

Flash back on my 3 years term as President of the I.E.A.

-- 1970-1973 --

-- Bernard Metz --

My election as President took place at the end of the 4th Congress of the I.E.A. held in Strasbourg on July 6th to 10th, 1970. It had been prepared with the help of H.P. Ruffel-Smith, I.E.A. President since 1967 and of John FOX, main organizer of the 3rd Congress held in Birmingham.

The Congress was opened by the Minister for Labor and Employment of the French Government Joseph Fontanet, with a speech proving his pertinent understanding of the bases and goals of Ergonomics.

Three major I.E.A. enterprises have required attention, negotiation and time during this term.

The first one has been the preparation of the 5th I.E.A. Congress scheduled in Amsterdam for July 1973. I thus participated in several meetings, held at Schiphol Airport, with its Organizing Committee. Two of its members were already officers of the I.E.A. : Frederik Bonjer as Secretary General, John de Jong as Treasurer. As a matter of fact, Frederik Bonjer was tacitly nominated for becoming the next President of the I.E.A., a function for which he was well fit : he had been in 1956, with Hywel Murrell, Tom Singleton, myself and 5 other experts, a member of the 2 months mission to the USA entitled "Fitting the job to the worker" organized for the European Productivity Agency by Denise Lecoultre, in cooperation with the Department of Labor of the U.S. Government and an american counselor, Harwood Belding, an applied physiologist.

The second major action was a satellite symposium on "Standardization" to be held at the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Loughborough in charge of its organization. It was an answer of the I.E.A. Council to a proposal from its West-German members to produce international standards in Ergonomics, generalizing what was already done in the German Federal Republic.

As issue of extensive discussions, I.S.O. (International Standardization Organization) set up Technical Committee 159 "Ergonomics", of which eventually national standards institutions of all developed countries became members.

The third major action was launched unexpectedly in the spring of 1972, when an invitation to attend in Moscow on the end of July, the First Ergonomics Conference of COMECON countries was simultaneously received by Alain Wisner as Past-President of SELF and by me as I.E.A. President. As a matter of fact, this invitation was in reciprocation, by Boris Lomov and Vladimir Munipov, for the means we had provided in 1970, to a number of East-European delegates to attend the 4th I.E.A. Congress in Strasbourg.

During the Conference, we both were given opportunities to meet separately and without visible soviet-russian attendance, every national delegation in order to discuss their eligibility as I.E.A. federated societies, taking into account the basic criteria of free membership and free election of society's officers. These had been clearly exposed in my address on behalf of the I.E.A. to the inaugural plenary session of the Conference. Progressively the eligibility conditions were reached in several COMECON countries, first in Poland where the 7th Congress of the IEA could be held in August 1979 thanks to courageous polish colleagues convened by Jan Rosner (future I.E.A. President) and Andrezj Oginski.

During the three years briefly evoked in this note, many more actors than those quoted had deserved to be named. Yet the names cited are those I remember most strongly without consulting the archives of the I.E.A.. They are the names of true companions sharing ideals beyond the mere market-value of Ergonomics.