A COMPOSITE picture of the average OMGUS employee has been put together by the Employee Relations Office from records gathered during the past three years.

Now that this section of the Office of the Personnel Officer has been merged into the Employee Utilization Section an opportunity exists to look back to see why people came to occupied Germany and how their urges and needs were satisfied or found wanting.

The greatest number of persons accepting overseas employment gave as their primary or secondary reason their interest in seeing Europe. This urge affected personnel at all salary levels but was predominantly the reason given by women in clerical and secretarial groups. Many wanted to serve in Europe for broad cultural reasons, others wished to see places where their soldier relatives had been during the war while some were eager to visit specific European countries from which their forbears had emigrated.

Another strong incentive which prompted employees to serve Military Government was the opportunity to save money during the early days of the occupation when the 25 percent differential was offered and living costs were low.

Other reasons cited by incoming employees was their desire to serve their country in its role as an occupying power, the wish to help build a better world and preserve peace and similar patriotic, humane and democratic reasons.

While only a few OMGUS employees were typical soldiers of fortune, it is true that a strong sense of adventure was a common trait among OMGUS employees and the hardships that everyone endurred during the early days of the occupation were cheerfully accepted as part of the game by the majority of employees.

Employee Relations counselors often pointed out that a great many employees appeared to be “running away from something.” This was not entirely a negative impression by any means. Those who sought escape included career civil service men and women who welcomed an opportunity to get away from an “old line agency” for a welcome break in their long years of service at one desk or in one governmental bureau. Others, bored with civilian jobs in both small towns and large metropolitan areas sought a refreshing change of pace in their overseas assignment.

Still others candidly admitted that they were “running away” from an obnoxious mother-in-law, from a broken romance, a boss they could no longer get along with or the climate in some far-off corner of the United States.

In the early months of the occupation, only a small percentage of men and women left OMGUS because of dissatisfaction with working conditions, wages or living conditions. The primary reasons for leaving which were most often recorded during 1946 and 1947 were the desire to return to another job or to school at the completion of an employment agreement, marriage, compelling personal reasons, special mission completed, homesickness and medical problems.

During 1948, as living costs rose and salaries were decreased due to reorganization and reclassification, an increasingly larger number of employees gave as their primary or secondary reason their inability to save money or to see any future chance for financial advancement for them in Military Government.

During the entire span of the occupation many employees admitted they were not really as much “homesick” as “here-sick” and they were unable to “take” the sight of the cold and hungry German population living as it did in ruin and rubble. Although this was not often the number one reason why men and women left for the United States, it was in a large percentage of the cases a strong contributing reason. One young woman said in an exit interview: “I just had a man follow me for a block just to get my cigarette butt. That’s the final straw. I’m going home.”

As jobs were reclassified and wages brought into line, many employees and particularly those who had civilianized into good paying positions felt that accepting a lower rating at less money would harm their employment record. For that reason they preferred to take their chances on finding a job at home in preference to staying with Military Government.

During the early months of 1948 as the political clouds darkened, some employees gave as their secondary reason their apprehension over the threats of war and violence. This was particularly true in Berlin, where the blockade further intensified the “claustrophobia” felt by those working in the quadrupartite island in the middle of the Soviet Zone.

A few employees frankly admitted their fear of personal safety while others who were apprehensive stood behind such “primary” reasons for leaving as completion of agreement, desire to go to college, or their wish to find employment in their hometown.

Among the negative elements which affected the recruiting, retention and reemployment of qualified men and women in OMGUS were such factors as the insecurity felt by the individual for his personal safety, his doubtful civil service status, the onesidedness of his employment agreement, the frequent reductions in force as occupation policy developed, the lack of a genuine overseas career service, and the frequent reclassification and downgrading of positions.

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Although few employees found the occupation and military government rules and regulations intolerable, there were occasional outcries against red tape and over-organization. Some employees resented having to obtain formal Military Government permission to get married, the need for travel orders, entry permits and special passes, the difficulties encountered in finding a home of one's choice and the restrictions against visiting German restaurants and clubs. More than that, almost all employees at some time missed such American amenities as drugstores, supermarkets, hamburger stands, department stores and the varied menus of American restaurants.

Despite the ruins, early language barriers and other "hardship" factors that made up the background of life in Germany, nearly all US civilians found opportunities to broaden their horizons and to enrich their own cultural backgrounds.

Most OMGUS employees took the opportunity to spend their generous allotment of leave days in nearby European countries. Unlike most Americans whose holiday trips abroad are concentrated and confined to a short number of days, US civilians in Germany by virtue of being stationed in the heart of Europe were able to take advantage of short leaves throughout the year, thus enabling them to visit Holland in tulip time, Salzburg during the music festival, the Rhine at Weinfest-time (grapes harvest time), France during Mardi Gras and the Alps in the ski season.

Nearly everybody learned to speak a little German and some became proficient in reading, writing and speaking this language. Since excellent tutors were available at relatively small fees, many studied French, Russian, Italian, and here and there Finnish, Hungarian and Greek.

Employees and their dependents found rare opportunities during the past three years to discover and exploit latent talents for painting and music, and by virtue of their advantageous economic position were able to retain top-flight artists to teach them oil painting, watercolor and sketching; or high-ranking musicians to assist them in perfecting their skills on the violin, piano or some other favored musical instrument.

Still others dabbled in ceramics, photography, weaving and other fine arts or practical arts. One young man even learned to become a contortionist, and guided by continental experts in that entertainment art became proficient enough to gain theatrical and nightclub bookings on his return to the United States.

PERSONNEL fortunate enough to be located in Berlin and similar metropolitan areas, were able to enjoy German opera, symphony orchestras, ballet, the theater, as well as motion pictures in German, French, English and even Russian.

OMGUS employees and dependents, sometimes in association with GYA and Amerika Haus (US Information Center) programs but more often on their own, sponsored round table discussions, forums, Kaffeeklatsche (Coffee parties), afternoon teas and Sunday morning "breakfasts" in an effort to bring Americans, Allied and German persons with similar cultural interests together. These informal programs were not only fruitful and worthwhile for Americans but served in an unofficial way to further the reorientation aims of Military Government among German cultural leaders.

The ability of an employee to adjust to the constantly changing environment which was characteristic of occupied Germany and Military Government seemed to be a major factor in the individual's success on his overseas mission.

In this respect age played a minor role since the employee's aptitude or willingness to accept the adjustments which constantly confronted him was not confined to any age group.

A serious interest in serving one's country and humanity, as well as a keen interest in his job, were basic drives which goaded many an employee toward a successful completion of his mission.

Among those who turned in poor performances or failed in their assignment and who were subsequently discharged or sent home after the completion of their initial agreement were men and women who were emotionally unfit for service with OMGUS.

This group of people included those who showed evidences of psychotic or psychoneurotic tendencies, heavy drinkers and persons having strong, unbridled, undemocratic prejudices. Men and women who hated Germans on one hand or those who were unreasonably fond of and sympathetic towards Germans on the other hand, were poor risks as employees. Those who disliked the French, British, Russians, Italians or other European nationality groups also failed to integrate themselves into the program, particularly on the bizonal and quadripartite level.

Curiously enough, employees with certain physical defects, which under a strict medical screening might have disqualified them, turned out to be good personnel risks. These include men and women with arrested tuberculosis, those suffering the loss of an eye or a limb and those with minor cardiac disorders. Much poorer risks were those men and women who required special diets which were difficult or impossible to obtain in Germany, or those with allergic, diabetic, ulcerous or similar conditions which would not be adequately treated in the European theater.

Among others who failed to keep the highest objectives of the mission in true perspective were those who succumbed to the temptations of the black market and those who spent an inordinate amount of attention on off-the-job interests and temptations.

To keep recruiters in the United States aware of changing conditions in occupied Germany, a special report on overseas life was prepared at tri-monthly periods and sent to orientation and procurement personnel along all steps of the recruiting procedure. By keeping them informed and by calling to their attention the type of people who failed to make good, OMGUS personnel officials helped guide recruiters in their selection and screening of new recruits.

Now that Employee Relations has become an integrated part of Employee Utilization, this type of human relations information reporting will not be dispensed with but will serve as a

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