

COMMUNICATIONS (CLANDESTINE)

The Sicilian Mafia has a maxim: "If you can say it, do not write it. If you can grunt it, do not say it."

Many clandestine operatives have a "Keltic distrust of the written word." On the other hand, transmission by way of mouth causes distortion, so Che Guevera recommended the use of ciphers or codes.

There are many methods of encrypting information, including the following:

- 1) Two operatives agree to use a certain text, such as the first edition of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde. In the message, the first word could be "13-18-4," which means the word will be found on page thirteen, line eighteen, word four in the Wilde text. If the operatives can keep the edition and book they are using secret, this method is secure.
- 2) In the message a simple cipher may be used, in which symbols (such as %, *, +) represent single letters or digits.
- 3) In the message, all consonants are represented by the previous LETTER in the alphabet, and all vowels are represented by the following vowel in series "A-E-I-O-U. With this technique, the name "Jesus" is IAROR.
- 4) A short message can be hidden as a "barn code" in an ordinary letter. Here, a three-page letter is written on some innocuous business, but every fifteenth word in the letter is actually the message.
- 5) An ordinary letter is sent, but a secret message is written on the page using "invisible ink." During World War II, British agents made invisible ink from one part alum mixed with one hundred parts water.

The message became visible when a hot iron was passed over the sheet of paper bearing the message.

COMMUNICATIONS (CLANDESTINE), CONVEYANCE OF

In secure communications, there is never any direct contact between the sender and the receiver. Ideally, the sender does not even know the identity of the receiver and vice versa.

There are time-tested ways for agents and operatives to communicate information. These include the following:

- 1) A "cut out" is a person who carries messages back and forth between two people who cannot meet. The cut out may be "witting" (he is aware of his function) or "unwitting" (he is unaware of his function). An example of an unwitting cutout is a commercial courier who is hired to deliver a package containing a message.
- 2) A "live drop" is someone who accepts messages and holds them until they can be safely collected by another person. The messages may be in written form or they may be transmitted orally to the "live drop" who memorizes them.
- 3) A "dead drop" is a predetermined hiding place where operatives leave messages. The messages are later collected by another.

A dead drop may be stationary (inside the hollow of a tree) or mobile (inside the

spare tire of a car).

Soviet agents often used soft-drink cans. They were rigged to explode or spill acid if they were not opened correctly.

In today's world, a dead drop may be an e-mail account. An operative accesses the account, writes a message, but does not send it. A second operative, who also has the password, accesses the account, reads the draft message, and then deletes it. (Since the message never traveled over the Internet, it cannot be intercepted.)

When a message is left at a dead drop which is a physical location, a sign or indicator is also left (a rock is moved, a chalk mark is made, and so forth). That way, from a distance the receiver knows a message is available and will not have to waste time (or unnecessarily arouse suspicion) by constantly checking the site.

The advantage of the dead drop is that it allows no direct contact between the sender and receiver. Indeed, the sender and receiver need not know the identity of the other.

The great disadvantage of the dead drop is that the message (for a time) is out of the control of the organization. The message may be copied, altered, stolen, or destroyed without the organization's knowledge.

COMMUNICATION (CLANDESTINE), PRISON AND

Prisons go to great lengths to control communication. In Alcatraz--the fiendish twentieth-century American prison--prisoners were never allowed to receive original copies of their mail. Only letters transcribed by the "authorities" were permitted.

Within the prison itself, inmates in solitary confinement use the "Knuckle Voice." Invented in Russia by a nihilist doctor, prisoners tap out messages based on the so-called "Siberian Square."

1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	A	B	C	D	E	
2	F	G	H	I	J	
3	K	L	M	N	O	
4	P	Q	R	S	T	
5	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

A is one-space-one (or two short taps)

B is one-space-two (or one short tap followed by two short taps)

J is two-taps-space--then five taps

Y is five taps-space--then five taps

In a North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp, an American pilot who was forced to utter enemy propaganda on film cleverly used his eyelids to say "torture" in Morse code.

In West German prisons, imprisoned members of the Baader-Meinhof gang communicated with one another through their lawyers.

COMMUNICATIONS (CLANDESTINE), RICE PAPER AND

If clandestine communications must be written, use tiny sheets of rice paper. The

sheets are easily hidden and in an emergency they can be safely swallowed.