

Press Congress of the World

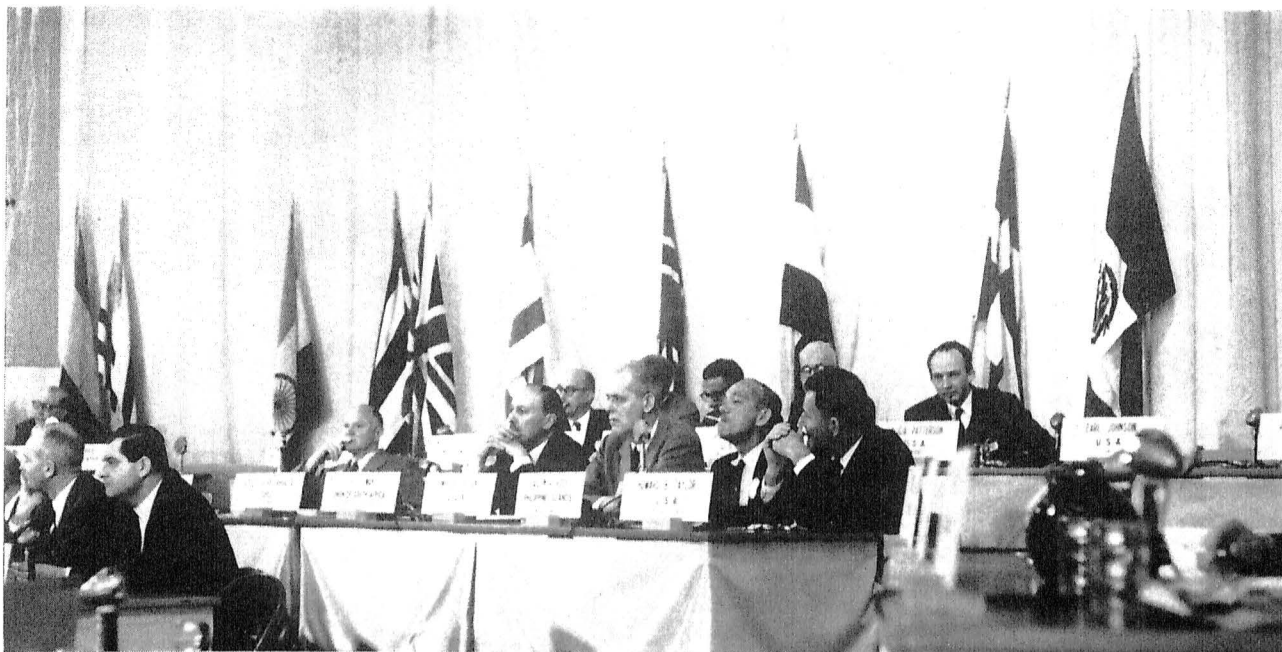
Thirty nations represented at University

School of Journalism event; forum viewed as

force for greater international understanding.

Delegates enter assembly with flags of own nations in colorful procession.





Scene of the three-day Press Congress was Rothwell Gymnasium, which looked like a United Nations assembly room. All sessions were recorded on tape.

The first Press Congress of the World to be held in thirty-three years—the last was in 1926 at Lausanne, Switzerland—brought to the University campus nearly 100 official delegates representing thirty countries. It was easily the most impressive and most significant of the various gatherings held thus far in the observance of the School of Journalism's Golden Anniversary. For three days leaders in all communications media in the free countries of the world aired problems of their profession and came closer together in mutual understanding. For days the Columbia, Mo. dateline was printed and broadcast throughout the free world as top newsmen reported on the debates and speeches of the Press Congress.

The first day of the program was devoted to discussions emphasizing responsibility—of the press, of broadcasting, for investigation, and for interpretation. Topics for the second day included international organizations for the press, education and training for journalism, and the flow of news. On the final day panels and speakers were concerned with impact of television on news presentation, foundation of a free press, access to the news, and summarization of world press problems.

Rothwell Gymnasium, setting of the general sessions, took on the appearance of an assembly room of the United Nations, with each delegate seated before the flag of his country. The hall was hung with white curtains, accented by gold drapery to bear out the message of a huge gold banner proclaiming the 50th anniversary of the journalism school. A press room was set up at the rear of the hall where some fifty writers and correspondents covered the event.

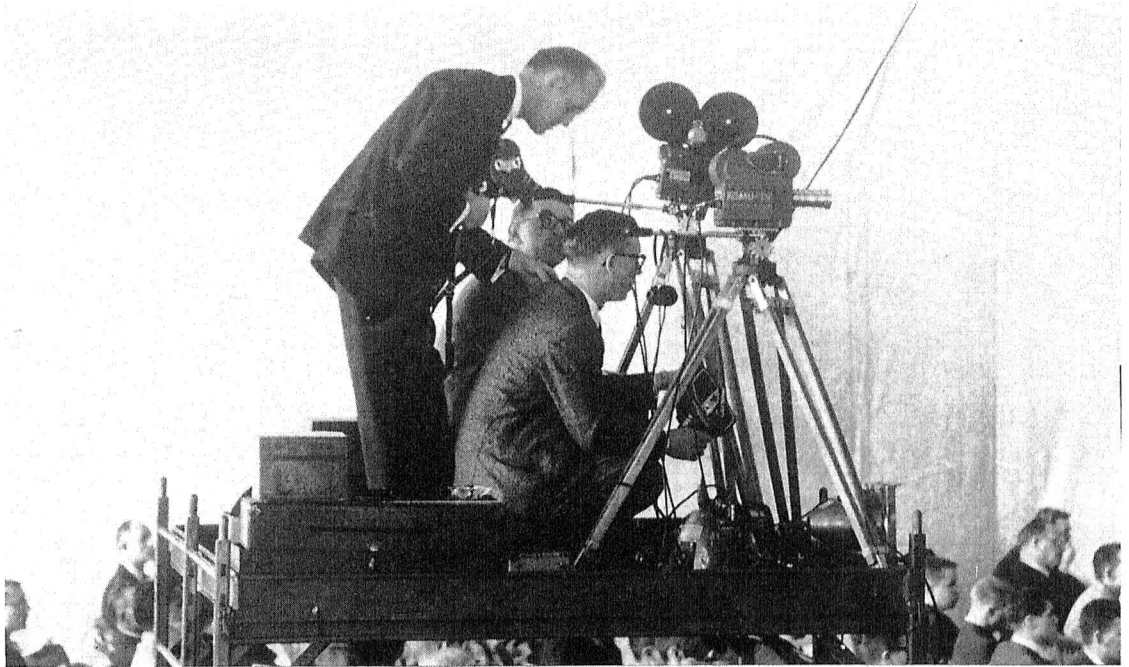
News was dispatched around the world by Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, Ltd. of London, Agence France-Presse, and others. Movie, newsreel and television cameras were mounted in the center of the gymnasium floor, and photographers roamed among the audience. All sessions were recorded on tape.

Byron Price was director-general and presided at the general sessions. After presentation of delegates at the opening session by Dean Earl F. English, the Congress was welcomed by University President Elmer Ellis. Charles Nutter, director of International House, New Orleans, was chairman of the Congress, and Dr. Frank Luther Mott co-chairman. James Kerney, Jr., secretary-general, presided at a luncheon, and Morris E. Jacobs, general chairman of the 50th Anniversary, presided at a dinner meeting.

Most spirited debate was on the coverage of the Cuban revolution, during which charges were made that United States newspapers not only had failed to inform their readers about events leading to the overthrow of the Batista regime, but were missing the boat on the situation in Paraguay. On another occasion the reporting techniques of Time magazine were denounced.

Former President Harry S. Truman appeared on the dinner program of the final session and enjoyed taking a few swipes at the press. He allowed he didn't know what a free press was, and would like to see one. Mr. Truman said he always got along fine with reporters, but it was the blue pencil men who gave him trouble.

Thousands of words were spoken each day on in-



World-wide coverage was given the Press Congress. Mounted in the center of the gymnasium floor were movie, newsreel and television cameras. A special press room was set up for fifty writers and correspondents.

ternational problems and those affecting the press. A few random samples:

Charles Nutter, director of International House, New Orleans, and chairman of the Press Congress: "Communism is beating us to the minds of the great bloc of uncommitted neutrals in the world . . . because they have a plan and I do not believe we do. We want peace, independence, harmony and progress within a brotherhood of man. This is being called a Press Congress of the World when actually it is a press congress of about half the world; the rest is already lost."

Joaquin Rocas, general manager of the Manila Times, the Philippines: "The only news printed in the United States about the Philippines is about violences, instead of stories showing good will and telling the rest of the world how we live."

Frank Starzel, general manager of the Associated Press: "One of the great barriers in the free flow of news is the 'dead' hook on the editor's desk. We deliver three times as much copy as newspapers use. I'm afraid the mechanical tail very often wags the editorial dog."

Earl Johnson, general manager of United Press

International: "It seems a weakness of newspapers that publishers will buy wire service and turn it over to the telegraph editor, who has no control over space, and allow him merely to fill in the spaces not already pre-empted by advertising and local news."

David R. Bradley, publisher of the St. Joseph (Mo.) News-Press: "The problem of Nicaragua is important, but my readers, who are on a pick-and-shovel level, simply will not soak up everybody's problems."

C. K. Bhattacharyya, head of the School of Journalism, University of Calcutta, India: "The problems of the press are two-fold. They are to maintain a responsible press that is good for society and nation and to maintain freedom of the press. Freedom of the press, which is the objective of this conference, should mean freedom of the reader. The one objective of all humanity is to achieve the idea of one world. This conference is a step in that direction."

The elaborate plans of the fifth World Press Congress were designed to give the visitors from other countries an opportunity to learn more about the United States and its people. The visitors entered the country a week or so before the Congress opened and were guests of professional colleagues in various parts



Students in the School of Journalism swelled audiences attending the sessions. They heard leaders in the communications media from all parts of the free world discuss issues.

Photography by Lee Battaglia.

of the U. S. before coming on to Columbia. Then, after the Congress ended, the visitors went to Chicago for two days of festivities with professional groups as hosts. After that, a two-week tour of the United States was planned by the U. S. Department of State in cooperation with the Government Affairs Institute.

Throughout the week reaction to the Press Congress was highly favorable.

As Editor Erwin D. Canham wrote in the *Christian Science Monitor*: "Such meetings accomplish more through friendly acquaintance than through passing resolutions. There is no need to emphasize the heavy responsibilities and dangers that confront newspapers in a complex age.

"It is reassuring, somehow, to shake the hand and gaze into the eyes of a fellow craftsman who is fighting hard for his paper's very survival, not to mention its independence or its prosperity.

"Thus in the relaxed but earnest atmosphere of the American Middle West, professional shoulders are being rubbed that rarely get a chance to meet.

"The intangible contributions of such a session may produce their results in some crisis far ahead, when courage to stand for freedom comes to a beleaguered editor as he remembers the fraternity of the profession throughout the free world."

In another report to the *Monitor* Mr. Canham said: "Another day of discussion of professional problems plus a great deal of informal fraternizing has proved that the mere fact of coming together is the greatest achievement of international press meetings."

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said in an editorial: "After three days of vigorous exchange and discussion, the 100 and more delegates to the Press Congress of the World have started back to editorial desks placed as broadly around the earth as Rotterdam, Oslo, Cairo, Johannesburg, Bombay, Melbourne, Quito and Havana. . . . The visitors took up a variety of issues concerning freedom of the press. In the process they saw one another in terms of similarities as well as differences. . . . The feeling was deep at Columbia for editors who fought as long as they could against totalitarian rule before going down before the forces of oppression. . . .

"Many delegates would have liked nothing better than for this Press Congress of the World to take strong stands on issues before them or submitted to them by editors back home, as, for example, the strong complaint by cable against *Time* magazine by Jose Dutris, editor of *LaPrensa* of San Salvador.

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Paul L. Fisher

Columbia from their recent home at Washington, N. C. Mr. Williams' appointment extends to July 31, 1959. According to present plans, a succession of prominent newspaper and communications leaders will serve six-month periods each as consultants.

President Elmer Ellis said that Dr. Fisher, in addition to his new responsibilities with the Freedom of Information Center, will retain his duties at the School of Journalism. He is also director of the linotype curriculum at the University, where he received four degrees.

Dr. Fisher has been closely identified with the movement for free access to public information for a number of years. He has served for three years as editor of the "Freedom of Information Digest," publication on the subject sponsored by the National Editorial Association. He also served as secretary for the several conferences of communications leaders which resulted in establishment of a national center here to work toward giving news media free access to information to which the public is entitled.

As executive secretary, Dr. Fisher will spend much of his time in the office of the Center directing the gathering of pertinent information on suppression of news, correlating the classification and indexing of such information, and directing a flow of publication of facts in this field. He will also help to enlist the support of other schools in getting materials from other nations of the world on the subject.

Members of the Advisory Council of the Center are: Howard Bell, assistant to the president, National Association of Broadcasters; Hugh Boyd, publisher, Home News, Brunswick, N. J.; Herbert Brucker, editor, Hartford (Conn.) Courant; William Bray, president, National Association of Managers (Press); Joseph Costa, chief photographer, King Features; Arthur Duncan, night editor, Kansas City (Mo.) Star; Ware Edgar, publisher, Knox (Ind.) Republican; Lowell Jeseen, publisher, Livermore (Calif.) Herald; Coleman Harwell, editor and vice-president, the Nashville (Tenn.) Tennessean; Malcolm Johnson, assistant director of news, CBS, New York; Nicholas Pentcheff, vice-president, International Federation of Free Journalists; Guy Easterly, publisher, Lafollette (Tenn.) Press; James S. Pope, executive editor, Louisville Times and Courier-Journal; J. R. Wiggins, executive editor, the Washington (D. C.) Post and Times Herald; and Arthur Witman, chief photographer, St. Louis (Mo.) Post-Dispatch.

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"But Dean English of the host institution held that the Congress lacked authority to act on resolutions. This power to meet and debate but not to act suggests something for the planners of the Fifth Press Congress of the World to go into thoroughly before it meets—whenever and wherever that may be."

An editorial in the Kansas City Star said in part: "The sessions were realistic and profitable because the delegates avoided the trap of benevolent discussions and high-sounding platitudes. And some of the statements, in our opinion, showed woeful ignorance of the motives of the American press on the part of the visitors from abroad. That, of course, is the very reason the Congress was so valuable. Meetings that result in a broad exchange of ideas and criticism help promote understanding."

Panelists and speakers for the sessions included: Joyce A. Swan, Minneapolis Star and Tribune; Vincent Naeser, Berlingske Tidende, Copenhagen; Miguel Lanz Duret, El Universal, Mexico City; A. S. Cowan, Australian Federation of Broadcasting, Sydney; Eric Adjorlolo, Radio Ghana, Accra, Ghana; Raymond P. Brandt, St. Louis Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau; Joaquin P. Rocas, Manila Times; Axel Springer, Die Welt, Hamburg, Germany; John Day, CBS, New York; Erwin D. Canham, Christian Science Monitor, Boston; Galal El Dine El Hammamsy, Al Goumhouria, Cairo, Egypt; James S. Pope, Louisville Courier-Journal; William Connor, Daily Mirror, London.

Henry J. Kaiser, Jr., vice-president, Kaiser Industries Corp., John R. Herbert, Patriot-Ledger, Quincy, Mass.; John T. O'Rourke, Washington Daily News; Paul Block, Jr., Toledo Blade; Dean Emeritus Frank Luther Mott, School of Journalism; Walo von Greyerz, Der Bund, Bern, Switzerland; Carlos Mantilla, El Comercio, Quito, Ecuador; Edward Lindsay, Herald-Review, Decatur, Ill.; Aryeh Dissentschik, Maariv, Tel Aviv, Israel; Charles Gombault, Paris; Basil L. Walters, Chicago Daily News; J. C. Jain, Times of India, Bombay; Frank Starzel, general manager, Associated Press; Earl Johnson, general manager, United Press International.

Samuel Sharkey, NBC, New York; Geoffrey Cox, TV News, London; Alicia Patterson, Newsday, Long Island, N. Y.; Wright Bryan, Cleveland Plain Dealer; Donald Edwards, BBC, London; Hugh Boyd, Home News, New Brunswick, N. J.; Julio C. Hernandez, El Colombiano, Medellin, Colombia; Ben Gilbert, Washington Post and Times Herald; Robert D. Swezey, WDSU, New Orleans; Alexander Stempels, Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Alfredo Silva Carvallo, La Union, Valparaiso, Chile; C. K. Bhattacharyya, head, School of Journalism, Calcutta, India; Raul Fontaina, Asociacion Interamericana de Radiodifusion, Montevideo, Uruguay; D. H. Ollemans, Johannesburg Star, Johannesburg, Union of South Africa; Fritz Molden, Die Presse, Vienna.