

## In memoriam of my colleague and friend Walter Liese

Like to many of us who knew Professor em. Dr. Drs. h.c. Walter Liese, it is difficult for me to speak, write and even think that he is not with us anymore. I first met him in person in 1995 at the XX IUFRO World Congress in Tampere. However, before that I have heard much about him from my teachers at the University – academicians Ivan Stepanovich Melekhov (1905–1994) and Nikolai Alexandrovich Moiseev (1929–2020) – two outstanding Russian scientists who did a lot to promote the name and spirit of IUFRO in the country.

Professor Walter Liese made a huge contribution to forest and wood sciences, wood biology and international forestry – a lot has been written about this, I would not repeat. Science has no political and administrative boundaries, and he proved it with his life and deeds. To paraphrase a well-known Russian expression: “Peter the First cut a window to Europe”, i.e., to the West of Russia, Professor Liese cut a window to the East, and not only to Russia, but to Asia, and to Africa in the South. As the President of Union, he made every effort to establish contacts of IUFRO with many countries, and especially with the Eastern European bloc countries. In 1980, he organized and undertook major meetings in Moscow and Sochi to establish a close relationship between the USSR and IUFRO. This act further affected the rapid growth of the membership of organizations from the USSR / Russia in IUFRO.



Interestingly, in Sochi, Walter became the godfather of two newborn girls – granddaughters of Victor Holyavko, the director of the Caucasian branch of All-Union Research Institute for Silviculture and Mechanization of Forestry (VNIILM) in Sochi. He maintained close contact with them almost until his last days.

*N.A.Moiseev, Walter Liese, T.A.Melekhova, I.S.Melekhov and V.C.Kholyavko (Photo from the Archive of W.Liese)*

In 1981, Walter Liese initiated and supported the election of Professor Dušan Mlinček as the President of IUFRO, who became the first and last president from

the socialist camp. He also initiated the holding of the first and the only IUFRO congress in the socialist country – Yugoslavia, the country that at that time served as a bridge between the European West and East. In fact, Walter himself has been a very solid bridge connecting 3 generations of foresters and practitioners for almost 60 years actively working in a large and friendly Union!

During more than 25 years, I have been in frequent contact with the Professor, but particularly, the last twelve years after the XXIII IUFRO World Congress in Seoul, where at that time I worked at Seoul National University.

Walter Liese and Don Koo Lee, former Presidents of IUFRO, and IUFRO Executive Secretary (1987–2003) Heinz Schmutzenhofer supported my ideas of writing a book about a history of IUFRO congresses and IUFRO eminent people. They were of great help in publishing the books. During this work, Walter was practically my main contact for finding and making most of the connections in Germany, but also in other countries. When the book about the IUFRO congresses was translated into English, Walter offered me to organize a side event and to make a scope presentation at the IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress in Freiburg, where he made an introduction presentation on the book.

It is worth to say that Walter took History very seriously. It is no coincidence that his direct participation brought the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the IUFRO to Khorin/Ebeswalde – the foundation mark of IUFRO. And prior to the 125-Anniversary Congress in 2017, a conference was held in Eberswalde where Walter handed over to IUFRO a

letter from his father, Professor Johannes Liese. In this letter of a half page size, Professor J. Liese, Rector of the Forest School refused to give the bronze statue of Bernhard Dankelmann for remelting, in connection with which he put himself and his family at great risk. To my mind, Walter inherited his father's solid character and honesty to himself and society. I should say that I am grateful to Walter for his support, guidance, valuable information and photographs, which he sent to me for the publication of my article on Professor Johannes Liese, which was published in June 2022 in commemoration of the 70th year of his death.

During many years, every Sunday we sent each other messages, just in case, and this exchange gave us extra strength for the whole next week. When he did not answer to my last letter, sent on February 26, I felt that something was wrong. Next day I received the sad news from Heinz Schmutzenhofer.

Walter enjoyed Life, every day of it. He rejoiced in the sun and the rain, he was upset when the boar came again and spoiled his lawn or complained that the piled snow spoiled the bamboo thickets on his piece of land. He made long journeys every day, although walking 5-6 kilometers every day became more and more difficult. However, he enforced himself, and he always sent photos from these walks. During recent years, he sent me photographs when he came to deliver flowers and a small souvenir to his former Technical Assistant Elisabeth Wollenberg. The last photo from her 103rd birthday is dated November 2022. He, probably, in the depths of his soul would have wished to conquer the milestone of 100 years himself, but what he experienced during the last war, the completely unexpected death of his father and the death of his wife, left a serious imprint on his life and health.

Walter was a very delicate person, sincere, open, and attentive. He knew how to listen to his interlocutor without interrupting, without inserting comments, without raising his voice in discussions. He was proud of his son Andreas and grandson Timo, who often visited him. Walter loved his wife Karin very much. He was kind to send me long ago her drawing for the Easter holiday. How much triumph of the spirit and sadness was reflected in this small piece of paper...

Rest in peace, my dear Friend!

Victor