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## “NO HARM IN HEARING IT ALL”: MEDICEAN ATTITUDE TO THE CONSPIRACY OF MARIN DRŽIĆ

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**ABSTRACT:** This article highlights a most recent discovery of an unknown conspiratorial letter of Marin Držić as well as some comments on Držić traced in the correspondence of Duke Cosimo I Medici with his secretary, Bartolomeo Concino, in the State Archives of Florence (*Archivio di Stato di Firenze*). Aiming to interpret Držić's conspiracy in the light of new evidence, the article affords transcriptions, translation and commentary of the documents. The recently discovered material indicates that Držić, contrary to the traditional interpretation, was not ignored by the Medici administration, and provides the basis for the reconstruction of the attitude of the Florentine court towards Držić's plot, his contacts there, along with an array of new details on Držić's understanding of his own political project.

### *Documents*

The folios 853r-854v of the file (*filza*) 529A of the series *Mediceo del Principato* at the State Archives of Florence (*Archivio di Stato di Firenze*)

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contain an unknown letter of Marin Držić.<sup>1</sup> Dated 27 July 1566, and addressed to Duke Cosimo I Medici, it reads:

*All'Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor*

*Duca di Firenze, et di*

*Siena; In mano propria*

*lettera secreta<sup>2</sup>*

*Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signore Duca<sup>3</sup>*

*L'ultima lettera mandai all'Eccellenza Vostra per mano del Concino<sup>4</sup> suo segretario; nel fin della quale feci indender a quella come detto messer Bartolomeo Concino havea parlato a messer Francesco Vinta<sup>5</sup> ch'io dovessi trovarlo;<sup>6</sup> et così trovandolo mi ordino da parte di Vostra Eccellenza che io dovessi parlar al Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe et poi mi domando di tre cose da parte sua;*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the result of recent research at the State Archives of Florence (*Archivio di Stato di Firenze*). Given the relevance of the discovery, it seemed imperative that I bring it to light as quickly as possible and accompany with an introductory study which, for reason of haste, could prove incomplete or inaccurate in places. I aim to come forward with a more comprehensive study on Držić's conspiracy in the light of the newly found documents, probably after longer archival research in Florence. I am also delighted to acknowledge the help of the staff of the Florentine Archives, especially invaluable assistance of Dr A. Bellinazzi and Dr F. Martelli.

<sup>2</sup> This part of the text was found on the outer side of the autograph, and in the file on f. 854v.

<sup>3</sup> Guided by the principle that a document's form is equally essential for its understanding as its contents, my intention in editing the text was to remain as faithful to the original as possible. In other words, avoiding modernisation for fear of altering the text, I have edited Držić's original and often ambiguous punctuation and paragraph structure with but a few minor interventions to which I point in the footnotes. Equally, I have made no attempt to intervene in Držić's orthography (e.g. Držić omits accents). For the sake of clarity, I have resolved the abbreviations and capitalised personal names. Finally, before and after the shorter words (*e, o, Scio, ancho*), probably for reason of legibility, Držić inserts a slash, which has been omitted in this edition.

<sup>4</sup> Bartolomeo Concino, Cosimo's secretary and man of confidence responsible for foreign affairs in particular, see below.

<sup>5</sup> Francesco Vinta (Vintha), Medicean magistrate holding the office of *Auditore delle Riformazioni*, see below.

<sup>6</sup> Considering that in the already known letters there is no mention of Concino's conversation with Vinta, this is evidently an allusion to yet another unknown letter Držić had written to Cosimo before 27 July, and probably after 23 July, because the letter to Prince Francesco bearing that date makes no allusion to the contacts with the Medici court. Hardly anything can be said about the contents of that letter, except that at its end Držić mentions Concino's conversation with Vinta, and that he (Držić) should look for him. Judging by this information, there must have been at least seven conspiratorial letters, including the two missing ones.

*La prima se io sono mandato da tutto il popolo o da parte o altramente?*<sup>7</sup>

*La seconda come con poca mano io penso espugnar un governo che non ha nome d'esser debole; et ch'e geloso dello stato suo?*

*La terza riuscendomi ogni cosa; a mantener detto novo governo come si farria<sup>8</sup> se li offesi si volesseno aiutar di Veneziani; o di Turchi?*<sup>9</sup>

*A le quali cose gli ho risposto sicuramente; se ho saputo esprimer il mio concetto; ne io dubitto di dette tre cose;*

*Quanto al mio venire; non potrei venir ne con piu fondamento in cosi fatta impresa; ne con maggior destrezza; ne con piu giuditio di quel che sono venuto; et si come in ogni cosa si vogliono debiti mezzi; cosi in questa debite vie; et debito proceder; non quello che pare al discorso sia migliore, ma quello che ha meglio da riuscire; se mi si crede e in conclusione il secreto e quello che ci darra vittoria; e non le osservanze; et la disposition di tutti e largissimamente piu che la mia;*

*Quanto che s'espugniuno, che veggiando si guarda; e al dormir non ha cura; non e difficil cosa; et che tale habbia per soi guardiani nemici che volontariamente s'habbia fatto; consideri quella come si stia sicuro? Et male guarda colui la cassa sua di ladri, se si soi (quei cassatum) di casa hanno mal animo alla roba sua; Ne sicuro puo esser alchuno gia mai che domestico nemico, ha, alla guardia; Coloro s'hanno fatto di nemici senza proposito dentro al suo proprio nido; di quali son forzati a fidarsi; Consideri quella come e stanno;*

*Quanto che tali riccoressino alle forze di Veneziani o di Turchi questo gia mai non farranno perche tutti i Rauegi universalmente abboriscono e quei, et quelli; et di cio ne cavarebbono piu danno che utile; et quando una parte non si discaccia fuora della citta credo, non intravengon queste cose; et la intention del popolo non e di privar alchuno del governo, ma col novo miglior governo porli freno a tanta loro licenza; oltre di questo sono di natura timidissimi anzi pusilanimi la Natura di quai e quando hanno il poter in mano, che sono*

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<sup>7</sup> The word *altramente* was written at the end of the margin and is not followed by any punctuation mark. Considering that Držić placed a question mark after Concino's next question, it seemed appropriate to add it here as well.

<sup>8</sup> After *come si farria* stands a question mark followed by minuscule *se*. It seems logical to omit it.

<sup>9</sup> The words *o di Turchi* have been added and inserted in the margin slightly below the line of the rest of the sentence. Since no punctuation followed, I have added a question mark to suit the meaning.

*superbissimi et quando sono sotto bassissimi d'animo; io che li conosco so queste cose; et la importanza in cio e dar mi fede et haver il mio giuditio non vulgare;*

*Ma tre cose hanno fatto la cosa nostra piu difficile doppo che io comparsi con quella suplica alla Eccellenza Vostra cio e;*

*La morte di Papa Pio Quarto il quale li conoscea et havea giusto sdegno contra di loro; ne desiderava altro se non e che qualch'uno comparise contra di loro con fondamento;*

*Anco se m'e licito riccorder ogni cosa l'esser levato il suo Baillo da Constantinopoli ha fatto un che; quella m'intende; pur sendo i Genovesi nemici di Turchi governarono la isola de Scio molto tempo;*

*Il caso de Scio ancho ha dato non so che da esser piu destro in cio; Niente di manco li nostri son simili a Maunesi<sup>10</sup> la superbia di quali; et il loro mal governo hanno dato in man di Turchi quella isola christiana la quale i Genovesi mantener libera, nel'ardor di guerra, fra loro et i Turchi lungamente. Niente di manco signore Duca per finirla; io ho piu animo che mai, confidandomi in Dio et nella Giustitia sua, qualunque volta l'Eccellenze Vostre si disponessino; pero io mi refferisco al miglior Giuditio loro, et perdonij quella se io le do fastidio, il Concino suo segretario mi ha detto che in tutto Vostra Eccellenza ha questa causa comessa al Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe,<sup>11</sup> et io mi contento assai; et di tutto quello che piace a quelle; et cosi fin che quella m'ordini altro io sarro a sollicitar l'Eccellenza del Principe; a cui Dio Benedetto conceda di questa cosa nostra tale riuscita che si venga il fine in beneficio della casa Vostra, et in satisfatione nostra et a Laude di sua Maesta la quale conceda a Vostra Eccellenza al Principe, e a tutta la Illustrissima Casa Vostra<sup>12</sup> perpetua felicità; di Firenze addi 27 di Luglio; del LXVI.*

*Di sua Eccellenza humillissimo servitore*

*Marino Darsa; Raguseo,<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> A Genoese trade company which ruled Chios until 1566.

<sup>11</sup> This concerns Francesco I Medici, Cosimo's heir, see below.

<sup>12</sup> The words *Casa Vostra* have been inserted below the word *Illustrissima*, written in the margin.

<sup>13</sup> The reason why this letter had not been discovered earlier is fairly simple, for it was mistakenly filed with the letters from 1567. Its date, 1566, can be ascertained with exactitude by the letter's contents, but also by the date itself clearly written at the letter's end. In Držić's handwriting it reads *27 di Luglio; del LXVI*. Yet another hand added *27 di luglio 67* in the upper left corner of the letter's first page.

The correspondence of Bartolomeo Concino, secretary of the Florentine duke, with Cosimo I contains the following references to Marin Držić:

In Concino’s letter of 16 July 1566 to Cosimo:<sup>14</sup> *Ho letto il negotio di Raugia al Principe mio Signor<sup>15</sup> al qual pare una girandola con assai fuoco, e con poco frutto o piacere.*<sup>16</sup> On the same page, but at the very end of Concino’s letter is a rescript in Cosimo’s handwriting: *qui non cie che risponder sendo tutte nuove del Raueo e in vero cosa di novelle pur intender tutto non nuoce.*<sup>17</sup>

In Concino’s letter of 28/29 July 1566 to Cosimo:<sup>18</sup> *Mando a Vostra Eccellenza alcune lettere, et infra l’altre una di quel prete Raueo, dal quale si cava poco altro che discorsi simili a primi senza fondamento.* This remark is directly followed by Cosimo comment in his own hand: *sono vanita.*

In English translation the contents of the documents would read:

“To the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Signore Duke,

My last letter to Your Excellency I sent through your secretary Concino; at the end of which I inform you that the said Bartolomeo Concino had told Francesco Vinta that I should call on him, and when I did, he ordered me on behalf of Your Excellency to speak to the Illustrious and Excellent Signore Prince, after which he inquired about three matters in his own name.

Firstly, was I mandated by all people, group, or other?

Secondly, how I, with little support, propose to overthrow a government which is not reputed as weak and holds to its power?

Thirdly, supposing I succeeded in my plans, how could the new government be maintained if the defeated turned to the Venetians for help; or to the Turks?

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<sup>14</sup> *Mediceo del Principato*, filza 612, f. 248v (Archivio di Stato di Firenze).

<sup>15</sup> This concerns Prince Francesco I.

<sup>16</sup> For a possible explanation of this curious metaphor see below in the text.

<sup>17</sup> Cosimo’s *rescritti*—that is, short remarks, comments and instructions added to Concino’s letters, represented a routine form of communication between the duke and his secretary.

<sup>18</sup> *Mediceo del Principato* filza 612, f. 256v. The dating of this letter is somewhat dubious. Apparently, at the end of the letter Concino wrote *29 di Luglio 1566* (f. 257r), while on the outward side, next to the addressee (*All’ Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo...*), he wrote *28 di Luglio 1566* (f. 257v). It is likely that this letter, fairly long and containing the briefings on many current issues, may have been written intermittently between July 28 and 29. Moreover, it is possible that at its end Concino added the date, 29 July, because he completed it in the early hours of the following day.

I have answered his questions with certainty—if I have expressed my thought fully—and have no doubts concerning the said three matters.

As for my part, I could not have more ground, ability or reason to do so; and as all things require suitable means, here too, one should choose a suitable path and procedure; not the one that appears better in words, but that which has a better chance of success; if I am trusted, secrecy will ultimately bring us victory, and not the opinion and disposition of all, and to the largest extent more than my own.

How often is something won though wakefully and sleeplessly guarded; it is not difficult; and if someone's guardians are his own enemies, consider how safe he is? Poorly guarded against thieves is a house whose guardian is envied by the house members on his possession. Never can one rest if a hostile domestic is on guard. They have earned enemies in their own nest, against their will. And they are forced to trust them. Consider their position.

As for the possibility to turn to the Venetian or Turkish forces, they will never do it, for all Ragusans, without exception, abhor both; that would bring them more harm than benefit; and if one party is not expelled from the city, I think that such things do not happen; and the people have no intention of depriving anyone of power, but with the new, better government harness their licence; besides, they are most timid, pusillanimous even; their nature is such that they are arrogant when in power, and humble when inferior; I who am familiar with them, know it; and that is why it is important that you trust me and have faith in my worthy judgement.

But three matters have made our position more difficult after I had come before Your Excellency with this petition;

The death of Pope Pius IV who knew them and was rightly outraged at them. He desired no other but for someone to act against them with reason.

And if I may mention it all, your Bailo being removed from Constantinople had certain consequences; You understand me; although the Genoese are Turkish enemies, they governed the island of Chios over a long period of time.

The case of Chios has given encouragement to be more adroit at this. Our people and Maonesi bear a similarity, whose arrogance and ill-governance has surrendered this Christian island into Turkish hands, which the Genoese, fighting against the Turks, managed to maintain free for a long time.

Nevertheless, Signore Duke, in conclusion, I am more vigorous than ever, confiding in God and His Justice, whenever Your Excellencies decide. Thus I trust in their worthy judgement, and forgive me if I have disturbed you, Concino, your secretary, told me that Your Excellency has confided this matter to the Illustrious and Most Excellent Signore Prince; I too am content with that and with all that is to your preference; and thus, until you order me otherwise, I shall support His Excellency the Prince, and we pray onto God for our prosperous cause to the ultimate benefit of Your House and to our satisfaction and praise of His Majesty, bestowing upon Your Excellency, the Prince, and the whole Illustrious House of Yours fortune long to continue; Florence 27 July LXVI.

Most humble servant to Your Excellency

Marin Držić the Ragusan”

In Concino’s letter addressed to Cosimo dated 16 July 1566: “I have read the Ragusan proposal to the Prince, my Lord, to whom it seems like a girandole with a lot of fire, but with little fruit or benefit”. On the same page but towards the very close of Concino’s letter are Cosimo’s handwritten remarks: “here there is nothing to reply, for these are only Ragusan’s news and mere rumours; yet, no harm in hearing it all”.

In Concino’s letter to Cosimo dated 28/29 July 1566: “I forward to Your Excellency several letters, among which is the letter of that Ragusan priest, from whom hardly anything new can be learnt apart from what he had already said, without foundation”.

This remark is immediately followed by Cosimo’s handwritten comment: “Mere vanities”.

### *Historical context: Medici court and the “Ragusan proposal”*

These documents alter the traditional perception of Držić’s conspiracy in several important aspects. Firstly, the newly discovered letter contains to date unknown details of Držić’s scheme and his political position. Most illuminating details, indeed, for Držić provides the answers to some of the essential questions which the historians studying his conspiracy have been trying to fathom for decades: on whose behalf he actually acted, what were the realistic prospects of his plan and its implications for the foreign policy. By far more important than Držić’s answers to these questions, whatever they may be, is the fact that

the discovery of these documents rejects an old and much-repeated thesis. Apparently, the Medici court did not ignore Držić, **and he did receive a reply**. New evidence not only clearly confirms it, but provides the basis for concrete conclusions on the nature and chronology of these contacts. Lastly, fragments from the correspondence between Bartolomeo Concino and Duke Cosimo afford material, if scarce, for outlining the answer to a most intriguing question—the attitude of the Medicean court to Držić’s conspiracy.

In sum, it becomes clear that the rethinking of Držić’s conspiracy leads to a certain shift of perspective—Florence gains a new quality beyond that of a mere setting. Držić’s relationship with the Medicean government becomes a crucial new problem. Placing Držić’s proposal within the context of Cosimo’s foreign policy, one should reflect upon the reasons for its consideration, define the starting official position on the matter and its evolution over time. Equally, it is necessary to pinpoint Držić’s contacts, highlight Cosimo’s reasons for their particular assignment to the “Ragusan matter”, and examine the nature of Držić’s contacts with the Medici administration. Lastly, and most importantly, the well known conspiratorial letters should be reread and their contents reconsidered in the light of new evidence, since Držić’s Florentine episode can no longer be interpreted as the frustrating several months spent in the expectation of a non-arriving response. Now it is clear that a **dialogue** and not a monologue had taken place, shedding a profoundly new light on a number of common places in his political letters. In short, the discovery of these documents necessitates a rethinking of Držić’s Florentine episode from a new angle, this study being its modest introduction: not only should a story of Držić and Dubrovnik be told, but that of Držić and Florence as well.<sup>19</sup>

### *The problem of Držić’s contact*

Preliminarily, one should point to a caveat: the identity of Držić’s collocutor in the conversation referred to in the newly found letter cannot be ascertained with utmost exactitude. Namely, the first sentences in which Držić mentions

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<sup>19</sup> Indeed, there have been attempts to contextualise Držić’s conspiracy within the specific Florentine circumstances in the summer of 1566. See for example: Rafael Bogišić, »Cosimo Medici i Marin Držić.« *Republika* 3 (1961): pp. 16-17; Rafael Bogišić, *Marin Držić sam na putu*. Zagreb: HAZU, 1996: pp. 252-258; Milan Ratković, »O Držićevu pokušaju prevrata u Dubrovniku.« *Dubrovnik* 3 (1967): pp. 91-98; Ivo Batistić, »Zavjerenička pisma Marina Držića.« *Filologija* 5 (1967): pp. 14-15; Roberto Valle and Slobodan Prosperov Novak, »Urota ili traktat o čovjeku Nahvao«, in: *Marin Držić, Pisma Cosimu I Mediciju 1566*. Zagreb: Most/The Bridge, 1993: pp. 53-64.



his contacts with Concino and Vinta are more than ambiguous. The main source of the possible misinterpretation arises from the words *trovarlo* and *trovandolo*, as it is not quite certain whether they refer to Francesco Vinta or to Bartolomeo Concino. The first plausible interpretation is that Držić wants to say that Concino spoke to Vinta and told Vinta that Držić would look for the latter (Vinta), whom (Vinta) Držić found (*trovandolo*) and talked to. Therefore, Vinta was Držić’s contact and he was the one who posed the three questions mentioned earlier, whilst Concino’s role in arranging this meeting could be described as intermediary. The second interpretation is that Držić wants to say that Concino spoke to Vinta and told him that Držić should look for him (Concino). Having learnt about it, Držić found Concino and talked to him, their conversation being related in this letter. According to the latter interpretation, the roles of Vinta and Concino are reversed: Concino was the person whom Držić talked to and who posed the three questions, whilst Vinta was a mere intermediary.

Držić’s opening remark in the newly discovered letter that he had sent his last, today unknown letter to Cosimo, through Concino contributes little to this dilemma.<sup>20</sup> His remark does not necessarily imply that Držić had met Concino earlier, which would support the assumption that Concino was only an intermediary and Vinta the contact mentioned in the recently discovered letter. It is likely that it was from Vinta—whom, there is reason to believe, Držić may have known from before—Držić learnt that Concino had told Vinta that Držić should look for him (Concino), after which he made a note on it at the end of the still missing letter to Cosimo which was delivered to Concino during the meeting Držić recounts in the newly found letter.<sup>21</sup>

This dilemma will continue to puzzle our minds. Yet, taking into account the historical context, it seems more likely that Bartolomeo Concino was Držić’s contact. Firstly, judging by the remark in Držić’s letter of 2 July in which he mentions that Cosimo could reply *per mezzo di Vinta*, Držić had already known a certain Vinta with whom he kept in touch.<sup>22</sup> That Vinta, Držić’s first contact with the Medici court, probably was no other than

<sup>20</sup> *L'ultima lettera mandai all'Eccellenza Vostra per mano del Concino suo segretario.*

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the ensuing events see the following chapter under the title *Držić's contacts with Florentine administration: chronology.*

<sup>22</sup> Marin Držić, *Djela*, ed. Frano Čale. Zagreb: Liber, 1979: pp. 31, 891. The mediating role of someone from the Vinta family has been long established and described in literature. See: Milan Rešetar, »Uvod«, in: *Djela Marina Držića*, ed. Milan Rešetar. [*Stari pisci hrvatski*, vol. VII]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1930: p. LXIX.

Francesco. Why would Concino, for whom we have no information that Držić had ever met, arrange audition with Vinta whom Držić's supposedly knew, and with whom he had talked earlier? A far simpler solution is that Concino, knowing that Vinta was Držić intermediary, told Vinta that Držić should visit him (Concino), of which Vinta subsequently informed Držić. Secondly, a welcome contribution to the thesis that Concino was Držić's contact is a fact that at the end of the recently found letter Držić mentions that Concino told him that his case was handed over to Prince Francesco, which sounds as if it had taken place during the conversation he recounted.<sup>23</sup> Thirdly, in Concino's favour is his comment in the letter to Cosimo of 28/29 July about the Ragusan priest from whom hardly anything new can be learnt apart from what he had already said.<sup>24</sup> This could be a reference to the conversation Držić recounts in the newly found letter, the conversation apparently designed to obtain from Držić additional explanation for some of his statements from the previous conspiratorial letters. Fourthly and by far most importantly, the fact that Concino was Cosimo's man for foreign policy *par excellence* speaks in favour of Concino as a contact and hence a more logical choice than Francesco Vinta who, despite his diplomatic experience, in the 1560s was mainly responsible for the interior and legal matters of the state. Additionally, in Concino's favour is the fact that he, and not Vinta, was an intermediary between Cosimo and Prince Francesco, to whom the duke handed Držić's case for further consideration.<sup>25</sup>

*Contacts: Francesco Vinta, Bartolomeo Concino  
and Francesco I de' Medici*

The portrayal of some of the Florentine figures involved in this episode will no doubt illuminate Držić's activity in Florence and the position of the Medici government on him. He mentions two new names in the letter—Francesco Vinta and Bartolomeo Concino—while the role of Prince Francesco I de' Medici, to whom Cosimo assigned the “Ragusan matter”, tends to gain significantly in the understanding of the conspiracy's outcome.

<sup>23</sup> *...il Concino suo segretario mi ha detto che in tutto Vostra Eccellenza ha questa causa comessa al Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe...*

<sup>24</sup> *...quel prete Rauego, dal quale si cava poco altro che discorsi simili a primi senza fondamento...*

<sup>25</sup> For the assistance in solving this dilemma, as well as for the many excellent suggestions I am indebted to Renata Hacı Citra.

First of all, an old issue should be reopened. Držić’s first contacts in Florence—that is, the person or persons who helped him come into contact with Cosimo’s court, are still obscure. They might have been the young Ragusan noblemen, Frano Luccari and his business associate Luka Sorgo staying in Florence at the time. Both had connections with the Florentine establishment, and in 1562 Sorgo even loaned a considerable sum of 8,000 scudas to the duke. Although less likely, mainly on account of his good relations with the Ragusan authorities, Lodovico Beccadelli may have had some doing in this episode too.<sup>26</sup> Finally, ignored yet highly intriguing possibility is that Držić’s contact was no other but Antonio Pelieri, whom he mentions in the letter of 2 July, noting that one of those currently governing Dubrovnik had cut the face of this man who “is in Florence today”.<sup>27</sup> Držić describes Pelieri as the son-in-law of Lorenzo Miniati, a seemingly significant and until now underestimated detail. Apparently, Miniati was not only a “recurrent informer” (Tadić), but a man who had been spying in Dubrovnik for the Florentine Duke Cosimo for years—continually between 1545 and the conspiracy—dispatching intelligence on the Ottoman Empire and the developments in the city itself.<sup>28</sup> Držić obviously knew him, and the fact that he discussed at length the alleged violence Ragusan patricians had committed against him may suggest that he was aware of this man’s importance to Cosimo as well as his actual preoccupation. Although those are only speculations, the evidence is still quite suggestive: of the two family related Florentines whom Držić had apparently known from his Dubrovnik days, one had a clear motive to help the conspirator against the patriciate and happened to be in Florence at the same time, while the other was Cosimo’s long-serving spy who, as it seems, had earned duke’s recognition and favour.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For some suggestions on this point see: Josip Pupačić, »Pjesnik urotnik (o političkim planovima Marina Držića«, in: *Zbornik radova o Marinu Držiću*, ed. Jakša Ravlić. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1969: pp. 200, 203; M. Ratković, »O Držićevu pokušaju prevrata u Dubrovniku«: pp. 95-97; Dragoljub Pavlović, »O revolucionarnom pokušaju Marina Držića iz 1566. godine«. *Glasnik SAN* 1 (1949): p. 167.

<sup>27</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> The Florentine Archives files a collection of Miniati’s letters from Dubrovnik addressed to Cosimo as, for example, *Mediceo del Principato*, filza 372, c. 154, 178, 184, 280; filza 453, c. 345, 475; filza 502, c. 343, 778.

<sup>29</sup> Miniati’s letter to Cosimo dated 17 May 1556, contains a remark most probably made by Cosimo himself: *la ricevuta ce exhortarlo a servizi qualche volta quasi ha cosi di momento* (*Mediceo del Principato*, filza 453, f. 475). The register of Cosimo’s correspondence also contains a copy of a letter from November 1566, addressed to Miniati, in which the duke kindly thanks his informer on the useful *avvisi* (*Mediceo del Principato*, filza 226 f. 76v).

Whoever Držić's first contact in Florence may have been, he seems to have connected Držić with a member of the Vinta family, who, beginning with July or even earlier, intermediated between Držić and Cosimo's court. The fact that on 27 July Držić finds it necessary to emphasize that he sent his last letter through Concino may suggest that he acted contrary to regular practice—that is, he had sent all his earlier letters through someone else, probably Vinta himself. Although we could just as well speculate about Paolo (1536-1609) or Belisario (1542-1613), who were about to embark upon their successful careers at the Medicean court at around this time, judging by the newly found letter, their father Francesco seems the most probable person.<sup>30</sup>

Originally from Volterra, Francesco Vinta (1506-1570) was a typical representative of Cosimo's new "bureaucratic aristocracy", one of the many cultivated provincials, lawyers mainly, who owed their meteoric social rise to serving the Medici dynasty. Among the most prosperous *homines novi* of Florence, Vinta was the founder of a true dynasty of Medicean office-holders, the generations of whom rotated on the key positions in the service of the grand dukes. Formally a doctor of law, Vinta started his career in 1540, when he assisted the Florentine ambassador to Paris. Soon he became Cosimo's envoy to Italian courts, to Bologna, Parma and Mantua. His longest diplomatic mission was that of a Florentine agent to Milan in the period 1546-1548, and again 1550-1552. Around 1555 he returned to Florence for good, when he was given an important office of *auditore delle riformagioni*, which he held continuously until his death in 1570. It was an old republican magistrature whose significance Cosimo redefined by transforming *auditore* into one of the main instruments of his personal power. Appointed by Cosimo himself, *auditore delle riformagioni* was the secretary of the two main Florentine councils (*Consiglio dei Duecento* and *Senato dei Quarantotto*) which, in

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<sup>30</sup> Both Francesco's sons studied at Pisa, presumably law, and around this time started to hold junior offices in the Medici bureaucracy, and over the years managed to climb up the political hierarchy of the grand duchy. The establishment of their exact whereabouts in the summer of 1566 will require more extensive research. It is certain that Vinta's third son, Emilio (1537-1566), was not involved here, since during Držić's visit to Florence he was posted as secretary to Cosimo's ambassador to Vienna, where he died on 25 July 1566. It should be noted that the Medici archives also contain the letters of a certain Antonio Vinta, secretary between 1569 and 1592, and perhaps another son of Francesco Vinta. An attempt to solve the Vinta dilemma—whether in his letter of 2 July Držić referred to Francesco or Bernardo (probably Belisario)—has been made by Milan Ratković, yet it remains unclear how he arrived at a conclusion that Držić cites him "as his close acquaintance and intimate friend". M. Ratković, »O Držićevu pokušaju prevrata u Dubrovniku«: pp. 94-95.

principle at least, were to confirm most of duke’s decisions. In addition to the delicate role of a mediator between the traditional patrician elite and new Medicean government, *auditore’s* responsibility also included an array of domestic issues, markedly of legal and administrative nature, from mediation between the central government and the dominions, legal verification of new provisions or legal status of certain individuals (adoption, legitimation, naturalisation and the like). As a man of Cosimo’s confidence, Vinta also held a secretarial post of the so-called *Pratica segreta*, secret council of Medicean ministers responsible for interior matters of the state, and was the main body of the new increasingly centralised power structure.<sup>31</sup>

Through Francesco Vinta yet another important figure featured in Držić’s Florentine episode: Concino, Cosimo’s secretary (*segretario*). Bartolomeo Concino (1507-1578) was one of Cosimo’s closest associates and doubtlessly one of the most powerful men in Florence of the latter half of the sixteenth century. Son of a rustic from Terranova, he joined the service of the Florentine duke as early as 1545, soon followed by a meteoric advancement to a status which brought him great reputation with Cosimo, who engaged him in “virtually all matters”.<sup>32</sup> As observed by A. Contini, Concino in time became the true *alter ego* of the Florentine duke.<sup>33</sup> During almost thirty years of continuous office he was Cosimo’s key executive for most delicate issues, particularly those dealing with foreign affairs: two dramatic missions to

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<sup>31</sup> On Francesco and the whole Vinta family see: Furio Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana: i Medici*. Torino: UTET, 1976: pp. 92, 175-176. For the function of *Auditore delle Riformagioni* and some details on Francesco Vinta as holder of this office, see *ibidem*: pp. 89, 163; Antonio Anzilotti, *La costituzione interna dello Stato Fiorentino sotto il duca Cosimo I de’ Medici*. Firenze: Francesco Lumachi Editore, 1910: pp. 45-50; for *Pratica segreta* *ibidem*: pp. 167-195. For *Pratica segreta* and Vinta’s role in it: Ilaria Domenichini, *Alle origini del principato cosimiano: il ruolo dei segretari attraverso l’analisi e la descrizione dei documenti dell’Archivio Mediceo del principato (1542-1559)*, Master’s thesis. Università di Pisa, 2006: pp. 40-41; for Vinta as *Auditore delle Riformagioni* and this office in general see *ibidem*: pp. 37-38, 83; for Vinta’s embassies to other Italian rulers: *ibidem*, pp. 134, 173, 175-176; for Vinta’s short biography *ibidem*, p. 173, note 141. The complete study of I. Domenichini is available on the web site: <http://etd.adm.unipi.it/ETD-db/ETD-search/search>.

<sup>32</sup> For a description of Concino’s role under the reign of Cosimo and Francesco see the relation of the Venetian ambassador Andrea Gussoni from 1576 in: *Relazioni degli ambasadori veneti al senato*, vol. III, ed. Arnaldo Segarizzi. Bari: Laterza, 1916: pp. 220, 229. On Concino’s pivotal role in Cosimo’s administration see the relation of Michele Tiepolo and Giovanni Michiel from 1579: *ibidem*, p. 268.

<sup>33</sup> Alessandra Contini, »Dinastia, patriato e politica estera: ambasciatori e segretari medicei nel Cinquecento«. *Cheiron* 30 (1998): p. 96.

Charles V in 1547 and 1552; coordination of the siege of Siena in the 1550s; a number of missions to Rome, among which successful lobbying for Cosimo's candidate, the future Pius IV with the papal conclave in 1559; arrangement of the prestigious marriage between Cosimo's son, Francesco I, and the daughter of the Habsburg emperor in 1565; long-drawn-out negotiations about Cosimo's proclamation of the grand duke by the pope, which eventually took place in 1569 and scandalised the whole of Europe. Although holding a relatively obscure title of *segretario*—it was not until 1570 that he was promoted into *primo segretario*—Concino was a person of Cosimo's utmost confidence. They kept almost a daily correspondence, often penned in the late nocturnal hours, discussing all the thorny issues on the home and foreign agenda of the Florentine duchy.<sup>34</sup>

For the understanding of Cosimo's role in Držić's conspiracy two of the functions he performed in Cosimo's governmental apparatus in the 1560s should be kept in mind. As mentioned earlier, he was the main foreign secretary, and thus the right person to weigh Držić's proposal. Equally, Concino mediated between Cosimo and his son Francesco, the regent to whom duke handed over the bulk of the state affairs, apparently the Ragusan proposal as well. Hence Concino was the person who, evidently after having consulted Cosimo, read Držić's letters to Prince Francesco (*ho letto*) on 16 July, and then informed Cosimo of the prince's impressions. Despite evident scepticism in both Cosimo and Francesco's reception of Držić's proposal, yet guided by the attitude "no harm in hearing it all", Concino soon proposed to meet Držić and have the conversation Držić relates in the newly discovered letter. Judging by the content of this conversation—closely related to the conspiratorial letters of early July—it seems that it was then that Držić had a first concrete and serious discussion of his plans with a representative of the Medici administration. Concino's remark to Cosimo dated 28/29 July that the "Ragusan priest" still speaks *senza*

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<sup>34</sup> One should note that Concino played the key role in Florentine politics almost to the last, even during the rule of Cosimo's son, Francesco I. His great political influence helped him proclaim his family the offspring of ancient Florentine nobility despite their peasant origin, and amassed huge wealth. For Concino's biography, see: Paolo Malanima, »Concini, Bartolomeo«. *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 27 (1982): pp. 722-725; F. Diaz, *Il Granducato*: p. 91; A. Contini, »Dinastia, patriziato e politica estera«: pp. 95-96; I. Domenichini, *Alle origini del principato cosimiano*: pp. 103-108, 162-166. Generally on the secretaries in Cosimo's governing apparatus: I. Domenichini, *Alle origini del principato cosimiano*: passim, especially pp. 83-134. For *modus operandi* of Medicean bureaucracy, notably foreign affairs, see: A. Contini, »Dinastia, patriziato e politica estera«: pp. 57-133.

*fondamento* leads us to believe that this conversation bore little effect with duke’s secretary. Despite this fact, during their meeting Concino informed Držić of a grave matter, apparently previously decided—that he should talk to Prince Francesco who was responsible for his case.

This last detail casts a completely new light on the role of Cosimo’s heir in Držić’s Florentine episode. Prince Francesco becomes the key figure for the understanding of the conspiracy’s development and its final outcome. And that, judging by what we know about Francesco, may have had far-reaching consequences for Držić’s plans.

The eldest of the five sons of Cosimo and Eleonora de Toledo, Francesco I Medici (1541-1587) seems not to have taken after his politically gifted father. Raised and educated by the best humanistic masters at Cosimo’s court, Francesco, “ever pensive”, showed a melancholic disposition from an early age. This gave way to frequent frictions between him and his father, best illustrated by Cosimo’s letter to his son of 6 August 1561, in which he warns him about leading a life “unbefitting” a prince, showing little “prudence”, and that his reputation of an incompetent regent threatens to mar their honour. Apparently, Francesco spent his juvenile days in the comfort of his room indulged in reading, and nights—what scandalised his father most—roaming the streets of Florence. Although distrustful about his political abilities, or on account of it, as early as 1561 Cosimo decided to introduce his son to political affairs, and in 1562/3 sent him to Spain to the court of King Philip II. Upon Francesco’s return, Cosimo made a move which took the political Europe of his day by surprise: on 1 May 1564 he appointed Francesco regent and entrusted him with the most of the state powers. The reasons underlying Cosimo’s decision have been the subject of different interpretations: from being fatigued by courtly life, especially after the tragic death of his wife and two sons in 1562, progressive disease which, by the 1570s, made him a physical and mental invalid, to his intent to secure smooth succession. Most of all, perhaps, by making such a decision Cosimo wished to pave the path to Francesco’s marriage to Joanna, archduchess of Austria, sister of the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian II. This marriage took place toward the end of 1565 and launched the Medicis among the most distinguished dynasties of the Renaissance Europe. Despite partial retirement, Cosimo remained a leading figure in the principate’s politics well after 1564. He retained his ducal title, the right to appoint some of the most important officials, as well as supreme political control, particularly over foreign affairs and the activities of the naval fleet of the Order of St Stephen. In other words, at the time of Držić’s arrival Florence was witnessing a specific

form of dual government of Francesco and Cosimo, while Concino and other Medicean secretaries mediated between them, coordinating their actions and keeping the father updated on his son's activity.<sup>35</sup>

The man assigned to deal with Držić's proposal and whom Držić might have met during the arranged audience struck the Venetian ambassador Priuli in the early days of 1566 in the following way:

*Ai venticinque di Marzo... prossimo avrà 25 anni. È di statura piccolo, magro, negro di faccia, e di cera malinconica: ha atteso sempre questo principe ai piaceri, e mostra di essere molto immerso nell'amore delle donne; si è diletato poco della virtù; non dimostra troppo bell'ingegno, il che si conosce nelle proposte e risposte, e massime nelle risoluzioni, nelle quali è tardo ed irresoluto, e dal duca suo padre è conosciuto però tale. Il quale per volentieri gli ha dato il governo, acciò che con l'esercio e l'esperienza, possa fare buon giudizio delle cose, e farsi principe prudente innanzi alla morte sua.*<sup>36</sup>

The judgement Priuli made here was soon to become a commonplace. Indeed, Medicean regent seems not to have been the right man for Držić's shemes. The traditional image of Francesco was that of a man lacking strong political vigour and determination that were so typical of his father. Instead, his passion and enthusiasm was rather self-oriented, ranging from alchemy to women. He was characterised as the most incompetent grand duke of Tuscany, a man of "trivial life and the worst among his race", "brutal and perverse" or a "melancholic" who, as a grand duke, had annihilated his father's lifelong efforts and surrendered to Philip II. His lack of political ambition is vividly illustrated by a somewhat later episode in which the Polish envoys offered him the crown of Poland itself. Explaining some of his political mottos, he replied that he was perfectly happy with the state he had, and that it had never occurred to him to "undertake something bigger". The main guideline of his foreign policy was to "resist the temptation to meddle in the affairs of others".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Luciano Berti, *Il principe dello studiolo: Francesco I dei Medici e la fine del Rinascimento fiorentino*. Firenze: EDAM, 1967: *passim*, especially pp. 9-16, 22, 47-50, 278; F. Diaz, *Il Granducato*: pp. 17-18, 185.

<sup>36</sup> *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, series II, vol. II, ed. Eugenio Albèri. Firenze, 1841: p. 78. The text cited is an excerpt from »Relazione di Firenze del clarissimo M. Lorenzo Priuli ritornatone ambasciatore l'anno 1566«.

<sup>37</sup> For a survey of the traditional assessment of Francesco I see: L. Berti, *Il principe dello studiolo: Francesco I dei Medici e la fine del Rinascimento fiorentino*: pp. 9-13, 22. For the case with Polish envoys see: Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the forgotten Centuries, 1527-1800*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973: p. 101.



“Meddling” of this kind was exactly what Držić had in mind. Judging by Concino’s short comment to Cosimo of 16 July concerning the prince’s view of the conspiracy plan as *una girandola con assai fuoco e con poco frutto o piacere*, Francesco was not much impressed by Držić’s proposal. Although the general meaning of this slightly odd formulation attributed to either Francesco or Concino is more than clear, it is not quite certain, however, whether it intends to describe an exaggerated matter, big words simply empty of meaning, or, less probably, a project of high risk but of little benefit.<sup>38</sup> Whatever the case, despite the prince’s evident reservations, during a meeting several days later Concino informed Držić that he should talk to Francesco. The explanation of this decision may lie in the fact that it was Cosimo and not Francesco who had suggested the audience, since Concino informs Držić on behalf of the duke.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, fairly little can be ascertained concerning this audience. Given the apparent scepticism of the Medicean regime about Držić’s plans as well as the fact that Concino had already met Držić, it is not quite clear as to why that audition was considered necessary.

More importantly, whether the audience had actually taken place remains obscure. The only extant document which could possibly cast some additional light is Držić’s last letter of 28 August. Držić’s formulation that he throws himself at the Prince’s feet “in spirit” when he is not able to do so “in person” suggests that the audience had never taken place, even as if Držić alluded to the promised audition. On the other hand, he was merely trying to say that the much-insisted “secrecy” prevented him from bidding the Prince farewell, again providing no solid information on whether the audience had taken place or not. The petition which follows, in that he be granted “merely a good word as consolation to my wish and on behalf of what I demanded from Your Excellencies” does suggest that he received no response from either Francesco or Cosimo. However, neither does this necessarily imply that the audition had not taken place—it can simply mean that during their eventual meeting Prince Francesco made no clear statements. Držić’s plea for forgiveness in case he acted “to the harm of Your Excellencies”, reveals no other than that he was aware of not having impressed the Medicis. In a word, the only conclusion that can be made with certainty on the basis of this letter is that by the end of

<sup>38</sup> The word *girandola* in the sense of a long and boring story, as cited in the English-Italian dictionary compiled by John Florio in 1611, could lead to yet another meaning of this metaphor. This text can be found on the web site: <http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/lorio/>.

<sup>39</sup> *...trovandolo mi ordino da parte di Vostra Eccellentia che io dovessi parlar al Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor Principe...* (Držić’s letter of 27 July).

August Držić had received neither a final nor concrete response, and that he left Florence without a clear picture of the reception of his proposal.<sup>40</sup>

*Držić's contacts with Florentine administration: chronology*

Judging by the fact that in his last letter Držić mentions that it was his fourth month in Florence, it is likely that he arrived there sometime in May. In May or June he wrote his first and mislaid letter to Cosimo, which contained a “general description of the City of Dubrovnik”. Whether this letter to Cosimo was sent through Vinta, or the latter started to act as a go-between later—that is, beginning with July, cannot be ascertained. The likelihood is that the said Vinta—Francesco most probably—carried all Držić’s letters apart from the second lost letter, which Držić, on 27 July, as an exception, mentions he dispatched through Concino. We do not know what exactly took place during the first two weeks of July after Držić had delivered his second and third letter (of 2 and 3 July). The next concrete piece of evidence is Concino’s note from 16 July, in which he informs Cosimo that the Prince has read the Ragusan proposal. This leads to an assumption that shortly before this date Cosimo, obviously informed about Držić’s plan, entrusted Concino to elaborate it before the Prince. Whether the decision to hand the whole case over to Francesco had already been made by the middle of July is hard to say, but seems probable. About a week later, on 23 July, Držić wrote his first letter to Prince Francesco. Judging by its contents, at that point Držić had no knowledge whatsoever that Francesco had been acquainted with his proposal, let alone that the prince was entrusted with the whole case.<sup>41</sup> All of this suggests that by 23 July Držić received no concrete response. It was about then that new developments began to take place: at about that point Concino told Vinta that Držić ought to find him (Concino), of which Vinta soon informed Držić. Držić then wrote yet another, today unknown, letter to Cosimo, at the close of which he mentions that he was informed about having to meet Concino.<sup>42</sup> Držić brought this letter

<sup>40</sup> For the abovementioned citations, see: M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 33. Držić’s insecurity can be seen from his words “if you attach some importance to it [my cause] or take it into consideration”.

<sup>41</sup> Držić very vaguely mentions to Francesco that he had approached his father *con una causa di qualche importanza*, after which, evidently unaware of Francesco’s assignment to his proposal, he pleads with the prince to recommend him to Duke Coismo (M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 894).

<sup>42</sup> *L'ultima lettera mandai all'Eccellenza Vostra per mano del Concino suo segretario; nel fin della quale feci indender a quella come detto messer Bartolomeo Concino havea parlato a messer Francesco Vinta ch'io dovessi trovarlo.*

with him to the meeting with Concino, which he mentions in the newly found letter and then delivered it to Cosimo’s secretary. During this meeting, Concino told Držić that Cosimo wanted Držić to meet Prince Francesco, and that the prince would deal with his case. Shortly afterwards, on 27 July, Držić wrote the newly discovered letter, in which he submits his version of the conversation, and sent it to Cosimo through an unknown channel (Vinta? Concino?). Concino apparently alludes to this document when, on 28/29 July, he informs Cosimo of forwarding yet another letter “from that Ragusan priest”. It is possible that the audition with Prince Francesco took place at the end of July or early August; however, there is no conclusive evidence. As far as later developments are concerned, the whole of August is obscure and, as it seems, until the very end of the month Držić had not received the final answer to his proposal, not even a refusal. Thus on 28 August, he wrote his last letter, addressed to Prince Francesco, on the basis of which we can conclude that, tired of waiting and in fear for his own life, he intended to flee Florence and return to Dubrovnik.

### *The attitude of Cosimo’s court to Držić’s plan*

Although it is unquestionable that the contacts were established, and that Držić practically came to the point of being received by the Florentine prince himself, it still does not mean that his proposal was taken seriously. The few marginal notes on *prete Raugeo* reflect a fairly clear attitude of the Medici court. Držić’s proposals were characterised as “vanities” (*vanita*), “tales” and “rumours” (*cosa di novelle*), and he as someone who spoke “without foundation” (*senza fondamento*). The fact that his matter was handed over to Prince Francesco also suggests that Cosimo did not see it as a priority. Moreover, judging by some of Držić’s remarks, he himself felt that he had not made a good impression. This is best illustrated by his formulations in the newly discovered letter, such as “if I have expressed my thought fully”, “if I am trusted” or emphasis on Medicis’ faith in his “worthy judgement”. The mere fact that Držić considers it necessary to acquaint Cosimo with his version of the conversation with Concino, assuring him that he had answered all questions “with certainty”, might lead us to believe that he was aware of not having been particularly convincing, thus attempting in his letter to cushion Concino’s presumably ill report to the duke and the prince. Apparently, this uncertainty only grew stronger with time, because the letter of 28 August was written in a similar tone. Držić continues to repeat the motive of his “unworthiness”,

assures that his intentions were with a good cause, and apologises if “he had erred or harmed Your Excellencies in any way”.

Although the official position of the Florentine administration is more than clear from as scarce evidence as this, Medicean approach to Držić’s proposal should not be understood over-monolithically or statically. In other words, it is more than likely that the conspiracy provoked different reactions and was subject to change over time.

Given sparse documentation, reconstruction of the positions of some protagonists and their ebb and flow is confined to speculation and fragmentary approach. It seems that it was Cosimo, despite general scepticism, who, at least in July, forwarded Držić’s case. To begin with, Cosimo was the one who reacted to the conspiratorial letters in the first place, although, apparently unimpressed by what he saw, he soon handed the matter to Prince Francesco for further dealing. Then again, Cosimo happened to be the person who, having become familiar with Concino’s report on the prince’s negative opinion, replied that he principally agreed, yet there was “no harm in hearing it all”. The Florentine duke, guided by this very motto, soon initiated Držić’s meeting with the prince, and perhaps that with Concino as well. It is difficult to reconstruct with exactitude the impression Držić left during the meeting with Concino, but the latter’s remark from 28/29 July on the Ragusan priest who spoke “without foundation” is quite revealing. Cosimo’s comment on “vanities”, however, suggests that duke too was not satisfied with Držić’s new explications. Thus it is possible that Concino—or Prince Francesco, had the meeting with him ever taken place—finally sank Držić’s hopes. This is not only supported by the cited comments of Concino and Cosimo, but also by Držić’s last letter of 28 August, which suggests that in the course of his last month in Florence no contacts of serious nature were made nor was any serious interest in his proposal shown.

Medicean principal position on this issue being clear, communication between the Tuscan duke and his secretary fails to reveal much on the concrete reasons underlying the negative opinion on Držić. Explanation for the underestimating comments in the correspondence between Cosimo and Concino should be sought elsewhere—in Držić’s letter of 27 July. Namely, the seeds of the administration’s scepticism can certainly be grasped from the three embarrassing questions Concino had posed to Držić.

Apparently the issue that bothered Medicis the most was formulated in Concino’s first question: on whose behalf Držić actually came. A necessary

prerequisite for any serious consideration of his proposal was to establish whether they were dealing with a lone adventurer or a true representative of a relevant social group from Dubrovnik seeking Cosimo’s protection. Medicean court seems to have harboured doubts about Držić’s well-grounded, if any, political background.

The first detail to raise doubts about the foundation of Držić’s statements was the description of the situation in Dubrovnik he afforded in his letters. Judging by Concino’s comment on the Ragusan government “not being reputed as weak” and “holding to its power”, the image of Dubrovnik as a city on the verge of rebellion, tyrannised by twenty “lunatics”, was quite a revelation to the Medici court. Doubts about the foundation of Držić’s statements on the popular discontent were raised further by certain details from his scheme. Despite his insisting on the fact that Ragusan *popolo* “pray Lord for one thing only” and that is to free themselves from the infamous twenty “monsters”, his claiming that “the whole *popolo* will not hesitate to embrace this good deed” or even mentioning that his followers would join Cosimo’s men, in some of its details Držić’s proposal may have aroused suspicion concerning his social background. If he came in the name of a consolidated social group, the majority of the common people who no longer could tolerate patrician tyranny, why was his demand for the coup mainly concentrated on the support from Cosimo’s men? Equally, if the Ragusan *popolo* awaited freedom desperately, why did Držić’s stratagem include drastic measures which would incite the people to rebellion, starting with excommunication, all the way to threatening to burn the ships of the “pusillanimous” ones who refused to join? Lastly, why did Držić, allegedly representing the “moneyed commoners” (*popolo denarioso*), demand financial support from Cosimo?<sup>43</sup>

Držić’s treatment of his associates and followers in his letters is rather vague, which no doubt undermined his credibility in the eyes of the pragmatic Medici government. Apparently, it is not quite clear on behalf of which social group he actually came and on whose help he actually counted: was it the whole “people”, “navy”, or “youth”, or the “two-thirds” of the patricians willing to

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<sup>43</sup> Fully aware of the fact that his insistence on Cosimo’s support might arouse suspicion, Držić underlines that the Ragusan *popolo* are “pusillanimous and unaccustomed to novelties and thus indecisive”. Justifying his demand for financial support, he writes: “I am well familiar with the general mood, but now I can no longer place my trust in tempting them further”. This claim gives rise to additional suspicions about the enthusiasm of his alleged followers (M. Držić, *Djela*: pp. 30, 32).

side with him? A cynical reader will certainly understand that most of these groups, according to Držić, need solid motives for participating in the plot. As for the *popolo*, whom Držić describes as “unaccustomed to novelties”, none other than the excommunication of the ruling elite would give them “great strength and courage” to take part in the coup. Similarly, the earlier-mentioned two-thirds of the patrician dissenters were also ready to join but after papal excommunication.<sup>44</sup> The navy, allegedly subject to systematic tyranny, was to be motivated using “craftiness”, and ultimately through the already mentioned measures from excommunication to the threats to burn down the fleet.<sup>45</sup> Youth seemed to have been the only targeted group that in Držić’s opinion did not require any particular motivators, but from his formulation “all youth would accept my plans” it is evident that the youth did not have a vague idea of its future role.<sup>46</sup> All in all, on the basis of Držić’s conspiratorial letters one could easily assume that only a handful of people in Dubrovnik, if any at all, were familiar with his schemes, and that he in fact believed that Ragusan citizenry would choose to restrain from active participation in the events and rather accept the coup as a *fait accompli*. It was Držić’s response to Concino’s direct question about his mandate that clearly confirmed the suspicion that he had a respectable group of devotees. Držić clouded the answer in phrases on the most solid grounds of his proposal, general consideration of the means and goals, finally followed by a statement which has a ring of confession about it: “if I am trusted, secrecy will ultimately lead us to victory...”<sup>47</sup>

Judging by Concino’s second question about how Držić thought to overthrow a reputedly strong government with a handful of men, the Medicean court was reasonably sceptical about the plan’s tactics as well. Their criticism may have resembled that submitted by some modern historians in certain points. Indeed, in terms of organisation, the coup was conceived in “an infantile way, ignoring

<sup>44</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: 28.

<sup>45</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: 29.

<sup>46</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: 24.

<sup>47</sup> For some considerations on Držić’s acting on someone’s behalf (if any) or as someone’s exponent, see: J. Pupačić, »Pjesnik urotnik«: pp. 180-181, 195; Jorjo Tadić, *Dubrovački portreti*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1948: pp. 112-113; Bernard Stulli, »Oko političkih planova Marina Držića-Vidre«. *Mogućnosti* 6 (1959): pp. 505-509; M. Ratković, »O Držićevu pokušaju prevrata u Dubrovniku«: pp. 93-94; M. Rešetar, »Uvod«: pp. LXVII-LXVIII; R. Bogišić, *Držić sam na putu*: pp. 259-264; Vinko Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«. *Rad JAZU* 338 (1965): pp. 99-104; Živko Jeličić, *Marin Držić pjesnik dubrovačke sirotinje*. Zagreb: Novo pokoljenje, 1950. For a somewhat modified Jeličić’s position, see: Živko Jeličić, *Marin Držić Vidra*. Beograd: Nolit, 1958.

the real circumstances” (Stulli).<sup>48</sup> The stratagem was far too complicated and much of it could go astray. Perceptive political readers at Cosimo’s court may have pondered, for example, the extent to which the prudent Ragusan government would become suspicious if an impressive number of Tuscan professional soldiers, though unarmed, set foot in Dubrovnik with a fairly obscure pretext. Furthermore, wouldn’t those soldiers, although ignorant of the purpose of their mission to Dubrovnik, still be able to draw certain conclusions on the basis of the encounters with their compatriots in the city and start to talk about it? In addition, who could warrant that the captains and the colonel, with no detailed instructions on the mission, would trust Držić exhibiting Cosimo’s document before them? Even if they did, the preparation of all the Tuscan troops for action in a town as small as Dubrovnik, and in doing so remain unnoticed, must represent a serious organisational problem. Supposing it went as expected, who could warrant that Držić would actually procure weapons and manage to arm almost a hundred men? Once armed, what were the soldiers’ chances against the city guards and patrician adherents? etc. Držić’s answer to Concino’s question only confirmed the suspicions of the Florentine government. Namely, Držić claimed his position by adverting to something which, in the view of Cosimo’s court, was ill-founded—popular discontent as well as the fact that Ragusan governors were apparently forced to rely on the enemies “in their own nest”.

Finally, judging by Concino’s third question, another important aspect of the potential coup, relatively poorly elaborated in Držić’s letters, may have given rise to suspicion—international legitimacy of the consolidation of

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<sup>48</sup> For the assessment of Držić’s plan to mount a coup in Dubrovnik, see: B. Stulli, »Oko političkih planova Marina Držića-Vidre«: p. 510; Rafo Bogišić, »Marin Držić pjesnik i urotnik«, *Krugovi* 7-8 (1958): p. 491; J. Tadić, *Dubrovački portreti*: p. 23; M. Rešetar, »Uvod«: p. LXXII; I. Batistić, »Zavjerenička pisma Marina Držića«: p. 24. For a detailed reconstruction of Držić’s proposed coup, void of commentary on its tactical realisation, see: V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: pp. 99-105. On the other hand, despite apparent naivety of certain details, Držić’s scheme unquestionably reflects the theoretical political literature of the epoch. From the voluminous literature see: Frano Čale, »Držić između filozofije i politike«, in: *Hrvatska književnost u evropskom kontekstu*, ed. Aleksandar Flaker and Krunoslav Pranjić. Zagreb: Zavod za znanost o književnosti Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta, Liber, 1978: pp. 193-220; Ž. Jeličić, *Marin Držić Vidra*; Leo Košuta, »Il mondo vero e il mondo rovescio in “Dundo Maroje” di Marino Darsa«, *Ricerche slavistiche* 12 (1964): pp. 65-122. For a comprehensive survey on the relations between Držić’s literary work, life and the dramatic conspiratorial finale, with references to older literature, see: Slobodan Prosperov Novak, *Planeta Držić. Ogled o vlasti*. Dubrovnik: Knjižnica Doma Marina Držića, 1996. For some appealing reflections on Držić, see: Zdenka Janeković-Römer, »Autoritet ljubavi: samotnička misija Marina Držića za ljude nazbilj«. *Kolo* 2 (2006): pp. 205-210.

Cosimo's protectorate over Dubrovnik. Concino warns about the realistic scenario that Držić fails to mention in his letters, that being a possibility of the formation of a post-coup faction of exiles, consisting mainly of the patricians, who could seek help from Dubrovnik's powerful neighbours. Concino's prediction owes its menacing tone to the Florentine traumatic background, centuries of struggle with various factions banished from the city (*fuorusciti*), such as the members of the powerful Strozzi family which, during Cosimo's reign, represented one of the greatest threats to the new Medici regime.<sup>49</sup> Though to a somewhat lesser extent, Dubrovnik shared a similar experience with the brothers Bucignolo, who, under the protection of the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand, caused serious trouble to the Ragusan government, a fact Držić must have been familiar with. It is difficult to say as to how convinced Concino and the whole administration may have been hearing Držić's statement that the Ragusans would never seek help from the Turks or from Venice, and that the "pussilanimous" nobility would ultimately yield to the new system. However assuring his answer may have been, the problem was far more serious.

Supposing the political dissenters outside the city decided not to form a faction, there remains a question as to how the important Mediterranean powers would react to the new political situation in Dubrovnik. The only powerful neighbour whose reaction Držić considers in his letters is the Ottoman Empire, for which he claims would recognise the new rule on condition that the Turks were reassured that the Ragusan relationship with the Empire would not be subject to any relevant changes, and that the city would continue to pay the agreed tribute. Given the relations of the Tuscan duchy with the Ottomans, it is questionable whether this statement could convince Cosimo's court. Namely, Cosimo was not only one of the crucial figures of the "imperial federation" of Philip II, sworn enemy of the Ottoman Empire, but also joined in its struggles with the Turks. In 1562 the Tuscan duke founded the order of the crusaders of St Stephen, which continuously waged war with the Osmanlis in the Mediterranean. In 1565 he sent troops and engineers to help Malta under siege, contributing thus to Turkish defeat. It was in the summer of 1566 that he launched a strong contingent of Florentine forces to Hungary as aid to Emperor Maximilian II against the oncoming Ottoman offensive. Anti-Turkish

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<sup>49</sup> On the Strozzi family and Cosimo see: I. Domenichini, *Alle origini del principato cosimiano*: pp. 18-22.



campaigns brought the Turco-Tuscan relations to a halt in 1565/6, and because of Cosimo's support to Malta, the Ottomans revoked a number of the old Florentine privileges, prohibiting Florence from having a *bailo* posted in Istanbul, a fact also noted by Držić. The mentioned reasons cast doubt on Držić's arguments that on their doorstep the Turks would accept the rule of a Spanish satellite and a close ally to the pope, who, over the last years, failed to miss a single military campaign against them and who had just been included among the hostile states.<sup>50</sup>

Even if the Medicis had been ready to accept Držić's assurance regarding the Turks, they were well aware of yet another important factor in the Adriatic, and that was Venice, which Concino also mentions. The Venetians, with whom Cosimo had cold relations, would no doubt disapprove of the establishment of Tuscan rule on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. The consolidation of even indirect Spanish rule in the east Adriatic seemed like Venice's geopolitical nightmare scenario come true: a situation in which, from the Venetian perspective, an already overly powerful Spanish empire would gain control over both coasts of what was proudly referred to as “the Venetian gulf”.<sup>51</sup>

Lastly, although Concino fails to mention it, the Medici court may also have harboured doubts about the reactions of the pope and the Spanish king to the eventual Tuscan protectorate over Dubrovnik. Although the new pope was not Cosimo's candidate on the conclave of December of 1565, from the first days of his pontificate Pius V remained on good terms with the Tuscan duke. During this period Cosimo made considerable efforts to secure such a relationship. Knowing that the only way to resist Spanish pressure was through a close alliance with the pope, Cosimo stood firmly on the position of the Catholic reform, ready to conform to all demands coming from Rome. Cosimo's determination is best illustrated by the famous case of the Florentine “heretic” Pietro Carnesecchi whom, though his protégé and friend, Cosimo ruthlessly surrendered to the Inquisition in the summer of 1566. In other words, whether Cosimo was willing to risk a still fresh and fragile alliance with the new pope by involving himself in the Ragusan adventure, which might look as an

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<sup>50</sup> On the relations of the Florentine duchy and the Ottoman Empire in this period, see: Giorgio Spini, »Il principato dei Medici e il sistema degli stati europei del cinquecento«, in: *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500*, I. Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1983: pp. 188-189, 194-197. For Držić's views on the Ottoman Turks, see: V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: pp. 72-76.

<sup>51</sup> On Venice's efforts to prevent Tuscan rule over Dalmatia, see: J. Tadić, *Dubrovački portreti*: p. 123.

unprovoked aggression on a friendly Catholic state whose relations with Rome were also traditionally good, remains doubtful.<sup>52</sup>

The problem had a far more acute perspective with regard to the Spanish court. The fact that Cosimo was one of the Spanish allies or protégés—depending on the viewpoint—did not necessarily mean that Madrid approved of duke's every large-scale ambition. Contrarily, through periodic interventions in the Florentine affairs the Spanish court mainly acted against Cosimo's interests, in an attempt to curb the growing independence of Tuscany. The memory of the 1564 events still haunted the Medici administration, when King Philip II intervened personally in Cosimo's renouncement of the crown of Corsica offered to him by the dissenters against Genoese administration on the island. That case was not an exception, for the year 1567 saw a virtually identical development after yet another rebellion on Corsica, while Cosimo's acquisition of the grand ducal title with pope's support a few years later (1569) was to lead to the verge of the Spanish military intervention. In a word, the reaction of the Spanish court to Cosimo's establishment of power in Dubrovnik, the latter being of great benefit to the Spaniards, even being informally considered a Spanish protectorate, gave serious cause for concern. In sum, even if all other elements developed according to the plan, there still remained more than valid causes for concern that yet another Corsica was to befall Cosimo.<sup>53</sup>

*“Matters which have made our position more difficult”: Držić's remarks on the Florentine bailo, the fate of Chios and death of Pius IV*

Besides providing a frame for the reconstruction of the position of the Florentine government on Držić's conspiracy, these to date unknown documents also shed a new light on the Ragusan's understanding of his own

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<sup>52</sup> On Cosimo's excellent relations with the popes in the 1550s and 60s, see: G. Spini, »Il principato«: pp. 191-193; Ruggiero Romano, *Istoria del granducato di Toscana sotto il Governo della Casa Medici*, II. Firenze: Cambiagi, 1781: pp. 76, 80; Massimo Griffo, *Firenze tra Francia e Spagna (1492-1574)*. Milano: Camunia, 1992: pp. 429-433; F. Diaz, *Il Granducato*: pp. 187-188.

<sup>53</sup> G. Spini, »Il principato«: pp. 177-216. On the international reception of a possible coup in Dubrovnik, see: M. Ratković, »O Držićevu pokušaju prevrata u Dubrovniku«: pp. 94, 97; on a relatively optimistic reconstruction of the papal and Spanish attitude towards the Tuscan protectorate over Dubrovnik: V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: pp. 104-105.

political project. In the letter of 27 July Držić refers to several important issues which, in his opinion, threatened to exacerbate the realisation of the coup in Dubrovnik. He referred to the death of Pope Pius IV, the “case” (*caso*) of the Genoese island of Chios, and the withdrawal of Cosimo’s *bailo* in Istanbul.

Beyond any doubt, the fact that Cosimo’s diplomatic representative was withdrawn from mission to Istanbul was a blow to Držić’s plans. Although the relations between Tuscany and the Porte had never been particularly good, there remained a glimmer of hope that, with the help of Ragusan diplomacy, the Florentine *bailo* could also contribute by preparing the Ottoman Empire to accept the coup in Dubrovnik. Yet in Držić’s opinion not even the fact that the Turks, on account of Cosimo’s military support to Malta in 1565, considered Tuscany a hostile state and for this reason banished their diplomatic representative, was a problem he could not bridge.<sup>54</sup> In support of his argument, he twice cites the example of the Genoese, who, although at war with the Turks, managed to maintain rule over the Aegean island of Chios.<sup>55</sup> But in the light of the recent news from the Levant, this example proved fairly unconvincing, almost inappropriate. Additionally, Držić here verges on the contradictory, for he himself recurrently mentions the fate of Chios in the spring of 1566, that *caso di Scio*, as a serious obstacle to the realisation of the coup in Dubrovnik.

In order to understand the significance of the “Chios case” for Držić’s argumentation, one should consider the broadest context of the Mediterranean basin in the summer of 1566. In actual fact, to grasp Držić’s wording as well as the attitude of the Florentine administration towards him, one should embark upon meticulous reconstruction of what the protagonists of the conspiracy may have known about the dramatic fate of this Aegean island and about the speculations it continued to reverberate.

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<sup>54</sup> For the withdrawal of the Florentine *bailo* from Istanbul, see: G. Spini, »Il principato«: p. 197. I have not been able to find more data on this case.

<sup>55</sup> ...*pur sendo i Genovesi nemici di Turchi governarono la isola de Scio molto tempo; Il caso de Scio ancho ha dato non so che da esser piu destro in cio; Niente di manco li nostri son simili a Maunesi la superbia di quali; et il loro mal governo hanno dato in man di Turchi quella isola christiana la quale i Genovesi mantener libera, nel'ardor di guerra, fra loro et i Turchi lungamente...* Držić here suggests that Dubrovnik’s existence is more imperilled by the arrogance of the Ragusan patriciate than by Cosimo’s hostile relations with the Turks

It was sometime during June and July, when Držić made his contacts with the Medici court, that most alarming and at the same time contradictory rumours about Ottoman naval operations in the Levant reached Florence, rumours about Chios, but also more and more often about Dubrovnik itself. Although by the spring of 1566 it became clear that the main Turkish offensive was to be launched in Hungary and not in the Mediterranean as previously believed, dramatic news on the fate of the Genoese island of Chios reached the West as early as the end of April and beginning of May. Despite discrepancies in detail, all the rumours agreed that in mid-April the Turkish fleet used trickery to conquer the island, a formerly tributary of the Ottoman Empire. Chios thus became the Empire's sancak, while the members of the ruling Giustiniani family were sent to prison.<sup>56</sup> This gave rise to widespread speculation about the next victim of the Turkish armada, the size of which was still veiled in obscurity. Despite expectations, Turkish offensive against Malta was becoming less plausible, as the focus tended to shift to the Adriatic Sea. Antedating the Chios case, a letter from the Levant to Genoa dated 9 February, warned about the plans of the Ottoman fleet to sail into the Adriatic that year, and penetrate as far as the Habsburg Rijeka (Fiume).<sup>57</sup> In early May the Spanish court received information from Cyprus about the Turkish plans to enter the Adriatic, of which Dubrovnik also had knowledge at the time.<sup>58</sup> In early summer it seemed a certainty, because in June several sources in southern Italy informed about the position of the Turkish fleet off Corfu and Valona. In the middle of July it was finally confirmed that the Ottoman fleet had sailed into the Adriatic.<sup>59</sup>

All in all, about the time when Držić arrived in Florence, the West received the striking news of the Turkish invasion of Chios, tributary of the Ottoman Empire, and the advancement of the Ottoman fleet towards the Adriatic. On the basis of these two details, in the summer of 1566 many observers of the

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<sup>56</sup> On the fate of Chios, see: Theodore J. Bent, »The lords of Chios.« *The English Historical Review* 15 (1889): pp. 479-480; William Miller, »The Genoese in Chios, 1346-1566.« *The English Historical Review* 119 (1915): pp. 427-428; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. IV. Philadelphia: American philosophical society, 1984: pp. 894-899.

<sup>57</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Sredozemlje i sredozemni svijet u doba Filipa II*, vol. II. Zagreb: Antibarbarus [original title: *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*], 1998: p. 403.

<sup>58</sup> F. Braudel, *Sredozemlje*: p. 403; For Dubrovnik, see: V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću.«: p. 108.

<sup>59</sup> F. Braudel, *Sredozemlje*: p. 403; K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*: pp. 902-903.

Mediterranean came forward with an alarming conclusion: the Turks were planning to repeat the Chios scenario with Dubrovnik.<sup>60</sup>

One of those who had come to this or at least similar conclusion was Držić. In the letter of 2 July, he appealed to Cosimo to help Dubrovnik, for it needed help more than ever, "bearing in mind the cruelty that... was happening to the island of Chios", stressing that Cosimo's government would perhaps "deter the Turk from ever dreaming of committing such barbarism to that city".<sup>61</sup> While it is evident that Držić was familiar with the main details related to the fate of Chios, it is less certain whether he knew about the oncoming entrance of the Turkish fleet into the Adriatic and the rumours about Dubrovnik.<sup>62</sup> Supposing he had knowledge of it all, it was too late to prevent the eventual Turkish intervention in the summer of 1566 by means of coup. Thus Držić merely draws a general conclusion: he used the fate of Chios in order to prompt Cosimo to intervene in Dubrovnik, claiming that it was only a matter of time when that Christian city, unless the current incompetent government was changed, would also fall under the Turks.<sup>63</sup> The same argument recurs in the newly found letter in which Držić draws a parallel between Dubrovnik and Chios, speaking of the resemblance between Ragusan patricians and Genoese Maonesi whose "arrogance and ill governance" has surrendered that Christian island into Turkish hands.

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<sup>60</sup> On this rumour see: K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*: p. 903. Tadić mentions that Requesens, Spanish ambassador to Rome, in his letter to King Philip II of 13 August, relates an interesting but possibly unreliable anecdote. Apparently Piali Pasha, commander of the Turkish fleet, having tasted the wine offered to him by the Ragusan envoys, commented that he was surprised that Dubrovnik had such good wine, resembling that of Chios. Whether Piali Pasha had actually drawn this awkward parallel or it was a complete invention of a Spanish intelligence agent is of minor importance. In any case, this anecdote is a good illustration of the widespread and more than obvious analogy between Chios and Dubrovnik (Jorjo Tadić, *Španija i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*. Beograd: SKA, 1932: p. 94, note 5). The news on the launching of the Turkish fleet in the spring/summer of 1568 and its advancement towards Dubrovnik reverberated through the Holy See and Rome where it was again believed that the Turks were about to attack the city (K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*: pp. 918-919).

<sup>61</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 23.

<sup>62</sup> Judging by his remark in the letter of 3 July that "on the 17 June they wrote to me from Dubrovnik", he obviously had some intelligence channels in that city and was actually informed about the arrival of the Turkish armada (M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 32).

<sup>63</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: pp. 884, 888. On Turkish menace as an important motivator of Držić's conspiracy see J. Pupačić, »Pjesnik urotnik«: pp. 190-191. The author rightly anticipates that prior to embarking upon his scheme, Držić "was aggravated by some sort of immediate and real danger for the future existence and safety of the Dubrovnik Republic...".

Ironically enough, it seems that this wrong and alarming prediction on the Turkish attack of Dubrovnik was among the rare statements Držić made that the Medici government was ready to believe. The intelligence on the manoeuvres of the Turkish fleet, arriving mainly from the Spanish Sicily, was most carefully analysed in Florence. Forwarding to Cosimo an *avviso* from Messina dated 19 July, ten days later Concino writes that it is believed that the Turkish fleet only pretended to advance to Rijeka and Trieste, its real target being “to make the Ragusans experience the fate of Chios”. Below Concino’s text stands a brief yet auguring Cosimo’s comment: “if not now, some other time then”.<sup>64</sup> This does sound as an echo of Držić’s words.

The fact that Cosimo was fairly convinced of the Turkish intervention in Dubrovnik throws a new light on yet another interesting issue. Apparently, despite serious reservations, Držić’s proposal found attentive audience in Florence. At the moment of his arrival, Medicean administration must have known about the fate of Chios, the speculations about the entrance of the Turkish fleet into the Adriatic, as well as the calculations on the attack on Dubrovnik. Even if the alarming analogy between the fate of Chios and that of Dubrovnik had not reached their ears from some other source, it was in early July that they learnt about it from Držić himself. Given the circumstances, there truly “was no harm in hearing it all”, and any information about the city which was about to become the focal point of the whole Mediterranean seemed more than welcome, especially when the bearer of the news—if unconvincing—persistently argued that “the Ragusans” prayed God for “one mercy only”, and that was the establishment of the protection of Cosimo I Medici.

Uncertain development in the Adriatic in July of 1566 contributed further to the Medicean anxiety not only about the fate of Dubrovnik, but also about

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<sup>64</sup> Concino writes: *...perche l'Armata Turchesca ha finto d'andar à Fiume et Trieste, da che si truova in tanto disordine che non puo far effetto notabile, et si pensa che all'ultimo habbia da far il medesimo alli Raugei che alli Sciotti*. Cosimo’s comment below: *se non altra volta*. The letter to which Concino refers here was written on 19 July from Messina by Alfonso Appiani d’Aragon to Francesco I. Appiani brings the news on the Turkish fleet advancing to Rijeka (Fiume), but at the very end adds: *Questa matina è comparsa una fregata dalla volta di Levante per laquale s'intende che l'Armata habbia fatto finzione de andar à Fiume e si dubbita che vogli far a Ragugia quelltanto a fatto a Scio (Mediceo del Principato, filza 522, f. 204r)*. Appiani’s letter to Jacob IV, governor of Piombino, of 28 July also provides evidence on the widespread rumours about the possible attack of Dubrovnik, mentioning the arrival of yet another frigate with the news on the launching of the Turkish fleet: *...alla volta di Castell nuovo, con resoluzione di andare à Fiume, ò vero à Ragugia; Ma piu si dubbita che faccia à Ragugia quello che ha fatto à Scio (Mediceo del Principato, filza 522, f. 290r)*.

the possible reactions of the Mediterranean powers to the Turkish entrance into the sea. Although it seemed that the Spanish viceroy Don Garcia, like his sovereign Philip II, were quite reluctant to attack the Turks, shortly after the news on the fall of Chios military preparations and defence were launched in southern Italy and Sicily: the coast was fortified, inhabitants evacuated, and Messina became the gathering point of the galleys and troops withdrawn from Malta.<sup>65</sup> Even the traditionally reserved Venice, which kindly withdrew its galleys as the Turkish fleet approached Dubrovnik, became more than concerned and started to arm its ships in July.<sup>66</sup> Lastly, Pope Pius V, persistent in his crusading initiative since the very beginning of his pontificate, showed more determination in advocating the Christian league and a united confrontation against the Turks. This campaign culminated by the end of July and early August when the pope, in all his fervour, led a series of processions for the rescue of Christianity against the Turks, appealing to Don Garcia to attack the Turkish fleet in the Adriatic together with Venice.<sup>67</sup> Although perceptive political observers at Cosimo’s court must have harboured serious doubts about the prospects of such an alliance, the possibility of a maritime conflict and geo-political changes which could affect Dubrovnik called for reconsideration. One should bear in mind—as emphasized by F. Braudel—that the contemporaries must have experienced this situation as dramatic despite its eventually irrelevant consequences.<sup>68</sup> Thus for the Florentine administration any information, even if coming from a man whose credibility was dubious, may have been of value.

Although the Medicis shared Držić’s opinion on the implications about the Chios case for the fate of Dubrovnik, it remains unclear whether they agreed with his interpretation of the implications that event had in the realisation of the plot. On this, Držić not only fails to provide a precise answer but even contradicts himself. While in the first surviving letter of 2 July he mentions Chios as an encouragement for action, claiming Dubrovnik’s inevitable fate unless the government changed, in his subsequent letters the role of Chios

<sup>65</sup> K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*: p. 903.

<sup>66</sup> Ludwig von Pastor, *Storia dei papi nel periodo della riforma e restaurazione cattolica: Pio V (1566-1572)*. Roma: Desclée, 1924: p. 514; K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*: p. 904; F. Braudel, *Sredozemlje*: p. 405.

<sup>67</sup> L. von Pastor, *Storia dei papi*: pp. 513-514; K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*: pp. 904-905; F. Braudel, *Sredozemlje*: p. 405.

<sup>68</sup> F. Braudel, *Sredozemlje*: p. 405. For the chronology of this Dubrovnik summer, see: V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: pp. 107-109.

takes a distinctly different course, curiously juxtaposed with the earlier one. That “case” was to become one of the main stumbling blocks to the realisation of the conspiracy.<sup>69</sup> What puzzles most is that such a sudden change of attitude took place overnight. While in the letter of 2 July Držić uses Chios as a dramatic appeal to action, only the next day, in the letter of 3 July he writes that “Fortuna begins to show certain impediments”, focusing, among other things, on the events related to that Aegean island. In the letter of 27 July he makes a similar reference, stressing that the “Chios case” necessitated “more skill” in the realisation of the conspiracy. What lay behind such a dramatic twist is hard to say. Drawing a parallel between the manner in which Držić spoke about Chios and his position on yet another event that apparently interfered with the plot in Dubrovnik—death of Pope Pius IV—might cast more light on the problem.

In Držić’s plans pope was to play the key ally role in the realisation of the coup. As elaborated in his letter of 2 July, the pope was expected to perform either an “assumed or genuine” papal excommunication, designed to persuade the *popolo* “unaccustomed to novelties” to join the revolt.<sup>70</sup> In addition, Držić even suggests that, upon Cosimo’s prompting, one of his men, presumably a church dignitary, would receive from pope the “secret authorisation” against those excommunicated, and would go to Dubrovnik on behalf of the church, pretending to negotiate with the nobility. His entourage was to consist of about fifteen men of confidence, who would join the rest of Cosimo’s soldiers in the coup.<sup>71</sup> In a word, Držić practically turned pope—whose support he “greatly relied on”—into a most direct accomplice in his scheme.<sup>72</sup>

In this view, the death of Pius IV was a serious problem. To start with Držić may have known that Cosimo, having invested huge amounts of money, secured the election of this pope, and being duke’s closest ally, Pius IV could be counted upon in the realisation of the coup.<sup>73</sup> More importantly, Držić believed that he

<sup>69</sup> V. Foretić was the first to observe this, V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: p. 106.

<sup>70</sup> On the excommunication, see: V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: pp. 102-104.

<sup>71</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 29.

<sup>72</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> The exact report of the Venetian ambassador read as follows: *Non c'è dubbio che il duca di Firenze l'ha fatto papa (Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato nel secolo decimosesto*, ed. E. Alberi, series II, vol. IV, Firenze 1857: p. 60). For that election and Cosimo’s influence see: G. Spini, »Il principato«: pp. 190-191, in addition, although bearing the same surname, the pope and the Florentine duke were not related as occasionally quoted. Giovanni Medici came from a Milanese family which had no ties with the Medicis of Florence.



could count on the support of Pius IV because the latter, as described in the letter of 27 July, was acquainted with the Ragusan governors “and rightly outraged at them”, and “wished no other but to see someone with a good reason act against them”.

Indeed, Giovanni Agnolo de’ Medici, later Pius IV, was familiar with the Ragusans because between 1545 and 1553 he was Archbishop of Dubrovnik and one of the many who bore this title but never set foot in Dubrovnik. His “discontent” with the nobility might have had roots in his conflict with the Ragusan authorities several years prior to his election for the pope. Despite initially good relations with Dubrovnik, as evidenced by his title of the “Ragusan cardinal” after the promotion in 1549, an action he took in 1553 gave way to a serious scandal. That year Cardinal Medici renounced the title of the archbishop of Dubrovnik in favour of a certain Sebastian Portico, whose position was soon confirmed by the pope. The problem started when the Ragusan government refused to accept this nomination, protesting for not having been consulted and drawing attention to the new archbishop’s dubious reputation. The controversy lasted until the pope, in an attempt to close this thorny issue between the Ragusan government and the Medici, finally appointed Portico bishop of Foligno. When in 1559 Pius IV died and cardinal Medici was elected pope, Ragusan authorities had little reason for content. Serafino Razzi writes that the news was received with joy among the common people, although the Senate failed to publicly show joy because of “certain timor” (*certo timore*) and “embarrassment” (*erubescenzia*) caused by the recent conflict over Portico.<sup>74</sup>

Describing this case, Razzi mentions yet another important detail which might have influenced Držić’s plan of action. Apparently, on account of the persistent Ragusan refusal to recognise the canonically named archbishop, the pope decided to pronounce a “terrible excommunication” (*una terribile scomunica*) against the Senate, for which the authorities made sure never to

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<sup>74</sup> For this conflict see: Stjepan Krasić and Serafino Razzi, *Povijest dubrovačke metropolije i dubrovačkih nadbiskupa (X.-XVI. stoljeća)*. Dubrovnik: Biskupski ordinarijat; Split: Crkva u svijetu, 1999: pp. 138-141. Nonetheless, continues Razzi, from this pope the Ragusans had never heard an ill word spoken either publicly or privately. On this point also see: Daniel Farlati and Jacobus Coleti, *Illyricum sacrum*, vol. VI. Venetiis: apud Sebastianum Coleti, 1800: pp. 228-230; Seraphinus M. Cerva, *Bibliotheca Ragusina*, ed. Stjepan Krasić, vol. I. Zagreb: JAZU, 1975: p. 39. For assistance in finding my way through Crijević’s maze and the ecclesiastical history of Dubrovnik in general, I kindly thank my colleague Relja Seferović.

reach the city. Considering that Držić obviously had some knowledge of the conflict with Cardinal Medici, this detail may have easily led him to plan the excommunication with which he intended to spark off the coup in Dubrovnik.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, the pope's unpleasant episode with Dubrovnik and the fact that he was the closest ally of the Tuscan duke, made Pius IV a seemingly perfect man for Držić's project. However, there is a major problem: while Držić was composing his conspiratorial letters, Pius IV was already dead. He died in December of 1565, and in July 1566 that was old news. Why Držić decided to state that fact, and repeat it even, is really hard to fathom.

There are three assumptions, none of which particularly convincing. The first is Foretić's benevolent interpretation that from the mere mentioning of the consequences the death of Pius IV could have for the conspiracy it is visible "that Držić conspired as early as 1565".<sup>76</sup> Should this explanation be adopted, the references to the death of Pius IV in the letters of 3 and 27 July are but mere political speculation about a failed opportunity, a somewhat curious and unnecessary digression which might be ascribed to the prevailing artistic flair and Utopian style of Držić as a conspirator.

As if arguing against this interpretation is Držić's sentence in the letter of 27 July, in which he speaks about three matters that "interfered with our situation **after** my appearance before Your Excellency with that supplication", which is immediately followed by a remark that one of those matters is the death of Pius IV. If Držić's fairly unambiguous words are understood literally, it seems as if he wanted to say that he had actually contacted Cosimo, and not only intended to do so, even before December 1565. On the other hand, Držić's comment in the letter of 28 August that it was his fourth month in Florence, counting thus from May 1566, speaks against this.<sup>77</sup> On the basis of mere speculation, one might find the way out of this maze of contradiction assuming that as early as 1565 Držić made some contact—presumably written—with Cosimo, after which he arrived in Florence in May of 1566. In all, although the references to the death of Pius IV make more sense in this interpretation than in the first one, the consequences of this explanation are truly far-reaching

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<sup>75</sup> On this excommunication, see: S. Krasić-S. Razzi, *Povijest dubrovačke metropolije*: p. 139.

<sup>76</sup> V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> M. Držić, *Djela*: pp. 34, 895.

and hard to accept: the chronology of the conspiracy should be radically rearranged and our knowledge of Držić’s relations with Florence considerably redefined.

Not only is it difficult to base such a drastic interpretation on a single sentence drawn from the obscure idiom of Držić’s conspiratorial letters, but there is yet another argument against it: a detail discernible to a meticulous reader of Držić’s text which suggests the third possible explanation. Apparently, it is in the letter of 3 July, and not before, that Držić discusses the death of Pius IV for the first time. In the letter of 2 July Držić makes no reference to it, as if he counted on pope’s maximum help, elaborating that from Rome they should procure excommunication and authorisation of the Church for Cosimo’s man who would be assigned to go to Dubrovnik. Only the following day he wrote that “Fortuna is beginning to show certain difficulties” and mentioned the death of Pius IV as a problem. More significantly, it seems as if Držić’s attitude towards Church and its role in the coup had changed overnight. While in the letter of 2 July pope is an important ally, only a day later, on 3 July, Držić insists on the secrecy of the stratagem, writing that “everything should be done tacitly and secretly, primarily for the sake of the Church, but also in respect for the Turks and Venetians”.<sup>78</sup> Contributing to Držić’s drastic twist of attitude towards the Church is the fact that, in his letters written after 2 July, he no longer mentioned the planned excommunication nor Cosimo’s man as the papal envoy to Dubrovnik.

How can we explain that Držić made his first reference to pope’s death on 3 July, whilst in the lengthy letter of 2 July he made no allusions to it whatsoever? How could Fortuna “begin” to show difficulties with the death of Pius IV on 3 July if the pope had already been dead for six months? What reasonable

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<sup>78</sup> It should be pointed that this interpretation of the change of the Church’s role is based on only one of the several possible interpretations of Držić’s sentence: *In conclusione, Signore Duca, queste cose non si hanno mai da far con la trombetta, ma tacite e secrete, col principio della chiesa, per rispetto di Turchi e di Veneziani ancora* (M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 892). Both translators of Držić’s letters, F. Čale and I. Batistić, translate this sentence in a similar way, as a warning that one should proceed carefully and secretly so that the plot is not discovered by the Church, the Turks and Venetians. (M. Držić, *Djela*: p. 32; I. Batistić, »Zavjerenička pisma Marina Držića«: p. 27). The sentence, however, could be understood in the sense that great caution should be taken so as to conceal the part of the plan related to the Church, and not hide it from the Church itself. The least convincing interpretation seems that submitted by Foretić, according to which Držić here “emphasises that everything should be started with the Church, but soon adds—with due respect to the Turks and the Venetians” (V. Foretić, »O Marinu Držiću«: p. 106).

explanation can one find for such a sudden change of attitude towards the role of the Church, ranging from alliance to distrust?

The most plausible explanation is both puzzling and incredible: it was not until July 2 or 3 that Držić learnt about the death of Pius IV. The conspiracy seems to have been contrived with his support in mind, and Pius IV may have been behind the pope, unnamed regrettably, whom Držić mentions in his letter of 2 July. This could also explain a curious fact that Držić wrote a new letter to Cosimo only a day after 2 July. He seems to have obtained some new information and felt an urge to react promptly. The fact that a serious shift in Držić's approach to the conspiracy did take place sometime between 2 and 3 July is additionally confirmed by the earlier mentioned Chios case. Similar to pope Pius IV, Držić's view of Chios changed overnight, turning from motive to obstacle to the planned coup.

The reasons underlying this sudden shift remain obscure. Perhaps a meeting took place (with Vinta? While delivering the letter of 2 July?), during which Držić was informed about two matters. First about the death of Pius IV, and second that the developments pertaining to Chios could cause problems, since they demonstrate Turkish determination to punish any change of policies of their small tributaries. Assuming that Držić had learnt about pope's death in the first days of July, the Medici court gained yet another reason to doubt his proposal, for he disqualified himself not only regarding the tactical problems of his scheme, but at an elementary level as well. What to think of a man, cleric moreover, who proposes a high-risk political operation and does not know that pope had died six month ago?

Držić's controversial statements on Pius IV and Chios have no convincing explanations. Each of the three submitted assumptions is unsatisfactory in its own way. Interpreting the whole affair as an inept digression of minor importance, the first explanation leans on a much-exploited motive of Držić's "poetic fantasy" and artistic flair. The main problem with this explanation is that with it anything can be explained away. Based on general qualification, even empty phrases, it virtually rules out any serious analysis of Držić's political plans. The second explanation is problematic because it is grounded on a single sentence—"after I had appeared"—of Držić's generally ambiguous idiom, and on the basis of these few words tends to dramatically rearrange the chronology of the conspiracy. Moreover, contrary to that is Držić's somewhat clearer statement about his fourth month in Florence, his arrival thus being in May 1566. The third explanation is a more radical version of the first, intensifying

the image of Držić as a confused and politically irrational artist-Utopian to the utmost extremes. Although it is beyond any doubt that Držić was a much better playwright than plotter, it is hard to believe that he was so amazingly uninformed.

### *Conclusion*

Risking of being overly optimistic, one might say that the most thrilling outcome of the newly found documents does not lie in the fact that they provide an array of new details on Držić's conspiracy. Namely, the fact that we now know that Držić was in contact with the Florentine administration which produced voluminous documentation still extant, opens an extremely exciting possibility. Among the thousands of letters, memoranda and relations from Cosimo's epoch there might still be more sources on Držić's conspiracy. Not only his letters, of which, it is certain, two more are missing, but also evidence on Držić which could be drawn from the internal correspondence of the Medici court—that is, in places least imagined until now, let alone searched for.

Supposing this optimistic assumption turned a failure, new documents as such have serious consequences on the traditional view of Držić's conspiracy. To begin with, they reveal that Držić proved an abler conspirator than generally believed. In truth, not much abler, because, although not utterly ignored as was long believed, the Medici court was obviously far from seriously considering his proposal. Držić seemed to have attracted their attention primarily as an interesting source of information about an important Mediterranean city with which Florence had lively relations, and, even more importantly, a city about to become a tragic episode in the struggle between Western powers and the Ottoman Empire, which marked much of the Mediterranean's sixteenth century.

Apart from revealing certain details on the position of Cosimo's court on the plot, new documents liberate Držić from a certain “social vacuum” in which he hitherto stood. Envisaged as an abstract subject until recently, the Medici court begins to show its human outlines. The roles of Prince Francesco and the said Vinta, now more or less certainly identified as Francesco Vinta, are clearer, while featuring in Držić's Florentine episode is a completely new figure of the powerful Bartolomeo Concino. By tracing these names, we might eventually be able to further reconstruct the web of Držić's contacts in Florence,

which in turn could lead to most unexpected answers to the broader scope of issues pertaining to the conspiracy.

Lastly, the new conspiratorial letter casts additional light on Držić's schemes and his political views. The former statement, however, is questionable, since the new data tends to obscure rather than illuminate Držić's character.<sup>79</sup> While some details prove enlightening, such as why Držić counted on the support of Pius IV, others, however—primarily Držić's "explanation" of Chios and his notes on the death of Pius IV—merely deepen some of the old dilemmas. The sudden shift of views may be accounted by eventual encounters or new information, but the likelihood of Držić's ignorance about pope's death might reopen the debate on—malevolently put—his mental state at the time of the conspiracy, his "metamorphosis" late in life, and along with it an essential question on the correlation of the conspiracy with his life and work on the whole.

Undisputably, these documents help elucidate certain issues, yet many problems associated with the conspiracy still remain open. Firstly, new evidence fails to provide any insight into the probably most important question—the true motive of the conspiracy and Držić's reasons for deciding to plunge into such a daring project. Equally doubtful is the question of Držić's possible accomplices in Dubrovnik and Florence, and whether he acted on someone's behalf. Finally, the possible meeting with Prince Francesco intensifies the old question about the outcome of the conspiracy and the exact reasons underlying Držić's decision to flee from Florence at the end of August 1566.

Just as the newly found documents fail to provide some of the much-sought answers, they do not alter the general conclusion on the outcome of Držić's conspiratorial episode. Although he knew that "capacity conquers the world", turning from theory to practice, Držić succeeded in rousing certain interest but also a considerable amount of scepticism, ridicule even. His success in persuading the Florentine rulers of the proposal's merits, as well as his ability to use their power for his purposes is more than doubtful. If anyone in this episode was the victim of manipulation, it was Držić.

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<sup>79</sup> On the shifting image of Marin Držić over the centuries, see: Miroslav Pantić, »Četiri stoleća u potrazi za pravim likom Marina Držića«, in: *Marin Držić 1508-1958*, ed. M. Pantić. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1958: pp. 5-56, especially pp. 12-16; Vinko Foretić, »Razgovor o pristupanju k biografiji Marina Držića«. *Dubrovnik* 3 (1967): pp. 65-90.