

Professor Hrvoje Kačić

(1932 – 2023)

Professor Hrvoje Kačić was a distinguished Croatian maritime lawyer with an astonishing professional, political and sporting biography. He was born in Dubrovnik in 1932, he graduated from the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law in 1956, and after completing the traineeship period at the Municipal Court in Dubrovnik and at the High Commercial Court of Justice in Zagreb and having passed the bar exam, he joined Atlantska plovidba shipping company of Dubrovnik in 1961, while he established his law office in Zagreb in 1989.

Besides having been a member of the Croatian Maritime Law Association and a member of its Executive Board, he was also a CMI Titulary Member and was participating in the CMI work in various committees and attended the Conferences in Athens (1962), New York (1965), Tokyo (1969), Hamburg (1974), Rio de Janeiro (1977), Montreal (1981), Lisbon (1985), Paris (1990), Vancouver (2004), Dubrovnik (2007) and Athens (2009). As a member of the national delegation, he attended a number of meetings of UNCTAD and other diplomatic conferences related to issues of marine insurance and carriage of goods by sea, participating as well in working groups and drafting committees during preparatory activities for various international maritime conventions. From 1970 to 1974 he was the chairman of the Legal Standing Committee of International Shipowners' Association (INSA) in Gdynia. From 1981 to 1985 he was a member of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Average Adjusters in Antwerp, while from 1980 to 1994 he was director of the UK P&I Club and a member of Executive Committee of International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS).

As a university professor, Professor Kačić was head of the Maritime Department at the University of Dubrovnik and a lecturer of several courses at postgraduate studies at the University of Split, Faculty of Law and at the International Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik. He was invited to give lectures at numerous universities in Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, USA, China, Nigeria, Austria, Germany, Russia, Japan, Singapore and New Zealand. He published four legal textbooks and many articles covering all aspects of maritime law.

Although he was never a member of any political party, Hrvoje Kačić was politically active since his student days during the Yugoslav socialist regime, when he was imprisoned three times and forbidden to leave the country because of his dissident political position. He was politically engaged in the process of gaining Croatian independence, international recognition and multiparty democracy. He was elected to the Croatian Parliament in the country's first democratic elections in 1990 as an independent candidate and was elected chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs. Professor Kačić represented Croatia at the Conference on the former Yugoslavia in The Hague in September and October 1991 and was also a member of Croatian Parliament delegation at the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary group in the Central-European initiative and in the NATO countries. From 1994 to 2001 he was president of the State Commission for Borders of the Republic of Croatia and he wrote a book depicting that period titled "Serving my Country".

As a world-famous water polo player, he was a member of the national water-polo team from 1950 until 1961 and played at the European Championship in Vienna, 1950 (bronze medal), the Olympic Games in Melbourne, 1956 (silver medal), the European Championship in Budapest, 1958 (silver medal), the Mediterranean Games in Beirut, 1959 (gold medal) and the Olympic games in Rome, 1960 (fourth place). He was selected in the best water polo team in the world three times (in years 1956, 1957 and 1960).

In the shipping and maritime law circles Hrvoje Kačić would be remembered as an expert who managed to combine in a masterful manner academic knowledge and experience of shipping practice. He was always in the front lines for solving emerging problems and issues of shipping by giving his views and proposing solutions in various international bodies, and at the same time offering his analysis to the wider audience through academic papers. His friends and colleagues will keep in their memories a picture of a kind, open and generous man, who lived by his principles of freedom, open-mindedness and hard work in an effort to make the world a better place.