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World Press Report Hits Nixon

Geneva

The International Press Institute asserted yesterday that the Nixon administration is "attempting to chip away at press freedom through the courts and by the threats of court action."

In its world review of press freedom, the institute said that the Nixon administration apparently intends to make the "journalist timid in research for the facts and the public nervous when confronted by a reporter asking for them."

Nevertheless, the study by the institute's French director, Ernest Meyer, found that in the U.S. the "foundation stone of freedom of speech and the press edifice that has been built on it remains almost unscathed."

The institute, a nongovernmental organization with headquarters in Zurich, is supported by 1700 editors and publishers in 62 countries.

Reviewing press developments over the past year, the institute said that the trend to restrict press freedom was stronger than in 1971. Barely one-fifth of the United Nations' 132 members "enjoy what can genuinely be called freedom of information," it reported.

The survey also cited what it termed the "continuing efforts of governments to erode freedom of expression through intimidation of journalists and manipulation of mass media."

The aim, it said, is to "give the impression that the interests of the country are necessarily identical with those of the government in power."

But the "true danger," the review continued, "lies in the fact that a growing number of governments, parliamentary representatives, citizens and even some members of the press begin to accept that attacks on freedom of expression are legitimate and justifiable."

The most serious attack on this freedom in the past year, according to the institute, was the "silencing of the most courageous and frank press in Asia, that of the Philippines."

Actions by President Ferdinand E. Marcos amounted to a "deliberate dismantling of the free mass media in his country," the survey said.

The review listed what it called the "notorious decision" of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of Earl Caldwell, New York Times reporter, among last year's "threats to the freedom of the press."

In that case the Supreme Court ruled that reporters do not have the right to withhold from federal grand juries the sources of information given in confidence or to refuse to testify about criminal acts they had been told about under a pledge of secrecy.

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