

# ANATOMY OF AN ARISTOCRATIC FAMILY. RAUCH DE NYÉK

## SUMMARY

The author presents her research on the noble Rauch de Nyék family history since 17th century until the present day, with a focus on 19th century. The aim of the book is to fill at least a part of the void in the Croatian history-writing concerning the nobility, especially in the period after 1918. Frequent political and social discontinuities reflected themselves on historiography and the history of the nobility after the World War I was rarely of interest to Croatian historians, as if it had perished alongside with the Habsburg Monarchy. The end of World War II and the onsetting communist regime brought about a ruthless retribution with already decimated noble landowners. However, noblemen lost not only their estates, but also their castles and manors, art and book collections, their archival material and very often their personal belongings, being thus deprived of part of their history and memories. Many castles and manors were purposely turned into nursery homes, poultry farms or were put to other unsuitable and damaging uses. Some noble tombs were looted or walled in. It is therefore only understandable that many noble families left Croatia for the Western countries. The communist regime was also very eager to promote the negative interpretation of their class enemy, stigmatizing nobility as a cruel exploiter of the people. However, Croatian historiography was at its best able to resist this approach, and since the late 1960s and 1970s it was possible to put forward positive aspects of noblemen's activities in the political, national, economic and cultural field. Yet, there was a line that was not to be crossed in this interpretation, particularly regarding the relationship between the nobility and the serfs/peasants.

After the fall of socialist Yugoslavia and the founding of independent Croatian state, the relationship to nobility suddenly changed. Not few noblemen returned, set foot again in Croatia, especially looking forward to denationalization of their landed property. As is often the case, political situation exerted influence on history-writing. In a way the pendulum swung back, and there were some attempts at interpreting the nobility exclusively in the national context.

This book is not meant to be a nostalgic search for old times. It tries to reconstruct the history of an aristocratic family and integrate it into the vertical of Croatian tradition. Therefore, the author is not concentrated solely on political activity and economic basis of the said family, but presents the reader with various elements of their everyday life, from family life to visual presentation and symbols to their living spaces and death culture. A separate chapter is devoted to women.

The Rauch family is of German origin, yet it settled in Hungarian Transylvania (today in Romania) where it obtained nobility in the mid 16th century. The first family member who came to Croatia was Daniel in 1635 and the family continuously lived in Croatia until 1945.

Political and social rise of the family took place in late 17th and early 18th century with Adam Daniel being a deputy of the *ban* (i.e. Croatian Vice-Roy). His son Ivan obtained the same honour, but unlike his father he belonged to the close circle of noblemen who created Croatian policy. Ivan's enormous political influence was abruptly put to end through his cruel putting down of the peasant rebellion in 1755; yet it should be stated that this was just an excuse for the Vienna centre to crush down the autonomous policy of Croatian nobility. Through his political fall Ivan was impeded from obtaining the title of a baron, but his son Paul obtained it in 1763. Until 1840s the Rauchs were not politically all too active, but from then on, they were again among the policy makers, and they were consistently pro-Hungarian oriented. Levin Rauch and his two brothers were among the founders of a pro-Hungarian political party and *Casino* in Zagreb. In 1868 Levin became a ban as a reward for his efforts on instigating the acceptance of the Croatian-Hungarian settlement in the Croatian parliament. Levin's regime was notorious for its persecution of the press and opposition in general. Levin was not able to pacify Croatia and his position as a ban was additionally

undermined through a series of articles that showed him as a corrupted politician. His son Paul followed his father's footsteps and became a ban in 1908. His task was to break the Croatian-Serbian Coalition and to set scene for the annexation of Bosnia nad Herzegovina by preparing the High Treason Trial in Zagreb. The intention was to show that Serbs were antidynastic terrorists, keen to ruin the Habsburg Monarchy. The High Treason Trial was politically biased and together with the Friedjung Trial it discredited the Habsburg Monarchy in general, and the Rauch regime in particular.

Political rise of the Rauchs was followed by the economic one. The family obtained many new estates, the main ones being Lužnica, Martijanec and Stubički Golubovec. The Rauchs were as a rule capable landowners, able to sustain their estates even when after 1848 the feudalism was abolished and landowners lost a part of their landed property. They had to cope with agricultural crisis, conflicts with peasants, shortage of capital and as a consequence got more and more encumbered with debts. However, they managed to keep their estates until 1918, and a part of the family situated in Stubički Golubovec (the Steebs) and Martijanec (the Vučetićs) even until 1945. However, the Yugoslav agrarian reform, launched in 1919 brought hard times to noble landowners.

The author shows the life on noble estates, the role of noble landowners in the local community especially their material support of churches and schools and their relationship to serfs/peasants. She also analyzes how the estates were run by numerous personnel headed by a steward.

The next chapter is devoted to castles, manors and the city palace of the Rauchs. The aristocratic way of life meant representative objects with spacious gardens and parks. The most important ones were baroque castles in Lužnica and Martijanec, the classicist one in Golubovec, the baroque palace in the Zagreb upper town and the villa at the seaside resort Crikvenica, built by Pavao Rauch in 1921. The castles were elaborately, often luxuriously equipped with valuable furniture, pictures, book and weapon collections, hunting trophies, in the baroque, rococo, Biedermeier or historical styles. Since visual representation was an important part of aristocratic self-stylization all objects contained numerous oil on canvas or graphic representations of ancestors and members of the family since 18th century. Men are shown as firm and self-assured pillars of society, and women as elegant ladies. On many portraits both of them were shown with decorations and other status symbols. The author elaborates various status and power symbols (coat-of-arms, decorations, chamberlain's key, ban's sceptre and banner etc.).

The last chapter is devoted to death culture. Aristocrats were buried in crypts, but in the 20th century many members of the extended Rauch family were buried at public cemeteries. The central burial place built by Levin Rauch – the crypt in St. George's church in Pušća near Zaprešić, was in 1940 looted and later completely filled in with a wall, showing the *damnatio memoriae* at work.