

# History and Political Thought: South Slavic Ideologies, Greater Croatia

Pavao Ritter Vitezović. Part IV

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*An importance and influence of P. R. Vitezović's ideological concept*

*P. R. Vitezović's works had a great impact on the development of the South Slavic national ideologies, national consciousness, and nationalism. Paradoxically but true, P. R. Vitezović influenced at the great degree the 18th century Serbian and Bulgarian national movements. His heraldic manual under the title *Stemmatographia, sive Armorum Illyricorum delineatio, descriptio et restitution* (Vienna, 1701), in which coats of arms of all "Illyrian" (i.e., according to him, Croatian) historical provinces were presented, was translated into the Slavonic-Serbian language, adapted and expanded in the mid-18th century by the Serbian patriot of the Bulgarian ethnic origin from South Hungary, Hristifor Žefarović (1700–1753). Nonetheless, previously to P. R. Vitezović, the examples of coats of arms of Illyria (i.e. the Balkans) were available in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (Basel, 1544) and revised by the Italian version in 1575. A very idea of the Illyrian (i.e. the Balkan or the South Slavic) unity could be found exactly in S. Münster's *Cosmographia*, where the lands of Carinthia, Carniola, Croatia, Slavonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina are described as the Illyrian provinces.*

P. R. Vitezović used, in addition to S. Münster's *Cosmographia*, as a basis for his own armorial manual, a heraldic work of the Herzegovinian nobleman and admiral in the Spanish navy service, Petar Ohmučević (known in Spain as Don Pedro) from 1596. P. Ohmučević's version of unified Pan-Illyrian Empire of Stefan Dušan Almighty (a Serbian ruler from 1331 to 1355) was illustrated by coats of arms of the following "Illyrian" lands: Macedonia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Rascia, and Littoral. P. Ohmučević's armorial manual was used and extended by Mavro Orbin (Mauro Orbini) from Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in his famous work where coats of arms of Bulgaria, Slavonia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Dalmatia, Serbia, Croatia, Rascia and Littoral were considered as historical provinces of South Slavic Empire of Stefan Dušan who was the most famous, mighty and glorified South Slavic ruler as the Emperor of Serbia from 1346 to 1355 (Banac 1993: 218–225).[i] Nevertheless, in P. R. Vitezović's interpretation, all of these coats of arms were heraldic insignias of the Croatian historical and ethnolinguistic provinces. These insignias were followed in P. R. Vitezović's armorial work by the next arms of the Croatian lands: Bohemia, Muscovy, Poland-Lithuanian Republic, Ukraine, Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, Moldavia, Transylvania, Wallachia, Lower and Upper Austria, Prussia, Venice, Hungary, Albania, Celta, Crete, Dacia, Dardania, Epirus, Greece, Japodia, Liburnia, Mysia, Pannonia, Romania, Scythia, Baltic Slavonia, Thessaly, Odrysia, Thrace, and Triballia. The real purpose of P. R. Vitezović's armorial was to demonstrate his idea of Pan-Croatianism, according to which, all Slavs were the

ethnolinguistic Croats and subsequently, a Greater Croatia (but no longer the Illyrian Empire of Stefan Dušan) had to be established under the Habsburg scepter.

However, while S. Münster's and P. Ohmučević's Illyrian heraldic manuals were for Vitezović the Croatian, for H. Žefarović the same S. Münster's and P. Ohmučević's Illyrian coats of arms were the Serbian. Subsequently, H. Žefarović's *Stemmatographia* (ΣΤΕΜΜΑΤΟΓΡΑΦΪΑ) (Vienna, 1741) of coats of arms of all "Serbian" historical-state lands which had to belong to revived Serbian Empire of Stefan Dušan, contributed to the growth of both Serbian national awareness and nationalism. H. Žefarović presented a triumphant mighty Emperor Dušan surrounded by 24 Balkan coats of arms that represented a unified Serbian Empire (i.e. the Balkan Empire). The message was that all the lands of S. Dušan's crown (but in fact the whole Balkans) should be politically united into a single (Serbian) state. The shorter version of the *ΣΤΕΜΜΑΤΟΓΡΑΦΪΑ* circulated among the Austrian and Ottoman Serbs at the beginning of the 19th century having a strong impact on the idea of the restoration of the Serbian medieval state during the time of the First Serbian Uprising against the Turks (1803-1813) and after that as well (Ćorović 1993: 556; Mladićević 1994: 54-59).

The 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-centuries state and national coats of arms of Croatia and Croats and Serbia and Serbs were modeled according to Vitezović-Žefarović drawings. H. Žefarović's *ΣΤΕΜΜΑΤΟΓΡΑΦΪΑ*, which was based on P. R. Vitezović's *Stemmatographia...*, became one of the most influential ideological and programmatic "lighthouses" for the Serbs in their struggle for the national unification. P. R. Vitezović created in his *Stemmatographia...*, according to the drawing of Mavro Orbin, the coat of arms of Bulgaria, and invented a completely new coat of arms of Romania. Shortly, P. R. Vitezović's "Illyrian" heraldry became one of the most influential contributors to the iconography of the Balkan nationalism. Both P. R. Vitezović's and H. Žefarović's heraldic manuscripts were the sources of national identities for the succeeding Croatian and Serbian generations (Banac 1991b; Banac 1993). H. Žefarović's collection of "Illyrian" (i.e., the Serbian) coat of arms clearly conveyed the notion that adherence to the Orthodox Christianity made for the Serbs a nationhood and suggesting that the Serbian historical-national task was to unite all the lands of old *Illyricum* under a single coat of arms of Serbia.

Nevertheless, P. R. Vitezović ideologically mostly influenced the development of the Croatian nationalism particularly in the 18th and the 19th centuries. His armorial and ideological Pan-Croatianism was a historical construction and a political program. During these two hundred years, his ideological influence extremely benefited to the Croatian resistance against the Hungarian claims on historical-state rights over the provinces of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia but, unfortunately, also to the creation of the extreme anti-Serbian feelings and the policy of Croatian genocide on the Serbs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, at the turn of the 19th century, P. R. Vitezović's writings were in great demand by the Croats and were reprinted in many occasions. During the whole 19th century, P. R. Vitezović's *Croatia rediviva...* was playing a role of "a Bible of the Croatian national policy" and nationalism too (Šišić 1934: 46; Banac 1993). For example, several the most significant and influential 19th-century Croatian politicians (some of them the leaders of the Croatian national revival movement - the *Illyrian Movement*) as Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872), Ivan Derkos (1808-1834), Janko Drašković (1777-1856), Ante Starčević (1823-1896), and Eugen Kvaternik (1825-1871) were rather familiar with P. R. Vitezović's work, which crucially influenced their ideology of a Pan-Croatianism. For Lj. Gaj, A. Starčević, and E. Kvaternik ("the fathers of Croatian nation"), the names of separate South Slavic

nations were only synonyms for the common ethnic name of the Croats (Gaj 1835: 1; Gaj 1965: 299–301; Starčević 1971; Kvaternik 1971). Further, for I. Derkos and J. Drašković, the Orthodox Serbs from Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, and the Military Border were only ethnolinguistic Croats (Derkos 1832; Drašković 1832).

The insignia (coat of arms) of the *Illyrian Movement*, invented by Lj. Gaj, was a Morning Star that was inspired by P. R. Vitezović's work as well. Ljudevit Gaj still sincerely believed in the Illyrian proto-homeland of all Slavs and moreover found "evidence" for this hypothesis in the large number of the Czech, Polish, and Russian coats of arms. For him simply the "Illyrian" (i.e., the Croatian) Morning Star became "only common coat of arms of all our (i.e., the Slavonic-Croatian) tribes and lands" (Gaj 1863, 194). A. Starčević and E. Kvaternik, the founders of the most nationalistic Croat political party – the Croatian Party of Rights, denied the legitimacy of any other term and name of the Balkan Slavs than the "Croat" one. In other words, all South Slavs were *specimens* of Croatian *gens*. In conclusion, the modern Croatian national-political ideology of Lj. Gaj, A. Starčević, and E. Kvaternik was directly derived from P. R. Vitezović's Croatocentric terminology, ideology and viewpoints of the Balkan and world affairs.

P. R. Vitezović's conception of linguistic nationhood that the language was the pivotal national identifier, significantly influenced the South Slavic Romanticist's linguistically based definitions of nationhood. This new approach had a considerable impact to South Slavic national ideologists especially during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.[ii] Ultimately, P. R. Vitezović's idea of Lithuanians' (as "Slavic" people) Balkan origin based on ethnolinguistic determination of the nation was shared by famous Lithuanian 19th–20<sup>th</sup>-century linguist and national worker Jonas Basanavičius, who claimed after many years of scientific investigation and comparison of contemporary Lithuanian and old Thracian languages that Lithuanian ancestors migrated from the Western Balkan province of Thrace (being of ancient Thracians' origin) to the Baltic littoral (Basanavičius 1898, 8–15, 21, 34–35, 74). Still, the Balkan region of Thrace was a part of P. R. Vitezović's *Croatia rediviva* or unified Croatia populated by ethnolinguistic Croats from the time of Antique onward.

It can be given a final conclusion that P. R. Vitezović by following the main idea of the medieval and Renaissance South Slavic writers upon the Slavic matters, who apotheosised Slavism, transformed the message of one of them, Vinko Pribojević, that historical task of the Slavic nation was to rule the world ("*ut totius orbis habenas regeret*") (Pribojević 1951, 78) into the new futurological anticipation that ethnolinguistic Croats had a historical destiny to rule the globe. Shortly, while Pribojević was speaking in the favor of world Slavic Empire, P. R. Vitezović introduced a concept of the ethnolinguistic ecumenical Croatian state.

## Conclusion

Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713), an aristocrat of the German origin of the Dalmatian city of Senj, was the first South Slavic national ideologist who extended the Croatian ethnic name not only to all Balkan Slavs but rather to all Slavs. Using several different medieval historical sources upon the Slavic settlement on the Balkan Peninsula and many of South Slavic literal and historical works that recorded a popular tradition about the Balkan-Illyrian origin of all Slavic people, P. R. Vitezović concluded that legendary Slavic progenitors – the brothers Czech, Lech and Rus' – should be understood as the persons of the Croat ethnolinguistic origin. Identifying the brothers as the Croats, P. R. Vitezović concluded that

in fact, the entire Slavic population in the world descended from the Croat origin.

During the last stage of the Great Vienna War (1683–1699), between the Christian Alliance against the Ottoman Sultanate, when the struggle between Venice and the Habsburgs for the division of the South Slavic lands emerged, P. R. Vitezović wrote a memorandum to the Habsburg Emperor in order to refute any Venetian claim on the territory of the “Croatian” historical lands. His work about *limites totius Croatiae* (“the borders of whole Croatia”) demonstrated the borders of a Greater Croatia, which was divided into two parts: *Croatia Septemtrionalis* (North Croatia) northward from the Danube River, composed by Bohemia, Moravia, Lusatia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, and Russia, and *Croatia Meridionalis* (South Croatia) that was the Balkan Peninsula with Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Albania, Epirus, Thessaly, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Thrace. The Balkan Croatia was further subdivided into *Croatia Alba* (White Croatia) and *Croatia Rubra* (Red Croatia). A trans-Danubian Croatia was subdivided into *Sarmatia*: Poland, Lithuania, and Russia, and *Venedia*: Bohemia, Moravia, and Lusatia. Shortly, the 17th-century Croatian usage of the terms “Illyrian” and “Croat” as the synonyms, P. R. Vitezović simply extended to all Slavs understanding them as the people of the Croat origin. In other words, every Slavic nation was seen as *specium* of the Croatian *gens*.

The ideology of Pan-Croatianism created by Pavao Ritter Vitezović, who developed the ancient theory upon derivation of all Slavs from the Balkans, was a historical construction and a political program as a protest against long-time fragmentation of alleged Croatian historical and ethnic territories, but it was at the same time politics against territorial pretensions on alleged Croatian historical-ethnic space by the Republic of St. Marco. Finally, P. R. Vitezović attempted by his writings to obtain a Habsburg political-military support for the creation of a unified or Greater Croatia, i.e. *Croatia rediviva*. P. R. Vitezović’s arguments were both historical and ethnolinguistic that helped him to appropriate a vast territory of Europe, from the Adriatic and the Black Sea to the Ural Mt and the Baltic Sea, to the Croatdom. Surely, he did not envisage any kind of a unified South Slavic state under the name of Yugoslavia or so, but he only designed a united Pan-Croatian political community paving the ideological road for the Habsburg expansionistic policy at the Balkans and Central Europe in the future.

P. R. Vitezović considered the whole territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a Croato-Slavic land primarily due to the fact that his knowledge about Poland and Lithuania, for the most part, came from the writings of pro-Polish and pro-Slavic authors who saw Lithuania as the Slavic territory. Lithuania at that time was very much Polonized through the spreading of the Polish language and culture. In addition, P. R. Vitezović’s apprehension of Lithuania as a Croato-Slavic land came from the facts that the Slavic languages, among the others, were languages of the official correspondence within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and what is more important, that a majority of Lithuania’s population was of the ethnic Slavic origin. Subsequently, according to his Croatocentric doctrine, a “Slavic” Grand Duchy of Lithuania was actually populated by ethnolinguistic Croats and, therefore, had to belong to a Greater *Croatia rediviva*.

Finally, we can agree with Simpson Catherine Anne that for P. R. Vitezović the value of the past was equal to that of the present, i.e. the past and the present are juxtaposed and intertwined, and that he occasionally subordinated the present to the past in the light of his national and political ideals (Simpson 1991: 94–107). It explains why in P. R. Vitezović’s historiographic discourse there is no clear distinction between the past and the present. Also, Blažević Zdenka was right that “both function as argumentative axes around which the

functional and transtemporal Croatia as a discursive articulation of Vitezović's worldview is being build" (Blažević 2000: 230). Clearly, P. R. Vitezović's "metahistorical" Croatia as "temporalized narrative space" produced by historical discourse" (Velčić 1991: 111) would not be made to fit the geographic boundaries of its contemporary toponym.

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## Notes

[i] For the Serbs, Emperor Dušan was a representative of the national statehood, glory, and power. At the time of the Ottoman occupation, the Serbian national dream and political ideology were framed within the idea to re-establish the Empire of Stefan Dušan (Stanojević 2015: 50–58). About the Empire of Stefan Dušan, see (Stevanović 2001).

[ii] See, for instance in (Banac 1983, 448–474; Sotirović 2000, 7–24).

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