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Opp. 1: Inter American Press Assn
PERS: Peron, AndrePress Freedom Anniversary Marked**IAPA -- Guardian of Liberty**By ANDRE PERON
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The Inter American Press Association paused in its hemisphere-wide activities to mark the twelfth anniversary of Press Freedom Day.

Newspaper members from most of the countries of the Western Hemisphere editorially hailed the freedom they enjoy.

One of the main objectives of the Inter American Press Association (IAPA), a non-profit organization, is to guard the freedom of the press. But its activities cover a far more extensive field. It works to promote and maintain the dignity, rights and responsibilities of journalism; to encourage uniform standards of professional and business conduct.

THE IAPA provides journalism scholarships both to North Americans and Latin Americans and works toward a wider knowledge and greater inter-change among the peoples of America in support of the basic principles of a free society and individual liberty.

On June 7, the day of this year's commemoration, Pedro G. Beltran of La Prensa, Lima, Peru, and the IAPA president for 1964-65, issued a statement which read in part:

"For the last 12 years the 7th of June has been set aside as Freedom of the Press Day. We observe it as a day of rejoicing in those countries where the press can ascertain its rights. But we must maintain a stubborn silence in mute protest where the freedom to report the news and to express our opinion has been trampled or is under threat.

"The day has not yet come when the IAPA can flash a triumphant bulletin to read tersely: 'There is freedom of the press throughout the Americas.' This is what I would like to say today, and every 7th of June. Such is the goal we pursue. Unfortunately, and without taking into account minor skirmishes in other places, there is yet a number of countries where freedom of the press has been wholly suppressed or is seriously wounded. These are our main battle fronts."

THE BACKGROUND of the IAPA can be traced to 1926 when the Pan American Union sponsored the First Pan American Congress of Journalists, in Washington. It was attended by delegates from all the Americas and a resolution calling for the establishment of a permanent inter-American organization of journalists was adopted. It was a beginning, but this

plan was not to see the light for 16 years.

It was not until 1942 that the Mexican government and a group of Mexican publishers called another meeting of journalists to formally establish the organization. In the years that followed meetings took place in different parts of the hemisphere: Havana, Bogota and Quito, in 1949, to which the U. S. chapter sent a delegation. The reason for the U. S. delegation's presence in Quito was two fold: 1) to rewrite the IAPA constitution and 2) to have the next meeting in New York. They were successful in both.

THE IAPA, or Socieda Interamericana de Prensa, was up to that time largely a Latin American organization. Very few North Americans took part in the previous meetings. But a small group of U. S. editors and publishers with faith in the organization's future decided in 1946 to establish an Inter American Press Association of the United States, as a national chapter of the hemispheric group.

The New York meeting in 1950 was the turning point in the history of the IAPA. Up to that time journalists attended the meetings as national delegations, and in many cases delegates were politicians rather than professional journalists. The expenses for the meetings were covered by the host governments.

It was at the 1950 meeting in New York that changes took place. The U. S. members supported by certain influential Latin American publishers, managed to secure approval of a new Charter and By-laws. In effect, it was a declaration of independence that would allow the organization to pursue its purpose without outside commitments.

Although it had many ups and downs through the years and especially in 1951 when the reorganized IAPA had to start practically from scratch, with few members and an empty treasury, today it is an impressive organization with over 600 member publications, including virtually all the major dailies and magazines of the Western Hemisphere.

The growing list of newspapermen whose lives have been saved or were released from prison through the efforts of the Inter American Press Association and the many papers that were allowed to reappear (and the press restrictions that have been revoked), directly or indirectly because of the IAPA, are the conclusive proofs of the necessity and value of such an organization today.