Ustasa

(“insurgent,” in plural ustase), Croatian nationalist, fascist, terrorist movement created in 1930. Ustasa was led by Ante Pavelic.

The Ustasa opposed Yugoslavia as a national entity, which was ruled by a Serb royal family, as Ustasa members fiercely hated Serbs. They also hated Jews, Communists, and non-Catholics. Until 1941, Fascist Italy acted as the group's political sponsor. In the mid-1930s the Ustasa began to woo Nazi Germany by adopting various aspects of Nazi ideology, including its anti-Jewish sentiments. When World War II broke out, the Ustasa began hating Jews as much as they hated Serbs. However, the Germans ignored the Ustasa until their invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941.

At that point, the Nazis created a Croatian satellite state, and allowed the Ustasa to run a puppet government with Pavelic at its head. During their four years in power, the Ustasa carried out a Serb genocide, exterminating over 500,000, expelling 250,000, and forcing another 250,000 to convert to Catholicism. The Ustasa also killed most of Croatia's Jews, 20,000 Gypsies, and many thousands of their political enemies.

The Ustasa government was dissolved in May 1945. After the war, most of the Ustasa leaders escaped to South America and Spain.