

## Abstract

This paper examines the internationalism of now largely forgotten instructors and representatives of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), in particular Ronald and Sarah Watts, who tried to promote western norms of professional journalism in the Global South in the 1960s.

During the 1960s the IFJ, representing the majority of national journalists' unions in Western Europe and Northern America, took action to gain ground in developing countries. The IFJ was involved in an ideological race with the International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ), whose core membership was made up of journalists' unions of the socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Through their affiliated member unions, the IFJ devoted a lot of resources to basic professional and trade union education courses for African journalists between 1963 and 1968, despite financial constraints. An 'African Journalism institute' (AJI) came into being in 1965. The key figure here was Ronald A. Watts of the American Newspaper Guild (ANG) who acted as the IFJ's international representative since 1962. The ANG funded his appointment. Watts stood under the supervision of the IFJ bureau as he ran IFJ-seminars in developing countries. This way the IFJ reached about 200 African journalists with 8 seminars in Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria and Zaïre between 1964 and 1967.

Sarah E. Watts (Ronald's wife) edited *The Journalist's World* (1963-1968), the IFJ's trilingual magazine. IFJ officials used *The Journalist's World* to portray a positive image of their efforts to promote the standards of modern Western journalism and trade unionism in postcolonial societies during the Cold War. In 1967 it became clear that, unbeknownst to the IFJ officials, the CIA was co-funding the IFJ's expansion programme with the American Newspaper Guild acting as a conduit. The activities of Ronald and Sarah Watts were financed from the ANG's International Affairs Funds, which in turn was subsidized by CIA-pass throughs. By 1968 the training programs of the AJI and the Brussels based magazine ceased to exist. The Watts couple returned to the US.

The position of the IOJ as the leading international organisation of working journalists in the developing world has already been documented in various publications. Indeed, Soviet-led socialist countries were often seen as a 'natural ally' of the developing countries. Yet, the less successful focus of the IFJ on the Global South during the 1960s has not been studied. This paper not only brings to the fore the lives and actions of a group of forgotten representatives of the IFJ and western unions during the Cold War. This paper also highlights how so-called Third World countries served as a screen onto which these journalistic voices projected the liberal-democratic universalism of the western bloc, applied to journalistic practices and culture, in ideological competition with the socialist/communist universalism of the eastern bloc, represented in the journalistic field by the IOJ.

## Bio

Christoph De Spiegeleer studied History at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and Leiden University. He obtained his PhD in modern history at the VUB. He is active as Research fellow of Liberas (Ghent), a heritage and research centre for the history of the liberal movement and the freedom ideal in Belgium. He is further affiliated to VUB and Ghent University as guest professor. One of Liberas' lines of research focuses on the freedom of press and its role in liberal democracy from a historical perspective. Within this line of research, he has published on the lives and works of liberal journalists

and the mediatization of royal deaths and funerals in both the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For his publications, see <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4927-8607>