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22 September 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR:

SUBJECT: Request for evaluation of SEA Seminar

REFERENCE; Memo of 28 August 1952

1. The following remarks must be properly qualified. The "reviewer" was an infrequent student of the SEA Seminar--primarily, for reasons of conflict with office assignments and to a lesser extent, but quite frankly, for others which may be inferred from this critique requested by your office.

2. This type of area program can provide valuable orientation for first, those who have recently transferred to positions requiring analytical skill in assigned areas, and secondly, those who though they may be experienced in the analytical field are recent entrants into intelligence work. As a group, these persons would benefit from a good basic coverage of the geographical areas and from discussions of current trends and developments in each country. A program of entirely different proportions is required to command the attention of an analyst who has been working for some time on area assignments. Such a person is assumed familiar with the informational approach and the substance of the basic concepts of the area; he is more interested in a "speculative" type of seminar--one in which the encyclopedic groundwork has already been laid and in which personal theories and ideas can be discussed, defended and evaluated--one in which the lecturer becomes the prompter, the challenger of these ideas. The point made here, to reiterate, is that "mass exposure", as you are aware but as assigning officers may not always realize, will discredit one part of the group of another. The recent seminar suffered from the problem of an audience of extremely divergent experience and thus, interests.

This particular seminar was not of much value to me. As a new analyst--one recently transferred to the field--this type of training was a welcomed opportunity. The implementation of this particular program, however, labored under considerable handicaps. The physical environment was not the least abortive element to profitable learning. A window-less room with only small revolving fans in extremely warm weather was not conducive to enthusiastic participation--either on the part of the student or the lecturer. The subject matter--and again I admittedly may have attended on "off" days (attended at least two or three lectures by each professor), left me with these impressions: (a) the information presented about the countries of SEA was excessively generalized and specificity was "illustratively nailed" to the Philippine Islands; (b) a major portion of the data presented was uninteresting either by virtue of the speaking manner of the lecturer (discussed below) or by the stereotyped text-bookish examinations of the subjects. Four instances can specifically be recalled in which reversal of trends or statistics outdated the source quoted and negated the very thesis presented by the speaker. Quite obviously, the presentations (of three or four of the five lecturers) were not in tune

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SEP 22 1952
6/10/52

CONFIDENTIAL

with the interests or needs of the audience; this may have been due to misunderstanding on the part of the lecturers as to the requirements of the Seminar members or to a lack of appropriate reorganization of their materials. The oral aspect of presentations must be rated without exception as extremely poor. Manuscript presentations are at best poor tools of instruction and unfortunately, each professor in the Seminar read 80%-90% of his materials verbatim. The one speaker who commanded the largest classes did so, I believe, because his first lecture was excellent and his extemporaneous delivery much enjoyed. Thereafter, aside from wishing for a similar presentation, the audience found that at least, his deviations from manuscript revealed not only humor, but a personal zest to recount valuable experiences in one of the SEA countries.

The subject matter and the method of presentation, and as important--infrequent attendance by seminar members, were contributing factors to the almost complete absence of discussion. The apathy of the group must be considered, but the speakers could have employed a few teaching techniques to spur the members to questions and to an exchange of ideas.

Other avenues of training should be employed during the two hour--periods of instruction. Films, slides, records, illustrative materials--as difficult as it might be to find the right types--would enhance the presentations and spark audience attention, especially during the latter part of these sessions.

3. The negative aspects always seem those which one remembers most readily and perhaps that is a partial rationalization for the foregoing. The balance is brought into rightful equilibrium by an earnest endorsement of the sponsorship of these area programs. A desire for increasing knowledge of the area with which one is concerned and for constant development and improvement of appropriate skills is felt by the majority of officers; enthusiasm in our Division has run high for participation in these and similar programs. In the inception of this type of training, in your desire to perfect curricula, as evidenced by your request for critiques, and in the constant adjustment to changing needs, you are performing an acknowledgeably difficult task.



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