

IOJ Presidium Meets in Quito

The International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) held its Presidium meeting in Quito, Ecuador, from June 28th until July 2nd. Quito was chosen as the site for the meeting primarily in order to draw international attention to the critical economic and political situation prevailing on the Latin American continent.

As is usual, the main document of the Presidium's agenda was the report of IOJ Secretary General Jiri Kubka, which covered the activities of the Secretariat since the Presidium's preceding meeting in New Delhi. Kubka began as follows: «The work of journalists on each continent has its specific feature. But there is one thing that is common to all our members: with their creative work, they all wish to create conditions for just and friendly international relations... We are fighting for a new information and communication order. Then it is not merely a question of historical justice for the developing countries in the face of a long period of exploitation and silencing, but primarily an endeavor to give hearing to the voice of those who by economic subversion and often violence are deprived of their freedom and sovereignty...»

The second important report was presented by the Federation of Latin American Journalists Unions (FELAP). It cast light on the economic crisis of Latin America, mainly the foreign debt crisis. It also presented a comprehensive exposé of the conditions under which journalists in several Latin American countries are working.

Karl Nordenstreng, IOJ President, also addressed the Presidium. In discussing the IOJ tasks, he said: «In the first place there is the contribution of the IOJ and her members to the strengthening of peace and international understanding, for disarmament and an analysis of the situation of the mass media of different countries. Special attention will be dedicated to the situation of journalists in Latin America where in many countries disinformation and suppression of freedom of the press is accompanied by brutal steps against journalists...»

Rodrigo Santillan, President of Ecuador's National Union of Journalists,

spoke as follows: «Latin American and Third World journalists in these systems of dependent capitalism, exploitation and injustice are inconvenient witnesses so the system persecutes, exiles, tortures and kills journalists... In our country freedom of expression cannot exist as people do not have their own social means of communication... (Journalists) are subject to coercion, pressure and menace in the public as well as in the private sector... Those who denounce violations of this liberty are labelled as sectarians or subversives. Nevertheless, the journalists of the UNP have advanced in strengthening their organizations, because they have joined people's organizations in their decision to establish a really free, democratic, sovereign and independent state...»

Hernan Uribe spoke on behalf of FELAP, emphasizing that: «Journalism is intimately related to social factors. Its diversity springs from different class interests. It is false to say that in antagonistic social formations it represents the general public opinion. In our societies, journalism is considered an industrial activity, an enterprise established on the market, while news is merchandise, but we professionals reject such a view since it deforms the true journalistic mission...»

«According to a UNESCO study, publicly owned journalism exists in just eight socialist countries in Europe, ten nations in Africa, eight in Asia, and Cuba. In Latin America, Cuba is the exception - the only socialist country of the continent, although we could now mention a share in Nicaragua and to a lesser extent in Mexico...»

«Information is selected and disseminated by the proprietors of the media, members of the ruling class, who seek to protect primarily the interests of this privileged strata while influencing the receiver of the news coverage... This

journalism reflects only one side of the reality, defending the interests and way of life of one class while clashing with the interests of the majority. This hinders national development...»

«At present, as the consciousness of the workers and peasants increases, so does repression. The death and imprisonment of hundreds of journalists and closure of information media in many Latin American countries is another clear case of disinformation, through silencing the scarce dissent and alternative media...»

Palestine - Latin America - common struggle

IOJ Vice-President Bassam Abu Sharif spoke, emphasizing that Palestinian journalists will fight side by side with Latin American journalists for justice, freedom and peace. He also spoke about the situation in the Middle East, highlighting imperialism's moves to impose surrendering solutions on the Palestinians in particular. In this context, the Amman accord provides a foothold for the US efforts to impose a solution. At the same time, the Israeli authorities continue to confiscate Palestinian land and build settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They are pursuing a plan to forcibly evict more Palestinians from their homeland. «The Palestinian people in occupied Palestine are denied the right of expression. Palestinian journalists are exposed to daily attacks by the occupation forces. Some were kidnapped, some put under house arrest, and all subjected to military censorship.»

He also spoke of the attacks by the Amal movement on the camps in Beirut, aiming to disarm the Palestinian people and prevent struggle against the Israeli forces from South Lebanon. «We defended our camps and our right to carry arms to continue the liberation struggle... We will always defend our people and our right to struggle until establishing our independent state... Our struggle is part of the international struggle against imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. We are in the same battlefield with the people of Latin America... The Nicaraguan people can