
ASSOCIATION FOR CROATIAN STUDIES (ACS) 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Ėetvrtak, 01 Studeni 2007

Founding

On October 15, 1977, a small number of Croatian scholars in America, gathered at the Annual Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) at Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington D.C., and laid the foundation to the Association for Croatian Studies. The idea for such organization was circulated among Croatian scholars participating at the AAASS Convention in Atlanta a year earlier, but someone had to take the initiative and do the work.

For those who are not familiar with the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, suffice to say that the AAASS was established in 1948 and it is a leading private organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about Russia, Central Eurasia, and East and Central Europe. It publishes the quarterly Slavic Review, the leading journal in Slavic studies.

The provisional name of the new Croatian scholarly organization was "Society for Croatian Studies." Its first officers were: Dr. Joseph T. Bombelles, President; Dr. George J. Prpić, Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Ante Kadić and Dr. Francis H. Eterović, Vice Presidents. Drs. Bombelles and Prpić were entrusted to affiliate the Society with the AAASS and to register the organization in the State of Ohio as a scholarly not-for-profit society.

On November 27, 1977, during the Twelfth Annual Seminar of the American Croatian Academic Society at Case-Western Reserve University in Cleveland, the name of the newly formed "Society for Croatian Studies" was changed to "Association for Croatian Studies" (ACS).

At the beginning of 1978, a proposed Constitution and By-Laws of the ACS were submitted to the membership for approval and a request was sent, with the necessary documentation, to the AAASS for acceptance as an affiliate scholarly society. At the same time, Dr. Prpić issued the first ACS official bulletin, called the "Announcement."

The affiliation process was not so easy as one might assume. Actually, the AAASS officials at the time implemented delaying tactics, in order to dampen the desires of Croatian scholars to affiliate their organization with the AAASS. We can probably guess what might have been the reasons for not welcoming the ACS to this large association of Slavic scholars, but we have to move on, just as the ACS officers at the time did. They persisted, and the Association was officially affiliated with the AAASS in October of 1978, and the ACS was allotted an official panel session for that year's National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

The ACS's first panel was entitled "Croatia and the Croats in the 1970s." The participants were: Dr. Joseph Bombelles, Chair; Prof. Mirko Vidović (France), Dr. Ante Kadić, Dr. George J. Prpić, Presenters, and Dr. Thomas F. Magner was a discussant. Dr. Prpić later reported: "The meeting was attended by more than sixty people of whom about a dozen were American Croats." A day later (October 13), the Provisional Executive Committee of the ACS was elected to serve a year term and the Constitution and By-Laws were unanimously accepted, under the condition that they may be revised, if necessary, in order to make them acceptable to the AAASS and the State of Ohio.

The Association was incorporated in the State of Ohio on June 8, 1983, and on November 14, 1984, the ACS became "exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501 9c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code." In December of the same year the name of the ACS's official publication was changed from Announcement to the Bulletin of the ACS.

Purpose and Activities

The main purpose of the Association for Croatian Studies, as defined in its Constitution, is "to foster closer communication among scholars interested in Croatian Studies" and to "promote the dissemination of scholarly information on Croatia and Croatians through the organization of meetings, conferences, and panels at conventions devoted to Slavic and East European Studies." Its particular and most important mission, however, is to organize scholarly panels at the AAASS National Conventions dealing with Croatian issues. Furthermore, the ACS encourages its members to organize and/or participate in scholarly panels that foster comparative studies with other affiliates of the AAASS and scholars from other countries and backgrounds. It also promotes scholarly activities and cooperation among its members, especially the younger scholars. Moreover, the Association often serves as a resource hub where various scholars and institutions turn for assistance and information dealing with Croatian subjects and issues.

The ACS Bulletin, besides informing the members of AAASS convention activities, brings news about the association and its members, and it often publishes relevant articles and/or book reviews. It frequently includes selective bibliography of new titles and Ph dissertations dealing with Croatia and the Croatians. For this reason, a number of academic libraries receive the Bulletin, and it has been included in some bibliographies as a resource publication.

The ACS founders have established a wonderful tradition, according to which during every AAASS convention ACS members, their friends, and individuals from the local Croatian community, get together for a "Croatian Dinner." We all look forward to this annual event in order to meet new scholars and friends, and to renew old friendships and acquaintances. It is in such gatherings that quite often new ideas for work and cooperation are born. We are pleased to announce, that this year's "Croatian Dinner" will be at the famous Drago's Seafood Restaurant, in the Hilton Hotel, New Orleans. It will be Croatian style and hospitality with New Orleans flavor! In 1986, the ACS enjoyed its "Croatian Dinner" at Drago's restaurant, but at that time it was at the original location in the city's suburbia. This year, it will be at the downtown Hilton hotel.

Panels

Since its

inception, the ACS and its members have organized numerous panels dealing with a wide range of topics. Just to mention a few: Renaissance in Croatia, Marko Marulić, Faust Vrančić, Ivan Gundulić, Bartol Kačić-Milčević, Rudjer Bošković, Juraj Križanić, Illyrian Movement, Kačić Miošić, Ivan Mažuranić, Krleža, Budak, Ujević, Film, History of Music, Theater, Croatian Dissent in the 1960s and 1970s, History of Dubrovnik, Croatian Language, Economic issues, Croats in America, Croatian History, Vojna Krajina, Radić Brothers and HSS, Croatian Nationalism, Jews in Croatia, Religion, US Foreign Policy and Croatia, Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Independence and War of Liberation, Regionalism in Croatia, International War Crimes Tribunal, Dayton Accords, BiH Constitution, Geography, Politics, Ideologies, Croatia and European Integration, and many other topics. The list of participants at ACS panels is very long. It includes almost all Croatian scholars in the West, and also many non-Croats who study Croatia or the region. Many of such scholars are also members of the ACS, and some of them have served or are serving as officers of the association.

Looking back at the three decades of ACS activities, one might divide the life and work of the association into three main periods. First, from its beginnings to 1989. This was the era of the Cold war. The AAASS was seen by the East as an instrument of Western interests and, as they would put it, scholarly propaganda. The ACS was seen in a similar, but worse light not only by the Yugoslav regime but also by Yugoslav sympathizers among American scholars. Furthermore, it was not permissible for scholars from Croatia to participate on ACS panels or Croatian scholarly institutions to be in touch with the Association. For example, the late Ivan Supek came to the 1987 Convention to participate on a panel about Ruder Bosković, but he was told by the regime's officials he better stay away. He was actually in the convention hotel while his paper was read by an American Croatian colleague. This might sound bizarre today, but it happened not so long ago!

The second period began in 1989. For the first time scholars from Croatia began to participate at the ACS activities and panels. The guests from Croatia at the Chicago convention of that year were: Ivan Supek, Franjo Tuđman, Dalibor Brozović, Ivo Smoljan, and Vladimir Končarak. The Iron Curtain was cracking and the dawn of freedom was on the rise. However, the early 1990s brought not only freedom but, unfortunately, also war to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the war years, the ACS and its members in their panels and presentations made an effort to clarify the causes and issues dealing with the wars of aggression, that most often, intentionally or not, were portrayed even in scholarly circles and by "experts" in a twisted light.

During the post-1995 era, scholarly activities of the ACS and its members have been oriented toward a variety of subjects and scholarly interests. In the last few years there is an increase of interest in Croatian studies among young scholars who are not of Croatian ethnic background. The ACS encourages such scholars to join the association, as well as those of Croatian heritage, so that in cooperation with each other we may contribute to the understanding of the Croatian past and present.

Although there

are no more political, ideological or other barriers that might prevent cooperation of the ACS with cultural and scholarly institutions in Croatia, the bridges between the ACS and the homeland are not as strong as they could and should be. It seems to us that the homeland institutions, and (too) many scholars, don't realize the importance of participating in scholarly activities on this side of the ocean. There has been an improvement, but both sides must cooperate in order to advance knowledge and understanding of our Croatian heritage and culture.

Anniversary

Thirty years

have passed, and, one might say, passed too fast. But a lot has been accomplished, thanks to the ACS founders and members, living and those who have passed away. At the present, the ACS is healthy, doing well, and it is fulfilling its mission as defined by its Constitution. A good indicator that it "promotes and disseminates scholarly information on Croatia and Croatians," are a number of panels and lectures that are on the program of this year's AAASS National Convention in New Orleans. As long as there is Croatia and the Croatians there will be an interest and need to study the country and the people. The ACS's mission, therefore, continues. We hope and believe that the younger scholars of Croatian and non-Croatian heritage will have interest, will, and stamina to carry on and build on the foundations that were laid thirty years ago, and keep the ACS young forever.

Ante Èuvalo

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Executive officers

The following
have served as executive officers of the ACS:

Presidents:

Joseph T.
Bombelles

Joseph Èondiaè

Ivo Banac

Ante Èuvalo

Secretaries:

George J. Prpiæ

Elinor M.
Despalatoviæ

Paula Lytle

Ante Èuvalo

Ivan Runac

Treasurers:

George Prpiæ

Tia Paušiæ

Sarah Kent

Ellen Elias
Bursaæ

Aida Vidan

At the
present time, the ACS officers are:

Ante Èuvalo -
President (cuv@gmail.com)

Jasna Meyer -
Vice-President (jmeyer@mcdaniel.edu)

Ivan Runac -
Secretary (ivan.runac@gmail.com)

Aida Vidan –
Treasurer (avidan@fas.harvard.edu)

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