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Approved For Release 2002/08/13 : CIA-RDP80-01826R000900090027-9

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25 February 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel  
THROUGH : Chief, Medical Staff  
SUBJECT : Early Retirement for Overseas Personnel - Medical Requirements

1. Experience has shown that prolonged living in the foreign environment involves certain health stresses which differ both quantitatively and qualitatively from those experienced in the American setting. From a physical point of view, these stresses may be climatic, nutritional, toxic, infectious, or exhaustive in nature. Stresses of an emotional nature arise from the chronic frustration of dependency and socializing needs of employees and their families, and the inhibition of expressive modes of dealing with affective impulses.

2. Employment overseas with this Agency is further characterized by (a) the small size of our installations (b) their anonymity (c) the isolating requirements of security. These factors frequently operate in such a way as to expose our employees to certain more noxious situations, and at the same time deprive them of defensive and adaptive supports that otherwise might be available. This mode of existence requires of employees a great degree of personal responsibility and self-determination. It prevents them from identifying with, and belonging to, larger groups with overt and accepted purposes. It causes them to live closer to the indigenous economy, its remote cultural patterns, and its sub-standard health conditions.

3. The above-named stresses interact over a period of time with specific vulnerabilities of individual employees in such a way as to produce subtle but increasingly costly adaptational failures. These may be occasioned by acute clinical illnesses, but more often they fall short of the type of reaction of maladjustment that would warrant disability retirement. They are subtle, but none the less pervasive. In some instances this will produce a general acceleration of degenerative processes, rendering the employee more brittle and sensitive to occupational strain. In other instances it produces chronic and irreversible changes in the personal and interpersonal emotional economy of the family, making it less adaptive to new situations. The over-all effect is a loss of flexibility and mobility of assignment, and a decrease in the tolerance for situational stress. These occupational limitations, in turn, produce their own frustrations for the individual, and there is a beginning downward spiral of maladaptive reaction formations.

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