

The New Calling of the Worlds' Journalists (1942)

Abstract

Maximilian du Prel (1904-1945) was a high-ranking Nazi functionary and editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official Nazi Party newspaper. This speech, written by du Prel and presented here as the afterword to a report on the first meeting of the Union of National Journalists, reflects both the Nazis' hostilities to the liberal press at the height of the war and their desire to reshape Europe's cultural landscape along nationalist lines. Du Prel attacks the press as the product of a wider so-called Jewish conspiracy motivated solely by profit. Instead, he argues, the press must work in the national interest and be untainted by materialism. The Union of National Journalists was first conceived in 1940 and was to work to unite all journalists across Europe as the Nazis formed its new European order. This sentiment is clearly reflected in the last few lines of du Prel's speech. This Union from its conception was a German-dominated group. Its goals reflected the Nazis' desires for Europe's social order after the war. This reality created some tensions among other fascist and nationalist regimes.

Source

Afterword

The Union of National Associations of Journalists was founded in Vienna on December 11, 1941, jointly by the Reich Association of the German Press and the Sindacato Nazionale Fascista dei Giornalisti. On the occasion of its founding, the Union was joined by the journalist associations of Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. The founding of the Union was also warmly welcomed by Japan, as expressed in a welcoming telegram from Japanese journalists, according to which they will base their own work on the principles of the Union. At the Venice Congress, as can be seen from the present report, the journalists of Spain and Norway have now also joined the Union, which has brought about a substantial widening of its field of action.

The Union of National Associations of Journalists is the rallying point for the journalists of those nations who support the new order and emphasize the responsibility of press work. This is expressed in the statutes of the Union, according to which the Union commits its members to "national journalistic work, truthful and uninfluenced by material interests." These principles do not permit Jews to join. The Union has set itself the task of guarding the intellectual, moral and political prestige of the journalistic profession; it opposes its endangerment by elements alien to the press. Scientific and journalistic institutions which serve the general recognition of these principles in world journalism are maintained and promoted by the Union. In addition, the Union devotes itself to practical tasks for the international facilitation of journalistic professional activity and for the promotion of the overall work of journalists.

This program of the Union of National Associations of Journalists goes far beyond the framework of the former international press associations, which were based on liberal principles, because those represented a mere association of journalists, without any moral demand towards the professional practice of the journalist himself. They did not benefit the idea of the press, but harmed it. But now that, starting from Germany and Italy, the fight against lies in the press has broken through and the service of truth has been recognized as the real aim of journalism, it was possible, with the participation of the nations mentioned, to found the Union which, as the union of national associations of journalists, represents the principle of responsibility in the press. All journalists of the world who pay homage to the same principles and are committed to a decent, morally sound attitude towards the press are invited to join the Union as individual members, if no national press association representing these principles has

yet been formed in their country.

In his speech on the occasion of the founding of the Union of National Journalists' Associations in Vienna, Reich Press Chief Dr. Dietrich pointed out that the struggle of responsible journalists in the years before the war had always met with the dogged resistance of a closed front of warmongers and a conspiratorial clique of their soldier-scribes, who suppressed any discussion on the subject of press lies and any debate on the necessity of press reform in the columns of their subservient press. Wherever voices were raised and consciences stirred in the press of the neutral European states, the tactics of threat and intimidation were used against them by Jewish democratic journalism. The essence of the renewal of the press is not to eliminate the freedom of the press, but to restore the true freedom of the press by reconciling freedom and responsibility in the press as well. Journalists, as the immediate intellectual creators of the newspaper, must also be the immediate bearers of responsibility for its content. The conscience of the press is embodied in the editors. At a time when not only the fate of individuals, but also the fateful decisions of entire peoples depend on the correct or incorrect representation of an event, on the conscientious verification or careless reproduction, or even on the criminal falsification of a report, the responsibility of the journalist in question must stand out clearly. Journalists stand in their national responsibility under the laws of the nations to which they belong. Since there is no legal responsibility in the international press, the responsibility of journalists in the coexistence of nations can only be an internal one, one of character and morality. It must come from the journalists themselves and be based on the inner laws of their own honor.

The practical work of the Union is also guided by such a spiritual objective. The meeting of the journalists belonging to the Union in Venice was marked by the manifestation of the responsible attitude of the press, and in large-scale lectures full information was given about the pernicious consequences which have resulted from the unrealistic, untruthful press policy of the enemy powers even in the recent past. In particular, the mask of the capitalist, Jewish and democratic world press was pulled off its face here for the first time before an international forum with indisputable factual material.

The fusion of the national journalists' associations into a union has already shown practical possibilities in many other areas besides the political objective. The intellectual exchange among the journalists of individual nations is beginning to develop on a new basis. The Union sees it as its task to take account of this development by creating and promoting appropriate institutions and, by facilitating journalists' trips, by organizing lectures and meetings, to make it easier for individual journalists to gather their own impressions and to broaden their viewpoint. This program, already started during the war, will find a strong expansion especially after the final victory.

The city of Vienna made the richly furnished Palais Schönborn available to the Union as its headquarters. The building, which was erected by the famous master of the Viennese Baroque, Fischer von Erlach, with its extremely splendid social rooms and large halls, which house the widely known Schönborn Art Gallery, already provided a festive setting when the Union was founded. In these rooms the journalism of the new Europe now finds its international social home in the Press Club of the Union, while in the working rooms of the Palais the archives of the Union are housed with the Institute for Research and Promotion of the International Press provided by the Reich Association of the German Press.

To sum up, the Union of National Associations of Journalists, with its political, social and scientific objectives, is an institution which, adapted to the intellectual format of the new order, is working to open up new paths and opportunities for journalism.

Dr. Maximilian Baron du Prel
Secretary General of the Union of National Associations of Journalists

Source of original German text: Generalsekretariat der Union Nationaler Journalistenverbände, ed., *Journalismus ist eine Mission: Bericht vom ersten Kongress der Union Nationaler Journalistenverbände*, Vienna: Terramare Institut, 1942, pp. 199-201.

Translation: Insa Kummer

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