

WELCOME SPEECH AT the 25th Anniversary of the Croatian Humboldt Club

18 May 2017

Esteemed members of the Croatian Humboldt Club, esteemed guests,
It is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all.

I have the great honour of greeting you on behalf of the Croatian Humboldt Club founders on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Club. My intention is to present you with some little-known facts about the foundation and beginnings of the Club and my memories of the 5th anniversary of the Club. I'll end my speech with my personal thanks to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

By the end of 1990 it was clear that the countries of the former country would move apart. I realized that we should establish an association which was later named the Croatian Humboldt Club. So, in early 1991 I wrote to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. In reply to my letter, the Foundation entrusted me with the task of putting that idea into practice. I was not afraid to accept that responsibility because I had relevant experience of establishing a very successful association, the Society of Plastics and Rubber Engineers, and of being the secretary general of the society for 25 years. But in the year of 1991 times were hard and rough in Croatia. In mid-1991, a national unity government was formed. The Minister of Science in that government was Professor Ante Čović, a former scholar of the Foundation. We met in September 1991 and agreed on the action. But, as I said, times were rough) and everything came to a standstill. In February 1992, five groups of former scholars showed interest for the establishment of the Club and charged Professor Čović and me to lead the preparation in the founding of the Club. In just seven weeks of the same year we completed all the necessary preparations. Relatively recently, I learned an interesting detail. A very young associate of Professor Čović helped us in the contacts with the Foundation. This was the patron of today's event, the President of the Republic of Croatia, Mrs. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.

The founding team found that the most appropriate person for first president is Professor Viktor Žmegač. A linguist, specialist in the German language, widely known both in Croatia and in Germany. It was decided to establish the Club in the hotel Inter-Continental, named Westin today, where we celebrate this anniversary today. The site was chosen very carefully. To our great satisfaction, the hotel was fully engaged in the preparations.

Finally, the big day, 11 May 1992, dawned. The Croatian Humboldt Club was founded and we became the 56th club in the family of Humboldt Clubs. The delegation of the Foundation flew to Graz and then took a bus to Zagreb. Since the Foundation agreed to pay the costs of the ceremony, the delegation brought the cash for that purpose with them. Times have changed since then, haven't they?

In a relatively short time, the club started its activities. Professor Čović managed to provide a room in today's Ivan Pilar Institute where the Club is located today. A distinguished painter Zdravko Tišljar made the logo of the club. A list of members was compiled and statutory bodies were elected. The Club organized lectures and forums on current topics and started publishing A Letter to Members. Meanwhile, a large number of the Club members had gained very high positions in Croatian politics and diplomacy. In the autumn of 1992,

President Viktor Žmegač and I, as Secretary, went on a three-week excursion organized by the Foundation to see the results of the German unity. As time went by, the Club was involved in its usual activities and here we are, celebrating its 25th anniversary.

I would like to share my memories of the 5th anniversary of the Croatian Humboldt Club with you. The celebration was held at the Sheraton Hotel in the presence of 250 people. There are facts that I would like to point out.

- The daily newspaper *Vjesnik* printed an eight page brochure with texts written by prominent members of the Club. The brochure was distributed to the participants as they were entering the hall.
- The celebration program also included a musical part in which representatives of the Foundation took part.

I'll end my speech with my personal thanks to the Foundation. For me, becoming a scholar of the Foundation means becoming a lifetime member of a very successful family, that of scientists. I believe that all the scholars of the Foundation feel the same.

Winning a scholarship from the Foundation made it possible for me to become the youngest Dr.-Ing. Maschinenwesen in Croatia. It was a great turning point in my life. The first result was introducing high school education in the production of plastics and rubber parts. The second benefit that as Secretary of Club I got acquainted with a large number of scholars coming from the field of natural sciences but also from the fields of social sciences and humanities. This has enabled me to continually and actively promote the original definition of technology (according to the German word *Technologie*), that of Johann Beckmann from 1777: „*Technologie ist eine übergreifende, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft und Technik verklammernde Wissenschaft*“ (Tehnologija je sveobuhvatna znanost o isprepletenosti gospodarstva, društva i tehnike). That is why I strongly promote the idea of reformed education of new generations in Croatia according to the STEAL+ SSH concept. What does STEAL mean? This acronym stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Languages. The acronym SSH represents Social Sciences and Humanities. The acronym STEAL is something similar a new English acronym STEAM. For all of that I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Foundation that trusted me.

Thank you for your attention. Enjoy the celebration!