

**Comment on Meyen's article "IAMCR on the East-West Battlefield: A Study on the GDR's Attempts to Use the Association for Diplomatic Purposes" in *International Journal of Communication*, 8 (2014) <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/2443>**

Michael Meyen reviewed the IAMCR "on the East-West Battlefield" in a manner which invites a comment.

First, it is important to bring new evidence and perspective to the history of the field of communication research in general and international communication associations in particular. Our understanding of the present depends crucially on how accurate and comprehensive is our knowledge of the past – not only regarding the theories and scholars of earlier times but also regarding the structures which have provided international interface between them. Meyen's reminder of contributions by colleagues such as Bourdieu, Craig, and Park is most welcome.

Second, Meyen has examined unpublished materials from the former GDR mainly from the Leipzig University archive and has also carried out interviews with eyewitnesses such as myself. These provide evidence, which it is useful to place on public record. However, little of it offers new insight into the operations of academics in the socialist system – it is only natural that the government and leading party of the GDR utilized its universities and researchers as instruments in politics in general and international politics in particular. Meyen would have been well advised to take the archive material, particularly the testimony of former IAMCR secretary-general Emil Dusiska, slightly less at face value – remembering the tendency in the system whereby subordinates typically exaggerated their role and achievements to the higher powers.

Third, the article introduces the IAMCR and its conferences as "ideological battlefields" – a quote taken from my 2008 article but largely out of context. Unfortunately Meyen allows his valuable evidence to construct a conventional Cold War narrative, completely overlooking the historical role which IAMCR played as a constructive bridge between the East and West offering both sides ways to get beyond the stereotypes instead of being the hostages of politics. Further bias is caused by focusing on Dusiska as if he did "most of the association's paperwork from 1972 to 1978" – leaving aside president Halloran's leading role at the helm of the association. Meyen falls victim to his self-fulfilling prophecy: "Simply put, IAMCR was more about politics than serving as a locus for the 'competitive struggle' for scientific authority described by Bourdieu."

Fourth, Meyen presents a thesis that in the early 1970s, along with a declining interest of the official GDR in the IAMCR, "academic logic began to triumph over political logic". I would rather testify that politics became more and more prevalent during the 1970s, both in IAMCR and elsewhere around communication research – and my view is not based on a Cold War frame. Meyen's use of scholarly journals as proof of this thesis is quite misleading as he elevates Dusiska's quite bagatelle proposal to establish an IAMCR journal to serve as proof of this thesis.

Finally, Meyen's comparison of IAMCR to ICA is highly problematic, to put it mildly. While portraying IAMCR as a predominantly political association and without any in-depth treatment of ICA, he claims that the latter has become "the world's leading scholarly communication association". Much more homework remains to be done on both of these associations – and in

general on the sociology of international networking in our field – until we are truly masters of our own history. Beauty competitions such as this are only counterproductive in a serious study on the history of the field.

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