
Book review: Edward Olszewski, Bogusław Zieliński (eds.), *Spotkania polsko-chorwackie* [Polish-Croatian meetings], Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2014, pp. 250

by Patryk Madej¹

The Republic of Croatia is currently the youngest member of the European Union. The country proclaimed its independence after the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991. It's economically strongest country of the Western Balkans (based on GDP), as well as the most attractive tourist destination in the region. Thanks strong pro-European tendencies Croatia has become the most influential state in the region, and hence – a model for other countries in the region in their European aspirations, efforts on the way towards development. It should be noted that initially Croatia struggled with many political, social and economic processes in the context of accession to the Council of Europe and the European Union. Ultimately, however, changes that have taken place in that country resulted in positive perception of the country by those who have so far assessed them in the light of the conflicts of the 90s of the twentieth century.

The publication “Polish-Croatian Meetings” (pl. “Spotkania polsko-chorwackie”) edited by Edward Olszewski and Bogusław Zieliński is a thorough analysis of the internal situation in the Republic of Croatia, as well as its role in the international arena. Authors, who are experts on the issue of the Balkan countries, under the guidance of two great connoisseurs of the topic, took on the challenge of analyzing the political, social, economic, with which Croatia was struggling both in the pre – and post-accession period. This analysis is particularly important from the point of view of both the EU member states and countries that are applying for membership in the European Union – which is mainly the Balkan states.

Publication begins with the article of Jerzy Jaskiernia “Croatia in the Council of Europe – Challenges of membership in the light of the monitoring procedure” apart of deliberately set out the sections relevant for the general characteristics of the Council of Europe or the rules and the importance of the accession procedure and monitoring site in a thorough manner

¹ Patryk Madej, a doctoral student of Institute of Political and European Studies of The Faculty of Humanities on Szczecin University.

described problems that Croatia faced in the period from submission of an application for membership until his recovery, as well as the realization of its obligations arising from this membership. In the right way Jaskiernia pointed out that the changes that took place in 1996–2000, r., and as a result of requirements imposed by the Council of Europe, were very important for the development of Croatia, not only for reasons of the accession process, but also because of the entrance of this country to the European Union.

Article of Renata Podgórzńska “The implications of the accession of Croatia to the European Union for the Western Balkans” in detail presents socio-economic and political situation of Croatia. It is worth to note the solid analysis of demographic data, so that it is possible to get acquainted with problems that might arise in Croatia. The author also highlighted the impact of this problem on stimulating the process of Europeanisation of the Western Balkans. The focus is also on the role played by the accession of Croatia to the European Union for the process of integration of the countries of the region into the Community. Also rightly it noted that the adoption of Croatia underlined the openness of the European Union in terms countries seeking accession process.

Marinko Zekic in his short article “The way of Croatia to the European Union – from the Euro-enthusiasm by Euro-scepticism to Euro-indifference” focused

on the development of relations between the Republic of Croatia and the European Union paying attention to the various events that were the next steps of the State on the way to becoming a full member of the Community.

The article “Political parties in Croatia in the years 1989–2013” written by Edward Olszewski in detail presents the Croatian political scene. Presented are the political parties, with the division of their natures. A description of each of them contains a presentation of persons that have the greatest impact on the activities of these groups. An in-depth analysis of the internal political situation allows to familiarize yourself with the distribution of power between the Left and the Right. In addition, attention also is facing on the distribution of powers between the various parties in elections to the European Parliament.

Dominika Mikucka-Wojtowicz has developed in the article “The Europeanization of parties and the party system of Croatia – an outline of the issues,” the theme of the party system of the Republic of Croatia in terms of changes that occurred as a result of joining the European Union. The author rightly draws attention to the Euroscepticism or Euro-enthusiasm of each party that are on the political scene of the Republic of Croatia. This analysis allows to understand internal political relations in relation to the accession process. In addition, clearly are pre-

sented the bonds of cooperation between the different parties of Croatia with their counterparts at the European Union level, which eventually was reflected in the European elections. The author rightly notes that the process of Europeanization of Croatian party continues, and programs and organizational cultures, many of them have changed.

Izabela Rycerska in the reviewed publication focused on the regime of local self-government of the Republic of Croatia. Her article is the largest part of the publication. It shows basis of the political system of the Republic of Croatia, the constitutional regulation of local self-government. In the way of detail presented Croatian administrative division. The author accurately described the functioning of the local government, the powers of individual organs. A full understanding of the system of local government leads to the conclusion that Croatia does not deviate far on the issue of this aspect from countries of the European Union, which also observes the author.

Boguslaw Zielinski in his article "Croatia in Polish public discourse (between Dayton and accession to the European Union)," focused on the perception of the Republic of Croatia, its internal and external situation in Polish media. The time frame dictated by two events indicated in the title is the period from 1995 to 2013. The author draws attention to the changes in the perception of the country – from the

context of post-jugoslav war, through the transformation of the political system to the moment of accession of Croatia to the European Union. The author also draws attention to the special role of Poland during the accession process of Croatia, that is the role of promoter, as a result of many common points of the history of Poland and Croatia. Presented in this way the image of Croatia in the eyes of the Polish media is able to represent the position of individual entities Polish media scene in terms of that state.

Agnieszka Puszczewicz drew attention to the special relations between Poland and Croatia in the article "Bilateral relations between Poland and Croatia". It draws attention to the numerous meetings of the presidents of both countries, and the role played by Poland in the accession process of the Republic of Croatia. It emphasized the role of economic cooperation of these countries, and especially with the strong process of mutual investments. The author rightly notes that a large contribution to the Croatian economy has also focused on this country tourism from Poland. An important platform for cooperation is also energy, or attention to the energy security of these countries. Joint actions in this regard are the priorities of both parties. Rightly highlighted the cooperation between these countries in the framework of NATO or the European Union.

"The Croatian issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina" is an article by Szymon

Sochacki, in which he presents the current situation of this country, which due to the mix of nationalities is unstable. A major role is played by a group of Croats who want to create their own entity, next to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, which are components of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author rightly notes that future relations between Bosnian-Croatian depend on the real possibilities of the exercise of power by the Croats within the Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Article of Emilian Pralat “Vox nostra ... a few remarks about the Croatian cultural heritage and its participation in the creation of the European community” represents the essence of cultural elements created on the territory of Croatia. Attention has been paid here to the Croatian contribution to European cultural heritage, a large number of sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The author rightly emphasizes the attractiveness of

Croatia in terms of tourism. A large part of the article is devoted to the city of Trogir – one of the few cities in the Balkans, which has developed despite the invasions of the Avars and Slavs.

The reviewed publication helps to understand the problems faced by Croatia, as well as deepen the knowledge of people who have already had contact with books focusing on this country. Thanks each article we are able to know the history of the development of Croatia since the breakup of Yugoslavia by the Dayton Agreement to the joining the European Union. It is possible not only to familiarize themselves with political and legal, but also the culture of this country and the way it is perceived in Poland. In the end, you will notice that despite the distance of nearly 500 km, Croatia and Croats are much closer to Poland and the Poles than it might seem. Hence, among other things, that Poland “introduced” Croatia to the European Union.