

Book Reviews

Co-operatives and Peace in the Era of Globalisation: A Retrospective Look at the ICA's Concern, Resolutions and Action throughout the 20th Century

By Dionysos Mavrogiannis

Ant N Sakkoulas Publishers, 69 Solonos Str, 106 79 Athens, Greece. 2002. ISBN 960-15-0747-7

Reviewed by John Courtneidge

This book is like a glass of water to a thirsty man.

It is the text of a paper that was submitted to the 2001 General Assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) for its discussions on the theme of Co-operation and Peace in the Era of Globalisation. The text comprises a collection of the resolutions, declarations and so on, that have been made at ICA Congresses since 1902, along with a relevant 1999 Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, and a 2002 Statement by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission. Together with this resource which comprises three quarters of the book, the author provides a short introduction note, comments upon all of the texts, and some concluding remarks.

That said, and before I sing its praises more fully, it is necessary that I comment on the book's standard of production.

The print quality and binding are of acceptable, if somewhat plain style, and the collected texts, (all in English save those, in French, from the 1902 ICA Congress) are well presented. The author's own introduction, commentaries, and concluding remarks are, however, severely marred by a range of flaws.

As a former research worker at University College, London, and as a manuscript referee for journals of the Royal Society of Chemistry, this reviewer has had experience of polishing the texts of authors whose first language is not English. It is clear that the present author did not have access to the resources necessary to clarify some of his remarks, the text of which in some places defies this reviewers' understanding. This might be excused, were it not for a thoroughly poor standard of proof reading.

The Endnotes, as a starting example, contain a number of extraneous typesetting control characters that probably are artefacts of production. Moreover, the author's own text

contains inconsistencies, transposition and spelling errors that should have been dealt with at page proof stage. Finally, the book has no index, and the contents page is located, unhelpfully, at the end of the book, before the author's biography. These production matters raise a number of points that the movement might consider.

Firstly, although not references as such, the texts of the resolutions, and so on, appear to come from an electronic archive (or at least, could form part of an electronic archive: no web reference is indicated), which many workers, now and in the future, would find a highly useful resource. Secondly, the text would have benefited from both preview by first-language-English (sub) editors, and concurrent translation (and publication) in the world's other principal languages. I wonder if a decentralised global co-operative of pre- and post-print publishers might make such resources more widely available, through local printing and local promotion. A possible task for the ICA and/or the UK Society for Co-operative Studies?

That said, I am delighted to see this book published.

As a co-operator and peace-worker, who works for the international magazine *Peace News*, and is a member of the Management Group of the (UK) Network for Peace, this reviewer has, over several years, attempted unsuccessfully to discover (or help create) deep, systematic co-working between the peace and co-operative movements. Historically, the linkage between these two movements has been much more active than is presently the case. Within that fact, this reviewer (and he suspects this book's author) wishes that the commitment of the ICA and its member organisations to active peace-making were a more prominent feature of the present pro-peace, anti-war world movements.

As the author indicates on page 12, these

collected texts are an essential tool for co-operators to engage the world's Peace (and social justice) movements. Co-operators might well, therefore, use them in pointing out our movement's century-long commitment to active peace work, and of our inclusive, voluntary, co-operative socialist alternatives to the failed authoritarian Marxist models that are still being touted by certain adherents of the pseudo-left.

In the light of the foregoing, I quote from page 34 of Professor Mavrogiannis's text. "Because, we co-operators have the firm conviction that ICA is the only international economic and social organisation which, in spite of the strong impact of the capitalist economy and the disasters caused by two World Wars, has managed to preserve its unity and, overcoming adverse conditions from both sides, exterior and interior, to avoid division or collapse. It has therefore the experience and the right to proceed with the New Economy for further developing the co-operative system, encouraged in that and enhanced as well by the quest of the working and labouring people for decent conditions of work, for social justice and for Universal Peace."

As an indication of the struggle for clarity within the co-operative movement, one can point to the interchange between Danish and Czechoslovakian co-operators at the ICA's 1934 Congress. Such debates serve to show how co-operators through the twentieth century gradually came off the fence with regard to contesting the social injustice that is an ordinate cause of war.

Thus, the Resolution for Peace at the 1995 ICA Congress recalls that ICA Rules call upon member organisations to "contribute to

international peace and security".

This remembrance of a core ICA objective suggests that member co-operative organisations could do well now - in this era of global warfare - to put substantial resources (both material and intellectual) into active peace work.

In so doing, they (we!) would be following the shining example of the International Co-operative Women's Guild at the 1930 ICA Congress, (page 76) which affirmed in both words and actions, "... the conviction of co-operative women that there can be no permanent security for World Peace except in total and universal disarmament and called on the Guilds to collaborate with other organisations for that object."

On page 47, in the reproduced text of the report of the ICA's Congress, 1902, Mr T Bland, the then Vice-Chairman of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, said that he was: "old enough to remember very vividly the disastrous Russian (Crimean) war; and I can see in my mind's eye today many of the men in the streets with arms and legs off."

Today, co-operators - world-wide - see a flood of news reports which prove that, one and a half centuries on, such outrages are now the daily experience of millions throughout the world.

This book, then, is a call to heed the slogan "Co-operation, the hope of the world" and for our Movement to work co-operatively for the true peace that only deep-seated, whole-hearted co-operation can bring.

In summary: for all my reservations about this book's production flaws, this is a valuable resource in humanity's quest for world peace, and I recommend it to all libraries and collections.

The Future of Co-operatives in the European Union at the Threshold of the 21st Century Report on the 14th International Conference of Co-operative Science, Nuremberg 2000

Forschungsinstitut für Genossenschaftswesen, an der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg,
Königstorgraben 11, D-90402 Nürnberg, Germany, ISSN 0176-2052

Reviewed by Jim Craigen

The Future of Co-operatives in the European Union at the Threshold of the 21st Century, edited by Wolfgang Harbrecht, Chair of the Board of the Research Institute for Co-operative Studies at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (published 2002) brings together various Papers presented to the 14th

International Conference on Co-operative Science held in Nuremberg in September 2000.

One of the papers then presented was given by our own Ian Snaith on the co-operative movement in the United Kingdom. This report raises some basic issues for co-operatives. Seminal you could say considering the 14th