

Bulgarian Historical Review

Издание на Института за исторически изследвания при БАН

Bulgarian Historical Review XLIVIII (2020) 1-2, 197
ISSN 0204-8906

Irina Ognyanova-Krivoshieva

The Catholic Church and the Idea of Independent Croatian State

(Abstract)

The article deals with the support of the idea of an independent Croatian state by the Croatian Catholic hierarchy in the interwar and the war period (1929–1945). That was very different from the approval of the created by the Nazis in 1941 Independent State of Croatia (ISC), in which the Ustasha government practiced the most extreme nationalistic policy – extermination of whole ethno-national groups in the country (such as Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies). Part of the hierarchy could not stay away from the national question, which was predominant for the Croats in the whole interwar period and supported the illegal separatist Ustasha nationalistic movement. The act of establishment of the ISC in April 1941 was openly welcomed by the Church. The Ustasha power was Croatian in national terms and Catholic in religious aspect. Some of the clergy, especially the lower, but even some representatives of the higher hierarchy went too far, participating in the structures and policy of the regime. But the Church, as an institution, led by the Zagreb Archbishop A. Stepinac was against any persecution of people on the basis of ethnos, nation, religion, or race. The reason the higher hierarchy did not publicly condemn the regime was the fact its alternative in the war period was the Great-Serbian or Communist dictatorship.

Keywords: Catholic Church; Ustashes; Independent State of Croatia; extreme nationalism