

information.” This conference met in Geneva from 23 March to 21 April, 1948. It was attended by delegates from fifty-four countries (including New Zealand), by observers from three other countries, from three specialized agencies, and from five international non-governmental organizations.

The General Assembly resolution had declared that “freedom of information is a fundamental human right” implying “the right to gather, transmit, and publish news anywhere and everywhere without fetters.” The resolution also declared that “freedom of information requires as an indispensable element the willingness and capacity to employ its privileges without abuse. It requires as a basic discipline the moral obligation to seek the facts without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent . . . Understanding and co-operation among nations are impossible without an alert and sound world opinion, which, in turn, is wholly dependent upon freedom of information.”

In the preparations for the conference and the translation of the above statements into the conference agenda, a fundamental cleavage of viewpoints developed. The Soviet Representatives at the ECOSOC Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the press, and at ECOSOC and the General Assembly, repeatedly advanced proposals reflecting the Soviet attitude on the function of the press and the Soviet interpretation of the international situations—*e.g.*, that the conference should consider, among basic principles to which all media of information should have regard, “the organization of a campaign for unmasking the vestiges of Fascism.” These proposals were rejected, ECOSOC listing the following as fundamental principles: “(a) to speak the truth without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent; (b) to facilitate the solution of the economic, social, and humanitarian problems of the world as a whole through the free interchange of information bearing on such problems; (c) to help promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and to combat any ideologies whose nature could endanger these rights and freedoms; (d) to help maintain international peace and security through understanding and co-operation between peoples and to combat forces which incite war, by removing bellicose influences from the media of information.”

Preparations for the conference, in which UNESCO collaborated, took up a considerable part of the time of two sessions of the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information. The preliminary discussions in the Sub-Commission and in ECOSOC revealed, apart from the fundamental cleavage mentioned above, several divergencies