

U.S. Press Praised by Institute for Watergate Role

ZURICH, Switzerland, Dec. 27 (UPI)—Through the part it played in unraveling the Watergate scandal this year, the American press showed the world a democracy conscious of its values and ready to defend them, Ernest Meyer, director of the International Press Institute, said in a report made public today.

Mr. Meyer, a Swiss citizen, praised the press and broadcasters in the United States for upholding their rights in a year in which freedom of the press was endangered, attacked or nonexistent in other parts of the world.

The International Press Institute, an association of publishers and editors from non-Communist countries around the world, issues an annual report on the condition of press freedom.

The report was divided into geographical sections:

United States

"Watergate, with all the critical currents surrounding it, and the reactions to President Ford's pardon decision have once again given the American press the opportunity to demonstrate its role of watchdog.

"Looking back on the attitude of the media as a whole when faced with a vindictive and unscrupulous Administration, and also allowing for certain exaggeration in the scurry of fighting, we have to state once more that the American

press as a whole, and broadcasting to a large degree, showed the world a democracy conscious of its values and ready to defend them."

Latin America

Chile — "Newspapers of all tendencies have disappeared, journalists have been arrested, foreign correspondents threatened and expelled. The whole range of disasters which follows coups d'état surfaced and their exposure is all the more painful because Chile was one of the Latin American countries which enjoyed a solid tradition of press freedom."

Africa

NIGERIA—It has "the freest press in black Africa and never fails to make itself heard in criticism of the military regime."

ETHIOPIA — "What has happened in Ethiopia is perhaps the most encouraging development in the entire continent this year." The report said that complete oppression of information media had stopped in Ethiopia, but that it remained to be seen whether the military leaders would continue to permit press freedom.

UGANDA—"There is no longer a press worthy of the name. When his cinematographic and epistolary performances leave him time, President Amin gives speeches which are compulsorily printed in their entirety, thus there is little space left for information and, in any case, as the practice of genuine

journalism has become too dangerous, nearly all the journalists have left the profession if, as a precautionary measure, they have not quit the country."

SOUTH AFRICA — The Government of Prime Minister John Vorster in February "filed a new law which constitutes a new attack on press freedom," the report said, adding, "anyone who publishes a declaration of speech by a person banned from public appearance may be sentenced to one year in prison."

Middle East

EGYPT — Only military censorship remains. The lifting of normal censorship "has allowed the people to see through the myths of the Nasser regime and the return to freedom of expression has been generally welcomed as a symptom of a trend toward a greater freedom," the report said.

Asia

INDIA—The disquieting shortage of newsprint is the major preoccupation. Several dailies and magazines had to close because of the lack of paper.

INDONESIA—All major publications are banned and those that remain are colorless.

NORTH VIETNAM — "Total censorship."

SOUTH VIETNAM—"The fate of the press depends very much

on the fluctuations of power in a regime under various pressures. The real decisive combat is engaged between the independent press and the Government."

CHINA—No big changes can be noted from one year to the next. There is only a faint echo in the press of what happens in the outside world.

PHILIPPINES—"The Government of President Marcos has been so successful in the suppression of the freedom of expression and of the press that it even embarrassed the supporters of the Government."

SOUTH KOREA — "There is no press freedom in South Korea."

JAPAN—"The Japanese press remains free and powerful. But it too suffers from energy crisis, difficulties in supplies and the results of the economic and financial crisis with its attendant train of claims and demands."

Europe

Mr. Meyer said that the Soviet Union had intensified control over the press and "the exercise of the profession remains precarious for foreign correspondents."

In Western Europe, Mr. Meyer said, the dangers center on financial and economic troubles, trade-union strikes and the concentrating of publications in few hands.