

KAARLE NORDENSTRENG (2020). THE RISE AND FALL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF JOURNALISTS BASED IN PRAGUE 1946-2016. USEFUL RECOLLECTIONS. PART III. PRAGUE: KAROLINUM PRESS, CHARLES UNIVERSITY 546 PP., ISBN: 978-80-246-4505-6.

With this book, Kaarle Nordenstreng completes his undertaking of recording the 120 years of the history of the international movement of journalists. Two previous volumes of *Useful Recollections: Excursion into the History of the International Movement of Journalists* (Part I, 1986 and Part II, 1988) were written together with then Secretary General Jiří Kubka and published in Prague by the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ). Kaarle Nordenstreng himself was at this time in the role of the President of the IOJ (altogether 14 years, from 1976 to 1990). In addition, before the current Part III, a collection of histories of all the main international journalists' associations – *A History of the International Movement of Journalists: Professionalism versus Politics* – was published in co-authorship with four other academics by Palgrave Macmillan in 2016. Considering that the entire Part III is dedicated to the IOJ, this organization has received the most detailed and proportionally the greatest coverage among the international journalists' associations. The reason is not that the IOJ was the most important, but due to the personal involvement of Nordenstreng in the activities of the IOJ. He does not try to conceal this fact; he does not give the reader a promise of neutrality or "objectivity". On the contrary, he states: "I do not claim to present the definitive account but rather history as I see it, with the advantage of personal involvement" (p. 11). At the same time, he emphasizes his aspiration "to tell the story of the IOJ honestly and openly for posterity"). In so doing, he also discloses that he has "benefitted from a great deal of unique inside knowledge" and from his personal document collection of the 14 years of his presidency.

The documentary foundation of Nordenstreng's work is fundamental: the entire story of the rise and fall of the IOJ is based on an abundance of unpublished documents, which today are all stored in the National Archives of the Czech Republic. The Appendix part of the book contains about 200 pages of various documentation; a bibliography of published sources (about 300 titles) completes the range of the source base of the book. Visually, the reader can imagine the wealth of detail in this book, looking at the photograph on p. 213, where the author is trying to find a foothold among the huge pile of haphazardly stored IOJ documents and

publications found by him in 2011 in a warehouse outside Prague. The story of the IOJ is illustrated with a number of photographs that help the reader to get better familiar with the people, places and events that make this story.

Part One of the book draws a detailed account of the rise and fall of the IOJ from its founding in 1946 to the demise in 2016, preceded by a short pre-history (1894–1945) on the pre-WWII Fédération International des Journalistes (FIJ) in the first chapter. Following a chronological order, the next nine chapters describe the life course of the IOJ year by year. Finally, Nordenstreng synthesizes the chronological chapters into six periods of the history of the IOJ. These reflect the decisive role of the context: the political events and processes in Europe from the Cold War to the collapse of the communist regimes, and the ensuing decades of the democratic transformation of the former Soviet bloc countries. The founding years (1946–47) of the IOJ were colored by “a post-war atmosphere of joy and optimism” (p. 218), which were followed by crisis and split (1948–52) caused by Cold War confrontations. The western member unions left the IOJ in 1948 and founded the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in 1952. The years 1953–72 was the time of consolidation and growth for the IOJ when the member unions of the Soviet bloc and China and other developing countries were joined by many unions from the Third World. The years of détente and co-operation (1973–89) followed, when the IOJ became increasingly active in journalists’ training, publishing, and other professional undertakings. The IOJ also managed to advance cooperation with the IFJ and regional federations in Africa, the Arab world, Asia and Latin America getting support from UNESCO. This success was followed by disintegration (1990–97) and demise (1998–2016) as the consequence of the global changes: the end of both the Cold War and the Soviet Union. As the author states, “the IOJ lost its eastern support pillar and found itself in an unwelcoming geopolitical environment” (p. 177). The previous decades of antagonism between the two world powers had positioned the two main journalists’ organizations on opposite sides, and the good will of the bridge-building was insufficient for the reunification of the international movement of journalists. After the IOJ lost its stronghold in Prague along with the closing of the local national member union by the Czech government, many member unions joined the IFJ, and the IOJ was practically dead by the end of the 1990s. It continued its existence *de jure* until the summer of 2016, when the last two presidents informed the congress of the IFJ of closing of this page of history, and officially passed on to the IFJ the heritage of the pre-war FIJ. It was the author of the book Kaarle Nordenstreng who presented the letter of the Presidents to the IFJ congress in Angers (France).

Kaarle Nordenstreng’s book is not only a conventional history, but a sizeable part of it presents personal recollections of the people related to the IOJ in one or another way. The second part of the book consists of 18 stories in three

sections. First come ten individuals whose names the reader meets repeatedly in the historical first part of the book, who reflect on their experiences as insiders in the IOJ Secretariat: Josef Klánský, Executive Secretary 1947–50, Jiří Meisner, Secretary General 1958–66, Vaclav Slávik, head of documentation services 1966–92, Ferdinando Zidar, Secretary of International Organizations 1968–72 and Christopher Muzavazi, Secretary for Africa 1988–92 among them.

In the second section, the last four IOJ Presidents give their “testimonies”, responding to the same three questions: 1) When and how did you first hear about the IOJ and what were your contacts with the IOJ before your presidency? 2) How did the process of being elected President go and what were your main achievements and disappointments? 3) What is your current assessment of the IOJ, with the wisdom of hindsight? Those four last Presidents were: Kaarle Nordenstreng (Finland) 14 years, Armando Rollemberg (Brazil) 3 years, Manuel Tomé (Mozambique) 1 year, Suleiman Al-Qudah (Jordan) 21 years. The issues and concerns the Presidents express comprise difficulties in reconciliation/bridge-building between the IOJ and IFJ concerning the re-unification of the international movement of journalists. Also, all of them very clearly see the decisive role of political circumstances and events that changed the world at the end of the 20th century. None of them was personally responsible for the disintegration of the IOJ in political turmoil of the 1990s. None of them was able to re-unite the international movement of journalists into a confluence, although each one made some steps to this direction. All four Presidents, however, seem to admit the criticism Manuel Tomé expresses in his “testimony”: “We were unable to make the necessary analyses so as to take wiser decisions, to bring the IOJ into line with the new international context” (p. 315).

The third section contains four reflections from outside the IOJ, the most remarkable among them being Théo Bogaerts, Secretary General of the rival organization IFJ in 1952–85. During his term, he had several contacts and meetings with the representatives of the IOJ on various occasions and assesses them as useful for the development of relations between the IFJ and the IOJ. He emphasizes, however, a basic difference between the principles of the two organizations: “the IOJ was particularly interested in the general political objectives, whereas the IFJ restricted its claims to the free flow of information and the exercise of the profession under the most appropriate conditions” (p. 324). Hifzi Topus, communication specialist at UNESCO in 1959–83 reveals the important role of the IOJ in UNESCO’s initiatives to establish training centers for journalists and arranging international training meetings in the countries which did not have institutions of journalism education (Ecuador, Turkey, Tunisia and many others). In the work for developing measures to protect journalists working under dangerous conditions UNESCO had good cooperation with the IOJ and also the IFJ and other journalists’ organizations. Both, the President of the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI)

in 1974–84 Paolo Murialdi, and Wolfgang Mayer, a board member of German dju (Deutsche Journalistinnen und Journalisten Union) in 1986–2016 express their concern about the solidarity of the journalists' organizations and rivalry deeply ingrained in their relationships. Wolfgang Mayer articulates the thought that most probably has passed the minds of all 18 authors of the recollections: "What would have happened if it had been possible to merge the IFJ and the IOJ and to create a really open and inclusive international unity? /---/ I consider this question purely rhetorical and not serious. History is as it happens..." (p.342). The author of the book seems to agree with Mayer, while stating that "the IOJ was an object rather than a subject of history" (p.231). This is a conviction that he reached through the personal experience of his presidency and the criticism of his opponents both in the academic and activism fields, the latter unavoidably influenced by political climate of the era.

Within the west-east political discourse, the IOJ as the eastern pillar of the movement was "stigmatized as a "communist" or "Soviet organization" (p.220). The fact is that the largest member organization of the IOJ was the Soviet Union of Journalists, which in reality was not a professional organization nor a proper trade union, but an ideological institution supervised by the Soviet Communist Party. This fact directly affected the reputation of the IOJ as well as of its Presidents from the western viewpoint. As the president of the IOJ for 14 years, Nordenstreng became a marked man in the eyes of a number of his academic colleagues and many western political actors. In his "testimony" in the book, he casts light on the circumstances of his acceptance of the Presidency of the IOJ, and the consequences of this action thereafter on his professional life. The key individuals involved in the process of nominating Nordenstreng as the President of the OIJ belonged to the top of the Soviet *nomenklatura*: the Vice-President of the Soviet Union of Journalists, Alexander Losev, and the Dean of the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University, Professor Yassen Zassoursky. Small wonder Nordenstreng became labelled a collaborator or even a "communist", and in Finland "suffered from the political stigma as a fellow traveller of the Soviets" (p. 230). Nordenstreng does not make a secret of his "far left political orientation" (p. 298) at that time, and the belief in the progressive impact of the communist state on the world order. As he confesses, his "overall motivation for this voluntary work was an idealistic desire to change the world for the better by influencing developments in journalism" (p.230). He admits that he still has mixed feelings about his role as the President of the IOJ, and finds several reasons for self-criticism, including the harshest sounding: "I failed to maintain trust in relations with strategic colleagues in the Secretariat and the leadership" (p.231). When describing the success and failures of the IOJ, Nordenstreng does not, however, have doubts about the importance of the organization for the international movement of journalists. The (historical) truth is that having been left

in limbo outside the IFJ because of unreconcilable ideologies, the journalists' organizations of the Soviet bloc countries got a chance to conduct international networking under the umbrella of the IOJ. They received a window of opportunity to reach out beyond their countries and, as Pál Tamás has put it in his recollection, "the local IOJ projects offered them a set of alternative feelings, adding to their direct experience and real environment." The IOJ also brought the national media elite in Central and Eastern European socialist countries a certain prestige in their local circles, and a possibility "to create themselves more room to manoeuvre with the local State and Party control" (p. 266).

The Rise and Fall of the International Organization of Journalists is a capital piece of work that is not possible to read through in one sitting. It contains a lot of information that will open the eyes of even the most knowledgeable, doing it in both ways – as a documental evidence and as a personalized account.

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