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Report of IPI link with CIA termed ridiculous

Madras, June 9 (UNI)—Mr G. Narasimhan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Press Institute of India, and Chairman of the Indian Committee of the International Press Institute, yesterday described as "ridiculous" the suggestion that members of the IPI "are linked with CIA."

In a statement issued here, Mr Narasimhan said the Institute was founded by seven member newspapers "with no outside encouragement except that of the International Press Institute." At present it had 30 members.

Referring to the criticism of the IPI in Pakistan, Mr Narasimhan said the IPI had repeatedly protested against the steady erosion of Press freedom in that country and had tried to intercede with the Pakistan authorities to stop muzzling the Press there and to free imprisoned journalists.

He said the trustees of the IPI "welcome constructive criticism about the professional body, the criticism now being made is not professional and has little relation to facts."

Text of statement

The following is the text of the statement of Mr Narasimhan:

As there has been some comment on the purposes and activities of the International Press Institute and the Press Institute of India and as it has been alleged that these organizations are linked with the CIA, it is necessary for me, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Press Institute of India and as Chairman of the Indian Committee of the International Press Institute, to put forward some facts about the true situation:

(A) The IPI includes among its members The Hindu, The Statesman, Ananda Bazar Patrika, The Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Hindustan Times, The Times of India, Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, The Tribune, The Indian Nation, Andhra Patrika, The Press Trust of India, The United News of India, Aj, Deccan Herald, Samyukta Karnatak, The Hitavada, Kalinga, Tej, Pradeepam, Nai Dunia, Vishal Sahyadri, Janmathubhoomi, etc. etc., in fact a good number of the most influential Indian newspapers.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that these newspapers are linked with the CIA. The Institute was founded by the seven member newspapers with no outside encouragement except that of the International Press Institute. There are now about 30 members.

National seminars

"The institute has held national and international seminars and workshops all over India, conducted refresher courses, organized consultancy and internee programme, given awards for journalistic excellence, sponsored research and issued publications. More than 115 Indian newspapers (PII's programme are open to non-members as well) and 1,015 journalists have taken part in its programmes.

Among people who have participated are Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr C. D. Deshmukh, Mr E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Mr V. V. Giri, Mr S. Nijalingappa, Mr P. C. Sen, Dr Sampurnanand, Mr Biju Patnaik, Gen. J. N. Chaudhuri, the Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, Vice-Admiral A. K. Chatterji, Mr Ashoka Mehta, Mr Dinesh Singh, Mr H. M. Patel, Mr M. Chalapathi Rau, Mr B. Siva Rao, Dr Minu Dastur, Mr L. Meenakshi Sundaram, Mr V. K. Krishna Menon, Dr L. M. Singhvi, Mr Frank Moraes, Mr A. E. Charlton, Mr Prem Bhatia, Mr G. K. Reddy, Mr Inder Malhotra, Mr T. J. S. George, Mr K. S. Ramachandran, Mr Kuldeep Nayar, Mr Durga Das, Prof. Satyen Bose, Mr Indrajit Gupta, Mr R. K. Khadilkar, MP, Dr N. B. Parulekar, Mr M. C. Setalvad, Mr Ashoka K. Sen, Mr Akshay K. Jain, Mr Asok Mitra, Mr H. C. Sarin, Dr S. Bhavaganatam, Mr V. K. Narasimhan, Mr Asok Chandra, Dr V. K. Narayana Menon, Mr A. R. Bhat, Mr R. R. Diwaker, Mr Ramesh Thapar, Dr S. C. Dube, Air Marshal P. C. Lal, Mr Govind Narain and others.

"The working expenses of the Press Institute of India have from the very beginning, been borne exclusively by the member newspapers. Some unconditional grants towards its programmes or proposals for collaborative programmes have come from organizations like the University Grants Commission, the India International Central, the Tata Iron and Steel Co. Ltd., the Indian Law Institute, the Gandhian Institute of Studies, the Government of Rajasthan, etc. etc.

"One body, which contributed towards PII's programme grants, was the Asia Foundation. Every grant from the Asia Foundation was scrutinized by the Government of India. As soon as it became known that the Foun-

dation had accepted some contributions from foundations and trusts named as having transmitted CIA funds, the trustees suspended the relationship of the PII with the Asia Foundation and returned the grant received for 1967. The accounts of the PII are audited and are open for inspection.

(B) Among the newspapers which have exposed the links which the CIA has forged, two principal ones are the New York Times and the Washington Post. These two papers are among the staunchest members and supporters of the International Press Institute from its inception. During the controversy about the CIA that is now going on in many countries, nowhere in the Free Press has the IPI been linked with the CIA. Of the more than 1,500 members of IPI (who represent the major papers of over 50 countries), many member-papers have taken a leading role in voicing concern about CIA's interference in cultural movements, but none, so far, has linked the IPI with CIA, nor has any member thought it necessary to resign from the organization.

Pak affairs

Apart from some uninformed generalization in India, the only other country where criticism has appeared is Pakistan. It is perhaps significant that in the last three years IPI has repeatedly protested against the steady erosion of press freedom in that country and has tried to intercede with authorities there to stop them muzzling with the Press and to have the imprisoned journalists released. Also to be noted is the fact that neither of the two representative Press organizations in Pakistan—the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors and Federation of Pakistan Journalists—has made any comment about IPI. The signatories to the statement are all from newspapers controlled by the Press Trust of Pakistan which is a pliant creation of President Ayub. IPI in Pakistan, on the other hand, is represented by such people as Mr Tofazzal Hussain (chairman of the Pakistan Committee of the IPI) who has been repeatedly jailed for his courageous independence.

Far from having anything to apologize about, we take special pride in the fact that in the short time of four and half years, the Indian Press has, by providing

about Rs 7 lakhs for such an institution, set afoot a process of professional self-criticism and constructive work and that, by virtue of its efforts, the Indian Press has gained considerable recognition in respect in international Press circles.

"The board of trustees appointed Mr Chanchal Sarkar to be director of the institute and he has always worked under the active supervision of the board.

"The trustees welcome constructive criticism about professional body. The criticism now being made is not professional and has little relation to facts."