

Training for Overseas Effectiveness

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Lessons for U.S. intelligence in non-government programs to prepare Americans for selfless or self-seeking missions overseas.

A ground-swell of public interest in giving greater efficacy to American efforts overseas, an interest backed by leading authorities in government, business, religion, and the academic world, has resulted in an outcropping of courses and centers devoted to training for overseas service. More than 30 non-government organizations now sponsor enterprises of this sort. A review of their activities may serve to provide background, both in theoretical approach and in practical methodology, for current attempts to solve the U.S. Government's and in particular the intelligence community's own problem of making its personnel effective while living and working in foreign societies.¹

Efforts to do something about increasing Americans' professional as well as personal effectiveness abroad are being undertaken with varying degrees of urgency by different kinds of private groups. The missionary group, with its long-standing need to train for proselyting all over the world, remains in the forefront, and some of its old programs are taking on a new look. Business groups are beginning to show an interest in overseas training, although with some exceptions (notably Aramco in Saudi Arabia and the Creole Oil Company in Venezuela) their efforts are still in the exploratory stage. The philanthropic foundations, with sizable groups of Americans going abroad constantly, are of course much concerned with the problem, and each of them has set up its own program. In addition, a number of academic centers and private institutions are coming up with new courses tailored to the specific

needs of some of these groups and of government agencies. In all this activity there is a veritable ferment of effort to concoct formulas for rapid and effective training.²

These efforts are in diverse stages of development. Some are merely plans on paper, for example a project to turn Ellis Island into an amalgamated overseas training school for all interested groups.³ Others, like the National Training Laboratories at Bethel, Maine, under Dr. Leland P. Bradford, have been running for years. But all the newer programs in "over-seasmanship" are a departure from the older courses taught in academic centers for international affairs, which are designed to produce the fully educated man and therefore take years to complete. The new ones simply seek to implant in a matter of weeks, by orientation techniques, a viewpoint or perspective conducive to effective action. While the two are not necessarily in competition, proponents of each often criticize the other, and the "old guard" in each of the sponsoring groups tends to look askance at the new method. Some of the academic centers (Syracuse University, University of Pittsburgh, American University) have recently added new-type overseas training sections to their traditional offerings in recognition of the importance of both.

The purposes of the various individual projects are basically similar: all are concerned with producing effective Americans for dealing with other-culture persons and societies. Within this general purpose each group has its special emphasis--the business group on training a profit-maker, religious organizations on creating an effective Christian, and so forth; but all focus their attention on concepts, skills, or methods that may make for better interpersonal relations abroad. It must be noted that the underlying image of the ideal "overseasman" in all of these programs is suspiciously like the successful person in our own society as portrayed for example by Dale Carnegie--a generally aggressive person with empathic understanding and a hard core of know-how in the manipulation of other persons. This concept, unidealistic as it is, is certainly well received by the American trainee, who can readily refer its role-image to his own experience in American society.

Philosophies of Approach

While the goals of the various programs are thus similar, their ways of arriving at the desired ends differ considerably. Four philosophies of approach, overlapping more or less, are distinguishable, each emphasizing the viewpoint of a particular behavioral-science discipline or combination of disciplines. The viewpoint (and discipline) is usually that of the leader of the program, which in turn reflects the interests of the group it serves.

One such approach is built upon concepts derived from public administration theory, aided by formulae from the behavioral sciences generally. It seeks to answer the question, "What kind of enterprise management is suitable for foreign cultures, or a given foreign culture, and how does one go about setting it up?" The International Operations Institute sponsored by DACOR (Diplomatic and Consular Officers, Retired), the pioneer Maxwell Institute of American Overseas Operations under the direction of Dean Harlan Cleveland at Syracuse University, the Johns Hopkins Institute on Development Programming for mid-career ICA officers, and a program for developing overseas executives at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs are guided by this *institution-building* approach.

A more directly "people-to-people" approach stresses the development of an individual's skills in interpersonal relations largely a matter of *communication*. The missionary programs and the work of Dr. Edward R. Hall⁴ with the Government Affairs Institute in Washington, D.C., take the communications approach, and the Bethel National Training Laboratories program, which seeks to produce the "effective innovator" various types and sizes of American groups, is a variation on it. The Bethel program uses the concepts and methods of education, sociology, and psychology to train for effectiveness our own society; the missionary and other groups preparing personnel for work in foreign societies lean to the concept of anthropology and anthropological linguistics. The one stresses psychological universals in human behavior; the other points up cultural relativism and area patterns of behavior Each has something to learn from the other.

Here a word should be said about language training programs, which although not covered in this survey are an obvious aspect of the communications approach. Most language programs to date have been devoted too nearly exclusively to training in verbal communication, ignoring other media of interaction between persons. But some are

beginning to interject value and behavioral concepts, embracing the broader training objective of proficiency in the whole culture of the foreign society in which one is to operate.

A somewhat different perspective from these two is offered by a *value-premises* approach, which concentrates on the basic differences in the attitudes and values that underlie the behavior patterns of Americans and those of persons in other cultures. Anthropology, social psychology, and sociology provide its conceptual materials, which include "cultural relativism" and "modal personality," sometimes called "national character." Professor John Fayerweather of the Columbia University Graduate School of Business considers this to be the approach of his program in training business executives for work in Latin America.⁵ He argues that foreign institutions may be similar in structure to American ones but differ greatly in the attitudes and values which lie behind the structural facade. Dr. Benjamin Paul at the Harvard School of Public Health, whose Social Science Division trains public health workers for community projects in the United States and abroad, reasons that the directives for training in person-to-person communications and institution building follow from an understanding of the value systems involved. Most functionalist anthropologists, including Bronislaw Malinowski (*The Dynamics of Culture Change*), Clyde Kluckhohn (*Mirror for Man*), Cora DuBois (*People of Alor*), and Ruth Benedict (*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*), make value premises fundamental in their analyses.

From a psychiatric point of view, making oneself effective in a foreign society can be approached as a personal adjustment problem. A booklet published by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, *Working Abroad: A Discussion of Psychological Attitudes and Adaptation in New Situations*,⁶ typifies this viewpoint. Dr. Lawrence Hinkle's group studying human ecology at the Cornell Medical Center is similarly concerned with individual adjustment problems, especially their pathological aspects. Both contribute a useful biological orientation by showing the importance of physical factors--nerves, muscles, viscera--and relate the adjustment problem overseas, the "culture shock," to that at home, the "nervous breakdown."

Other differences among the training programs result from differences in the needs of the organizations supporting them. The foundations usually have personnel overseas for one tour only, and a short one. Their preparation therefore consists of brief orientations to acquaint the

trainee with a specific country. Business, on the other hand, usually places its personnel in one foreign area for a protracted period of time. On-the-job training in the field is most important here, and this is what Aramco and the Creole Oil Co. emphasize. Missionaries, however, like government workers, are often shifted from one area to another after a few years, and hence have in common with them the problem of training to become a "universal man" skillful at adjusting to any environment on short notice (not so incidentally a favorite American self-image).

Variations in Methodology

The training programs differ greatly in method as a result of these differences of approach. As to duration, for example, the Ford Foundation orients in a few days; the Hopkins ICA Institute takes 21 weeks. The interdenominational Meadville Missionary Training Conference at Allegheny College devotes, half of its six-week summer course to applied linguistics, on which the Hopkins Institute gives one lecture during its 21 weeks. The missionary programs are strong in emphasizing the other-culture viewpoint, the typically anthropological approach which has been weak or lacking in most of the others. Most programs, however, are now attempting with varying degrees of emphasis and of success to incorporate this "cultural relativity" view.

Some programs, for example the United Presbyterian Church's Institute on Overseas Churchmanship at Stony Point, N.Y., and most business groups' courses, rely entirely! on lectures by specialists and supplementary discussions. Others are primarily "laboratory" courses: the Bethel National Training Laboratories organize students into "T-groups" for practical exercises, skillfully blended with lectures. If the lecture courses are presented by academicians (and they often are because of the importance of the behavioral sciences in this training field) they can be successful only to the extent that the academic lecturers are able to apply their scientific theories to the practical field of the supporting organization. Often they have difficulty doing this, lacking knowledge of the practical field. This is no problem, of course, if the specialist is also a member of the practicing profession, as Dr. Eugene Nida and Dr. William Smalley of the Meadville missionary training center are also missionaries, and Dr. John Fayerweather at

Columbia is a business professor in addition to being an overseasmanship specialist.

Most of the program directors recognize the embryonic state of overseas training and approach their problems experimentally. The Bethel National Training Laboratories, who have had most experience in the interpersonal relations method, are constantly seeking to improve their programs by a system of staff critiques and by using their classes as research laboratories in teaching methods.

However divergent in approach and method, the programs are based in common on the faith that it is possible to inculcate a new, effective perspective in the minds of the trainees, and this new frame of mind which will enable the trainee to analyze his past experience and better interpret his future experience abroad is regarded as their most important product. This gaining of insight, like religious conversions, can be achieved in a relatively short time, and in fairness to the quickie system it must be said that much of traditional pedagogy of the best sort has relied on sudden flashes of wisdom rather than the laborious accumulation of knowledge, although ideally the two go together and "knowledge increaseth wisdom."

The directors, queried as to what factors are most important in developing the new perspective, collectively emphasize three principal ones. First, the personalities of the teaching staff are regarded as of prime importance in firing the minds of the trainees, communicating the desired image to them. Second, the duration of the course seems to them less important than having the concentration of full-time training for whatever period in an environment segregated from the workaday American world. Third, methods for inducing the students to grasp actively the new perspective should go beyond mere participation in discussions to include role-playing and other devices for emotional involvement. The critical elements thus appear to be forceful personalities like Dr. Eugene Nida of the Meadville program, special training areas such as the United Presbyterians' center at Stony Point or the Cheyenne Village used in a Montana University program for ICA personnel, and involvement techniques such as those of the T-group at the Bethel workshop. It seems that a course of training overseas in the foreign society, bringing all of these elements together, would be the best of all.

Overseas Follow-Up

Many of the programs viewed their pre-departure orientation as the major or only step in producing the effective American, who then should be tossed into the maelstrom of the foreign society to sink or swim as he had learned his lesson well or ill. Several, however, see the training as including at least some instruction after arrival overseas. The post-arrival orientation efforts of the International Educational Exchange Service (the Fulbrighters) with the help of local national point the way toward development of continued guidance in the field. Emulating the language and area schools conducted by the State Department overseas, for example in Beirut and Tokyo, the University of Syracuse is also currently setting up a training school in Italy.

A glance at the quarter-century history of the Arabian-American Oil Company's training of personnel for working and living in Saudi Arabia shows changes that may take place in overseas programs as they mature. At first, when Aramco was recruiting many employees who had no area knowledge, it gave them their initial training in an "Arab village" erected for the purpose on Long Island. This school was later removed to Saidon, Lebanon, and then to Dahran, where on-the-job orientation is now given in Arabic language and culture. At present, however, with recruiting at a relatively low level, staff vacancies can often be filled by persons with a prior knowledge of the Middle East. The current emphasis is therefore on an intensive postgraduate course given at Hofof, Saudi Arabia, where students selected from the elite of the company's staff speak only Arabic and live entirely in an Arab culture for ten hours a day over a 14-week period. The classrooms here are real-life laboratories of cultural orientation—the market place where the student learns to buy and sell Arab-style, the tent where he becomes familiar with the elaborate code of Arab hospitality, and the council gathering which shows him the traditional local patterns of decision-making. He also studies written Arabic and does research papers on aspects of the Saudi Arabian social and political scene.

Popularity and Effectiveness

A comparison among the courses as to number of students shows the missionary programs with large enrollments but most of the business and academic ones poorly attended. Two programs scheduled for the summer of 1959 for business personnel were postponed for lack of students. The key reason for this contrast seems to be that the missionary programs form an integral part of their students' career development: both interdenominational Meadville and Presbyterian Stony Point are screening centers as well as training areas. At Stony Point the students remain only candidates for overseas positions pending satisfactory completion of the course. The Johns Hopkins Institute also has a potential effect on the careers of its ICA students in that it sends the ICA personnel office reports on their capabilities to adjust to the foreign situation.

The most effective program from the standpoint of student interest and large enrollment is not a missionary one, however, but the Bethel workshop of the National Training Laboratories. It is well organized, and we have noted its balance of conceptual material in lectures integrated with the device for emotional involvement and case role training represented by its T-groups. A major factor in its popularity is that the students are required to study a fascinating subject-themselves-in interpersonal relations. According to Dr. Bradford, the Bethel plan has laboratories in ten universities, Standard Oil of New Jersey is putting a million dollars into the method for the next 10 years of training, and other organizations like General Electric and Red Cross are working with it. The present program is *not* useful content-wide for overseas training-it would train persons going to foreign societies for effectiveness in America-but its methods could be used in a foreign area frame of reference. The T-group also promises to be useful as a device for conducting research on small group interactions in any society.

None of the programs has data on record to validate the efficacy of its methods. Even the Bethel laboratory, with a dozen years of experience, has only anecdotal material to offer in support of its system. Many of the groups are beginning to take interest in getting feedback from the field and are instituting systems for continued contact with their trainees abroad, but none has approached the problem of evaluation scientifically, devising controlled studies of overseas Americans. More generally, there is a decided lack of scientific data anywhere on the overseas American and on the possibilities of training for effectiveness in another culture. A research organization will probably have to be set up eventually to study what happens to the American in new

environments and to keep abreast of changing foreign patterns of culture.

Although we are properly concerned here only with training, some mention should be made of the parallel problem of *screening* for effectiveness abroad. It is recognized that certain American personality types, with traits often stemming from ethnic group and area background, as well as the personal experience of the individual, are better fitted for work in one foreign area (say the Middle East) than in another, (say Southeast Asia) ; and it may be more efficient to utilize; the talents and capabilities an individual has acquired over the years than to try to remake him in a period of a few weeks. The screening systems of the missionary programs and especially of the Hopkins ICA Institute are quite rudimentary, and their effectiveness is a matter of conjecture at this stage in the development of overseas training. Ideally, screening for effectiveness should precede assignment to an area, and training should follow.

Implications for Intelligence Training

Although intelligence training can profit from continued contact with these private programs, their diversity in theoretical approach and methodology, reflecting differences in the needs of their sponsoring organizations, suggests that intelligence should not rely on outside organizations, but continue to develop its own overseas effectiveness training. The Foreign Service of the State Department, the ICA, the USIA, and the MAAG administration have similarly instituted intensive courses in overseas effectiveness. The area courses and training centers established overseas, however, whether by non-government groups or by government agencies, are a most important asset in which we could profitably become interested.

The intelligence program, like these others, will continue for some time to be an experimental one, and it should maintain an open-minded flexibility in training methods. It should borrow useful concepts from all the various philosophical viewpoints, the institutional approach of the public administration groups, the communications and value-premises theories of the anthropologists, and the personal adjustment bias of the

psychiatrists, rather than confine itself to the terms of any single academic discipline. Beginning with introductory courses and pre-departure orientation, it should aim at a follow-through in the field and additional training upon return from field duty.

A number of techniques used with success in other programs might be adopted in the intelligence courses—the emotional involvement of students through self-analysis in action situations, as in the Bethel T-groups; a problem-game technique used by DACOR's International Operations Institute and the Hopkins ICA workshop; Meadville's use of foreign nationals for research and class demonstrations, but broadened to include not only language but all communications as in the advanced Aramco course; the special training environment and full-time concentration provided in most programs; and an evaluation of individual capabilities and problems in a screening function. As we have seen, the successful programs with high enrollment and enthusiastic support are those that make this training obligatory for personnel assigned to overseas duty. Putting the intelligence program on such a basis would be a step toward ensuring its success.

Finally, although the need for research into the nature of the overseas effectiveness problem may be filled in part by the activities of other organizations, the intelligence program requires a concomitant research and validation activity of its own. Methodical study in depth will demand close cooperation between the field and the conductors of the training program, and a great deal of scientific data-collecting will be necessary before we are on firm ground. This doesn't mean that training programs should wait until the data is in, but rather that research should go hand in hand with teaching.

1 This problem was pointed up by a confidential OCB report of July 1959 entitled *United States Personnel Overseas*.

2 Although this survey concentrates on training of Americans conducted in the United States, it should be pointed out that the phenomenon of cross-cultural training is not restricted to stateside programs or to Americans. There is a growing interest in reorienting Americans already resident in foreign societies and in training foreign nationals for work in other countries, including the United States. Indiana University has a training program for incoming foreign students and special visitors from abroad. The Washington International Center of the American Council on

Education puts out a *Handbook for Travelers to the U.S.A.* and gives some orientation to foreign visitors. The Instituto Mexicano de Administracion de Negocios gives a twelve-week orientation on Mexican life for American businessmen in Mexico City. The British Council of Churches and the Conference of the British Missionary Societies present a one-week course at Moor Park College in England. In Germany there is an Institut Mr Selbsthilfe at Koln-Lindenthal which trains students for work in foreign areas. Many of the peoples of the world are thus becoming increasingly aware of the problems entailed in functioning in cultures and societies other than their own.

3 Sponsored by the Committee for an International Institute, headed by William Brennan.

4 See his book *The Silent Language*, reviewed in Intelligence Articles i 11 13.

5 See his book *The Executive Overseas*, reviewed in Intelligence; Articles IV 2.

6 Report No. 41, New York, Dec. 1958.

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