

x Page 2 RFE

Balloon Propaganda Developed Slow Leak

By FULTON LEWIS, JR.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19. — The Free Europe balloon propaganda program with headquarters in Munich, Germany, widely touted as one of the big guns of the so-called Crusade for Freedom, ceased operations in October a year ago, after the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution.

It had 359 employees, of whom 268 were on the scene, and the operating head of it is a pleasant young man named Samuel S. Walker, Jr., in New York, an Ivy League atmosphere, was editor of the Yale Daily News the year before. William Buckley, smokes a pipe and is 31 years old.

I have a photostat of an official memorandum, dated December 3, 1956, formally suspending operations as of that date.

IT GOES SO far as to recommend substitute projects, on which the employees could be kept busy.

Nearly a year later, Mr. Walker has just dispatched a special representative, G. A. Trutnovsky, a Czech, to finally "dismantle" the project and dis-

pose of all equipment. He is assigned to do the job in 45 days at an allowance of twenty dollars a day plus transportation.

I asked Mr. Walker about this, because he already had a \$15,000-a-year assistant in Munich, Howard S. Weaver, who has been in charge of the balloon program since its inception. Weaver also is Yale. While Trutnovsky is being sent to Munich, Weaver is being recalled. I asked Mr. Walker why.

He informed me that Weaver's recall is because he and eight other members of the Munich staff were involved in a cigarette black market scandal about which the German government took a dim view.

The Americans had made a deal with a GI to have him buy the cigarettes for them at the Army post exchange at something less than 25 cents a pack, which is about one-third of what they sell for on the tax-paid German retail market.

THE FREE EUROPE headquarters in New York dispatched its own General Counsel, Richard Greenlee, from New York to defend the nine, his trip costing "several thousand dollars." There also was a German attorney.

All nine were convicted and fined by the German court, and Weaver was "recalled for a new assignment in New York."

The balloon project has the atmosphere of a sort of Yale post-graduate cops-and-robbers club with a Social Register screening system.

Walker's deputy director is

CAPITAL REPORT



THE BALLOON BROKE

somewhat younger than he—John Kirk, also a son of Old Eli and also a son of Grayson Kirk, president of Columbia University. He was hired in August, 1956, this being his first job, at \$5,500 a year. Today he is drawing \$10,500, which seems to demonstrate how fast the modern young man can rise in the world.

Mr. Walker is not very specific about why the year elapsed between the end of the balloon operations and the long-last dismantling. He says it has been a "gradual process," which seems to be a masterpiece of understatement.

(© 1957, by King Features Synd., Inc.)