Compte rendu

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Grupa pracownicza jako przedmiot i podmiot motywowania (Work Group as an Object and a Subject of Stimulation), by Alicja Kozdroj, The Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Management, Wroclaw, Ossolineum, 1988, 307 pp., ISBN 83-04-02806-9

The crisis of industrial relations in Poland dictates a need to activate hidden resources potentially available but so far not adequately recognized. The book by A. Kozdroj starts with the issues of work motivation as presented mostly in the Western literature of the subject. Next is presented the socio-psychological phenomenon of the work groups: the group concept, the characteristic features of working groups, management based on small groups. In the third chapter application of group approach is presented in terms of how it works in the West, in the USSR, and in Yugoslavia. The fourth chapter deals with the application of small working groups in Poland: mining, construction, shipyards, maintenance, steelmills. The last chapter contains proposals regarding the location of small groups in the Polish enterprises.

The group forms of work already exist in mining, construction, manufacturing, steelworks, and electronics. They are either of a traditional nature or they are dictated by the technological and organizational necessities which are imposed by the collective nature of the work tasks. There are several desirable dimensions in these work groups: small size (max. 20-25 members), the autonomous nature of a collective task, self-governmental nature of group management, the voluntary participation, management of objectives, representation of the group interests on the higher levels of management, job rotation, mutual help and trust, bonus on output divided among the group members according to their individual contributions (pp. 281-284).

The group dynamics approach would much enrich this book; unfortunately it is entirely missing. Groups have to be established and organizationally helped with the recognition of socio-psychological factors and processes. There are several **stages** through which groups grow towards maturity. In the beginning the attrition rate is very high and only a few teams are able to overcome the internal and external difficulties. The climate and style of human relations in the group depends a great deal on the cultural and socio-emotional maturity of individual members, and especially the group leader. Training and consultation are very important factors in the promotion of autonomous groups, and this is not adequately acknowledged in this book[1].

The group identity is a very important factor which has to be approached from the sociological and socio-anthropological perspective. Many human liaisons play a minor role because their public manifestation is weak or actually non-existent. Connections between people at work play a public role in Japan and they are not much weaker than the family ties. Actually these connections are cultivated outside workplace and worktime at the expense of family life. The socialist and communist work brigades in the Soviet bloc have become well publicized, but their actual public image has remained weak because of the artificial nature of this social phenomenon, as well as its manipulation by the ruling party and the administration of the nationalized enterprises.

Socio-cultural identity is something much different than administrative or organizational identity. The fact of belonging to a given unit may be the matter of pride and satisfaction or it

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1   I wrote in detail on these problems in *Kultura pracy zbiorowej* (Culture of collective work), Warsaw 1962, pp. 149-185, *Wiez i konflikt w zakladzie pracy* (Cohesion and conflict at workplace), Warsaw 1969, *Praca i kolezenstwo* (Work and Companionship), Warsaw 1963, *The Self-Defeating Organization. A Critique of Bureaucracy,* New York: Praeger 1986, pp. 101-179, and *Sociotechnics of Trust at Work,* Speyer, FRG: Verwaltungschule 1988.

may be a negative factor. People may grow through their group identity or they may become losers. For example, the drinking of alcohol practiced with work companions may lead to a personal and organizational disaster. The sociotechnics of group work should take into account all these factors in order to make groups the vehicle of individual and collective growth. For example, in the Israeli collective farms belonging to the work groups constitute a very important factor of socialization, fully recognized by the collectivity. Individual members of the **kibbutz** take much of their personal pride and esteem from group achievements.

So far, the work groups in Poland do not have much of a socio-cultural identity. Up to the 1960s, there was much effort to politicize these groups and to use them in the socialist emulation officially promoted. It did not work because aims were quite unrealistic and the whole policy was implemented from the top down without much concern for the real needs and aspirations of common people. Now, there is much more recognition of the necessity of improving the climate of human relations at work. This is one of the basic factors of a genuine socio-economic reform so much needed in Poland in order to improve the general wellbeing. It would be not enough to spread around the organizational form of autonomous work groups. In addition, the creation of a positive public image of this form is needed: to promote an exemplary climate and a good performance, to help in problem solving and mutual accommodation between the group members, and to reinforce the capacity of the groups to be recognized at the higher level. Without these measures, it will not be possible to achieve positive results expected from the autonomous work groups. Any manipulatory utilization of them by the external bodies would spoil the groups and diminish their capacity to improve work motivation.

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