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Extended Essay in History World War II and the Bosnian Genocide of 1992-1995 Research Question: To what extent did the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia influence the Bosnian Genocide of 1992-1995? Name: Topias Hokkanen Candidate number: 03939051 Session: May 2012 School: Coppell High School Supervisor: Michael Cook Word count: 3, 847 Abstract This extended essay deals with the Bosnian Genocide from 1992-1995, where the Bosnian Serb army committed various acts of war crimes towards Bosnian Muslims. It carries out a historical investigation of the causes of the war crimes, trying to make clear how the Bosnian Serbs could kill neighbors just because of their religion or where they resided. In more detail, the investigation deals with the origin of the tension between both groups, how Nationalistic influences from World War II were prevalent during the genocide, and how World War II influenced the practices sought to carry out the genocide, examining the question: To what extent did the Axis Occupation of Yugoslavia influence the Bosnian genocide of 1992-1995? The limitations of this essay are restricted to the long-term causes of the genocide, because the immediate causes are not investigated. Furthermore, the essay does not go into every historical or social factor that caused the genocide.

In pursuance to examine the research question, primary and secondary sources related to World War II and post World War II Bosnia are used. This investigation leads to the conclusion that the Bosnian Genocide to a profound degree was a result of the Axis influence in the region from World War II. The Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims did exist as separate identities religiously and ethnically before the Axis occupation, but with the brutal enforcement of Nationalistic dogmas through military and propaganda means, the dichotomization of both groups grew to another level. One can argue that the new way of depicting each group introduced by the Axis justified the genocide of 1992-1995. Although there are several other reasons that might have contributed to the reason why the genocide occurred, there is no doubt the Axis occupation in the region was one of great importance. 297 words) Table of Contents Title Page… 1 Abstract2 Table of Contents3 Introduction4 1.

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.. 18 IntroductionDuring the duration of the Bosnian War that took place in present day Bosnia-Herzegovina in Southern Europe from 1992-1995, thousands of Bosnian Muslims were systematically killed for purposes hard to understand. According to the European Parliament it was the “ biggest war crime to take place in Europe since the end of the Second World War” and consisted of the murder of more than 8, 000 Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica as well as the mass expulsion of another 25, 000–30, 000 Bosnian Muslims. In total, the UN estimates the war accounted for 200, 000 people killed, 12, 000 of them children, up to 50, 000 women raped, and 2.

million forced to flee their homes. Just like Nazi Germany, the “ intent was clearly to find a total solution; that is, to remove the Muslims from the land by whatever means feasible. Killings, torture, rape, and deportation” (Cigar 3). The Bosnian genocide was the slaughter of one group of people, the Bosnian Muslims also known as Bosniaks by the Bosnian Serbs. The two groups for centuries have lived together in the same region, a region with a political and cultural history unlike that of any other country in Europe. It was until the twentieth century when the major clashes between both groups occurred, and the differences in religion were to determine your fate alive or dead. What sparked the Bosnian genocide was the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulting in the stable Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to dissolve.

It was the shift that gave power to nationalists subscribing to the very ideologies that the Communists had attempted to suppress for half a century (Hoare 360). Wars broke out for territorial and ideological gain which eventually led to Bosnian Serbs committing genocide towards Bosnian Muslims. To answer the question why Bosnian Serbs suddenly started killing their Bosniak neighbors, it is essential to go back into history to understand why both groups had such partition between them.

Like most countries in Southern Europe during World War II, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was conquered by Nazi forces in 1941. The subjugation under a foreign power led to it to be ceded into Germany’s puppet state NDH, also known as the Independent State of Croatia. It is of natural conscious that when a country is subdued under the influence of a greater power, the state of society changes with the greater powers ideologies being fixed into the minds of the subdued. Therefore, the research question to what extent did the Axis Occupation of Yugoslavia influence the Bosnian genocide of 1992-1995, arises. To answer the question, the investigation will look at the differences in the relations between the Bosnian Serbs and Muslims before, during, and after their subjugation under the Axis powers during World War II. Also some recent causes will be analyzed such as the underrepresentation of Serbs in newly formed republics and the nationalist Radovan Karadzic who was the president of Republica Srpska during the Bosnian Genocide. Even though tensions between Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks were prevalent before the Second World War, it is certain that their ideological perceptions of each other changed with the new ideologies and institutions introduced by the Axis powers.

Even after the Axis powers’ left the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, both groups never managed to transcend the horrors and ideologies fixed upon them from World War II. The author of this investigation will therefore argue to some extent that the Bosnian Genocide was influenced by the Axis occupation. 1.

The origins of Different Identities in the Region In order to determine the significance of the Axis occupation as a cause of the Bosnian Genocide, the investigation will first examine the origins of different races, religions and groups in the region. The Bosnian and Herzegovinian population consists of three major ethnic groups: the Bosniaks, the Serbs, and the Croats. 1. 1 TheoriesThere is no definite historical evidence that provides the exact details of the origins of the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. However there are theories that suggest plausible explanations of their origins which became the basis of carrying out the Bosnian genocide. There are very few racially homogeneous provinces in the Balkan region, and only a few individuals could claim a racially pure ancestry for themselves (Malcolm 1). And yet, many times during the last centuries racial theories of superiority have dominated the political scene. The reason to analyze the early origins of each ethnic group is that it enables us to see whether it were correct to conduct politics in terms of racial beliefs and what it lead to, the Bosnian Genocide.

The earliest records of inhabitants in the region are the Illyrians, tribes that spoke an Indo-European language related to Albanian (Malcolm 2). They were encountered by the Romans as the Romans extended their empire during the second and first centuries BC. Under Roman influence for centuries, Christianity became the main religion and bishops were administered to the Balkan regions. Bosnia was included in the Roman province of Dalmatia, and Latin became the dominant language in many regions due to colonists living in coastal towns. The Catholic religion had a strong presence in some regions and till today has a powerful presence. For example needles in the Illyrian burial mounds in Bosnia were found by archaeologists, which are still used for tattooing within Catholics in Central Bosnia (Malcolm 4).

This shows how Illyrian traditions were blended together with catholic practices throughout millennia. With a strong presence of Illyrian tribes and Roman influence in the region, Germanic tribes of Goths invaded the Roman Balkans in the third century, and kept a strong military presence well due into the late fifth century. Their armies were finally expelled by the Byzantine emperor Justinian in the early sixth century, however much of the Goth population that had emigrated still remained. The German tribes did not leave any cultural imprint in the region, but a great number remained and immersed themselves into the local culture. During World War II Croats used this historical event to justify their alliance with Hitler, stating that they were descendants of the Goths. By using medieval manuscripts to prove their ancestral heritage such as the ‘ The Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea’, the Croats were able to prove their Germanic descendance and remain allied with the Axis (Malcolm 5).

This theory became extremely popular during the Second World War, especially with Bosnia, who wanted autonomy from the German puppet state NDH. Hitler received a memorandum from a group of Bosnian Muslims in 1942, in which they claimed racial superiority over Serbs and people of Slav decent. In the memorandum, they stated ‘ By race and blood we are not Slavs, we are of Gothic origin’, a major reason why there exists much tension between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs till this day (Malcolm 6). Historians also account that the present day Slavs in Bosnia, which back then was Croatia, came from the arrival of the Sarmatians in the eastern Balkans. They inhabited the region north of the Black Sea with a mixture of tribes, Slavs and Sarmatians.

Sarmatians are known historically to be Iranian, who moved from the northern side of the Caucasus in the second century BC. They were Iranian speaking ruling elite, and by the seventh century both tribes, the Slavs and Sarmatians had kingdoms in Europe and were called ‘ White Croatia’ and ‘ White Serbia’. Croatian nationalists used this theory to try to salvage many Croatians who were persecuted during World War II to prove their people, the Croats, were either of German Goth or Persian ancestry, and rejected it for the Serbs. Another reason why the Serbs were treated informally during the Second World War, and which created an age-old racial division between the two populations. How this relates to the topic, 95% of the Muslims that live in the Bosnia are of Croat descent. During World War II, Muslims of the region used this theory to prove themselves as superior to Serbs, because in the Nazi racial hierarchy, Iranians and Goths stood higher than Slavs. Based on data drawn together it seems like the ancestral origins of the Bosnian Serbs and Muslims are insignificant today.

The fact that they derived from many of the same tribes, had a clash of cultures mixed with them, and lived in the same region for centuries are vastly more important when one seeks to explain contemporary events. In order to understand the tension between the Bosnian Serbs and Muslims, we must therefore look at more recent history, such as World War II. 2.

Nationalism Certainly Nationalism played a vital role in the Bosnian Genocide. In order to determine to what extent the Axis occupation influenced the Bosnian Genocide, the investigation will examine how Nationalism similar to Nazism influenced Bosnian Serbs to commit genocide. .

1 Spread of Nationalism during World War II The first Axis army to impose control over Yugoslavia, Nazi Germany, arrived in modern day Bosnia on the 6th of April 1941 (Lovrenovic 169). By then the greater Serbia province had been given to the Nazi’s agreed upon earlier in the Tripartite Pact so it could serve as an economic partner to the Reich when a ‘ strong and united Yugoslavia’ was created (Hoare 199). However, with the failure of an attempted British coup, Hitler became unconvinced and ordered the creation of the puppet state NDH. The former government had fled abroad and the territory was free to be divided among the Axis powers.

The whole new territory was divided by a line of demarcation into German and Italian zones of interest (Lovrenovic 170). The Independent State of Croatia, also known as NDH, was in charge of local governments and served as the center of authority in the region. By being influenced heavily by the Germans, the NDH incorporated a similar Nationalistic identity to them, declaring that only Croat Nationalism was acceptable and denied the legitimacy of any other nation, especially a Serb nation (Hoare 201). To implement their newly gained Nationalism, the Utashe military was formed and were branded for their “ brutal exclusivist ethnic program against the Serbs”, not targeting Slavic Muslims in the same way because of their religious background, which they thought made them racially superior to other ethnic Slavs, such as Serbs (Cigar 19). Muslims in the NDH were accepted as soldier into the Utashe, inflaming even more rival tension between many Muslims and ethnic Serbs. In due course, the brutality of the Utashe led to the creation of the Chetnik extremists, who opposed all of the Axis forces and the NDH. The Chetnik movement’s aim was for a “ Greater Serbia” (Cigar 16) comprised of ethnic Orthodox Serbs, disinterring against the Axis occupation and the Muslims.

By June, 1941 Chetnik leaders had drafted a formal policy document calling for “ Homogeneous Serbia”, expanding all over Yugoslav territory. This document proposed “ cleansing the lands of all non-Serb elements. ” Points 4 and 5 below depict a clear point of view towards Muslims. Point 4. To cleanse the state territory of all national minorities and anti-national elements. Point 5. To create a direct, continuous, border between Serbia and Montenegro, and between Serbia and Slovenia, by cleansing the SandZak of the Muslim inhabitants and Bosnia of the Muslim and Croatian inhabitants (Cigar 18) As seen above, the tensions between both groups were taken to immeasurable levels during the war.

The fact that a formal document was written denouncing other ethnic groups directly shows the severity in their actions and hatred. Nationalism, with the quest of creating a greater state, with only one race, was the pivotal factor why genocide took place during 1992. The “ quest for a Greater Serbia” defined the people of each ethnic group and maintained a strong presence in the minds of inhabitants since the end of World War II.

This was the goal of the Serbian elite during the Second World War, who explicitly had written their military objective in Serbia from Mihailovic’s headquarters, “ when the time becomes appropriate, we will complete our task and that no one except the Serbs will be left in Serbian lands. It can be inferred that from when he refers to a different time, “ when the time [to eliminate the Muslims] becomes appropriate”, it to some extent foreshadows the Bosnian Genocide. This type of outlook became very common during World War II, especially under the influence of the Axis occupation, when numerous ethnic groups were subjugated to propaganda and to horrors outlaid by their rulers. 2. 2 Post World War IIWith the defeat of the Chetniks by the communists in World War II, it prevented the full scale implementation of the Serbian nationalist program which they hoped for during the war. Instead it went underground and remained strong until the dissolution of Communist power in Yugoslavia. During the new Communist rule, the Croatian born ruler, Tito, granted Serbs control over areas of high non-ethnic Serb populations and equal representation was given to Serbs over different branches of government (Cigar 20).

This situation was very effective and prevented the people from uprising during Tito’s era. Nevertheless, with the death of Tito, power began to be exploited because of a weak government, leading to anger between ethnic groups. Nationalistic ideas and propaganda started to flow once more to support ones groups cause.

As sociologist Leo Kuper mentioned, “ a redefinition and legitimation of national goals was required, within a convincing intellectual framework, which could motivate strata of the population beyond the small number of psychopaths. This depiction given by a sociologist in Bosnia within the timeframe reveals the mindset of leaders during the 1980’s, using extreme ideas with intellectual support to spread their influence, resembling the deposed leaders of World War II such as Hitler and Mussolini. Conversely, due to the numerous amounts of years since World War II, when nationalistic ideas were relentlessly used, one can argue that external factors such as Communism could have had a greater effect on the separation between each ethnic group. Due to the nature of communism, especially under Tito’s rule, it suppressed most distinct groups from forming armed militias or practicing their beliefs together. Under communism, the government focused on creating a “ new Yugoslav socialist culture” (Banac xvi), which after 1960 was a failure. With the suppressive nature of communist Yugoslavia, writers “ became the ideologists of Yugoslavia’s new national divisions and contributed to the collapse of Yugoslav cultural unitarism” (Banac xvi). The same writers would once again be referenced later on when leaders during the Bosnian genocide sought to justify their actions.

Through the spread of new Yugoslav ideology, identity and statecraft, it led to the delegitimation of the Communist government. Thus the Communist state that was so eager to rule the Yugoslav territory after World War II failed to fix the national grievances that ultimately led to the failure of cultural unitarism which could have prevented the genocide. 3.

Targeting of a Distinct Group During the year 1922, a very prominent journalist named Josef Hell interviewed the infamous Nazi party leader, Adolf Hitler. In their interview, Josef Hell asked Hitler the reasoning behind his hatred against the Jews. Hitler responded, they are the “ right kind of victim, and especially one against whom the struggle would make sense”, concluding the interview “ that a campaign against the Jews would be as popular as it would be successful” (Fleming 16). Similarly, Radovan Karadzic, supposedly the mastermind behind the Bosnian genocide, speaking before the Bosnian Parliament in October 1991, said that “ Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war” (Burg 78).

Both Hitler and Karadzic, with similar rationale, targeted their victims because of their vulnerability in the region and to simplify their political objectives, which for Hitler was to “ Create a Greater Germany” (Hitler) and for Karadzic, the “ quest of a Greater Serbia” (Cigar 16). They chose a distinct ethnic group, and used it as political leverage to gain power and keep their plans in check. With this in mind, it is crucial to understand what was the justification behind their choice, what the people believed and were led to believe which eventually led to such atrocities to occur. .

1 Justification Bosnian Muslims were chosen as the scapegoat for Bosnia’s internal problems. It was a cause of historical facts that led the people and prominent politicians to choose them as a vulnerable victim. As mentioned in chapter one, tensions between all ethnic groups in the Balkans have existed for centuries and World War II was the pinnacle when those tensions became inflamed. During World War II, thousands of Serbs across the region were sent into concentration camps by Nazi controlled troops, whether part of the Ustasha or the SS. Most perpetrators of war crimes were under influence from Nazi Germany and their ideas of racial-biological ‘ purity’. Muslims, appealing to the Ustasha as ‘ Croats of the Islamic religion’ (Hoare 204), were recruited into the Ustasha regime as soldiers and officers. Thus Muslims who lived in the Bosnia and Herzegovina region were recruited into the Ustasha and served as executioners of concentration camps. Muslims were ‘ unrepresented’ in the Ustasha in terms of soldiers, but still implemented a erious amount of influence within ‘ Ustasha commissioners’ (Hoare 204).

For example, two Muslim commissioners under Francetic were ‘ charged with the organization of Ustasha bodies across the whole of Bosnia-Hercegovina’ (Hoare 205). Not only were Muslims prevalent in the Ustasha army that committed horrible crimes against Serbs, the Nazis recruited Bosnian Muslims for an all-Muslim unit of the SS called the “ Handschar” division, which committed so many atrocities that 38 of its officers were later tried as war criminals (Medoff). With these historical facts in mind, the Serbs sought justification in their persecution of Bosnian Muslims, particularly the founder of the Serbian Democratic Party and president of Republica Srpska during the duration of the Bosnian Genocide, Radovan Karadzic. Karadzic during interviews with the BBC, “ never seemed to get beyond 1941, and his obsession with the murder of huge numbers of Serbs at the Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia”.

He used this as an excuse to get many of his followers aroused, and what ultimately led to genocide. On the other hand, Karadzic used revenge as a motivation for the Bosnian Serbs to relocate Muslims out of Bosnia. But his revenge was sold through propaganda, hence the rationale could never be considered as 100% valid. Propaganda is known to sell half truth, and throughout the beginning of the 1990’s hour after hour of Serb propaganda was broadcasted on television. The propaganda included “ Serb cemeteries from battles lost 800 years ago vied with Serbian women crying at the graves, depicting Serbs as eternal victims” (Geyer). Similar to Nazi propaganda from World War II, which chiefly depicted the Germans as mere victims from Jewish greed, Serb propaganda “ depicted [Muslims] routinely as virtually non-people” (Cigar). “ It was TV that promoted the hatred, not ancient hatreds.

It gave people myths and called them history”, as former American ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmerman writes (Geyer). Hence, the justification sought to commit the Bosnian genocide contained similar rationale and propaganda methods similarly used by the Nazi’s to persecute the Jews. 4. Similarities in Holocaust and Bosnian Genocide The fact that it was more than 40 years from when genocide took place during World War II in Yugoslavia could be an argument supporting the idea that the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia during World War II was not an important cause of the Bosnian Genocide. The investigation will now examine to what extent the practices and techniques were used to commit genocide similar to Nazi techniques. 4. 1 Similarities It is of no doubt the Bosnian Serbs who committed genocide during the late 20th century had influence reminiscent of the Nazi’s. The Bosnian Serbs were similar in how they sought to relocate different ethnic groups, basing people off their own racial hierarchy.

Also the set up of concentration camps and mass executions were common, an intimation that they had influence from their World War II predecessors. Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, a leading Jewish American scholar in the field of genocide notes the many similarities in how genocide was sought. The Nazi model for carrying out genocide was similarly replicated during the Bosnian genocide. Although it was smaller and constituted of a smaller population, it aimed to eliminate the entire ethnic group of Bosnian Muslims. The mass killings constituted a major part of it, in which the Nazi’s tried to keep it a secret from the outside world, so did the Bosnian Muslims. However, while evidence of genocide existed from the very beginning alike with the Nazi’s, it could be sufficiently blurred to enable the people not involved to refute such claims. Not to mention the rigidity of the entire genocidal process that followed a “ systematic pattern”.

As former Pentagon analyst Norman Cigar states in his book, the armed Serbian forces and more lightly armed militias would rely on a “ symbiotic relationship” (55). The Serbian forces would take control of an area creating a “ safe environment” for the light militia to be “ able to engage in ethnic cleansing”. This was commonly seen during the Bosnian war, and as Cigar mentions, this procedure was also implemented by the Nazi’s according to which “ heavily armed Wehrmacht combat forces [would secure] an area, thereby enabling lighter forces [made up of Einsatzgruppen] to operate with relative impunity”. Concentration camps were scarce during the genocide and served as collection points for Bosnian Serbs. One concentration camp, the Omarska was one of three camps set up in northern Bosnia. It held about 6, 000 Muslims and Croats, and hundreds died of starvation, punishment beatings, comparable to the camps run 40 years ago by the Nazi’s in the region (Osborn). Also the leadership during the Bosnian Genocide and Holocaust compare in the extensive use of strong rhetoric and strict management.

Alike the German elite during World War II, the Serbian elite “ engage[d] in a systematic and intensive campaign in order to create a nationalist movement” to the extent “ that genocide could be made plausible” in 1992 (Cigar 6). However, Serbian leaders during the Genocide were not under control, but acted self willingly to their actions and perceptions. There was no foreign power imposing control onto them reminiscent of World War II, and it was implemented by their own beliefs without the interference of another power.

In the case of World War II, Utashe military commanders were under the order of another power, Germany, when the atrocious acts of genocide were committed. ConclusionAfter having examined the impact the Axis powers had on the Bosnian people in general, the investigation comes to the conclusion that the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia influenced the Bosnian Genocide. Even though there was clear division between the distinct groups before the Second World War, the difference was political instead of an ethnic one. With the arrival of the Axis forces in the former Yugoslav territory, their mindset of separation of different ethnicities and the superiority of Croats and Muslims over Serbs became predominant. Through Nazi propaganda and firm authoritative control over the region, this perception of ethnic hierarchy grew to a new level. To say that the Axis occupation was the only significant cause of the Bosnian genocide would be somewhat wavering. It is, however, apparent that the influence of the Axis occupation on the perception of every Bosnian and Muslim played a major role in the events of 1992-1995.

The post World War II communist government and independent governments failed to transcend the ideologies places half a century ago. Even though the conflict resulting in the deaths of thousands of people had its origins back to World War II, it still doesn’t explain the underlying reason why it happened, and may make up the basis of another investigation. Work Cited Books: Banac, Ivo. Foreword. The Politics of Cultural Diversity in Former Yugoslavia, Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War. By Sabrina P. Ramet.

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