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24 July 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training and Education

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FROM:

[Redacted Name]

Chief, Career Training Division, OTE

SUBJECT: Aspen Institute Seminar

1. I am in the process of preparing some evaluative comments on the Aspen Institute seminar I attended 5-18 July 1987, but thought you might be interested in a beneficial side effect of our participation in it: the chance to correct misperceptions about the Agency. A recurrent theme during my two weeks in Aspen -- from auditors in the seminar as well as participants -- was the comment: "I certainly have a different view of CIA after meeting you and discovering that Agency people share our values." Am not certain what they expected, but it was clear that there were some negative preconceptions about what a CIA official might contribute to that kind of forum. One auditor's parting shot was: "One thing I have learned from this seminar is not to prejudge what a person will be like by his title and affiliation." She made a point of saying privately that the observation was chiefly directed at me.

2. The group of 16 participants was about evenly split between political views to the left and right of center, with no one on the extremes. By the time we left there was great fondness among the group members, all of whom vowed to keep in touch. Though there was curiosity about the Agency, and wariness evident among the academics, my presence served to de-mystify and neutralize whatever prejudices people brought with them. One evening, for example, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Missouri, one of my fellow discussants, asked me to spend an evening in the bar with him to talk about CIA. A professed liberal, he wanted to get what he thought would be straight information about the Agency from someone in the organization he had come to trust. He left asking for brochures on the CT Internship Program, which we have subsequently sent him.

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3. These comments, of course, are not intended to say that I personally caused any changes of mind. If [redacted] of NESAs (whom I replaced at the last moment as a stand in) had been there, he would have had the same experience. The point is that we need to see and be seen by people who will form opinions about CIA in a vacuum if we are invisible. Since the people who attend Aspen Institutes are leaders in their fields -- industry, state government, academia, the labor movement, and the church -- we are wise to be represented there. By extension, the same holds true for other external training: it not only benefits the individual but -- to the extent that we are out there showing our true colors -- it can significantly help the Agency's image.



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