



**Speech of Deputy Speaker Željko Reiner on the occasion of the Conferment  
of the Order of the Rising Sun with Gold and Silver Star to dr. Drago  
Štambuk**

**Monday, 29 July 2019**

Your Excellency, Ambassador Kaji,

Your Excellency, Mr. Štambuk,

Dear guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to be here with you today on the occasion of the Conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun with Gold and Silver Star to my colleague and dear friend for about 45 years, dr. Drago Štambuk.

The government of Japan recognized Mr. Štambuk's efforts in bringing our two countries and peoples even closer, and I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Štambuk on this great honour, on behalf of the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, members of the Parliament and myself.

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Receiving the Order of the Rising Sun with Gold and Silver Star is one of the biggest acknowledgments for a professional diplomat, because it reflects all of his accomplishments and efforts. Drago's career in diplomacy lasts for 28 years. From the early moments of establishing the independent Croatia, up to a point when our country is a proud member of the European union, NATO, and many other international organizations.

In the early 1990s many of us reached to a point where we had to stop for a moment and rethink our future goals and careers. Drago, just like myself, was driven by a certain force to offer his knowledge and passion for a greater cause: creating and establishing free and independent Republic of Croatia. Diplomats of that time possessed the most powerful tools for this purpose: strong character, sharp mind and subtleness. They were envoys of the wounded Croatia, voices of the people facing the terror of aggression and war. Diplomacy in the early nineties was delicate, but determined; careful, but resolute. Not many people can reconcile such opposed terms, but Drago certainly was one of them.



What makes Mr. Štambuk an excellent diplomat, medical doctor, and an exquisite poet is his spirit and devotion. At a first glance all of these professions are not connected. But they all strive to two things: comfort and breeding good: of a nation, of a human body and of a soul. It takes a lot of knowledge, patience and experience to fuse the best of all three professions, and I am proud to witness that Drago succeeded in this.

All these qualities were recognized by the Japanese Emperor, Government and by the Japanese people when he served as a Croatian Ambassador in Japan from 2005 until 2010. It's the cultural and touristic ties that connect our peoples the most and that is what Mr. Štambuk did excellent. He promoted haiku poetry and Japanese culture in Croatia, and presented Croatian natural beauties and heritage to the Japanese people. Although our countries are geographically very distant, people like Drago make us feel like we are neighbours.

I already mentioned Drago is an exquisite poet. Numerous prizes and awards prove that. But one of his most famous works is book of poetry "*Croatiam aeternam*". His unique style embodies his unbelievable passion and patriotism: to his birth place, to his country and to his history and heritage. His precision, just like one of a medical doctor or a diplomat, radiates from his pen. This flood of words, used by our ancestors and seemingly forgotten in the modern times, takes us on a journey of Croatian history and cry of our people for a change - long-lasting desire for independence and peace.

But, I am mostly fascinated by the fact that Drago has already made a piece of Croatian heritage. Since 1991 he is the creator and host of a linguistic and poetry festival called "*Croatia rediviva - ča-kaj-što*" that takes place in his birthplace Selca on the island of Brač. The festival celebrates the diversity of Croatian language and its main three dialects. The 29<sup>th</sup> Festival will take part in 10 days, on August the 9<sup>th</sup>, and I would like to congratulate Drago on his innovative and successful project that lasts for almost 3 decades.

Allow me to conclude by paraphrasing Mr. Štambuk's words: "*Culture, especially literature, is one of the most important identity features of a nation. Literature is a recognition, pride and an essence of the nation.*"



*Ured potpredsjednika Hrvatskoga sabora akademika Željka Reinera*

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Congratulations to Mr. Štambuk once again!

May the era of Reiwa bring peace and harmony to our countries and peoples!

Thank you.