

F.
THE WASHINGTON POST

Jan. 11, 1967

1/19
Bad News in Brazil

The new press law proposed by the military government in Brazil would proscribe "criticism against the government" and would label as "criticism," according to its Brazilian opponents, news of commodity price increases, reports of demands for higher wages and even accounts of the collapse of a public building. President Castello Branco has restricted legislative debate on the proposal and has threatened to impose the law by decree if Congress does not approve it by January 24.

The timing could hardly be more unpropitious for President-elect Costa e Silva, who arrives in Washington on an unofficial visit on January 25 in an effort to smooth the way for his assumption of office in March.

Brazil's government is caught in a cruel bind. It seized power nearly three years ago in order to impose economic reforms and thereby rescue Brazil from a merciless inflation. Not only have the reforms so far failed to approach the hopes of their partisans. They have chewed into the pocketbooks and patience of most wage earners. To prevent the resentment born of austerity from taking a political shape, the regime has become increasingly repressive. Earlier it abolished the traditional political parties and cancelled the political rights of most oppositionists and now, by the press law, it is stifling still another source of criticism and dissent.

Marshal Costa e Silva has promised to "humanize" the Brazilian government, a concept he has yet to define either in words or specific deeds. Pressure is rising on him in Brazil to bleed off popular antagonism by a round of wage increases. He might be better advised to start to "humanize" politically by reversing Brazil's drift toward authoritarian rule.

Press Bill

Brazil's Press Asks End to Proposal on Freedom

President Castello Branco Is Expected to Enforce Restricting Statute Today

BY FRANCIS B. KENT
Times Staff Writer

RIO DE JANEIRO — With unprecedented unanimity, the newspapers of Brazil have called on the military government to withdraw a proposed statute that would restrict freedom of the press.

The proposal, which has been criticized as antidemocratic, totalitarian and reminiscent of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, was sent to congress last week. It may never be voted upon, but not necessarily because of any second thoughts on the part of the government leaders.

According to the influential daily O Estado de São Paulo, President Humberto Castello Branco is expected to enforce the proposal by decree today.

Opinions Differ

Justice Minister Carlos Medeiros Silva, in sending the measure to congress, said it "will do much for the free dissemination of thought and information, without the excesses which are condemned by all."

The newspapers see it differently. And they are not alone.

The Inter-American Press Assn., from its headquarters in New York, cabled President Castello Branco urging him to cancel the proposal, which "would mean the end of press freedom in Brazil."

A similar appeal came from the International Press Institute in Zurich, Switzerland, which ex-

pressed alarm at "the arbitrary measures proposed by your government in the new press law."

Muzzle on Press

"These proposals," the international body added, "will empower the government to muzzle the press, suppress criticism and free reporting and make a sham of the principles of press freedom to which the law pays tribute."

Here in Rio, the Brazilian Press Institute sent a memorandum to Justice Minister Silva calling for a postponement of the project until it could be examined by the various professional organizations of publishers, editors and writers.

The sharply worded memorandum "laments that the government has sent to congress a project that does not conform to the nation's political and legal traditions and offends the democratic conscience of the country."

As sent to congress, which has little power to delay or alter executive measures, the bill provides for suspension or termination of publications that violate the law. Individuals would be subject to up to four years in prison and fines of as much as \$1,300.

No pre-publication cen-

BRAZIL PRESS LAW MAY BE AMENDED

President Says He Would Accept Congress Changes

Special to The New York Times

BRASILIA, Jan. 7—President Humberto Castello Branco has advised Congressional leaders that the Government is prepared to accept amendments to a restrictive new press law that has provoked opposition from Brazil's newspaper and broadcasters.

Following a declaration by São Paulo newspapers condemning the law as "Fascist-inspired," newspaper in Rio de Janeiro issued a statement today calling on Congress to reject or radically modify the bill through amendments with a democratic sense.

No measure that Mr. Castello Branco has sent to Congress has generated more opposition than the press law, which establishes prison sentences and stiff fines for a large and vague body of "violations of press freedom."

The President met here yesterday with leaders of the Gov-

ernment's National Renovating Alliance party and told them he welcomed a debate on the law and accepted the possibility of amendments.

The President's office also sent a telegram to Robert U. Brown, publisher of the United States trade magazine Editor and Publisher, welcoming the presence of a representative of the Inter-American Press Association to accompany the Congressional debate.

The Inter-American Press Association has protested against the bill and asked Mr. Castello Branco to withdraw it from Congress.

Congress has been called into a joint session to consider the draft of a constitutional reform greatly strengthening presidential powers under an "urgency rule" that allows only until Jan. 24 to vote the reform.

The legislators have received the press bill under the same urgency rule. If it is not voted by Jan. 24, the press bill becomes law as it was originally worded. The Congress has scheduled a vote on the bill Jan. 21.

The press law's most controversial articles are those that establish prison penalties for publishers, editors and reporters convicted of violating "official secrets."

New York Times January 7, 1967

Curbing Brazil's Press

The Brazilian press bill has not only aroused dismay and antagonism in Brazil, but has led to strong protests from the International Press Institute in Geneva and the Inter-American Press Association. These two institutions cover the world press in general and Latin America in particular.

An idea of the scope of President Castello Branco's bill can be gleaned from one clause calling for prison and fines for reporting which could "provoke lack of confidence in the banking system." Prison terms would be prescribed for publishing news prejudicial to the national security.

The vagueness of a measure of that sort gives the Government a power that makes a mockery of press freedom—and Brazil was a country that has had such freedom for many years. The Jornal do Brasil of Rio de Janeiro, which is generally pro-Government, has said editorially that the bill would "destroy, without doubt, whatever is left of the concept of Brazil as a democratic country."

The one hope is that President Castello Branco will think again and recognize how much harm he is doing to freedom in his own country and to Brazil's image abroad by insisting on this iniquitous press bill.