

Press Institute Calls Criticism by Agnew Major Threat in '69

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GENEVA, Dec. 31—Vice President Agnew's attacks on newspapers and television were 1969's "most serious threat to the freedom of information in the Western World," the International Press Institute said today.

The Zurich-based institute represents 1,600 newspaper editors in 58 non-Communist countries. Its annual survey of press freedom was prepared by its director, Ernest Meyer.

The institute's statement referred to Mr. Agnew's criticism of television networks' "immediate analysis" of President Nixon's nationwide address last May, in which Mr. Nixon stated his Administration's policy on the war in Vietnam. In his remarks, at a Republican party meeting in Iowa, the Vice President reminded broadcasters that they were licensed by the Federal Government.

Later, he similarly criticized the handling of news by newspapers and magazines, specifically mentioning The Washington Post and The New York Times.

Possible Nixon View Seen

The survey commented that normally the Vice President's office carries little weight. For this reason, it found that the most serious aspect of Mr. Agnew's remarks was that they might have been inspired by the office of President Nixon.

Reviewing the 1960's, the survey said that the underdeveloped nations of the world were falling further behind in press freedom.

The institute saw a promising development in what it called the "post-deGaulle era" in France, where it said, the Government's "stranglehold on television and radio was released to no more than a firm grip."