its major battlegrounds in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over the last years, scholars have, moreover, shown an increasing interest in the social and political history of the Muslim

[3] Fedrigotti to Foreign Office, 19 Apr. 1941, Ključ, PA, R 60681 (also in PA, R 27363); and Fedrigotti to Foreign Office, 27 Apr. 1941, Belgrade, PA, R 60681.

[4] The most comprehensive work remains Jozo Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: occupation and collaboration* (Stanford, CA, 2001), esp. pp. 466–510. On Bosnia in particular, see Enver Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War* (New York, NY, 2005); idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo i 13. SS Divizija: Autonomija Bosne i Hercegovine i Hitlerov Treći Rajh* (Sarajevo, 1987); and Marko Attila Hoare, *Genocide and resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: the partisans and the Chetniks, 1941–1943* (Oxford, 2006). Significant general studies include Ben Shepherd, *Terror in the Balkans: German armies and partisan warfare* (Cambridge MA, 2012); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's new disorder: the Second World War in Yugoslavia* (New York, NY, 2008); Hermann Frank Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß: Die 1. Gebirgs-Division im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2008); Klaus Schmider, *Partisanenkrieg in Jugoslawien, 1941–1945* (Hamburg, 2002); Paul N. Hehn, *The German struggle against Yugoslav guerrillas in World War II* (New York, NY, 1979); Gert Fricke, *Kroatien, 1941–1944: Der 'Unabhängige Staat' in der Sicht des Deutschen Bevollmächtigten Generals in Agram Glaise v. Horstenau* (Freiburg, 1972); and the classic by Martin Broszat and Ladislaus Hory, *Der Kroatische Ustascha-Staat, 1941–1945* (Stuttgart, 1965).

population and Islam in the region during the war years, reflected most notably in Zlatko Hasanbegović's account of the Muslims of Zagreb and Emily Greble's study of wartime Sarajevo.[5] The history of Germany's engagement with Muslims and Islam in south-eastern Europe, however, has been studied less. In the existing literature, discussions of Germany's policy towards the Muslim population are usually limited to the history of the employment of Muslims in the 13th SS Waffen Mountain Division, known as 'Handžar'.[6] In what follows, the division is only considered tangentially. The article instead shows that Germany's engagement with the Muslims of the Balkans went much further and included a significant, religiously charged, campaign, targeted at the civil population. These policies may be seen as an episode in the wider story of Germany's attempts to instrumentalize Islam in other parts of the Muslim world during the Second World War. Indeed, as research has shown, German authorities tried to employ religious policies and propaganda to rally the faithful from North Africa to Central Asia.[7]

On a wider scale, the following pages address the politics of religion in the Second World War, and may contribute more generally to our understanding of the intersection of power and religion in war and military conflict. Throughout the war, German authorities employed religious policies in the warzones.

[5] Zlatko Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu, 1878–1945* (Zagreb, 2007), pp. 167–386; and Emily Greble, *Sarajevo, 1941–1945: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Hitler's Europe* (Ithaca NY, 2011); and, for an overview, Valeria Heuberger, 'Islam and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina during World War II: a survey', in Lieve Gevers and Jan Bank, eds., *Religion under siege*, II: *Protestant, Orthodox and Muslim communities in occupied Europe, 1939–1950* (Leuven et al., 2007), pp. 175–93, esp. pp. 183–8; and on the Muslim population in the civil war, see also the literature in n. 11.

[6] The major studies on 'Handžar' are George Lepre, *Himmler's Bosnian division: the Waffen-SS Handschar Division, 1943–1944* (Atglen, PA, 1997); Amandine Rochas, *La Handschar: histoire d'une division de Waffen-SS bosniaque* (Paris, 2007); Redžić, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*; Zija Sulejmanpašić, *13. SS Divizija 'Handžar': Istine i Laži* (Zagreb, 2000); and Holm Sundhaussen, 'Zur Geschichte der Waffen-SS in Kroatien 1941–1945', *Südostforschungen*, 30 (1971), pp. 176–96, at pp. 192–6.

[7] A comprehensive account of Germany's engagement with Islam on the North African, Middle Eastern, Balkan, and Eastern fronts is provided by David Motadel, 'Germany's policy towards Islam, 1941–1945' (Ph.D., Cambridge, 2010); and, for some facets of this policy, see Gerhard Höpp, 'Der Koran als "Geheime Reichssache": Bruchstücke deutscher Islampolitik zwischen 1938 und 1945', in Holger Preißler and Hubert Seiwert, eds., *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Kurt Rudolph zum 65. Geburtstag* (Marburg, 1994), pp. 435–46. More specific studies, which have stressed the role of Islam in German war policies in different regions, include, on the Eastern front, Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern: Der Nationalismus der Sowjetischen Orientvölker im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf, 1971); and Joachim Hoffmann, *Kaukasien, 1942/1943: Das deutsche Heer und Orientvoelker der Sowjetunion* (Freiburg, 1991); on the Arab world, Łukaz Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London, 1966); and Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi propaganda to the Arab world* (New Haven, CT, 2009); and, on the collaboration of the famous Mufti of Jerusalem, Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Mufti and the Fuehrer: the rise and fall of Haj Amin el-Husseini* (New York, NY, et al., 1965); Jennie Lebel, *The Mufti of Jerusalem Haj-Amin el-Husseini and national-socialism* (Belgrade, 2007); and Klaus Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis: the Berlin years* (London and Portland, OR, 2011).

German troops encountered Catholics, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, and, in the Kalmyk steppes of the southern Soviet Union, even Buddhists.[8] As they destroyed synagogues and killed millions of Jews, the Germans ruled over thousands of Orthodox cathedrals, Protestant churches, Catholic domes, and Islamic mosques. And although it was race, not religion, that formed the basis of Nazi policy schemes, in most warzones German officials soon became aware of the significant influence of religion among the population and regularly engaged actively in confessional politics. Ranging from suppression to support, German policies towards religion were usually pragmatic and determined by local conditions, the military situation, and the political and tactical considerations of the involved branches of the regime. Religious structures were destroyed when suspected of generating resistance, or actively employed to rule and pacify the rear areas and to win local support, as in the case of the Muslims of the Balkans.

When studying the politics of religion under Nazi rule, historians have long concentrated on the question of collaboration and resistance, while showing less interest in the nature of German religious policies themselves. Drawing on archival materials in both German and Bosnian, this article examines the ways in which German authorities instrumentalized religious rhetoric, slogans,

[8] Scholars have mostly studied religion on the Eastern front, see Harvey Fireside, *Icon and swastica: the Russian Orthodox Church under Nazi and Soviet control* (Cambridge, 1971); Wassilij Alexeev and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *The great revival: the Russian Church under German occupation* (Minneapolis, MN, 1976); Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, 'Der SD und die Kirchen in den besetzten Ostgebieten 1941/1942', *Militaergeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 29 (1981), pp. 55–99; Michail Škarovskij, 'Deutsche Kirchenpolitik auf dem besetzten Territorium der USSR, 1941–1944', in Gabriele Gorzka and Knut Stang, eds., *Der Vernichtungskrieg im Osten: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht in der Sowjetunion aus Sicht russischer Historiker* (Kassel, 1999), pp. 69–85; Leonid Rein, 'The Orthodox Church in Byelorussia under Nazi occupation, 1941–1944', *East European Quarterly*, 39 (2005), pp. 13–46; Friedrich Heyer, *Die Orthodoxe Kirche in der Ukraine von 1917 bis 1945* (Cologne, 1953), pp. 170–227; Christoph Kleßmann, 'Nationalsozialistische Kirchenpolitik und Nationalitätenfrage im Generalgouvernement (1939–1945)', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 18 (1970), pp. 575–600; and Kazimierz Śmigiel, *Die katholische Kirche im Reichsgau Wartheland 1939–1945* (Dortmund, 1984). On the Western front, see Jacques Duquesne, *Les catholiques français sous l'occupation* (Paris, 1966); Vesna Drapac, *War and religion: Catholics in the churches of occupied Paris* (Washington, DC, 1998); and Renée Bédarida, *Les catholiques dans la guerre, 1939–1945: entre Vichy et la Résistance* (Paris 1998); Alain Dantoing, 'La hierarchie catholique et la Belgique sous l'occupation allemande', *Revue du Nord*, 60 (1978), pp. 311–30; idem, *La 'collaboration' du cardinal: l'église de Belgique dans la Guerre 40* (Brussels, 1991); and A. F. Manning, 'De Nederlandse Katholieken in de eerste jaren van de Duitse bezetting', *Jaarboek van het Katholiek Documentatie Centrum*, 8 (1978), pp. 105–29. On the Northern front, see Eino Murtorinne, 'Die nordischen Kirchen im Zweiten Weltkrieg', in Carsten Nicolaisen, ed., *Nordische und deutsche Kirchen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1982), pp. 212–27. Overviews of religions under German occupation are given by Xavier de Montclos, *Les chrétiens face au nazisme et au stalinisme: l'épreuve totalitaire, 1939–1945* (Paris, 1983); and by the articles in part I of Karl-Joseph Hummel and Christoph Kösters, eds., *Kirchen im Krieg: Europa, 1939–1945* (Paderborn et al., 2007); and in Lieve Gevers and Jan Bank, eds., *Religion under siege*, I: *The Roman Catholic church in occupied Europe, 1939–1950,* and II: *Protestant, Orthodox and Muslim communities in occupied Europe, 1939–1950* (Leuven et al., 2007), which contains one chapter on Muslims, i.e. the quoted article on Muslims in the Ustaša state (see n. 5).

and imperatives in their propaganda, and employed religious dignitaries to pacify the Balkans. At the same time, it looks at the ideas and notions about Islam and the Muslim population that informed these policies. It first examines the gradual involvement of German officials in the 'Muslim question' of the Balkans between 1941 and 1943, subsequently explores various facets of this involvement, including the use of religious propaganda and the engagement with local religious authorities, and finally discusses the tense relation of these policies and propaganda efforts with the violent nature of German warfare.

II

Hitler had initially not intended to get involved in the Muslim territories when invading and dissolving the kingdom of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941. While German troops occupied Serbia, the Muslim areas fell under the administration of the Italians (Montenegro, including the Sandžak of Novi Pazar), the Bulgarians (Macedonia), and, most importantly, the newly created Croatian Ustaša state (Bosnia and Herzegovina), which governed the majority of the Muslims of the former Yugoslav kingdom. It was the escalation of the war in late 1942 that would eventually lead to German political involvement with the Muslims of the region.

The Muslims of Yugoslavia had, for most of their history, enjoyed special rights and a certain level of autonomy in their religious life and organizations, first under the Ottomans, then, from 1878, under the Habsburg monarchy, and, after 1918, in the Yugoslav kingdom, although Yugoslav rule had quickly proven to be less tolerant than that of its imperial predecessors.[9] Although

[9] On Islam in the Ottoman Balkans, see Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule, 1354–1804* (Seattle, WA, 1977); and, for the later phase, Fikret Karčić, *The Bosniaks and the challenge of modernity: late Ottoman and Hapsburg times* (Sarajevo, 1999), which also provides a good overview of Islam under Habsburg rule. On Islam in the Habsburg era, see Robert J. Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle: the Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina, 1978–1914* (New York, NY, 1981); Ferdinand Hauptmann, 'Die Mohammedaner in Bosnien-Hercegovina', in Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848–1918*, iv: *Die Konfessionen* (Vienna, 1985), pp. 670–701; Srećko M. Džaja, *Bosnien-Herzegowina in der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Epoche, 1878–1918: Die Intelligentsia zwischen Tradition und Ideologie* (Munich, 1994); Muhamed Mufaku al-Arnaut, 'Islam and Muslims in Bosnia, 1878–1918: two hijras and two fatwās', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5 (1994), pp. 242–53; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 29–51; and Alexandre Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique: les musulmans du sud-est européen dans la période post-ottomane* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 269–310. And on Islam in interwar Yugoslavia, see Sabina Ferhadbegović, 'Fez oder Hut? Der Islam in Bosnien zwischen den Weltkriegen', *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, 5 (2005), pp. 69–85; Xavier Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman legacy? Islamic reformism and revivalism in inter-war Bosnia-Herzegovina', in Clayer and Germain, eds., *Islam in inter-war Europe*, pp. 313–43; Muhammed Aruçi, 'The Muslim minority in Macedonia and its educational institutions during the inter-war period', in Clayer and Germain, eds., *Islam in inter-war Europe*, pp. 344–61; Fikret Karčić, 'The reform of Shari'a courts and Islamic law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1918–1941', in Clayer and Germain, eds., *Islam in inter-war Europe*, pp. 253–70; idem, *Šeriatski Sudovi u Jugoslaviji, 1918–1941* (*Seriat courts in Yugoslavia, 1918–1941*) (Sarajevo, 1986); Atif Purivatra, *Jugoslovenska Muslimanska Organizacija u Političkom Životu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*

Muslims, under the leadership of Mehmed Spaho, head of the powerful 'Yugoslav Muslim Organization' (Jugoslovenska Muslimanska Organizacija), had retained much of their religious autonomy in the interwar period, most felt repressed under Orthodox Serbian hegemony (as did many Catholic Croats) and welcomed the fall of Yugoslavia in 1941, not anticipating that it was the prelude to years of violence and bloodshed.

The Ustaša regime, with its fascist vision of a Catholic Croatia, had little respect for its Muslim subjects. And yet, while murdering Jews and persecuting Orthodox Serbs, Ante Pavelić, Poglavnik of the Independent State of Croatia, did at least formally try to accommodate the Muslim population. He made Islam the second state religion and Ustaša officials declared the Muslims to be 'the flower of the Croatian people'.[10] The regime also employed a number of Islamic leaders, most prominently perhaps Ismet Muftić, the Mufti of Zagreb, who became a vigorous promoter of the Ustaša state, and, officially at least, sustained *šeriat* courts, *medresa*s and *vakuf* (*waqf* in Arabic) properties. In the centre of Zagreb, the new government even opened the colossal Poglavnik Mosque (Poglavnikova Džamija). Soon, however, the Muslim population was caught in the crossfire of a bitter civil war.

From early 1942, the Balkans became increasingly engulfed in a severe conflict between the Croatian regime, communist partisans, and Orthodox Serbian Četniks.[11] The partisans, led by the former Habsburg soldier and Bolshevik revolutionary Josip Broz, better known as Tito, clashed with both Ustaša troops and Četniks. At the same time, the Četnik movement, which

(Sarajevo, 1974); Musnija Kamberović, *Mehmed Spaho, 1883–1939: Politička Biografija* (Sarajevo, 2009); Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 53–166; and Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 310–36.

[10] On Islam in Ustaša state, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 488–94; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 68, 85–7, 166–9 and 172; idem, Muslimansko Autonomaštvo, pp. 9–20; Greble, *Sarajevo*, esp. pp. 58, 76–81, 84–5, 120–9, 192–5, 213–17, and 253; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 167–386; and Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 336–42.

[11] On the Muslim population in the civil war, see literature in n. 4, esp. Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, esp. pp. 491–4; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, esp. pp. 63–118 and 169–77; and idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, esp. pp. 29–62; as well as Edmond Paris, *Genocide in satellite Croatia, 1941–1945: a record of racial and religious persecutions and massacres* (Chicago, IL, 1961), pp. 119–26; Yeshayahu Jelinek, 'Nationalities and minorities in the independent state of Croatia', *Nationalities Papers*, 8 (1980), pp. 195–210, esp. pp. 200–3; idem, 'Bosnia-Herzegovina at war: relations between Moslems and non-Moslems', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 5 (1990), pp. 275–92; Tomislav Dulić, 'Mass killing in the independent state of Croatia, 1941–1945: a case for comparative research', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8 (2006), pp. 255–81, esp. pp. 265–70; and Damir Mirković, 'Victims and perpetrators in the Yugoslav genocide, 1941–1945: some preliminary observations', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 7 (1993), pp. 317–32, esp. pp. 321–2. For excellent overviews of the Muslims in the civil war in Bosnia, see Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: a short history* (London, 1994), pp. 174–92; Marko Attila Hoare, *The history of Bosnia: from the Middle Ages to the present day* (London, 2007), pp. 197–308; and Robert J. Donia, *Sarajevo: a biography* (London, 2006), pp. 168–203. Vladimir Dedijer and Antun Miletić, eds., *Genocid nad Muslimanima, 1941–1945: Zbornik Dokumenata i Svedočenja* (Sarajevo, 1990), provides a selection of primary documents on the civil war and Četnik violence against Muslims.

under Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović fought for a restoration of the monarchy and a Greater Serbia, waged war against not only Ustaša troops and the Catholic population, but also against Tito's partisans. The Muslim population was repeatedly attacked by all three parties. Ustaša authorities had employed Muslim army units to fight Tito's partisans as well as Četnik militias, and had used them to control Serbian Orthodox areas. Soon, Muslim villages became targets of retaliatory attacks from both partisans and Četniks. Particularly violent were the Četnik reprisals against Muslims in East and South Bosnia and in parts of Herzegovina, where Ustaša authority had always been unstable. Mihailović burned down entire villages. His men became feared for killing Muslims by cutting their throats. Estimates of the number of Muslim victims grew into the tens of thousands. Despite Pavelić's warm words for Islam, Ustaša authorities did little overall to prevent these massacres. Even worse, in areas where Muslim leaders engaged in local ceasefire agreements with Četnik and partisan commanders, Catholic Ustaša units responded by repressing the Muslim civil population. German military reports pointed to the mounting discord between the Muslims and the Croatian Catholic state.[12] More and more Muslim leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina pleaded for independence. Attempts to build Muslim militias for self-defence were, on the whole, a failure. As an ultima ratio, some leading Muslim representatives turned to the Germans. In a memorandum of 1 November 1942, addressed to Hitler, they asked for Muslim autonomy under a German protectorate in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[13] Remarkably, the Muslims tried to employ pan-Islamic references to strengthen their case, emphasizing that the Bosnian Muslims were an integral part of the '300 million Muslims' in the world, and that they were willing to align themselves with the Axis against 'Judaism, Freemasonry, Bolshevism and the English exploiters'.[14]

[12] On 18 Feb. 1942, the German envoy in Zagreb, Kasche, forwarded a number of appeals from local Muslim groups to (Muslim) Ustaša authorities, complaining about their religious persecution, to Berlin, see Kasche to Foreign Office, 18 Feb. 1942, Zagreb, PA, R 60608, and, attached, Memorandum ('Beschwerde der muselmanischen Bezirksbeauftragten von Prijedor an einige angesehene Muselmanen'), 23 Sept. 1941, Prijedor, PA, R 60608; and Memorandum ('Denkschrift des Sarajevo Ulema-Verein "El Hidaja"'), 12 Oct. 1941, PA, R 60608; and Memorandum ('Denkschrift der muselmanischen Vertreter aus Banja Luka'), 12 Nov. 1941, Banja Luka, PA, R 60608.

[13] People's Committee ('Volkskomitee'), Memorandum, 1 Nov. 1942, Sarajevo, PA, R 261144. The twenty-page memorandum was first assessed by army officials and then forwarded to Hitler at the end of 1942, see Wehrmacht Intelligence (Amt Ausland/Abwehr) to Reich Chancellery, 28 Dec. 1942, Berlin, PA, R 261144. On the memorandum and Muslim appeals to the Germans and Italians, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 489 and 494–6; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 19, 168, and 177–80; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 71–9; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 163–6; and, for a Croatian translation of the complete memorandum, Dedijer and Antun Miletić, eds., *Genocid nad Muslimanima*, pp. 249–64.

[14] People's Committee ('Volkskomitee'), Memorandum, 1 Nov. 1942, Sarajevo, PA, R 261144.

The Germans were in a dilemma. Berlin accepted the Ustaša state and its rule over the Muslim territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hitler had only sent diplomatic and military representatives to Zagreb, most importantly the Austrian Nazi veteran General Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, who was accredited as the Wehrmacht's representative in Croatia, and *SA-Obergruppenführer* Siegfried Kasche, Germany's envoy in Zagreb. Kasche had little sympathy for the Muslims and would, until the end, support the Ustaša regime.

In practice, however, the situation was changing.[15] From autumn 1942, as parts of the Croatian state, particularly Bosnia and Herzegovina, seemed to be spinning out of control, German troops became increasingly involved in the Muslim territories. All operational areas were subsumed under German military command, forcing Pavelić to give up de facto sovereignty of parts of Croatia. In late 1942, Glaise-Horstenau was forced to share power with General Rudolf Lüters, who became 'Commander of the German troops in Croatia'. In early 1943, a major offensive was launched against all insurgents in Central Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Soon, the SS would also become involved. In late March 1943, Himmler sent *SS-Brigadeführer* Konstantin Kammerhofer to Zagreb as the official SS commissioner on the spot. Kammerhofer had limited respect for the Ustaša authorities or for the German envoy, Kasche. Ignoring all complaints, he instantly put parts of North Croatia under the authority of the SS. Convinced that the SS would be more effective than the wavering Ustaša security forces, the Wehrmacht did not resist. Kasche was increasingly sidelined and isolated. By the end of 1943, the SS had further strengthened its influence. Between spring and autumn 1944, it practically ruled over the Muslim areas within Sava, Drina, Spreča, and Bosna.

Less concerned than Kasche and the Foreign Office about Ustaša authority, the Wehrmacht and, more importantly, the SS saw the Muslims as welcomed allies. Military reports and internal papers regularly referred to the alleged pro-German attitude of the Muslims from the Balkans and to their influence on the wider Muslim world. It was the pan-Islamic character of the Muslims, Rudolf Lüters assured in a report from spring 1943, that provoked the Četniks. 'It is especially the apparently supranational, religiously determined behavior which angers the Serb with his overarching national pride.'[16] A commander, who would brief German troops fighting in Bosnia, emphasized not only the pro-German attitude of the Muslims, but also that the '950,000 Muslims' of Bosnia and Herzegovina 'know very well that they represent the some 500,000,000 Mohammedans to the Greater German Reich and the Axis'.[17] German support

[15] On the intensified German involvement in the Balkans in 1942–3, see literature in n. 4.

[16] Lüters, Report ('Aufstandsbewegung der Cetniks'), 5 May 1943, n.p., Federal Military Archive, Freiburg (MA), RS 3–7/16.

[17] Wurianek (Army), Report ('Bericht über Bosnien'), 10 July 1943, Graz, MA, RH 31-III/5; and Wurianek, Speech ('Vortrag vor der Mannschaft der Kampftruppe Ost- und West-Bosnien'), 10 July 1943, Graz, MA, RH 31-III/5.

for the Muslim population would therefore have a propagandistic effect on 'the other Mohammedan countries'. These views were shared by officers in the SS intelligence and by other German officials on the ground.[18] It was a set of reasons – the idea of a pro-German attitude of the Muslim population as well as considerations of their alleged significance within the wider Islamic world – which prompted the Wehrmacht and SS to seek co-operation with the Muslims when pacifying the region from early 1943 onwards.

Soon, as the German military stepped up their operations in the Balkans, the Wehrmacht and SS extended this policy towards Muslims of the Italian occupied regions. In early 1943, German troops got involved in the Sandžak area, the Muslim mountain belt between Montenegro and Serbia which was formally under the rule of the Italians, who had, as the civil war escalated, turned a blind eye to Četnik massacres of the Muslim population. The German army command immediately ordered the soldiers to treat only the Muslims as allies, while encouraging them to act ruthlessly towards the rest of the population.[19] In September 1943, when Italy changed fronts and withdrew from the Balkans, the Sandžak was formally taken over by German troops. Moreover, the Muslim majority of Albania, which included Kosovo and had been under Italian occupation since 1940, now too came under the control of the Germans, who installed a puppet regime in the country.[20] In the Epirus area of north-western Greece, which bordered Albania and had also been

[18] SS Reich Security Head Office, Intelligence Report ('Muselmanenproblem'), n.d., n.p., Federal Archives, Berlin-Lichterfelde (BA), R 58/92; and for views of other observers on the ground, NSDAP Organization Croatia, Report ('Monatsbericht'), 31 Dec. 1942, Sarajevo, MA, RH 31-III/5, which was forwarded by the NSDAP *Landesgruppenleiter* Rudolf Empting to Horstenau, 13 Jan. 1943, Zagreb, MA, RH 31-III/5; and Hille (Croatian representative of the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*), Report, 19 Aug. 1942, Zagreb, Russian State Military Archive (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvenni Voennyi Arkhiv), Moscow, Special Collection (Osobyi Archive), accessed through Archives of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Washington (USHMA), RG 11/Reel 131.

[19] Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß*, p. 119. Also representatives of the SS and the Foreign Office agreed about the exploitation of the Muslims for the pacification of the Sandžak, see Gredler (Foreign Office), Internal Note ('Bericht des Ustascha-Kommissars Murat Bayrović über die Lage im Sandschak'), 12 Apr. 1943, Berlin, PA, R 100998. On a description of the co-operation with Muslim militias on the ground, see the memoirs by Karl Wilhelm Thilo, 'Der Einsatz auf dem Balkan', in Hubert Lanz, ed., *Gebirgsjäger: Die 1. Gebirgsdivision, 1935–1945* (Bad Nauheim, 1954), pp. 242–77, esp. pp. 253 and 245–6.

[20] On Albania under German control, see Bernd J. Fischer, *Albania at war, 1939–1945* (London, 1999), pp. 157–256; idem, 'German political policy in Albania, 1943–1944', in Richard B. Spence and Linda Nelson, eds., *Scholar, patriot, mentor: historical essays in honor of Dimitrije Djordjević* (Boulder, CO, 1992), pp. 219–33; Hubert Neuwirth, *Widerstand und Kollaboration in Albanien, 1939–1944* (Wiesbaden, 2008); Christoph Stamm, 'Zur deutschen Besetzung Albaniens, 1943–1944', *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 30 (1981), pp. 99–120; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: a short history* (London, 1998), pp. 304–13; and, on religion in wartime Albania, Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 36–42; and Roberto Morozzo Della Rocca, *Nazione e Religione in Albania, 1920–1944* (Bologna, 1990), pp. 167–246, which points to German non-interference in the country's Islamic institutions and the work of the *ulema*, headed by Sherif Langu.

under Italian rule, German military authorities sought co-operation with the Albanian Muslim Cham minority, which provided militias to pacify the region.[21] German involvement in these territories was overseen by Hermann Neubacher, as Hitler's Plenipotentiary for south-eastern Europe responsible for Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece and himself an ardent supporter of an alliance with the Muslims of the Balkans.

Hitler fully endorsed German courtship of the Muslims. Neubacher, who discussed the situation in south-eastern Europe regularly at the Führer Headquarters, recalled after the war that Hitler had firmly supported a 'positive Muslim policy' (*positive Muselmanenpolitik*) in the region.[22] According to Neubacher, Hitler's view of the Muslims in the Balkans was also influenced by considerations about pan-Islamic implications. Discussing 'the political significance of Balkan Islam in regard to the Middle East', Neubacher had tried to explain the connection to Hitler in terms easy to understand: 'When you strike a Sandžak Muslim, a student in Cairo reacts!' The phrase had apparently impressed Hitler so much that he soon used it himself.

Indeed, when strategically mapping the region, the Germans defined the Muslims primarily in terms of religion.[23] This was to a certain extent

[21] On the Muslims of the Epirus area, see Mark Mazower, 'Three forms of political justice: Greece, 1944–1945', in idem, ed., *After the war was over: reconstructing the family, nation and state in Greece, 1943–1960* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 24–41, at pp. 24–6; Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß*, pp. 151–2, 204, 463–76, 539, and 620–1; Fischer, *Albania at war*, pp. 70–6, 85, and 168–9; and, for an account from the perspective of the Chams, Beqir Meta, *The Cham tragedy* (Tirana, 2007), pp. 59–105; and the documents in Robert Elsie and Bejtullah D. Destani, eds., *The Cham Albanians of Greece: a documentary history* (London, 2013), pp. 335–94. Germany's policy towards the Muslims of Greece will not be addressed in this article. It seems that Islam only played a marginal role in the occupation policies in Greece, although, in the Aegean, army officials tried to co-opt religious figures like the Mufti of Rhodes, Seyh Suleyman Kaslioglu, to stabilize the late German occupation regime, see Headquarters of Commander East-Aegean, Report ('Stimmungsbericht'), 17 Nov. 1944, n.p., MA, RH 19XI/38, 221. Kaslioglu hid some invaluable Torah scrolls in the pulpit of the island's Murat Reis Mosque during the war, see Isaac Benatar, *Rhodes and the Holocaust: the story of the Jewish community from the Mediterranean island of Rhodes* (Bloomington, IN, 2010), pp. 22–3 and 84. The German military authorities estimated that c. 130,000 lived in occupied Greece, see Headquarters of High Command Army Group E to Headquarters of Commander South-East, n.d. (Mar. 1944), n.p., MA, RH 19XI/10b.

[22] Hermann Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost, 1940–1945: Bericht eines fliegenden Diplomaten* (Göttingen et al., 1956), pp. 32–3 and, similarly, p. 160.

[23] On confessional bonds and politics in the Muslim areas of the Balkans, see Marco Dogo, 'The Balkan nation-states and the Muslim question', in idem and Stefano Bianchini, eds., Balkans*: national identities in a historical perspective* (Ravenna, 1998), pp. 61–74; Pedro Ramet, 'Religion and nationalism in Yugoslavia', in idem, ed., *Religion and nationalism in Soviet and East European politics* (Durham, NC, 1984), pp. 149–69, esp. pp. 156–8; Ivo Banac, *The national question in Yugoslavia: origins, history, politics* (Ithaca, NY, 1984), pp. 359–78; and, more specifically, idem, 'Bosnian Muslims: from religious community to socialist nationhood and post-communist statehood, 1918–1992', in Mark Pinson, ed., *The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina: their historical development from the Middle Ages to the dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), pp. 129–53; and Mitja Velikonja, *Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (College Station, TX, 2003). Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: a short*

a consequence of the situation on the ground. With ethnic and linguistic distinctions being marginal, religion had long been a principal marker of communal difference in the Balkans. Confessional bonds, be they Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, or Muslim, were strong. Although of course none of these communities was fully homogeneous and the lines between them were not impermeable, they shaped the social landscape across the region. Even in an age of shattering empires and rising nation-states, most Muslims continued to see themselves primarily as 'Muslims'. While some had embraced national affiliations (like 'Croatian' or even 'Serbian'), and many would also emphasize their regional (like 'Bosnian' or 'Herzegovinian') or urban identities (like 'Sarajevan' or 'Zagrebian'), religious loyalties (as 'Muslim') remained crucial. Furthermore, religion had a political meaning, with religious leaders and institutions exerting significant political influence. In the conflicts of the Second World War, the political-confessional divisions came most radically to the fore, and the Germans keenly fuelled and instrumentalized them for their war effort.

III

In late March and early April 1943, the SS sent Amin al-Husseini, the legendary Mufti of Jerusalem, on a propaganda tour across the Balkans.[24] Al-Husseini had arrived in Germany in late 1941 and since then had become a prominent figure in Berlin's propaganda efforts towards the Muslim world. Carefully staged by the SS Head Office, the spectacle marked the beginning of Germany's Islam campaign in the region. Its aim was to win Muslim popular support and to mobilize the male population into the Muslim SS Division, portraying the Third Reich not only as the protector of Muslims in the Balkans, but also as the patron of Islam more generally. Al-Husseini's role as an Islamic figure was to impart religious legitimacy to the German war effort. Berlin thereby adhered to the conception (fostered by al-Husseini himself) that the Mufti was comparable to an Islamic pope, whose words would have authority among pious Muslims across the world. The employment of the Palestinian religious leader not only reflected the idea of global Islamic solidarity, it also underlined the religious character of German efforts to win Muslim support in the Balkans.

Greedy for influence, al-Husseini had boasted in a conversation with Gottlob Berger, chief of the SS Head Office and responsible for the organization of the

history (London, 2000), provides a brilliant account of the Balkan communities before and after the nation-state.

[24] On the Balkan tour of the Mufti, see Schechtman, *The Mufti and the Fuehrer*, p. 139; Lebel, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, pp. 181–9; Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, pp. 132–5; Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, p. 498; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 34, 39, and 182; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 91–102; Broszat and Hory, *Kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, p. 156; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 170–1; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 192–5, 208, 411, and for an Ustasha security report about the visit, pp. 506–7.

tour, about the great influence he had across the entire Muslim world.[25] The cause of Muslims in south-eastern Europe, he claimed, had been his special interest for a long time. Indeed, the Mufti had already received a delegation of Islamic dignitaries led by the Mufti of Mostar, Omer Džabić, a major proponent of an Islamic state in the Balkans, in Rome in 1942.[26] A large deputation of Yugoslav Muslims had also participated at the Muslim Congress in Jerusalem in 1931, where some had established ties with al-Husseini.[27] Among many Muslims of the Balkans the Arab Mufti enjoyed remarkable respect. As early as August 1942, *Osvit*, a major Muslim newspaper in Sarajevo, had published an interview with al-Husseini which had aroused interest both in Croatia and among German officials.[28] *Osvit* remarked that the Mufti had become the spearhead and protector of millions of suppressed Muslims. The Mufti affirmed Hitler's and Germany's amity for Islam and claimed that the Muslim world stood entirely on the side of Germany, Japan, and its allies. The British empire would be fought until its collapse, just like Russia, which had been an enemy of Islam for centuries. 'Recently, the Führer confirmed to me that Germany follows with great interest the fight of the Islamic world against its oppressors, and does not intend to enslave or suppress any Islamic country.'[29] The victory of the Axis would be the victory of the Islamic peoples.

Officers of the SS Head Office planned the tour down to the minutest detail and prepared the Mufti well in advance.[30] His role was, of course, limited to representational purposes. Berger had assured the Mufti that his support was 'not only for practical reasons', but came 'from a full heart'. Yet, he made no secret of his practical intentions, adding that the SS would 'not believe in promises', but wanted to have 'proof' on the spot. On 30 March 1943, the *Junkers 25 Tubo* of Kurt Max Franz Daluege, head of the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*), crossed the Alps.[31] On board were the Mufti and a number of SS officers, most importantly *SS-Sturmbannführer* Schulte and *SS-Untersturmführer* Rempel of the SS Head Office, and *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Hermann, representing the SS Reich Security Head Office. Moreover, two Gestapo officers

[25] Berger to Himmler, 27 Mar. 1943, Berlin, BA, R19/2255.

[26] Al-Husseini to Foreign Office, 30 Apr. 1943, Berlin, PA, R 27322 (also in PA, R 100998). Muslim attempts to send a delegation to the Mufti in Berlin failed, see documents in PA, R 60608. In his memoirs, al-Husseini claims that he had received telegraphs from the Balkans asking for a reception in Berlin, but that the Foreign Office had not given permission, see Amin al-Husseini, *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini,* ed., 'Abd al-Karim al-'Umar (Damascus, 1999), pp. 137–8. On the visit of the delegation to Rome, see also Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 494–5; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 175–6; and idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 64–7.

[27] Martin Kramer, *Islam assembled: the advent of the Muslim Congress* (New York, NY, 1986), pp. 132 and 162; and, on the Mufti's own assessment of the relevance of these ties during the war, Al-Husseini, *Mudhakkirat*, p. 137.

[28] Kasche to Foreign Office, 13 Aug. 1942, Zagreb, PA, R 27327.

[29] Quoted ibid.

[30] Berger to Himmler, 27 Mar. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255.

[31] Ibid.

accompanied the Mufti, as well as a pistol sniper.[32] The tour took two weeks. After visiting Zagreb (1 to 2 April), the group flew to Banja Luka (3 to 4 April) and set off from there to Sarajevo (5 to 9 April), before returning to Zagreb (10 to 11 April).[33]

During his travels, the Mufti met with Ustaša representatives, including Pavelić, and German and Italian officials. More significant, however, were his consultations with the local *ulema* in Zagreb, Banja Luka, and Sarajevo, which underlined the religious character of the journey.[34] In Sarajevo he would receive Muslim leaders and dignitaries from the entire area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, from Tuzla and Mostar, as well as delegations from the Sandžak and from Albania. Al-Husseini was particularly impressed by the Friday prayers in Sarajevo's grand Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque and his meeting with the religious establishment afterwards, years later recalling in his memoirs the warm welcome he had received.[35] 'For the Bosnian Mohammedans, the Mufti was first and foremost significant as a Mohammedan', a German diplomat noted.[36] 'The pious accepted him as a just Muslim; he was honored as a descendant of the Prophet; friends from his theological studies in Cairo and from the pilgrimage to Mecca welcomed him.' In the name of the Axis, al-Husseini affirmed solidarity with the destiny of Muslims in the Balkans, emphasizing, as the Germans observed, 'his deep repulsion' for atrocities committed against 'religious facilities like mosques' by partisans, whom, he claimed, were 'paid by Moscow and London'.[37]

Throughout the tour, the Mufti made extensive use of religious rhetoric. His speeches, sermons, and appeals were delivered in Arabic, with local interpreters translating them. When visiting the Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque, he gave such an emotional speech about the torment Muslims had suffered that parts of the audience burst into tears.[38] Bemoaning the situation of the Muslims in the Balkans, he assured the faithful that only the inner refuge of Islam made life bearable. His sermon included the call for war on the side of the Axis. Mustering all his religious authority, he warned throughout his visit that doubts about an Axis victory would be a sin. Finally, the Mufti not only employed religious language, he also used pan-Islamic rhetoric. German observers noted

[32] Berger to Himmler, 19 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255.

[33] For a schedule of the tour, see Berger to Himmler, 19 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255.

[34] Ibid.; and, on his meetings, also Kasche to Foreign Office, 12 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 27322; Ettel, Internal Note, 16 Apr. 1943, Berlin, R 27322, as well as, on al-Husseini's own account of his tour and his meetings with religious dignitaries, Al-Husseini, *Mudhakkirat*, pp. 138–40 and 143.

[35] Al-Husseini, *Mudhakkirat*, p. 143.

[36] Winkler, Report ('Die politische Lage der Mohammedaner Bosniens'), 4 May 1943, Berlin, PA, R 67675.

[37] German News Agency, Confidential Report ('Vertrauliches Rohmaterial'), 16 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 27327.

[38] Winkler, Report ('Die politische Lage der Mohammedaner Bosniens'), 4 May 1943, Berlin, PA, R 67675.

with satisfaction that al-Husseini emphasized the common nature of the battle fought by both the Muslims of Croatia and the Muslims from other parts of the Islamic world, in Palestine, Syria, or Egypt, who were troubled or oppressed by 'anti-Muslim elements', be they 'Muscovite arsonists', 'English tyrants', or 'American exploiters'.[39] To the press, the Mufti announced that the 'Muslims in the Islamic world' would follow the situation in the Balkans with 'the greatest concern'. 'The outrage in the Islamic world' against the Serbian gangs and their allies was 'significant and bitter'.[40] According to US intelligence, al-Husseini condemned the Allies for massacres committed against Muslims in the Balkans.[41] His pan-Islamic rhetoric was exactly what the Germans wanted to hear. Not surprisingly, the Mufti later summed up in his report to the Germans: 'Islam fights Bolshevism and the Muslims know without doubt that their destiny is linked with that of Germany and the Axis, and that they are only threatened by Serbs, communists, and the Allies.'[42]

The SS reacted enthusiastically to the tour. 'The visit of the Great Mufti has been a success in every way; also politically it has been received exceptionally well and positively, and may contribute quite considerably to pacification in this area', Berger reported effusively.[43] Emphasizing the religious dimension of the tour, he declared: 'It has proved anew that the Grand Mufti possesses a fully functioning intelligence apparatus and commands extraordinary prestige in the entire Mohammedan world.' Sustaining misconceptions about the Mufti's universal authority among Muslims and the possibility of winning large-scale support through Islam, Berger even suggested similar tours on the Eastern front: 'The Grand Mufti is also by all means prepared to travel to the Crimean Tatars, i.e. to the Mohammedans of the currently occupied Eastern territories and to activate them in every form for Germany.'

The Wehrmacht co-operated through the entire campaign. 'The German generals', Berger reported to Himmler, had done the SS 'an extraordinary political and military service' when making the trip of the Mufti possible.[44] A month after the beginning of the campaign, in May 1943, Lüters already rejoiced that 'the treatment of Muslims [*Muselmanenbehandlung*] has become a propaganda weapon of the first order for Germany'.[45]

SS and Wehrmacht attempts to employ Islam in the Balkans had many opponents. Well aware of the politics of the tour, the SS faced heavy resistance

[39] German News Agency, Confidential Report ('Vertrauliches Rohmaterial'), 16 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 27327.

[40] German News Agency, Confidential Report ('Vertrauliches Rohmaterial'), 21 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 27327.

[41] US Intelligence (FBIS), Report, 22 Apr. 1943, USNA, accessed through USHMA, RG 6, Reel 22.

[42] Al-Husseini to Foreign Office, 30 Apr. 1943, Berlin, PA, R 27322.

[43] Berger to Himmler, 19 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255; and similarly, ten days later, Berger to Himmler, 29 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, NS 19/2601.

[44] Berger to Himmler, 19 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255.

[45] Lüters, Report ('Aufstandsbewegung der Cetniks'), 5 May 1943, n.p., MA, RS 3–7/16.

from Italian authorities and the Ustaša regime, both anxious to maintain their respective spheres of influence. As soon as the Mufti's plane had landed in Zagreb, the Italians tried to stage all kinds of plots to stop the tour. In his memoirs, al-Husseini remembered that after his arrival in the Croatian capital, a high-ranking Italian diplomat flew in from Rome to prevent his trip to Bosnia and that he had been warned that they could not guarantee his safety should he choose to travel to the war-torn area.[46] After the Mufti had returned to Berlin, the Italians urged the Germans 'with respect for Italy's special Croatian and Islamic interests', as Ernst Woermann, head of the political department of the Foreign Office, reported, to ensure that any future contact between the Mufti and the Muslims of the Balkans be organized through Italian channels.[47] The SS could not have cared less. Equally unsuccessful was the intervention of the Ustaša regime. The Croatian government had reacted 'quite dismissively' to the tour, Berger noted.[48] However, Ustaša officials very quickly 'reversed' their attitude, the head of the SS Head Office boasted in a letter to Himmler, after he, Berger, had directly confronted the Croatian envoy in Berlin. Ultimately, the Ustaša regime tried to control the Mufti throughout the visit. On his tour from Zagreb to Sarajevo, the Mufti was escorted by two representatives of the Ustaša regime.[49] Croatian government officials tried to isolate the Mufti from Muslim leaders who were not part of the regime. Nonetheless, the SS officer Karl von Krempler, a former Habsburg officer who was now responsible for Muslim affairs in the Balkans, sidelined the Ustaša agencies and organized confidential meetings with various Islamic dignitaries and separatist leaders.[50] Officially, of course, the Germans tried to conceal these frictions with the Ustaša leadership.

The SS also faced internal resistance. Kasche and the Foreign Office were opposed to the trip. In their eyes, the courtship of Muslims in the Balkans would only further undermine the Ustaša regime. When the Mufti visited Kasche's office in Zagreb, the envoy did not receive him, and only sent his card.[51] Furious, Kasche internally complained that the tour had sparked rumours among the Muslim population that Berlin was prepared to support the creation of a Muslim state in the region.[52] In general, the new course of the SS and Wehrmacht towards Islam in the Balkans, reflected in the Mufti's tour

[46] Al-Husseini, *Mudhakkirat*, p. 139. He also made the same complaint after his return to Berlin to Ettel, Internal Note, 16 Apr. 1943, Berlin, PA, R 27322.

[47] Woermann, Internal Note, 29 Apr. 1943, Berlin, USHMA, RG 71, Box 91.

[48] Berger to Himmler, 19 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Phleps (Commander of the 7th Volunteer SS Mountain Division 'Prinz Eugen') to Jüttner (Chief of the SS Leadership Head Office), 19 Apr. 1943, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601; the report was forwarded by Jüttner to Himmler, 27 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, NS 19/2601.

[51] Berger to Himmler, 19 Apr. 1943, Berlin, BA, R 19/2255. Kasche explained that he did not receive the Mufti because he believed that the trip was of an entirely 'private character', Kasche to Foreign Office, 12 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 27322.

[52] Kasche to Foreign Office, 28 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 100998.

and the deployment of the Muslim division, was interpreted in the Foreign Office as an attempt to 'fortify' Islam in south-eastern Europe, as the diplomat Hans Alexander Winkler in Berlin, put it.[53] In the immediate aftermath of the Mufti's tour, Winkler had visited Zagreb and Sarajevo, and subsequently worked out an eight-page memorandum about Germany's policy towards Islam in the Balkans, giving a highly concerned assessment of the new direction.[54] He showed an understanding of why the military found the Muslims, who in his eyes were entirely pro-German and still remembered the times of the Habsburg empire, as ideal allies on the ground. The SS must appreciate their 'racial material, the soldierly tradition and the anti-papal spirit', Winkler remarked. Yet, he sounded a note of caution with respect to German support for Muslims in the Balkans. First, he warned that German support for an 'autonomist Islam' (*autonomistisches Mohammedanertum*) in the region would undermine the Ustaša regime. The Mufti's tour had given a boost to 'Mohammedan self-confidence', and the deployment of the Muslim division would give rise to a 'religious idea' with the 'utmost disruptive' effect on the Ustaša state. Second, Winkler expressed his concerns about the 'pan-Islamic, non-European orientation' of Muslim collaborators in the Balkans. Unlike the SS, he perceived pan-Islamism as a risk, not an opportunity. The tour of al-Husseini had contributed to this risk. 'The Mufti regards the world situation under a very widespread Muhammedan perspective, which for us is completely alien.' This perspective, Winkler stated, was entirely 'anti-European'.[55] Winkler's memorandum reflected a rare perception of Islam, expressing a classical European notion of the religion and the Occident, a view which did not really fit into the pragmatic and rationalized conceptions of SS officers like Berger or military representatives such as Lüters, who were convinced of the usefulness of Islam for their war effort. Winkler's warnings had little impact. He, Kasche, and the Foreign Office had no significant influence anymore on the German political course in the Balkans, whilst the SS and the Wehrmacht pursued their policy towards Islam.

The Mufti's tour was framed by a wider campaign. It was followed not only by the employment of the Muslim SS division, but also by a major religiously charged propaganda campaign to win over the Muslim civil population for Hitler's New Order.

[53] Winkler, Report ('Die politische Lage der Mohammedaner Bosniens'), 4 May 1943, Berlin, PA, R 67675. On Winkler's stay in Sarajevo and Zagreb between 14 and 22 Apr. 1943, see Kasche to Foreign Office, 28 Apr. 1943, Zagreb, PA, R 100998; and, attached, German Legation in Zagreb, Report ('Übersicht über den Inhalt der einzelnen Gespräche während Reise Konsul Winkler, Dr. Katschinka und Herr Oertel'), n.d. (28 Apr. 1943), Zagreb, PA, R 100998.

[54] Winkler, Report ('Die politische Lage der Mohammedaner Bosniens'), 4 May 1943, Berlin, PA, R 67675.

[55] Ibid.

IV

Considering Ustaša sensibilities, the Germans avoided employing Islam in their propaganda in the Balkans before the spring of 1943. 'A propagandistic influence of the Muslim population was withheld, as such is not wanted from the Croatian side', a report of the Propaganda Squadron South-East remarked in August 1942. 'Only', the report added, 10,000 copies of a 'small illustrated brochure in the Croatian language' entitled 'The Life of the Muslims in Germany' had been printed for distribution in West Bosnia, where German units had begun fighting again.[56] In fact, 'The Life of the Muslims in Germany' ('Život Muslimana u Njemačkoj') was twenty-seven pages long.[57] It contained many photographs of Muslim life in the Reich, including pictures of the Berlin Mosque, founded in the interwar period, and short texts about individuals from all parts of the Muslim world who worked in Germany. Its aim was to identify the Third Reich as the friend of Islam, assuming a pan-Islamic sense of identification between Muslim peasants in West Bosnia and Muslim civilians in Germany. The brochure was the first significant piece of German religious propaganda launched in the Muslim areas of the Balkans.

With the beginning of further German military involvement, this kind of propaganda intensified. Brochures and pamphlets were distributed in Muslim towns and villages, propaganda posters were put up in streets and trains. The print propaganda which survived the war, today mostly stored in the German military archives in Freiburg, has, interestingly, never been examined in any study about the Balkans during the Second World War. It paints a clear picture of the ways in which German authorities employed religion as a political instrument against their enemies. German propaganda pamphlets would usually portray Jews, British, and Americans as the foes of Islam, who pulled the strings behind the scenes of the Balkan theatre and were responsible for the miserable situation of the Muslims there. Other pamphlets, which were distributed on the spot in more specific tactical situations, characterized Tito's partisans and Četniks as the enemies of Islam. In any case, the Germans repeatedly drew on religious sentiment.

First, German propaganda merged Islam with Jew-hatred. One of the most significant examples of this kind of religiously charged anti-Jewish propaganda dispersed among Muslims of the Balkans was the brochure 'Islam and Judaism' ('Islam i Židovstvo').[58] It propagated the idea of an age-old history of hostility between Islam and Judaism, beginning with the conflict between the Prophet

[56] Propaganda Division South-East, Report ('Lage- und Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat Aug. 1942'), 4 Sept. 1942, Belgrade, MA, RW 4/232.

[57] Propaganda Brochure 'Život Muslimana u Njemačkoj', n.d. (Feb. 1943), MA, RH 45/73.

[58] Data Sheet on 'Islam i Židovstvo', n.d. (Feb. 1943), MA, RH 45/76; and, on the content, Thomas Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division 'Prinz Eugen': Die Banater Schwaben und die nationalsozialistischen Kriegsverbrechen* (Frankfurt and New York, NY, 2003), p. 333; and Lebel, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, pp. 311–19, which includes the full translation of the booklet on pp. 313–19.

and the Jewish community of Khaybar. German propagandists distributed 10,000 copies of the publication on 21 February 1943. Half of the texts were circulated among Muslims by the local office of the Propaganda Squadron Croatia in Banja Luka; the remaining copies spread by its local representative in Sarajevo.

Generally, however, it was British and Soviet imperialism that played the central role in German propaganda towards the Muslim population. A pamphlet circulated in the summer of 1943 proclaimed to 'Muslims' that the culprits who brought 'misery and death, blood and tears' were none other than the 'agitators in London and Moscow'. Only the victory of the Axis would 'mean the end and the extermination of all enemies of Islam'. The Muslims of the SS division were portrayed as part of a broader pan-Islamic mission, as 'the first who could fight under these victorious banners, not only for the freedom of your homeland, but also for the liberation of Islam from its enemies'. The pamphlet was adorned with a flag depicting crescent and star. On 5 June, 15,000 copies were distributed by General Walter Stettner's infamous 1st Mountain Division. The Luftwaffe dropped another 35,000 copies in the areas of Konjic, Blagaj, Goražde, Rogatica, Fojnica, Visoko, Travnik, and Maglaj on 7 June 1943. The pamphlet concluded with a simple message: 'Islam has one enemy: England. Islam has one friend: Germany. Muslims: Your place in this battle is set.'[59] Typically, the leaflets would address the Allied powers jointly, speaking of the 'danger of English, American and Soviet imperialism',[60] or warning of plots against Islam made in 'London and Moscow'.[61] Yet, if one of these powers was mentioned most frequently, it was the Soviet Union or, more generally, Bolshevism, portrayed as the atheist enemy of Islam. A pamphlet addressing the 'Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina' warned: 'A red wave from the East threatens to swallow all peoples and religious communities in the Balkans!'[62] Their 'brothers in faith' in the Soviet Union had, the pamphlet declared, already been 'trampled down' by the Kremlin. Only if the Muslims went to arms on the German side could they prevent their 'total extermination by the Soviet fury', a fury which had already caused the deaths of 'hundreds of thousands of Muslims in the Soviet Union'. 'To arms', it called the Muslims, and praised the SS division 'Handžar'. Even more colorful language was used in another pamphlet, which drew on the religious associations of the green flag of the Prophet. It asked rhetorically: 'Must Stalin's plan become a reality? Must the green flag of the Prophet run red with the blood of the Muslims?'[63] And it referred to massacres of Muslims by Tito's partisans in the area of Čapljina. 'The

[59] Pamphlet 'Muslimani!', MA, RH 45/51; and, for the German translation, see Pamphlet 'Muselmanen!' (German translation), MA, RH 45/51; for details about the pamphlet and its distribution, see Data Sheet on 'Muslimani!', June 1943, MA, RH 45/51.

[60] Pamphlet 'Kämpfer des NOV!' (German translation), n.d., MA, RH 45/49.

[61] Pamphlet 'Braćo muslimani!', n.d., MA, RH 45/51.

[62] Pamphlet 'Muslimani Bosne i Hercegovine!', n.d., MA, RH 45/59.

[63] Pamphlet 'Treba li Staljinov plan da bude stvarnost?', n.d., MA, RH 45/53.

bloodsucker Stalin will allow his entrusted Tito to spill the blood of Muslims elsewhere.' The reason for the alleged Soviet hatred against Muslims was also given: 'Because every Muslim protects his faith, his old customs and conventions against communist overthrow!' The pamphlet contained an image of a mosque with a minaret and a (supposedly green) flag. In the front, it showed a depiction of Stalin and below him a fictional quote: 'I will take care that *this* flag also turns red. As is necessary, with the blood of the Muslims alone.'

On a more tactical level, German propaganda towards Muslims campaigned against communist partisans and Četniks. In fact, Muslim combatants in their ranks were the first the Germans encouraged to change sides. A pamphlet addressing the 'fighters of the Bosnian and Muslim brigades' of the partisans, for instance, claimed that Tito had made empty promises to Muslims and was now on the retreat, facing hunger and cold.[64] The Muslims were called upon to change sides before it was too late. Another pamphlet referred to atrocities committed by the partisans, remembering '353 murdered Muslims' from the area of Vlasenica and giving a detailed two-page 'report' about the cruelty of the communist partisans and their determination to kill all Muslims. It concluded with a final call: 'Muslims! Do you want to continue watching your extermination quietly?'[65] These texts would often be religiously charged as well. A pamphlet which called for Muslims in Tito's ranks to change sides was prefaced by a quotation: 'Fire at the mosque with the cannon!'[66] These were the alleged words of Tito's commanders, when they had ordered the attack on the town of Velika Kladuša. The (remains of the) mosque of Velika Kladuša, the pamphlet explained, now evidenced the attack by the 'communists'. Employing religious rhetoric, the pamphlet called those 'who believe in god' to 'take aim with the weapons against the communists'. A pamphlet addressing 'Muslim fighters' asked why Tito ridiculed their faith and customs, and insulted Muslim women.[67] The answer was immediate: 'Because human and religious ideas, customs and conventions are incompatible with communist ideas', and 'because you and the people of the right faith will always be a plague upon godless Bolshevism!'. At the top of the pamphlet was a picture of a mosque with a crescent on its roof and a minaret. Similar propaganda was directed at the few Muslims who fought in Četnik ranks. A pamphlet addressing the 'Muslim brothers!', for instance, counteracted Četnik propaganda towards Muslims, reminding Muslims that Mihailović's troops had killed everything that was 'Islamic or Croatian'.[68] 'Muslims know very well who their enemy is', the pamphlet read.

[64] Pamphlet 'Borci bosanskih i muslimanskih brigada!', n.d., MA, RH 45/61.
[65] Pamphlet '353 ubijenih Muslimana obtužuju Titu u području Vlasenice', n.d., MA, RH 45/53.
[66] Pamphlet 'Pucaj sa topom u džamiju!', n.d., MA, RH 45/59.
[67] Pamphlet 'Borci Muslimani', n.d., MA, RH 45/59.
[68] Pamphlet 'Braćo Muslimani!', n.d., MA, RH 45/59.

Religious images and illustrations, especially those of mosques and minarets, played a remarkable role in many of these pamphlets. Visual propaganda had the advantage that it could also reach those who were illiterate. 'To allow for the illiteracy of the population here, a series of suitable drawings has been prepared at the instigation of the department in Agram', a report from the Propaganda Division South-East had stated as early as September 1942.[69] Besides illustrated pamphlets, Germans also distributed propaganda posters depicting mosques.[70] One of them showed Roosevelt dropping bombs on Mostar, represented by a skyline of roofs and minarets.

A high portion of the pamphlets addressed Muslims in religious terms, as 'Muslims' (*Muslimani*) or 'Muslim brothers' (*Braćo muslimani*), rather than as, for example, 'Bosniaks' (*Bošnjaci*) or 'Bosnians' (*Bosanci*). Yet, some leaflets attempted to accommodate Muslims within other religious groups, addressing for instance, 'Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox of Bosnia', or 'Croatians and Serbians: Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox', or the 'honest Croatians, Muslims and Orthodox in the partisan ranks!', exhorting them to change sides.[71] Another pamphlet asked 'Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox' to remember that the Bolsheviks would not only spread 'murder and burning', but that they also stood for the 'extermination of faith and religion'.[72]

After the employment of the 'Handžar' division, reports and pamphlets about it became a strong instrument of German propaganda directed towards Muslim civilians. Moreover, from early 1944, when the division was deployed after several months of training abroad, its propaganda section also became concerned with the ideological education of the civil population.[73] In spring 1944, for instance, it put up charcoal drawn propaganda posters for the *Mavlud* (birthday of the Prophet) celebrations across the occupied Muslim areas.[74]

[69] Propaganda Division South-East, Report ('Lage- und Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat Aug. 1942'), 4 Sept. 1942, Belgrade, MA, RW 4/232.

[70] Propaganda Poster, n.d., MA, RH 45/54; the poster was printed 8,000 times on 7 Feb. 1944 and put up on 9 Feb. 1944 in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Dubrovnik and other towns, see Data Sheet in MA, RH 45/54; and, for the poster depicting Roosevelt, see Propaganda Poster, n.d., MA, RH 45/54; this poster was printed in 10,000 copies on 1 Mar. 1944 and put up on 8 Mar. 1944 in Sarajveo, Banja Luka, Dubrovnik, and other towns, see Data Sheet in MA, RH 45/54.

[71] Pamphlet 'Muslimani, Katolici i Pravoslavci Bosne', n.d., MA, RH 45/48; and, for the German translation, see Pamphlet 'Muselmanen, Katholiken, Pravoslaven Bosniens' (German translation), n.d., MA, RH 45/48; Pamphlet 'Kroaten und Serben: Muselmanen, Katholiken und Pravoslaven' (German translation), n.d. (Oct. 1943), MA, RH 37/6853; and Pamphlet 'Poštenim Hrvatima, Muslimanima i Pravoslavcima u partizanskim redovima!', n.d., MA, RH 45/59.

[72] Pamphlet 'Muslimani, Katolici i Pravoslavci', n.d., MA, RH 45/48; and, for the German translation, see Pamphlet 'Muselmanen, Katholiken und Pravoslaven' (German translation), n.d., MA, RH 45/48.

[73] Structure Plan, Office for Political and Ideological Education the 13th SS Waffen Mountain Division 'Handžar', 2 Mar. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

[74] Wangemann (Chief of the Office for Political and Ideological Education of the 13th SS Waffen Mountain Division 'Handžar'), Report ('Tätigkeitsbericht der Abt. VI'), 4 Apr. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

Between 12 and 25 March 1944, it employed a loudspeaker van to address three local *Mavlud* celebrations.[75] The division also produced pictorial reports of the religious celebrations of the soldiers. These were then used, for example, in window displays.[76] In autumn 1943, the SS had already given a photographic report about the Ramadan *Bajram* (end of the Islamic fasting month) celebrations of the soldiers to the Croatian press for publication. Concerned about the SS campaign, Ustaša authorities turned to Kasche, complaining that the article had been foisted upon them under duress.[77]

Soon, the German command would also use the military imams of the division to conduct propaganda among Muslim civilians. Propagandistically trained, the SS sent them into the mosques to lead the Friday prayers (*džuma-namaz*) for the civil population in order to 'carry', as an SS report put it, the 'ideas of the division' to the civil population.[78] The report further noted that the 'imams continuously hold gatherings in the mosque for the civil population, which are framed by Islamic prayers'. These religious gatherings were used to spread political ideas and propaganda, especially to explain the work of the division and to agitate against Tito.

> Such meetings are held by the imams in all the larger towns in the area of the division's employment. The imams also conducted the most diverse *Mavlud* celebrations in these places, and have achieved a very good propagandistic effect on the civil population as, during the solemn speeches, allusions were made to the division and its aims.

Soldiers of the division were also used as propagandists. Pamphlets designed for the civil population, which were created by the division's propaganda section, were not just airdropped from planes, but were also given to the soldiers to be sent, along with their field post, to their families, neighbours and friends.[79] Soldiers were instructed to tell their relatives to forward the pamphlets in order to achieve a maximum readership. Moreover, the SS created pamphlets signed by Muslim soldiers calling for war against Tito. One such pamphlet, signed by the SS man Halid Komić, not only turned against the partisans, but also carried anti-Jewish stereotypes: 'It is the Jews and the Jews' menials. Who has had the whole capital in their hands? The Jews. Who has lived at ease? Only the Jew.' Now, he claimed, the SS division would bring back 'freedom, order and

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.; and Wangemann to Sauberzweig (Commander of the 13th SS Waffen Mountain Division 'Handžar'), 10 Apr. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

[77] Propaganda Division (Waffen-SS Standarte 'Kurt Eggers') to Brandt (Himmler's Staff), Berlin, 8 Nov. 1943, BA, NS 19/2601.

[78] Wangemann, Report ('Tätigkeitsbericht der Abt. VI'), 4 Apr. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

[79] Sauberzweig, Propaganda Letter 'Moji dragi momci!', 28 Feb. 1944, n.p., BA, NS19/2601; and, for the German translation, see Sauberzweig, Propaganda Letter 'Meine lieben Männer' (German translation), 25 Feb. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

justice'.[80] Another pamphlet, anonymously signed by a group of SS men, railed against the 'godless hordes of Tito' which had turned Bosnia into a 'vale of tears'. 'Our unshaken belief in the great man [Hitler], who leads the freedom loving peoples of Europe against the adversaries of god and mankind, gives us the strength to carry out the fight and the tasks successfully', the pamphlet proclaimed. In the usual manner, religious imperatives were connected with political appeals: 'Who is not for us and with us, is against us . . . herefore it is your holy duty to follow completely this, our call! . . . Heil Hitler!'[81]

Finally, the imams were to instruct the German soldiers of the division about religious customs and rules in Muslim areas.[82] They were also to act as intermediaries during billets with the local populace. Islamic dignitaries were considered politically important by German officials on the ground.

V

Before 1943, German interactions with the religious leaders, the *ulema*, and their institutions were rare. German Foreign Office officials dealt almost exclusively with the Muslim representatives of the Ustaša state and faced the problem that a powerful Muslim leader did not exist. The two most important Muslim factions within the Ustaša regime were led by the Muslim vice-premier, Džafer Kulenović, and by Hakija Hadžić, Pavelić's lackey in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[83] A veteran politician, Kulenović had already been a minister in the kingdom of Yugoslavia and, following the death of Mehmed Spaho in 1939, had become president of the 'Yugoslav Muslim Organization'. According to a German diplomat, he drew first and foremost on religious slogans and only second on Croatian nationalism, but was still accused by many Muslims of being an Ustaša puppet. Hakija Hadžić, who promoted Croatian nationalist slogans rather than religious ones, had only a small following, mostly among the intelligentsia.[84] Another German official observed in March 1943 that there was 'no personality' who could be considered a generally accepted leader.[85] 'The solution to the Muslim question is mainly a leadership question', he stated. Muslims of the Ustaša regime had little authority within the Muslim population. The situation seemed clearer in the case of the religious establishment which was believed to wield more genuine power and influence over the people.

[80] Pamphlet (Draft) 'An alle Flüchtlinge!' (German translation), n.d., BA, NS 19/2601.

[81] Pamphlet 'Bosniaken und Bosniakinen!' (German translation), n.d., BA, NS 19/2601.

[82] Sauberzweig, Order ('Stellung der Imame innerhalb der Division'), 8 Mar. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

[83] On Kulenović and Hadžić, see literature in n. 10.

[84] Requard (German Legation in Zagreb), Report ('Bericht über Dienstreise nach Sarajevo'), 2 June 1943, Zagreb, USHMA, RG 71, Box 237. Requard based his assessment on consultations with Islamic leaders, especially Ali Aganović.

[85] Katschinka (German Legation in Zagreb), Report ('Muselmanen'), 27 Mar. 1943, Zagreb, USHMA, RG 71, Box 237.

As religious structures were fully institutionalized, they could be understood, and, possibly, utilized. Organized within the 'Islamic Religious Community', the faithful were under the authority of the *Reis-ul-Ulema* (Head of the *Ulema*), the highest religious leader.[86] The *Reis-ul-Ulema* was assisted by the *Ulema-Medžlis* (Council of the *Ulema*), the supreme council of the Islamic community, which consisted of himself and four other eminent dignitaries and oversaw the *vakuf* endowment, *medresa*s and *šeriat* courts as well as the work of the local imams, the *ulema* and *hodžas*. This administration had been introduced in 1882 by Habsburg bureaucrats anxious to loosen the religious bonds with the Ottoman empire and keen to monitor and control Islam in the Balkans, and had survived in the Yugoslav kingdom and under the Ustaša regime. Eager to present themselves as a protector of Islam, the Germans made no direct attempts to interfere with the Islamic administration. As they became more involved in the Muslim areas of the Balkans in early 1943, however, German officials increasingly engaged with religious leaders. In the end, the SS even employed an important member of the *Ulema-Medžlis* for their political aims.

At the time of the German invasion of Yugoslavia, the office of *Reis-ul-Ulema* was held by Fehim Spaho, former president of the High *Šeriat* Court in Sarajevo and brother of Mehmed Spaho. Although Spaho initially enthusiastically supported the Ustaša regime, hoping that it would allow him to realize his own aims, he soon lost hope in Pavelić.[87] Salih Safet Bašić, who informally replaced Spaho after his death in early 1942, had a rocky relationship with the Ustaša.[88] Concerned with the protection of their community, both leaders sought good relations with the Germans. Spaho had in fact cultivated his contacts with German officials already in the months leading up to the invasion of the Balkans and kept them informed about atrocities against Muslims during the war.[89] Other members of the *Ulema-Medžlis* went further. As the situation of the Muslims deteriorated in 1942 and 1943, many of them embraced the idea of Muslim autonomy under Berlin's protection. Their hopes were fuelled by the

[86] On the history of the Islamic institutions, see Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle*, pp. 19–22; Hauptmann, 'Die Mohammedaner in Bosnien-Hercegovina', pp. 685–90; Džaja, *Bosnien-Herzegowina in der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Epoche*, pp. 58–64; Al-Arnaut, 'Islam and Muslims in Bosnia, 1878–1918', pp. 250–1; Karčić, *The Bosniaks and the challenge of modernity*, pp. 124–39; idem, 'The office of Ra'īs al-'Ulamā' among the Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims)', *Intellectual Discourse*, 5 (1997), pp. 109–20; idem, *Šeriatski Sudovi u Jugoslaviji, 1918–1941*; idem, 'The reform of Shari'a courts and Islamic law'; Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman legacy?', p. 317; Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 273–8, 316–19, and 339; and, for a general overview, Ferhat Šeta, *Reis-ul-Uleme u Bosni i Hercegovini i Jugoslaviji od 1882 do 1991 Godine* (Sarajevo, 1991).

[87] On Spaho, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 467 and 490; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 78 and 86–7; Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman legacy?', passim; Greble, *Sarajevo*, esp. pp. 30–7, 64–5, 76–81, 85, 96, 99, 101, 112–13, 115, 124, 126, and 166; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, passim; and Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, p. 339.

[88] On Bašić, see Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 174; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, p. 91; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 161–2 and 217; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, p. 293; and Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, p. 339.

[89] Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 32 and 166.

tour of the Mufti, the establishment of the Muslim SS division, and Germany's massive religious propaganda campaign.

Both Fehim Spaho and Salih Bašić were opposed as being too progressive by more fundamentalist members of the *Ulema-Medžlis*, most notably Mehmed Handžić. Al-Azhar educated, Handžić was a leading Islamic revivalist with pan-Islamic leanings who taught at a *medresa* in Sarajevo and served as the head librarian of the grand Gazi Husrevbegova Biblioteka.[90] He was president of El-Hidaje ('The Right Path'), a society of Salafi *ulema*.[91] Its youth organization, the Mladi Muslimani ('Young Muslims'), attracted a considerable following. Handžić and his supporters had quickly become disillusioned with Ustaša rule and were now advocating an autonomist agenda and seeking German help. During al-Husseini's tour, Handžić had met with the Mufti in Sarajevo, gave him a warm welcome address at a banquet in the city hall, and afterwards published an article about the visit in *El-Hidaje*, the official organ of his society.[92] In consultations with German diplomats in Sarajevo in mid-April 1943, Handžić urged for a more extensive German intervention.[93] Bemoaning the suffering and murder of Muslims, he blamed the Ustaša for the situation. The Croatian regime had adopted the same policy towards Muslims as pursued by the Serbs in the Yugoslav kingdom, he claimed – a policy of annihilation. The Muslims in Pavelić's government were not true representatives of the people, but had been bought, he told the Germans. Although he enthusiastically welcomed the foundation of the Muslim SS division, he made clear that this was not enough. The only solution was an independent Muslim state under the protection of Germany. Handžić even suggested a religious resettlement plan to create purified Muslim areas. The Muslim population had been deeply impressed that German soldiers had fallen in battle against the enemies of Islam. And the visit of the Mufti had also sent the right signals. There was no doubt, Handžić assured the Germans, that the Muslims were the natural allies of the Third Reich. Handžić was well aware of what the Germans wanted to hear. Giving

[90] On Handžić, see Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 189; Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman legacy?', passim; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 34, 78, 126, and 214; and Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 119, 205–7, 210, and 261.

[91] On El-Hidaje and the Young Muslims, see Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 103, 105, and 169; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 16, 123, 142–3, and 205–6; Karčić, 'The reform of Shari'a courts and Islamic law', p. 268; Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy?', passim; Greble, *Saravejo*, esp. pp. 33–4, 78, 160–3, 175–6, 184–5, 200–1, 214, 217, and 235; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, passim; and Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 321, 328, and 340.

[92] Mehmed Handžić, 'Palestinski veliki muftija u Sarajevu' ('The Palestinian Grand Mufti in Sarajevo'), *El-Hidaje*, 6 (5 May 1943), pp. 250–2; the article includes the text of the speech given by al-Husseini after the Friday prayers in the Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque of Sarajevo (p. 251); and a portrait photo of the Mufti was printed on the front page of the issue. *El-Hidaje* is stored in the Gazi Husrev Beg Library (Gazi Husrev-Begova Biblioteka), Sarajevo.

[93] German Legation in Zagreb, Report ('Übersicht über den Inhalt der einzelnen Gespräche während Reise Konsul Winkler, Dr. Katschinka und Herr Oertel'), n.d. (28 Apr. 1943), Zagreb, PA, R 100998.

them the impression that their religiously charged propaganda had fallen on fertile soil, he pushed his own agenda, most notably the strengthening of self-defence and the establishment, de facto and, if possible, de jure, autonomy from the Ustaša.

Handžić was not the only member of the *ulema* to seek a tighter alliance with the Germans. Ali Aganović, a widely respected member of *Ulema-Medžlis* who repeatedly consulted with German officials, also followed this line.[94] Although he paid public lip service to the Ustaša regime until the end, he too had soon lost faith in Pavelić and had begun to urge the Germans for a stronger involvement in the Muslim Balkans.[95] At a meeting in the spring of 1943, Aganović assured the officials from the German legation in Zagreb that Muslim religious autonomy could only be achieved through political independence.[96] Emphasizing the importance of the Muslims of the Balkans within the wider Islamic world, he also discussed pan-Islamic policies and the re-establishment of the Caliphate, an office he believed should be given to the Mufti of Jerusalem. While Handžić and Aganović made their appeals for an alliance with the Third Reich behind closed doors, other members of the *ulema* stood openly in the service of the German authorities.

The most important collaborator of the *Ulema-Medžlis* was Muhamed Pandža, a leading religious dignitary and a member of El-Hidaje.[97] From a prominent Sarajevo family of religious leaders and educated at the most prestigious Islamic institutions in the country, Pandža had always kept a certain distance from the Ustaša regime and was now publicly pleading for Muslim autonomy under German protection. His strong pro-German attitude made him an ideal collaborator for the Wehrmacht and the SS. At once, the SS employed him for the recruitment of Muslim volunteers, a mission which he would carry out with all his religious authority. Pandža was described by a field imam of the Muslim SS unit, Hasan Bajrakitarović, as the 'true initiator, greatest propagandist, recruiter and fighter for the foundation and replenishment of this division'.[98] According to the imam, it was Pandža who had convinced the 'Muslim clerical leadership' to support the deployment of the division. 'Everybody knew', Bajrakitarović explained, that what Pandža recommended must be 'genuinely

[94] On Aganović, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, p. 491; Greble, *Sarajevo*, p. 128; and Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 293 and 341.

[95] Requard, Report ('Bericht über Dienstreise nach Sarajevo'), 2 June 1943, Zagreb, USHMA, RG 71, Box 237.

[96] German Legation in Zagreb, Report ('Übersicht über den Inhalt der einzelnen Gespräche während Reise Konsul Winkler, Dr. Katschinka und Herr Oertel'), n.d. (28 Apr. 1943), Zagreb, PA, R 100998.

[97] On Pandža, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 411, 495, and 503–4; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 103, 174, 184–5, and 224; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 22–3, 139–43, and 147; Broszat and Hory, *Kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, p. 157; Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman legacy?', pp. 324–5; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 173–4, 184–6, 192, and 237; and Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 79–81, 205–10, and 345–6.

[98] Bajrakitarović to Phelps, 15 Nov. 1943, Mostar, BA, NS 19/2601.

Islamic and patriotic'. In some towns, before recruits were allowed to enter the enlisting office of the division, they were required first to see Pandža, who prepared them mentally for their mission.[99] Aside from military mobilization, the Germans would also use Pandža as an intermediary to support their efforts to pacify the Muslim areas.

A significant role in this respect was played by the socio-religious organization Merhamet – also known as the 'Muslim Charitable Society Merhamet' (Muslimansko Dobrotvorno Društvo Merhamet) – in Sarajevo, which was led by Pandža.[100] Merhamet became a major body providing humanitarian aid during the war years, running soup kitchens, orphanages, and refugee camps, and it also got politically more and more involved. For the Germans, Merhamet became a valued partner, and they were cautious to retain good relations with the organization. When, for instance, Merhamet requested the return of a Muslim orphan who had been adopted by a German Catholic family, brought to Germany and converted to Catholicism, German authorities swiftly intervened, returned the child and entrusted it to a Muslim family in Sarajevo.[101] On the ground, military officials soon regarded Merhamet as the most important representative body of the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Merhamet repeatedly negotiated the food situation with the German Police Area Commander, Sarajevo, *SS-Oberführer* Werner Fromm.[102] And when Berlin started a relief fund in early 1944, Berger suggested that clothes for Muslim refugees be distributed through Merhamet.[103] Himmler was only too happy to employ the local Muslim structures, and authorized Merhamet to make the distribution.[104]

The SS perceived Merhamet as a strong partner. Yet, it was not fully controlled by the Germans and would follow its own interests. In September 1943, the second secretary of the organization, Mehmed Tokić, who had actually been hired by the SS as a covert informer, would threaten German officers with an open rebellion against the Croatian state.[105] The Muslims,

[99] Ibid.

[100] On Merhamet, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 409, 411, and 495; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 174; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 123 and 142–3; Greble, *Sarajevo*, esp. pp. 34, 106, 139–41, 173–6, 213–17, 235, and 245–6; and Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 285, 287, 321, and 340.

[101] Greble, *Sarajevo*, p. 174.

[102] Langenberger (Headquaters of the 369th Infantry Division), Report ('Niederschrift über eine Besprechung am 17.9.43 mit dem 2. Sekretär der "Muslimansko Dobrotvorno Društvo: Merhamet Sarajevo" namens Mechmed Tokitsch'), 17 Sept. 1943, n.p., BA, NS19/3893 (also in MA, N 756/183b).

[103] Berger to Himmler, n.d. (Jan. 1944), Berlin, BA, NS 19/319; and, similarly, Berger to Himmler, 12 Jan. 1944, Berlin, BA, NS 19/2601.

[104] Meine (Himmler's Staff) to Berger, n.d. (Jan. 1944), n.p., BA, NS 19/319.

[105] Langenberger, Report ('Niederschrift über eine Besprechung am 17.9.43 mit dem 2. Sekretär der "Muslimansko Dobrotvorno Društvo: Merhamet Sarajevo" namens Mechmed Tokitsch'), 17 Sept. 1943, n.p., BA, NS19/3893 (also in MA, N 756/183b). This report was forwarded by Phleps (Commander of the 5th SS Mountain Corps) to Himmler, 5 Nov. 1943, n. p., BA, NS19/3893.

Tokić made clear, despised the Ustaša regime and sought to live in a German protectorate instead, as in Austrian-Hungarian times. Berger tried to ameliorate the situation, rejecting any threats levied by the 'Muslim leadership', and warning that violent uprisings such as these would make things even worse for the Muslims.[106] The leaders of Merhamet soon became disillusioned with the Germans. In the end, also, Muhamed Pandža lost his hope in the Third Reich. He went into the woods, founded the 'Muslim Liberation Movement' (Muslimanski Oslobodilački Pokret), and called for armed self-defence and Muslim autonomy.[107] Addressing his 'Muslim Brothers!' in a propaganda pamphlet, Pandža now declared war against Ustaša and Četniks.[108] He announced: 'Everything we serve is the wellbeing of the Islamic community and our nation.' 'Muslims', he proclaimed, in his usual religious rhetoric, now had to fight 'with faith in god and his help, bravely and dauntlessly' for survival. Although some SS circles in Berlin were concerned about these developments, Krempler, who had repeatedly dealt with Pandža in the field, emphasized that he was still pro-German.[109] Hitler, whose trust in the Muslims remained unbroken, excused Pandža's defection with the remark that the Muslims needed to protect themselves.[110] Pandža, who later made contact with Tito's partisans, was finally captured by German troops in eastern Bosnia and handed over to the Ustaša authorities. He was not the only Islamic leader who had become disillusioned.

VI

Promises made to Muslims by the Germans, eager to present themselves as the protector of Islam, contrasted sharply with the realities of war. In practice, the Germans were not able to pacify the Muslim areas. The collaboration between Muslim leaders and the Germans nurtured the hatred directed against them by partisans and Četniks. Although the Germans had promised that the sole purpose of the Muslim division was the protection and pacification of the Muslim areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Himmler had sent it for training to France and, later, Germany. Unprotected, the Muslim population became the object of retaliatory attacks. In the autumn of 1943, Tito's partisans initiated a

[106] Schulte to Brandt, 11 Jan. 1944, Berlin, BA, NS19/3893 (also in MA, N 756/183b).

[107] On the Muslim Liberation Movement, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 503–4; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 103, 184–5, and 224; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 139–43; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 184–6 and 192; and Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 208–10.

[108] Pandža, Pamphlet (German Translation), n.d. (10 Jan. 1944), MA, RH 19 XI/10a (also in BA, NS 19/2601).

[109] Headquarters of the 2nd Panzer Army to Headquarters of Army Group F, 8 Jan. 1944, n.p., MA, RH 19XI/10a; and, for a similar assessment, Bajrakitarović to Phelps, 15 Nov. 1943, Mostar, BA, NS 19/2601.

[110] Kasche, Internal Note ('Unterhaltung mit dem Führer am 29.10.1943 im Hauptquartier'), 11 Nov. 1943, Zagreb, PA, Nachlass Kasche, vol. 23.

major offensive in Bosnia. Thousands were killed. Tens of thousands were soon on the run. The relatives of Muslim volunteers in particular were targeted by partisans. Muslim refugees gathered in the hundreds in depots, barns, stables, and basements, an SS field report noted.[111] Many of them had no proper clothes and suffered malnutrition. Across the Islamic world, these events were followed closely. On 11 January 1944, the SS representative for Croatia, Konstantin Kammerhofer, wrote to Himmler, apparently concerned not only about the local situation, but also the effects this had on the wider Muslim world:

> As a consequence of the partisan struggle in Croatia about 230,000 people, around 210,000 of them from the area of Bosnia, are currently on the run. The situation of these people is the worst possible that could be imagined. At the present time, no human being can describe the tragedies that take place among these masses ... The majority of the refugees comprises Muslims ... With regard to the Muslims in the 13th SS Bosnian-Herzegovinian Volunteer Mountain Division as well as to the problem of World-Islam (*Weltmuselmanen-Problem*) it has to be considered anew if you, Reichsführer, should call for a special support to provide relief needed by the refugees.[112]

Himmler was convinced. On the occasion of the *Bajram* celebration in autumn 1943, the SS had already organized a collection of money for the Muslim population in Bosnia and, shortly after, Himmler had ordered a second relief fund.[113] During the second collection alone, more than 120,000 *Reichsmark*s were raised.[114] Himmler would add another 100,000 from his own funds.[115] In January 1944, Berger reported that 225,000 *Reichsmark*s had been amassed.[116] The money was mainly used for clothing, which was then distributed.[117] Still, these projects were only a drop in the ocean. SS policies towards Muslims had compromised the Muslim population, while providing it with no military protection.

Finally, in late February 1944, the SS sent the 'Handžar' division back to the Balkans, launching another major propaganda campaign. For a short period, the situation for Muslims eased. The Muslims responded with hope and thanks. On 20 April 1944, for instance, Krempler reported that prayers for Hitler took

[111] Posch (Waffen-SS), Report ('Abschlussbericht über die Tätigkeit als F. O. in Kroatien vom 10.3.1943–1.1.1944'), 30 Dec. 1943, Zagreb, BA, NS 19/319.

[112] Kammerhofer to Himmler, 11 Jan. 1944, Zagreb, BA, NS 19/319.

[113] Sauberzweig to Berger, 5 Nov. 1943, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601; and, on the second collection, Himmler to Berger and Jüttner, 16 Nov. 1943, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

[114] Berger to Himmler, 12 Jan. 1944, Berlin, BA, NS 19/2601.

[115] Brandt to Berger, 31 Jan. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601; and on the actual transfer, documents in BA, NS 19/2601.

[116] Berger to Himmler, n.d. (Jan. 1944), Berlin, BA, NS 19/319.

[117] Wangemann, Report ('Tätigkeitsbericht der Abt. VI'), 4 Apr. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/2601.

place in all the towns of the Sandžak.[118] A Muslim delegation from the area sent Hitler a telegram of obeisance:

> The Muslims of the Sandžak, who shoulder on shoulder with the brave German soldiers participate in the battle against the bandits, celebrate today your birthday and send fervent prayers to the almighty Allah for your personal long life and happiness, in the unshakable and deep trust in the final victory of the German people and the salvation of us Muslims.[119]

Hitler thanked the Muslims, in return letting them know that he had been 'very delighted' by the letter.[120] Similar demonstrations of loyalty followed. In July 1944, Muslims from the Sandžak area sent a gramophone record containing a prayer of thanks and praise in Arabic for Hitler.[121] In Berlin, Brandt, head of Himmler's personal staff, sent the record to the SS propaganda section to be exploited by the SS or by Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry.[122]

In spring 1944, northern and eastern Bosnia effectively came under the control of the SS and Himmler's Muslim division. The infamous SS 'Guidelines for the Securing of Public Peace in Bosnia' ('Richtlinien für die Sicherung des Landfriedens in Bosnien') give a good idea of the intended occupational regime in the area and of the utilization of religion to support it.[123] In the towns and villages, SS officers were to install reliable local leaders who functioned as intermediaries between the population and the Germans. Every Friday, the day of the *džuma-namaz*, these representatives had to read out the weekly propaganda slogans of the SS. Schools were to be put under the command of trustworthy locals – 'teachers, imams, particularly suited women', but 'no intelligentsia', as the SS specified. More importantly, the SS scheme envisaged a massive religious resettlement with the aim of creating homogeneous Islamic towns and villages. 'It is the aim, under any circumstances, to create in the country communities a population of the same confession', it was stated. Moreover, the SS guidelines endorsed a war of extermination against partisans,

[118] Krempler to Neubacher and Behrends (Higher SS and Police Leader Serbia), 20 Apr. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/3630.

[119] Muslim Representatives of the Sandžak (*Landesausschuss der Muselmanischen Volksvereinigung Sandschak*) to Hitler (German translation), n.d. (spring 1944), n.p., BA, NS 19/3630. The letter was forwarded by Krempler to Neubacher and Behrends, 20 Apr. 1944, n. p., BA, NS 19/3630; and then from Behrends to Brandt, 24 Apr. 1944, Belgrade, BA, NS 19/3630; Brandt to Behrends, 15 June 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/3630; and Himmler ordered it to be forwarded to Hitler with the wish that an answer be written: Brandt to Fegelein (Hitler's Staff), 13 June 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/3630.

[120] Brandt to Behrends, 7 July 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/3630.

[121] Behrends to Himmler, 31 July 1944, Belgrade, BA, NS 19/3630.

[122] Brandt to Behrends, 18 Sept. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/3630; and Venn (Himmler's Staff) to Propaganda Division (Waffen-SS Standarte 'Kurt Eggers'), 18 Sept. 1944, n.p., BA, NS 19/3630.

[123] Sauberzweig, Guidelines ('Richtlinien für die Sicherung des Landfriedens in Bosnien'), 9 Mar. 1944, n.p., BA, NS19/2145 (also in PA, R 100998). On the guidelines, see also Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, p. 499; and Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 45–6; and idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, pp. 166–7.

Četniks, and other hostile groups as well as an aggressive domination of the civilian population. 'The point is to annihilate the enemy', the guidelines made clear, encouraging field commanders to be particularly 'ruthless'. In the end, the reign of the SS in the area was too short-lived and the German war bureaucracy too chaotic for schemes to be fully implemented. And yet, the soldiers of the Muslim division became notorious for acting particularly brutally, spreading fear and terror.

To some extent, the population relocations envisaged by the guidelines of the SS mirrored the demands of some Islamic autonomists. But although Himmler internally toyed with the idea of the creation of a future military protectorate, or 'military frontier' (*Wehrgrenze*), as it had existed in the Habsburg era, for the time being, the SS was in no position to realize the hopes of the Muslim autonomists in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[124] Similarly, when, in the final months of the war, Bedri Pejani, a prominent Albanian Muslim politician, sought help from the Mufti of Jerusalem for the foundation of a Muslim state in the Balkans, uniting Kosovo, cleansed of Orthodox Serbs, and the Sandžak with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania, the Germans quickly thwarted these ambitions.[125]

As the German military situation deteriorated, many Muslims lost hope in an Axis victory. In July 1944, a Wehrmacht report described the attitude of the Muslim population towards the Germans as inconsistent, a fact which now made them 'in every respect unreliable'.[126] In the final months of the war, many did not count on German help any more and looked for alternatives. Muslim self-defence groups, like Pandža's 'Muslim Liberation Movement', spread.[127] Many young Muslims, a German army report noted in June 1944, organized themselves into local self-defence units, so-called 'green cadres'.[128] Indeed, the militias, most importantly the 'Green Cadre' (Zeleni Kader) of the pro-German warlord Nešad Topčić, attracted more and more Muslim men. Supported by religious leaders like Mehmed Handžić, they not only protected Muslim villages but also committed ferocious atrocities among the Orthodox population. Attempts by the Četniks to recruit Muslims into their ranks had, unsurprisingly, only little success.[129] Tito's partisans, on the other hand,

[124] Brandt to Phleps, 20 Nov. 1943, n.p., BA, NS19/3893. Himmler made this statement in response to Phleps's letter of 5 Nov. 1943 about Tokić and the autonomists, see n. 105.

[125] Neubacher to Foreign Office, 9 Apr. 1944, Belgrade, PA, R 101101.

[126] Winkelbrandt (Headquarters of the 373rd Infantry Division), Report ('Feindnachrichtenblatt Nr. 7'), 16 July 1944, n.p., MA, RH 37/6931.

[127] On Muslim self-defence groups and the green cadres, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, p.504; and Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, esp. pp. 105–10 and 183–91; and idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, esp. pp. 120–3, 147–9, 185–6, and 207.

[128] Winkelbrandt, Report ('Feindnachrichtenblatt Nr. 6'), 17 June 1944, n.p., MA, RH 37/6931; and, for a general military assessment of the Muslim militias, see all reports by Winkelbrandt in MA, RH 37/6931.

[129] On Četnik recruitment of Muslims, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 494 and 501; idem, *The Chetniks* (Stanford, CA, 1975), p. 105 and 240; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, esp.

seemed to be a viable alternative to both the Germans and the Muslim militias. As the war situation worsened in the winter of 1943–4, increasing numbers of Muslims joined their ranks, though the proportion of Muslims in Tito's ranks should not be overestimated. In spring 1944, according to Tito's own assessment, only 2·5 per cent of his men were Muslims.[130] A first Muslim partisan unit had already been formed in the summer of 1941, and Marshal Tito willingly repeated Moscow's religious wartime propaganda that portrayed communism as the only hope for Islam. In the brochure 'Muslims in the Soviet Union: Religion in the Soviet Union' ('Muslimani u Sovjetskom Savezu: Religija u Sovjetskom Savezu'), distributed by the partisan propagandists in the autumn of 1944, Stalin's state was depicted as a paradise for the pious.[131]

The Germans dealt with those Muslims whom they suspected of betrayal with great brutality.[132] In a number of punitive missions against Muslim villages and settlements whose inhabitants were accused of sheltering partisans, German troops executed Muslim women and children. Even mosques were attacked. In late 1944, German forces broke into the building of El-Hidaje in Sarajevo to search for evidence against a number of members of the Young Muslims who were suspected of working with the enemy. And despite all official efforts to promote Germany as the protector of Balkan Islam, ordinary soldiers in the field often had little respect for Muslims and their religion.

After the war, Muslims across the Balkans were widely stigmatized as collaborators. Nevertheless, the communist regime in Yugoslavia did initially refrain from direct attacks on Islam.[133] Only the most notorious Islamic collaborators, like Ismet Muftič, Pavelic's Mufti of Zagreb, were executed, while

pp. 97–8, 143–6, and 174; and idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, esp. pp. 105–8, 168–9, and 207–11.

[130] Anonymous, 'Marshal Tito's supporters', *Times* (16 May 1944), states that Tito's army was comprised of 44 per cent Serbs, 30 per cent Croats, 10 per cent Slovenes, 6 per cent other nationals (including Italians), 5 per cent Montenegrins, 2.5 per cent Macedonians, and 2.5 per cent Muslims, although it has to be taken into account that the proportion of Muslims in the population was overall much smaller than that of Serbs or Croats.

[131] On Tito's recruitment of Muslims, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 502–4 and 506–10; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, esp. pp. 170, 183–91, and 206–9; idem, *Muslimansko Autonomaštvo*, esp. pp. 108–10, 127–8, 157–9, and 211–12; and, on the propaganda brochure, Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 341–2.

[132] On German massacres of Muslims and attacks on Islamic institutions, see Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, pp. 503–4; Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 35 and 188; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 183 and 213–14; and Jonathan Gumz, 'German counterinsurgency policy in independent Croatia, 1941–1944', *Historian*, 61 (1998), pp. 33–50, at pp. 48–9.

[133] On Islam in Tito's Yugoslavia, see Banac, 'Bosnian Muslims', pp. 144–6; Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 343–65; Greble, *Sarajevo*, pp. 234–5, 237, and 244; Donia, *Sarajevo*, pp. 215–21; Zachary T. Irwin, 'The fate of Islam in the Balkans: a comparison of four state policies', in Ramet, ed., *Religion and nationalism in Soviet and East European politics*, pp. 207–25, at p. 216; Smail Balić, 'Der bosnisch-herzegowinische Islam', *Der Islam*, 44 (1968), pp. 115–37, esp. pp. 121–2; and, on the arrests of Islamic dignitaries for wartime collaboration, Isma'il Balić, 'The present position of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Islamic Review*, 37 (1949), pp. 22–5, at p. 24.

other religious leaders, like Salih Bašić, remained in office. Muhamed Pandža and Ali Aganović received long prison sentences (Mehmed Handžić had already died in 1944). The Poglavnik Mosque was shut down and its minarets blown up. After the consolidation of power, the new rulers engaged in a more rigorous crackdown on Islam, which culminated in the legendary anti-veiling campaign of Tito's Antifascist Women's Front. In the newly created People's Republic of Albania, Enver Hoxha launched an even fiercer attack on religious institutions, rivalling the Stalinist terror against religions of the interwar years.[134] Accused of treachery, the Muslim Cham Albanians of the Epirus area were targeted by the nationalist militias of Napoleon Zervas's 'National Republican Greek League', which massacred many, plundered and burned down villages, and expelled the survivors to Albania.[135]

To conclude, Berlin's attempts to promote Germany as the patron of Islam in the Balkans was not the result of a long-term strategy but grew out of the escalation of the war which led to increased German military involvement in the Muslim areas in early 1943. The civil war had brought to the fore religious frictions, which the German authorities eagerly tried to exploit. The Muslims seemed to be an ideal ally not only because they were considered pro-German and hostile to the Western allies and communism, but also because of specific notions of Islam and geopolitical considerations, most importantly the belief that regional policies in the south-east of Europe would have global, pan-Islamic, resonances. The previous pages have shown the ways in which German officials tried to use Islam in their policies and propaganda on the ground, further politicizing the religious in the region. Religious language, terminology, and imperatives were employed in military propaganda to give religious legitimacy to an alliance with the Third Reich and the war against its enemies. German officials also got involved with religious dignitaries who tried to pursue their own agenda, most notably the aim of Muslim autonomy. Indeed, from the beginning Muslim leaders played an important role in German policies towards Islam in the region, which was, after all, also prompted by Muslim appeals and memoranda. In the end, German courtship of the Muslims was less successful than officials in the Wehrmacht and SS had hoped. Although German advances had initially raised the hopes of many Muslims who were suffering from the civil war, it soon became apparent that they conflicted with

[134] On Islam in Hoxha's Albania, see James S. O'Donnell, *A coming of age: Albania under Enver Hoxha* (Boulder, CO, 1999), pp. 137–44; Raymond Zickel and Walter R. Iwaskiw, eds., *Albania: a country study* (Washington, DC, 1992), pp. 85–7; Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, pp. 42–65; and, on the arrests or executions of the Muftis of Tirana, Durrës, and Shkodër and others for wartime collaboration, Irwin, 'The fate of Islam in the Balkans', p. 212; and Peter Prifti, 'Albania: towards an atheist society', in Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, eds., *Religion and atheism in the USSR and Eastern Europe* (Toronto, 1975), pp. 388–404, at p. 391.

[135] On the expulsion of the Albanian Muslim Cham minority, see Mazower, 'Three forms of political justice', pp. 24–6; Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß*, pp. 620–1; and, from the Cham perspective, Meta, *The Cham tragedy*, esp. pp. 59–105; and the documents in Elsie and Destani, eds., *The Cham Albanians of Greece*, pp. 335–94.

the violent realities of German warfare. Moreover, Berlin's propaganda campaign lacked credibility and authenticity. It was all too obvious that the Germans wanted to instrumentalize Islam for their political and military interests. Attempts to solve the problem of authenticity by employing trusted Muslim intermediaries had only limited effect.

The story of Germany's engagement with the 'Muslim question' in the Balkans, overall, fits into the larger history of Berlin's more general attempts to promote the Third Reich as a patron of Islam. Indeed, constant references to the wider Muslim world and the global dimension of German policies towards Islam in the Balkans were apparent not only in the internal writings of German officials, but also in their communications with local Muslim leaders and in their field propaganda. And yet, with their involvement in the 'Muslim question' in the Balkans, the Germans encountered a very particular situation, a highly complex, religiously charged conflict that can hardly be compared with the situation in any other Muslim war zone.

Finally, the previous pages have also shed some light on the intersection of religion, politics, and propaganda in the Second World War. The studied episode has shown that religion could be crucial – and at times even more important than ethnic and racial categories – for German political and military officials when mapping the populations in the warzones and drafting policies towards them. Assuming that religious communities, no matter how pious their members or how fluid their communal lines, were governed by a distinctive set of values and doctrines, religious policies were designed to manipulate and instrumentalize the sacred for political and military purposes. Indeed, the story of Germany's involvement with the 'Muslim question' in the Balkans constitutes one of the most striking examples of the significance of the politics of religion in the Second World War.