

BOOK REVIEW

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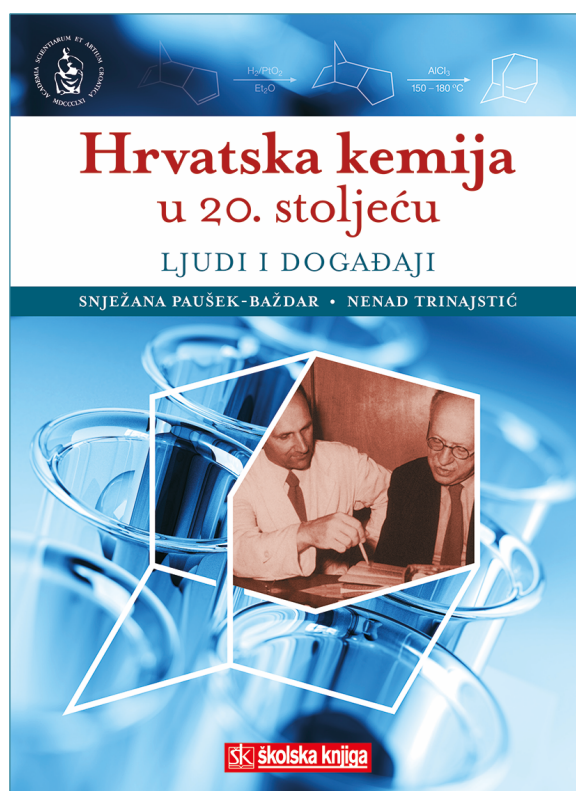
Hrvatska kemija u 20. stoljeću Ljudi i događaji

[Croatian Chemistry in the 20th Century
People and Events]

Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Školska knjiga d.d.,
Zagreb, 2014, 332 pages
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The book “Croatian Chemistry in the 20th Century. People and Events” was published in November 2014 in cooperation with the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the publisher, Školska knjiga. The book begins with introductory remarks of the authors, followed by 10 chapters, while the book ends with concluding remarks, literature overview and biographies of prominent Croatian chemists. Chapter titles include: Croatian chemistry in the 19th century, Croatian chemistry of the early 20th century before the first Yugoslavia, Croatian chemistry in the first Yugoslavia (1918–1941), Croatian chemistry in the age of the Independent Croatian State (1941–1945), Croatian chemistry in socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1990), Croatian chemistry in the Republic of Croatia (1991–2000), Croatian chemical associations and journals in the 20th century. The book also gives an overview of Croatian chemistry through the meetings of Croatian chemists and chemical engineers as well as an overview of the work of the Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the Matica Hrvatska. It also devotes a part to the chemists at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

As the authors stated in the introductory remarks, chemistry in Croatia has a very long tradition. Thus, in the 14th century we find Croatian authors dealing with alchemical art. The horizon of Paracelsus movement in Europe, and in Croatia as well, has been partially explored. Moreover, in the period of Enlightenment, many Croatian naturalists dealt with issues within the phlogiston theory.



However, the Croatian natural science milieu developed within the Jesuit Academy in the 18th century. When the Jesuit order and Academy was abolished (1850), higher education in natural subjects in Croatia did not exist until the restoration and establishment of the modern University of Zagreb in 1874, and its natural science department in 1876. However, at that time there was no adequate Croatian personnel that could give lectures on natural subjects. Therefore, the first professors were foreigners, chemistry professor Aleksandar Veljkov followed by the professor Gustav Janeček. In the first chapter of this book, Croatian chemistry in the 19th century, we can find information regarding the development of chemical nomenclature in Croatia, with an emphasis on the works of Bogoslav Šulek, the

description and analysis of the first chemistry textbooks in Croatian language, the emergence of the first chemical laboratory on Croatian soil, and the first chemistry doctorates at the renewed University of Zagreb with a special focus on the work of professor Janeček. Scientific research in chemistry begins during the last two decades of the 19th century. The other chapters of the book present the development of chemistry in Croatia, shed light on the facts regarding the first chemistry doctors and doctoral chemistry students at the University of Zagreb. In the following sections, authors focus on the most important and oldest institutions in Zagreb where chemistry was taught or performed as a part of scientific research, such as: Technical High School in Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Engineering, Ruđer Bošković Institute, Faculty of Chemical Technology, Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Forestry, and the Faculty of Textile Technology.

Separate chapters are devoted to the Croatian chemical associations and journals in the 20th century. The first Croatian chemical journal was *Revue Chimique* and it was edited by Svetozar Varičak. The first issue was published on January 15th, 1921, and the journal shut down in the year 1923. This book describes the historical development of today's journal *Croatica Chemica Acta*, and journal *Chemistry in Industry (Kemija u industriji)* and *Biochemical Engineering Quarterly*, as well as Croatian popular scientific magazine *Nature (Priroda)*, published since 1911. Also, it gives the review of subjects presented in meetings of Croatian chemists and chemical engineers from 1969 to the present. A separate chapter is devoted to the establishment and functioning of the Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the Matica Hrvatska, and its journal *Natural Sciences (Prirodoslovlje)*.

The last chapter gives an overview of chemists at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts since its foundation, and a review of published chemical works in the publishings of Yugoslav (Croatian) Academy of Sciences and Arts.

This book presents a detailed and systematic chronological overview of the development of Croatian chemistry in the 20th century through political changes. In the 20th century, Croatian chemistry is slowly reaching the international level of development. Lavoslav Ružička and Vladimir Prelog started their research in Croatia and then both continued it in Europe and received the Nobel Prize in chemistry (1939 and 1975). Croatian professional associations are now members of the relevant international community and the Croatian chemical journal *Croatica Chemica Acta* is recognized internationally. This book presents important people and events that have influenced the development of chemistry in Croatia, with emphasis on the area of Zagreb and Zagreb University from the late 19th to the early 21st century. Besides the abundance of data, this book is very rich with pictures, which provides visual enjoyment in reading and an invaluable source of information. A special effort was put in by authors in view of short biographies of chemists who have left their mark in the development, promotion and popularization of chemistry in Croatia during this period.

This book gives a valuable contribution to the history of science, especially chemistry in Croatia. I recommend the book to all chemists and colleagues in related fields as well as all those who are interested in the development of natural sciences in order to gain a deeper insight into the development of chemistry in Croatia since the late 19th century to the present.

Vanja Flegar