

The Ustašas and Fascism: “Abolitionism,” Revolution, and Ideology, 1929–42

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Abstract: *The analysis departs from a discussion about whether one should consider the Croatian Ustašas as fascist, or whether they in fact are best described as radical nationalist group, as was recently argued by Oleksandr Zaitsev in a comparison with the OUN. By combining Mathiesen’s theory of “the unfinished” with the key elements of “generic fascism,” the authors present a new model for the holistic analysis of fascist ideology over time. Following an in-depth theoretical discussion of the phenomenon of fascistization, they use the Ustašas as an empirical case to elucidate how “abolitionist” movements and organizations keep part of their ideology “unfinished” in public until the acquisition of state power. During an initial “abolitionist” phase, fascists will focus their communication on those ideological elements of importance for the “dogmatic negation” of the “old system.” The ideological elements relevant for the “positive construction” will instead be merely “suggested” until the assumption of power. We can find the reason behind such strategies in the statist and monistic tenets of fascist ideology, which views the acquisition of political power as an essential prerequisite for the achievement of profound political and societal change. By connecting the process of fascistization to the role of agency and state power, the new model also provides a basis for a more refined analysis of the emergence and development of fascist entities.*

Introduction

Recent decades have seen a considerable growth in research interest pertaining to the Ustaša—Croatian Revolutionary Organization (*Ustaša—Hrvatska Revolucionarna Organizacija*, UHRO), which