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*Parallel dissatisfactions rankle
in agents on opposite sides of
the globe.*

A MIRROR FOR AGENT HANDLERS

Kermit B. Teichholtz

It is a rare thing to get from an agent, especially in writing, his frank and unflattering opinion of his superior and his methods of handling problems and people. It should be of value to a case officer, however, to be aware of what his agents think of him; even if their criticism is unjustified or misdirected or their views myopic and confused, it is of importance for the handling problem that they hold these views. A full assessment of the agent must take into account his personal attitudes toward the case officer and his mental reactions to the officer's instructions and demands.

There are presented in parallel on the following pages extracts from two such written opinions obtained during the early fifties, one from an agent in Germany and the other from one in Korea, wherein the criticism does *not* appear to be altogether unjustified. While they contain hints of self-interest and some one-sided views, the remarkable similarity on a number of subjects displayed by two commentaries of such widely separated geographic and ethnic origin reinforces their validity and makes them worthy of some study. Both agents said that after much hesitation they finally succeeded in "unloading their minds in complete frankness," as indeed they apparently did.

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*Trust**From Germany*

9 We have not found common ground on the point of trust. This has been the most grievous side during the past ten years of our collaboration. Your basis for collaboration is this: we Americans have the money and we pay you, you do not have a completely dumb head; therefore, give us the information we need. The human aspect, or all that we can call the spiritual elements of our collaboration, automatically came under the heading of a second, if not a third, plan. I do not wish to say that there was no trust from the side of my superiors; perhaps there was. However, I have been convinced the whole time that it did not exist. . . . If the lack of confidence came because of disbelief in me, then something should be done about it. It is most important that I should be assured that this is done for this or that reason and the affair should not be left unclarified.

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9 With few exceptions, none of my case officers (over one dozen of them) did anything to erase this distrust between one person and another, especially in my case, an intelligence agent. This would have been achieved in a diverse number of ways, e.g., closer fellowship, discussions, etc. . . . I feel the need of some comradeship and trusting friends, to talk things over with them, to learn about their activities, their joys and sorrows.

From Korea

I know that in this business you have to suspect practically everybody you are dealing with, often including yourself. And yet, I believe it is a very poor policy to let your suspicion be known to the person involved, especially in handling the sensitive agent. When you reveal your suspicion, if it is unfounded, you lose your good friends. When you reveal a well-founded suspicion, you give premature warning and often lose your enemy uncaught. In either case you lose more than you can possibly gain.

*The Polygraph***From Germany**

I believe the voluntary aspect of the polygraph is lost when refusal is tantamount to a person's automatically falling under suspicion. Despite the fears that some of his personal secrets may be revealed, the agent accepts the treatment because he does not wish to fall under suspicion. . . . The application of the machine predisposes the individual to think that his superiors distrust him. The impression is that the superiors can find the truth only with this aid since all other methods have been unsuccessful. Also, the questions asked at times lower a person's dignity. When the self-respect is disturbed the individual feels angry with those who enforce this tactic.

I have undergone the test twice. In the first instance it made me unhappy only to a minimum degree. My case officer explained the purpose and introduced me to a very sympathetic man who, in a private discussion, gave me further explanations. No one was present with whom I worked until that time. . . . However, on the second occasion the test came as a surprise to me on a day when I was quite unprepared from the standpoint of my morale. Then, to my astonishment, it was given in the presence of the case officer with whom I worked for the past year. My feelings were aggravated further when the case officer began to ask polygraph questions. The method of investigation not only aroused my anger, but a moral depression and disrespect for the officer. It was an error from the psychological standpoint: It tore away from us all associative contacts that we had built through a period of working together. The polygraph investigation should tend to strengthen the relationship between the case officer and the agent, not destroy it because of imprudent tactics.

From Korea

I have often wondered whether we are gaining more than losing by the use of the polygraph. I have worked very closely with the system for several years, witnessing, I am sure, more than two hundred tests with the scientific device. Yet I do not recall any one case in which the operator really thought he cracked open a serious case of enemy infiltration or collaboration with the enemy. On the other hand, I can recall numerous cases in which the person tested openly expressed his displeasure at being unjustly suspected. The operator's explanation that the test was another "routine security measure" and that its administration did not mean the person was under any specific suspicion did not do much good in most cases. I believe the system would do more good if it were used as an aid in interrogation rather than using it too frequently on too many persons as a means of a "routine security precaution."

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Mirror for Handlers

Clandestine Practices

From Germany

Clandestinity of our collaboration is overdone in some forms. . . . During the course of my collaboration with the Americans, I can say that I cannot identify by name any of the persons with whom I have worked. I can supply only the pseudonyms, and then only the first names, "Bob," "Steve," "John," or "Mike." I cannot identify the organization that employs me, much less the location of its offices.

If conspiracy is carried out so rigorously for practical security reasons, then everything is in order. However, if it is influenced for reasons of disbelief, then this is a negative factor in our collaboration and something should be done about it. I should be assured that the clandestinity is adhered to for this or that reason, not because of me; the affair should not be left unclarified.

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From Korea

I believe that a good working relationship with the local government has not been possible because of the somewhat over-emphasized clandestinity on the part of the Americans. It would have been much easier and more fruitful in the long run if the local government had been approached with a warmer hand, even if it had meant a little risk from the standpoint of security. Of course it would have been a completely different story if the entire operation had been covert or underground in nature, as it would have to be in enemy territory. But how could you possibly hope to get away with disregarding the feelings of the local government in a supposedly friendly and independent nation when you were using half of the good buildings available and a large number of indigenous personnel?

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Mirror for Handlers

Motivation

From Germany

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3 The Germans [his previous employers] understood human relationships and moral perceptions of the individual and were able to strengthen us and never permitted us to believe that we were ordinary, paid, untrusted agents. They always told us: a paid agent will work for an intelligence service until the other side pays him more and gives him the possibility of living better. However, intelligence work uses ideologically motivated people who see a living value in their effort. If a person does not have moral values, he cannot participate in intelligence. Money is the means to an end, not the end itself. The Germans taught us not to place value in money. And that was good.

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2 The human aspects cannot be fulfilled with material rewards. When one of my American case officers brought me ten cartons of cigarets, he felt it proper to say, "I give you more cigarets this time because you gave us more information this time." The whole transaction became a business deal, not a matter of human relations. Because I gave more information than was usual, a case officer gave me a CARE package, perhaps worth about \$10. The case officer did not place the value of information in the moral category, but automatically placed me in the category of a paid low-level agent. I fought this degradation of the human individual with all the force which I could muster, degradation from the state of a human to that of a paid spitzel.

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~~From Korea~~

Regardless of what I may say here, you do not have to remind me of who I am and what I am because I know very well about my own past background, and I am fully aware of my present status as well. Human relations should receive a greater emphasis in dealing with Korean agents than any search for their proper motivation. The word motivation is beautiful when it means something, but it is so very hollow when used by the wrong persons at wrong times and in wrong places.

True, it is more difficult to find a well motivated South Korean than to locate a four-leaf clover. But how many Americans serving in Korea could honestly be classified as persons with truly high motivation? Most of them are there simply because they are better off financially. I have listened to so many complaints about the living quarters, food, and, above all, "those goddam Koreans" that it is a big joke for Americans to seek for motivation among Koreans. The sooner the Americans forget about the idea of seeking real motivation among the Koreans and work at the whole thing more from a human give-and-take attitude, the better off they will be.

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Mirror for Handlers

U.S. Expertise

From Germany

I can only say that the people with whom I have worked have apparently had intelligence training and some undoubtedly had long experience. However, frequent changes in case officers, at least during the initial period of each new one, indicated that the gentlemen were unacquainted with the area targets and they were not familiar with the specific problems involved. Individual situations and general appreciation of the operations were often quite foreign to them. There were times when the case officer failed to see the difference between operations X, Y, and Z. I observed that each case officer concerned gradually filled in the gaps of this type of background knowledge. This positive factor was true with all case officers: with time they acquired knowledge of the operational area and its problems.

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From Korea

Every American in Korea is there to do a certain job in a limited amount of time. In most cases, he has to rely upon the services of Koreans in order to get this job done. It would be a lot easier for everyone if he would just concentrate on getting the job done by making the best use of the Koreans as they are rather than trying to teach or convert them to the American way of life or thinking. Such things should be left to the USIS people or the missionaries serving in Korea. The language barrier is no doubt one of the most serious problems confronting Americans in Korea and, at the same time, one of the most convenient excuses behind which many can and do hide their own inefficiency. Don't forget that the language problem bothers Koreans as much as it bothers Americans. Just knowing a few native words no doubt helps you in your social life, but you will find it of little use in your official work.

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Mirror for Handlers

Evaluation of Production

From Germany

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Not one of my case officers has given me an assessment of my efforts. I am not aware whether or not headquarters is satisfied with my work. I would be very grateful if criticism would be offered periodically concerning my efforts. I do not consider myself to be a great specialist in the activity, but whatever I attempt is sincere in that I want to accomplish as much as the circumstances permit. For human reasons, it would be much better for me personally if I would know that the office is happy with my work and that my efforts have achieved at least some minimum of success. I certainly would not condemn anyone for criticism; in fact, I think such is necessary and I would be thankful for it.

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My feeling that the efforts have been satisfactory comes only from deduction, based on the fact that I have not been released from employment and that my salary has been raised periodically. I do not desire light or cheap compliments or undeserved credit. However, it would be more profitable to me and my "growth" in the intelligence field if an assessment were given to me periodically. If the criticism is favorable, it gives a person strength and desire to achieve greater successes; if it is negative, it drives one to better application of effort in order to obtain a more favorable criticism in subsequent assessment.

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From Korea

The worst trait of the case officer in relation to his men is that of indifference. In assessing the agents or in criticising them for what they do or fail to do, the air of indifference is unquestionably most harmful. The case officer can "raise hell" with his agent, when necessary, but he must never assume an attitude of indifference. I recall one case officer who, when his men returned from a hard but unsuccessful mission, remained in bed and made no effort to receive them. Had the case officer received the group at the gate and reprimanded them, they would appreciate him more, and chances are they would feel very responsible for their failure in the mission. But the indifferent attitude of the case officer made the men forget all about their failure. It only forced them into an attitude of resentment and revolt.

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Mirror for Handlers

Promises

From Germany

In 195_, I was informed that I would be advanced to the status of "assistant" and that my salary would be raised accordingly. Further, on this occasion and in two subsequent instances, I was told that I would be given a contract to sign and that this contract would stipulate all terms of our relationship. I have yet to see or sign such a contract.

During the same period, I was told to take my wife for vacationing on the lake and that all expenses would be paid to me on my return. I took the vacation, although it was a rainy season, but I was not reimbursed upon my return; it was explained to me that the headquarters refused to grant the reimbursement.

What should I think about a series of false promises like these? I could only think that the case officers had no trust in me.

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From Korea

No matter how small and insignificant it may be, a false promise should never be given to an agent. You are not the only case officer who offended me thus, but let me give you some specific examples in our relationship. You have been extremely nice to me and my family, but you have made several false promises.

First, you told me several times that I could have your car from time to time after I got my license, so that I could take my family around for a ride. You said this even in front of my wife. But after I got my license you never even suggested my borrowing your car. Not that I would have accepted it anyway, but it was a false promise.

Second, it was your idea about my driver's license and you had me study the book of rules. You said you would take me to the Division of Motor Vehicles to apply for a learner's permit. You never meant it. When I got the permit anyway, you said you would take me to the police to get the final license. I waited, after more promises which you never kept, until finally I got the license through someone else. I knew you were busy, and it all would not have mattered if you had not told me later that you had taken your wife to the police for a license during the same period when you kept saying that you would take care of me.

Third, you kept saying for three or four consecutive weeks that you would come out to my home for a Sunday visit to see how things were. I waited for you with my family each weekend, but you never came or even called me. It did not matter too much because I had no place to go and had little choice but to stay home whether you came or not. Yet you were careless in making promises.

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Mirror for Handlers

Handling

From Germany

Let us review our operational meetings during the past ten years. Most of them took place as follows: We met and shook hands. Then the case officer would ask, "What's new?" After making my reply, I would pull some reports out of my briefcase to read them, clearing up some points in the reports and answering questions. Here and there I would be offered American cigarettes. The meeting would take about an hour, sometimes two. At the conclusion we would ask one another whether there were any other questions, then arrange for the next meeting, shake hands and depart from one another. There has been nothing human about these meetings, no
2 friendship, amiability, or other kind of gentleness. The meetings invariably turned out as crude business transactions. I
3 provided the information and you paid me at the end of the month.

2 It is my thought that this type of dealing has had a seriously negative impact during the ten years of our collaboration. In this sort of relationship a person gradually becomes a robot, without a soul, without a moral basis. It brings forth undesirable complexes, it forces a person to lose his individuality, and, worst of all, it makes a person a paid agent. In order to rid one's self of this role, one has to go through a series of inner conflicts and one has to tell one's self that the situation is different from what it actually appears to be.

From Korea

Koreans, as a whole, are funny people. You cannot treat them too soft and you cannot drive them too hard; in either case they revolt against you. During my four years of work with American case officers in Korea, I did not know more than one or two who I thought had the right touch in their handling of Korean agents. I am inclined to believe that poor personnel handling by the majority of Americans should be blamed more than anything else if the outfit is not getting the results it should.

Let me give you here some examples of the kind of things which should be avoided by the Americans.

1. Don't expose yourself totally in the eyes of your agent personnel. If you do, they get tired of you rather quickly.

2. Don't try to sell dog meat while you have lamb's head hung outside. This is an old Chinese saying which makes sense. In other words, what you say you would do and what you actually do should always match.

3. Don't expect too much loyalty from the Korean agent if you yourself are giving him too little of your loyalty. Loyalty, like friendship, is reciprocal.

4. Don't criticize your fellow American members of the organization, including your predecessor and superiors, to your Korean men. They will think of you as a low character of repulsive nature.

5. Don't try to enforce the channel of command to your men while you yourself are violating the very same thing. Don't let anyone else touch your men, and at the same time don't try to give orders to somebody else's men without going through him.

6. Don't talk too much. The more you talk, the less they may think of you.

7. Don't eat popcorn on the street, chew gum during serious conversation, or blow your nose at the table.

8. Don't use your men for anything other than what you are paying them for; I know of several cases where agent personnel were used for all-around household duties and so produced far less in their main work.

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Mirror for Handlers

9. Don't refer any pending decisions to your superior in front of your men. Once your men know that there is someone else who is making decisions for you, you may as well give up and turn the operations over to someone else.

10. Drink with your men, but don't go near them when drunk because in that state you will lose all respect that you may have enjoyed up to that time. I recall one security officer who used to check the guard posts when he was in such condition that he could not walk straight. He made a laughing stock of himself.

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