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CIA Runs Radio Free Europe, Ex-Employee Says in Prague

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BONN, Jan. 30 — The U.S. broadcasting services Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty have come under renewed attack from the Soviet bloc after a period of relative quiet.

Yesterday, a former employee in Munich of Radio Free Europe held a news conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia, to charge that the CIA still controls the operation despite reforms instituted by Congress five years ago.

The radio's acting director, Richard Cook, denied the charge, saying that the claims of 30-year-old Pavel Minarik are "garbage."

Radio Free Europe broadcasts news and commentary to Eastern Europe and Radio Liberty directs its programs to the Soviet Union.

After a period of relatively mild and low-level criticism, the official Communist Party newspaper Pravda published a sharp attack on the radios in a long editorial on Jan. 13.

The editorial said that the radio broadcasts violate the spirit of the recent Helsinki security conference and added that the radios are still a CIA front sheltering some 20 agents.

Minarik, who worked as a broadcaster in the Czechoslovak section of RFE for seven years, was presented at a press conference in the Czech capital as a captain in the nation's intelligence service. He named director Cook, along with two other RFE officials in Munich, as either working for or being connected with the CIA.

But Cook, in a telephone interview, stated: "We have no employees who are in any way connected with the CIA."

Referring to the shakeup five years ago, when Congress demanded that previously secret CIA financing of the broadcast operation be halted, Cook said: "When you have been through a transition like the one we went through, you don't play games with the source of your funding, which is now the U.S. Congress. You just don't play games with the Congress."

Cook said Minarik was among a group of employees who actually were let go by the organization last summer as a result of budgetary cutbacks. Minarik arranged extensions until the end of March.

On Jan. 7, however, he flew to New York and then showed up in Prague a few days ago. His West German wife still lives in Munich.

Some U.S. officials speculated that Minarik, who reportedly did not speak

English or German very well, could not get another job in Munich and went back to Prague under an arrangement in which he was to attack RFE.

In 1971, a RFE employee went back to Warsaw claiming to be a Polish intelligence officer, and revealing that several employees in Munich were CIA men.

Spokesmen here now admit that as many as a dozen CIA men were working at RFE at that time.

Since the congressional investigation, however, all CIA personnel are supposed to have been removed and all government funding was to come through direct appropriation. The Board of International Broadcasting, which was set up in Washington in 1973, oversees the radio stations.

According to RFE officials, Minarik was among a number of Czech citizens who fled in 1968 in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion.