

HEADQUARTERS
ARMY SECURITY AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

CSGAS-81

5 August 1948

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Army Security Agency, Operational Survey Board
THRU: Chief, Personnel and Training Branch *JRS*
SUBJECT: Development of Personnel

The inclosed study represents the personal evaluation of the undersigned of certain conditions existing in the Agency and suggests means for alleviating these conditions. It is submitted herewith to the Operational Survey Board for consideration and action.



THOMAS R. CHITTENDEN
Technical Staff
Security Division

1 Incl
Study

1. There has been considerable discussion and ferment within the Agency the past few months about the internal weaknesses of the organization. Although no organization can meet all problems and situations with equal strength and aplomb, it has been felt by several, myself included, that there are certain areas of difficulty and weakness. Some inefficient procedures have been noted; serious mistakes have been made and the lack of coordination and initiative have, at times, been deplorable. But have these inefficiencies, errors, and sterilities been entirely the fault of the organization, that is, of the present arrangement of functions? I think not. An organization is a combination of functions and attitudes or, more simply, work and people. The arrangement of the functions constitutes the machinery for operating while the attitudes of the people determine the manner or effectiveness of the operations. Unfortunately the greatest amount of attention is given to the machinery and practically none to the manner. Thus, when an organization begins to lessen in effectiveness the usual reaction is to turn a suspicious eye upon the machinery and to ignore or forget the attitudes governing it. This memorandum, however, looks the other way. It presents my reaction to some of the prevailing attitudes and suggests means for shoring up those which are weak.

2. My reason for examining the attitudes rather than the machinery is simply that after surviving several agency, division, and branch reorganizations, I have never been able to find any improvement in the effectiveness of the operations or the morale of the people. Usually, both are lower. As a result, it was not difficult to conclude that the real trouble lay in the less tangible half of an organization - the attitudes of its people, particularly its management people. Thus, I believe that the real difficulty in the Agency, is in its basic consideration of individuals. This is not the same as its personnel policy, which is an arbitrary arrangement for caring for the administrative needs of the people and bears the same relation to the constructive development of a person as the grade-school procedure of forming lines of boys and girls outside the school building in order to get them into the hated structure bears to their education. In other words, both insure that the person is in the proper position for instruction (development) but neither insures that he will be given that instruction. This assurance must come from a more basic policy. In the school system this policy is the concept of education prevailing in a locality. In a production organization it is the concept of management. In other words, it is the attitude of management toward the direction and development of the people within the framework. Persons of average intelligence, if appealed to and directed properly, can make practically any organizational machinery work effectively. If managed in such a manner that they know **WHAT** to do and **WHY** they should do it, they will find means of making the machine work, however creaky it may be.

3. It is the concept of management prevailing at ASA which I believe to be the source of the present difficulties. Specific examples of this concept are complicated to relate, difficult to lift free of entangling circumstances, and often embarrassing. It is not possible to relate all and it is unfair to put down only a few. If specific examples are required

before this line of reasoning can be accepted, then, as the ads say, they will be furnished upon request. Otherwise only the generalizations drawn from observation of specific incidents will be cited. There are three of these generalizations. Each will be stated and examined separately.

4. The first generalization is that there is considerable responsibility without accountability. This lack of accountability for actions seems to arise mostly out of the commendable desire to be good natured. However, whatever the merit of its source, the effect is that of lack of firmness. Or, to paraphrase a famous slogan, it is representation without taxation. It is not enough that persons have responsibility. There must be some regular and effective means for determining if they are meeting their responsibilities in an effective manner. If they are, then they should be so informed. If they are not, they should be called upon to explain why not and what, in their opinion, is required to meet the difficulty. This is not a cry for more discipline or restrictive administrative measures. No. This is suggested in the belief that it is better to check regularly upon the manner in which a person is discharging his responsibilities than to check only when a mistake has been made or an oversight noted. They feel that they have important responsibilities to meet every day in the efficient conduct of their branch. However, they also feel that the only time the Agency is aware of them is when a mistake has been made or when something special is afoot. Whether or not this feeling has basis in fact is not the question now. It exists--and if the Agency is to function with that effectiveness which comes only from persons who are interested in being effective and not just in being here, it must be eradicated. To erase it will require persistent and deliberate pursuit of a policy of requiring all persons who have responsibilities to meet these responsibilities and of regularly and frequently checking upon their manner of meeting them.

5. The second generalization is that there is no feeling in the Agency, of interest in the development of individuals. Perhaps this impersonal feeling is inherent in government service. Having worked only at this Agency, I am not competent to judge that. But certainly here there is no discernible policy of "bringing a man along." This is a fatal weakness and one of the basic reasons, though mention of it is seldom found in the official reasons for separation, for the melting away from this Agency of top quality people.

a. To be more specific, the development of which I speak is the development of the innate qualities of self-reliance, independence, and confidence which exist in varying degree in all persons. These qualities form three sides of the hexagon known as morale - the other three being interest, money, and work. Most of the positions in the Agency offer these latter three - but scant provision is made for the former. It is true that these are the most difficult qualities to bring out in a person. Certainly our standard American educational system does little to nourish them, and, if one reads the newspapers carefully, one must conclude that the average home doesn't offer much encouragement to them either. But if a person doesn't bring to the job the mental temper necessary to do it well, where can he get it? The only alternative left is for him to get it on the job.

b. Is this possible? Is it being done? The answer to the latter question is simple, - "No. Not in ASA, or many other places for that matter." To the former I say "Yes - with qualifications." It can be done but the effort is enormous and exacting. The course to be followed is as simple as that statement which I made in the memo of June 1947, "The course of action necessary is to develop self-reliance in the persons performing operational and supervisory functions...." Of course, actually following this is considerably more complex than simply stating it. The difficulty of attempting it has been emphasized not because I am afraid that it cannot be done but because I realize that one's first impression of this approach is that it is impractical and idealistic. In this instance the first impression is not a true one for when the practical side of it is carefully considered, it will be seen that it is not beyond the scope of any of us.

c. The practical application of this idea consists of drafting a specific program for the positive and active development of the working and supervisory people. This paper recommending the adoption of the policy of development is not the place in which to attempt to draw up a detailed and specific program. The strength and chance for success of such a program is determined almost completely by the care and intelligence with which it is shaped for each type of work in each branch. It requires planning in each echelon for the different types of work performed on that echelon. Some concrete examples of actions which could be taken in the implementation of a program of development might be helpful in clarifying the scope and means of such a program and of emphasizing its practical nature. Some examples follow:

- (1) Institute the practice of work credits by having the name of the person preparing a letter, draft of a document, plan, or staff study appear on the work until such time as it leaves a Division.

This would acquaint each Division Chief with the type and quality of work performed by persons who at present are mere faces in the hallways or names on a roster. It would appeal directly to the pride and sense of responsibility of each person and would result in better quality work. It is only natural that work upon which a person's name would be appearing would assume more importance to him and would be given more attention.

- (2) Invite personnel other than branch chiefs to meetings at which policies or problems specifically affecting their work will be discussed or formulated.

Depending upon the situation, such persons may or may not be asked to take active part in the discussion. Whether they do or not will not matter a great deal in the effectiveness of the procedure. The important fact is that each is being permitted to see the complete action and interaction involved in the determination of a policy under which he is going to have to work. Adoption of this development procedure alone would increase

the effectiveness of a Division by eliminating the misunderstanding and cynicism on the working levels about the abilities of the persons on the managerial levels. Let them see and participate in (even if only as an auditor) the difficulties facing and the peculiarities of the forces exerted upon a Division. In other words, bring the persons concerned, not indiscriminately, into the picture at the start rather than at the end and I guarantee that the results which he will produce will excel any produced in the past. Furthermore, after a few such sessions, a pattern of the ability of each person to respond to the stimulus of development activities will be discernible. This pattern can then be used in furthering or changing the development programmed for each.

- (3) Inform persons concerned when their work is rejected or changed by higher authority and, if known, why it was rejected or changed.

It is appreciated by most persons that a portion or all of a piece of work submitted to higher authorities may not be acceptable or express exactly what is desired. What is not appreciated by anyone is to have the work altered or rejected completely without being informed of the action or the reason for it. It is possible that the point upon which the rejection was made could be avoided in the future - but this is possible only if the preparing party is informed.

- (4) Adopt a policy of telling workers the WHY of a project as well as the WHAT and HOW, whenever it is possible to do so.

It is the WHY of a project which stimulates thinking. If it is not made known, then the possibility for working personnel contributing suggestions or ideas concerning it has been eliminated. Certainly many of the projects in this Division are difficult enough without restricting the possibility for ideas concerning them to emanate from the operating levels.

- (5) Invite persons whose work is concerned to meetings at which personnel from ASA field units present their problems or comment upon operations in general.

At this sort of meeting particularly, the participation of working persons can be limited to listening without reducing the effectiveness or the benefit of the meeting to him. By attending such meetings he will gain an appreciation of the scope of ASA activities and the difficulties being met by ASA outside of Washington.

- (6) Encourage individual workers to attend trade schools or colleges particularly in the study of subjects related to their work here.

Extend help in the cases warranting it by putting the weight of the Agency behind the efforts of an individual to enter a particular school; or, more practically, by making adjustments in the working schedule of the person when such can be made without detriment to the work.

(7) Institute courses of instruction in technical subjects having direct relation to the work.

Courses in grammar, mathematics, electronics, and practical machine work would have direct application to the operations of the Division. The course in electricity presently being conducted by AS-81 is an excellent start in the right direction. Other branches should be urged to follow suit.

d. Thus the essence of this development program is recognition, encouragement, and opportunity for experience. The actual initiation of it requires careful planning and adaptation to the type of work and individuals performing it for probably each person will react differently to overtures of development. In some sections development will take the form of increasing a person's skill or introducing him to new skills. In others, it will be aimed at increasing the person's initiative, experience, judgment, and sense of responsibility.

e. The program cannot be accomplished or even launched by a directive. In fact the publishing of a directive would have an undesirable effect because it would produce so much the air of a reorganization or new personnel policy that it would be received with cynicism by the many, many persons who have seen several reorganizations blaze and fade without having improved the operations or their status. No, a directive would only abort it. And so would a campaign of printed platitudes. Large signs bearing the word "DEVELOP" would be as laughable and ineffectual as IBM's "THINK" cards. Implementation of the program must be accomplished by gradual absorption of it by all supervisors from a Division Chief to the head of a sub-unit. Its effectiveness depends upon active and continual pursuance of it, intelligent application of it, and uncompromising faith in it.

6. The third, and last, generalization is concerned with the selection of supervisors. One of the major problems which has confronted the Agency since its first expansion in 1942 has been the problem of choosing supervisors and training them in the tricky business of employee relations.

a. During the time I have been at Arlington Hall Station there have been at least five drives to overcome the problem of poor supervision. There have been formal lectures. There have been six hour training courses for supervisors conducted by local experts. There have been experts imported from industry to conduct a two weeks course in employee relations. Unfortunately each of these courses was completely unrealistic and superficial; the industry one was particularly bad, based as it was on a back-slapping, Rotarian approach to employee-supervisor

relations and ignoring completely the fact that most of the persons working at this Agency are a bit more intelligent, perceptive, and sensitive than the average drill-press operator. These courses merely scratched the surface of this complex problem and in doing so scratched the supervisors into irritation and resistance to all formal lecture methods of attempting to overcome the problem. Oddly enough there was very little doubt in anyone's mind that the problem existed and that it was a serious one, but all agreed that a finger pointing lecture, or even a buddy-buddy one, was not the solution.

b. As bad as these courses were, they were at least an attempt to meet the supervisor-employee relation problem. The more basic problem of instructing the top management in the selection of supervisors has never been faced, to the best of my knowledge. It is certain that some of the employee-supervisor relations problems would be eliminated if the supervisors were chosen with greater care. Viewed from the outside, the basis upon which supervisors have been chosen seems to be a curious mixture of seniority, sex, and default. In other words, the senior member of a group is chosen; many times if the senior member is a woman she will be passed over in preference for the senior male member; and oftentimes, supervisors chosen pro tem will become the permanent supervisor because the person making the choice forgets after a while that Henry was only to serve until the permanent supervisor was selected.

c. Of course, this is only the view from the outside. What is it from the inside? Is there a written policy which stipulates how a supervisor shall be chosen? Are examinations given to determine the psychological and technical fitness of the candidates to supervise, lead, and direct others? Are the persons to be supervised permitted to express their views on the candidates? Is final commitment withheld until the person selected has given some evidence of his supervisory ability? I cannot give an unequivocal "no" to each of these questions - but I have never seen these procedures or anything similar to them employed here. They may have been used in isolated instances, but they are not used regularly. They should be. The selection of supervisors and, when selected, the development of their abilities to administer, lead, and direct are among the most important actions of the top level administrators. Actions of such importance should be guided by a definite, progressive policy and not be left to the vagaries of each administrator.

d. Unlike the discussion about development, this one is not as difficult to reduce to a specific policy. Furthermore, it lends itself readily to promulgation by directive. In fact the primary action required is the drafting, adoption, and publication to all members of the Division of a policy governing the selection of supervisors. Regardless of whether the policy is imaginative or based on straight seniority, this action alone, by defining for all to see what the policy of the Division is, would be a stabilizing influence. The present doubt which most persons have regarding their possibilities for advancement to supervisory positions would be replaced by the facts. However, in the interests of not only removing doubt from people's minds but also giving

them a goal and hope, I recommend the adoption of the following five point program for choosing and training supervisors:

- (1) Choose supervisors from the ranks whenever possible.
- (2) Select supervisors on the basis of facts gained from competitive examinations. Give tests designed to examine the technical abilities, knowledge, and judgment of the competitors. Give tests designed to examine their psychological fitness for supervising. Tests of this latter type are obtainable from universities and such private institutes as the Institute of Human Engineering in New York.
- (3) Give the persons in the section a voice (not the final or even majority opinion - but at least a chance to be heard) in the selection. Anonymous ballots or ratings could be used to avoid any possibility of unfairness or reprisals.
- (4) Require that supervisors selected demonstrate by performance on the job for a trial period that they are capable of being assigned permanently.
- (5) Personal interest be taken by the management in the persons selected as supervisors.

7. To summarize this discussion, I believe that the basic fault lies in the prevailing concept of management and that most of the troubles could be eliminated by altering the present concept in three specific ways. These are:

- a. The adoption of a policy requiring persons having responsibilities to be accountable for the adequate discharge of them.
- b. The institution of a program to develop self-reliance in the individual workers by widening their work experiences, by permitting limited participation in the formulation of policies affecting their work, and by encouraging improvement of their technical skills.
- c. The adoption and statement of a planned policy governing the selection of supervisors on a basis of tested and proven technical, supervisory, and human relations abilities.

It is realized that there may be some hesitancy about accepting any of these proposals but I sincerely believe that once the plunge is made, the untried waters will be found to be exceptionally invigorating.


THOMAS R. CHITTENDEN