

## **November 23, 1960**

### **International Operations Division, Management Turmoil at Radio Free Europe**

#### **Citation:**

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<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115991>

#### **Summary:**

The IOD officer responsible for RFE informs Cord Meyer of the turmoil in the RFE Czechoslovak Service. He opines that resignation of the RFE Munich leadership [European Director Erik Hazelhoff and his deputies David Penn and Charles J. McNeill] "would be an extremely healthy thing."

#### **Credits:**

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#### **Original Language:**

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#### **Contents:**

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23 November 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Chief, International Organizations Division

SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe Czechoslovak Desk

1. The following is the situation as I understand it as of the morning of November 23.
2. As you know, some 19 members of the Czechoslovak Desk of Radio Free Europe in Munich signed a petition to the European Director protesting against the promotions of three people to senior positions on the Desk. This problem has been brewing for some time and is due in some major part to the new Desk Chief who succeeded [redacted]. A copy of the petition is attached.
3. On receipt of this petition it was passed by Hazellhoff to New York. At Bernie Yarrow's suggestion -- in the absence of Archie Alexander who was in Lisbon -- [redacted] the head of the Czechoslovak Desk in New York, called some members of the Czechoslovak Desk in Munich and obtained their agreement to withdraw the petition.
4. Hazellhoff, however, felt that this was not sufficient and issued a memorandum to the Czechoslovak Desk in Munich to the effect that if each member did not issue a full retraction as specified in his memorandum, he would issue termination notices to each person involved by 2:00 p.m., Munich time, November 23.
5. Three members of the 19 signed the retraction, the remaining 16 refused. At 2:05 p.m., November 23, these 16 were issued termination notices by Hazellhoff.
6. Although we do not have the names of the people involved, we are told that these 16 are the key people on the Desk. We are also told that the other Czechs and Slovaks in Munich have "associated" themselves with those who refuse to sign the petition. Potcher, the representative of the newspaper guild to which practically all members of the Czech Desk in Munich belong, has interested himself in the case and has instructed his members not to sign the retraction. He also claims that the action of Hazellhoff is in violation with agreements with the union and apparently is making a major issue of this.
7. Alexander is seized with this problem having spent practically all day the 23rd trying to straighten it out. He plans to send Tom

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Brown and Henry Smith to Munich on November 24 with [ ] to  
 follow if needed. Alexander is disturbed that Hasselhoff took what  
 he considers to be precipitous action after the initial petition  
 had been withdrawn. Alexander is also disturbed about what will  
 certainly be at least local publicity about this in Germany and the  
 repercussions of this within RFE generally.

8. This problem is somewhat complicated by the fact that two  
 of the senior appointees on the Czech Desk are considered to be  
 security risks (Grunek and Delak-Berger). There is considerable  
 question as to whether [ ] is qualified to run the Desk and  
 it is probable that some major reorganization of the Desk will have  
 to be worked out.

9. We will keep you advised of developments.

[ ]  
c/IO/I

P.S. LATE FLASH

Alexander reports that as of 11:00 a.m. this morning Messrs  
 Hasselhoff, Foss and McNeill have threatened to resign if they are  
 not "baked up" in this matter. For my money this would be an  
 extremely healthy thing.

IO/I:EBB:kb (23 Nov 60)

Orig. & 1 - Addressee  
 1 - RFE File  
 3 - IO/I

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