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Win friends and destroy your enemies with CIA's wartime guide to bribery and blackmail

Field manual from the “Father of Central Intelligence” explains how to trigger riots and coups

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https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2017/sep/18/cia-oss-bribery-blackmail/?utm_content=buffer3a0c4&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

A field manual in Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) archives, prepared under the direction of, and signed by “[Wild Bill](#)” [Donovan](#), the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the World War II predecessor to CIA, explained how to use bribery and blackmail to destroy enemies and influence people.

Donovan, also known as the [Father of Central Intelligence](#) and the [Father of American Intelligence](#), laid the groundwork for the American Intelligence Community and acted as a mentor to all of the most influential CIA Directors through the 1980s. Dubbed the [Morale Operations Field Manual](#), the highly sensitive provisional manual was to be “used as the basic doctrine” for the OSS’ training. Its suggestions included using bribes to cause riots, trigger coups, and [getting people hooked on drugs](#) in order to bribe them with more.

This Morale Operations Field Manual, Strategic Services, (Provisional), is published for the information and guidance of all concerned and will be used as the basic doctrine for Strategic Services training for such subjects.

The contents of this Manual should be carefully controlled and should not be allowed to come into unauthorized hands. The Manual is intended for use of the OSS bases and should not be carried to advance bases.

AR 308—5, pertaining to handling of secret documents, will be complied with in the handling of this Manual.



William J. Donovan

Director

While called “Morale Operations” in the book, the definition used more closely matches the popular understanding of psychological operations, or the U.S. military’s current definition of subversion. For the OSS’ purposes, morale operations included “all measures of subversion other than physical used to create confusion and division, and to undermine the morale and the political unity of the enemy.”

The term MORALE OPERATIONS as considered in this Manual includes all measures of subversion other than physical used to create confusion and division, and to undermine the morale and the political unity of the enemy through any means operating within or purporting to operate within enemy countries and enemy occupied or controlled countries, and from bases within other areas, including neutral areas, where action or counteraction may be effective against the enemy.

The authorized examples of morale operations were varied, but explicitly included bribery and blackmail.

4. IMPLEMENTS

a. AUTHORIZED*

The Morale Operations Branch, in cooperation with other agencies of OSS, will employ the following implements for the accomplishment of the above objectives:

(1) *Contacts* with and manipulation of individuals and underground groups;

(2) *Agents provocateurs*;

(3) *Bribery and blackmail*;

(4) *Rumors*;

(5) *Forgery*, to include the writing of poison-pen letters, forging of misleading intelligence documents, falsification of enemy documents and periodicals, and the printing of false orders to the enemy, regulations, and proclamations;

(6) *False leaflets, pamphlets, and graphics*, to be used for subversive deception within enemy and enemy-occupied countries and not identifiable with any official or semi-official United Nations agency;

(7) "*Freedom stations*" masquerading as the voice of groups resistant within enemy and enemy-occupied countries when used for subversive deception and not identifiable with any official or semi-official United Nations agency.

According to the manual, bribery and blackmail could be "extremely effective" in many cases, but both were seen as dangerous. Bribery in particular was seen as likely to expose the operator, "since the art of double-crossing is an ancient one, and the bribed individual is apt to be an unscrupulous person willing to work for either side." Bribery could be used to target "political and military leaders, newspaper editors and reporters, radio broadcasters, heads of business houses, religious, professional and labor leaders, police, petty officials, customs officers and sentries."

24. BRIBERY AND BLACKMAIL

a. Bribery and blackmail, while in many cases extremely effective, must be used with great caution. Unless done skillfully, they may result in exposure of the operator. This is especially true for bribery, since the art of double-crossing is an ancient one, and the bribed individual is apt to be an unscrupulous person willing to work for either side.

b. Bribery and blackmail must be adjusted to the social customs and expectations of the recipient. In some areas of the world (particularly in the East) and among some classes of people, bribery is almost as common as tipping in the United States; in other areas and among other classes of people, the mere suggestion of bribery is highly insulting.

c. Such individuals as political and military leaders, newspaper editors and reporters, radio broadcasters, heads of business houses, religious, professional and

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Bribery's uses were varied. In some instances, they could be used to accomplish "important strategic secret diplomatic acts," but typically would be used to aid less ambitious operations. A bribe to a journalist or broadcaster, for instance, could be used to plant or help circulate rumors. The manual also notes that "bribing of police officials may facilitate the creation of an "incident" or riot."

d. USES OF BRIBERY

(1) In rare instances, bribery may be effective in accomplishing important strategic secret diplomatic acts, especially in enemy satellite countries (see paragraph 33-e). Typically, bribery is used to aid in carrying out less ambitious operations. Thus, for the purpose of spreading rumors, it may be desirable, especially in neutral areas, to bribe newspaper men or radio announcers to plant the rumors in newspapers or in broadcasts. Bribing of police officials may facilitate the creation of an "incident" or riot.

The "important strategic secret diplomatic acts" referenced above are discussed again in paragraph 33-e of the World War II manual, subtitled "Provoking Rebellion or Coup d'Etat in a Satellite Country or Inducing Its Separation from the Axis." According to the manual, "the mission is to aid in the inciting and carrying through of revolutions, incidents, changes in governments or coup d'etat in satellite or other enemy-dominated countries." The manual notes that due to the sensitive nature of overthrowing another country, "close consultation with the State Department may be necessary." The manual, embedded at the end of the article, goes on to list several ways of accomplishing just such a goal.

e. PROVOKING REBELLION OR COUP D'ETAT IN A SATELLITE COUNTRY OR INDUCING ITS SEPARATION FROM THE AXIS

(1) The mission is to aid in the inciting and carrying through of revolutions, incidents, changes in governments, or coup d'etat in satellite or other enemy-dominated countries. Since many of the operations are in the nature of secret diplomacy, close consultation with the State Department may be necessary.

Returning to the section on bribery, the manual explains that its judicious use with local leaders, “fence-sitting political, religious or professional groups” could help convince them to become subversives that would serve the U.S.’s goals. Similarly, selectively bribing officials could result in dissension being created in the organization. The manual also suggests bribing officials and then exposing the bribes to enemy authorities as a way of eliminating a troublesome person and creating “doubt and suspicion of all officials.”

(2) In some cases, bribery can, by itself, achieve certain MO objectives. Thus by judicious bribing of local leaders of various enemy or fence-sitting political, religious, labor or professional groups, the group may be induced to engage in subversive work — or by selective bribing of such officials, dissension might be created in the rank of the organization. Successful bribery of an enemy or collaborationist official followed by exposure to the enemy authorities can also be used to discredit or neutralize the effectiveness of such officials and create doubt and suspicion of all officials.

When it came to actually bribing people, Donovan’s manual notes that it’s often best to start small and with minimal risk. This allows the recipient of the bribe to become accustomed to the idea, and creates a potential for leverage. In addition to the prior suggestion of exposing a bribe to eliminate a troublesome official, the manual also suggests using evidence of the bribe as the basis for blackmail. “Once the initial bribe has been accepted, and evidence of such bribery has been obtained, the demands can become successively greater.” Whatever form the bribe took, it was important that it “become increasingly indispensable to the recipient.”

e. OPERATION OF BRIBERY

(1) It is often desirable for the first services purchased to be of a minor character, and one not involving great risk on his part. Once the initial bribe has been accepted, and evidence of such bribery has been obtained, the demands can become successively greater. Where possible, the “reward” or bribe should also be of such a nature as to become increasingly indispensable to the recipient.

In some instances, this meant providing something other than money, whether that meant food, medicine, drugs, clothes, liquor, jobs, transportation, protection, favors, etc. The manual notes that in the instance of drugs, it “may involve first inducing a dependency in the individual upon a drug.”

(2) In many cases money may be less effective than goods or services, particularly in areas where certain goods and services are relatively inaccessible while money is plentiful. The following may be useful depending on the needs and susceptibilities of the recipient: food, medicines, drugs (this may involve first inducing a dependency in the individual upon a drug), clothes, liquor, employment, escape to neutral countries, transportation of letters to friends and relatives outside, release of relatives or recipient from prison, protection, business tips, social and political favors, especially aid to the recipient's family.

The manual explains that some bribes are best left covert and deniable. Techniques suggested, which are still used today both by intelligence agencies and organized crime, included buying goods above their value or selling them below it, deliberately losing a bet, presenting people with expensive gifts or loans, as well as “monopolistic rights to certain revenues, products or services; establishing “philanthropic” organizations as fronts; [and] subsidizing corporations.”

(3) Indirect or covert bribery may be used where it will reduce the danger of exposure and avoid the possibility of insulting the recipient. Covert bribery involves the use of such techniques as the following: selling goods below their value; buying goods above their value; losing to the recipient at gambling; making unwinnable bets with him; presenting him with expensive gifts; making heavy “loans”; granting monopolistic rights to certain revenues, products or services; establishing “philanthropic” organizations as fronts; subsidizing corporations.

Regardless of who the target was, the manual notes that good intelligence is required. A successful bribe relied on understanding and exploiting the recipient's “needs, weaknesses, grievances, fears, hopes, honesty, and integrity.”

1. TYPE OF INTELLIGENCE REQUIRED

To carry through successful bribery it is essential to have full intelligence on the character of the recipient — his needs, weaknesses, grievances, fears, hopes, honesty, and integrity. What he feels deprived of in the way of goods and services should be known. Closest collaboration with X-2 should be maintained.

The section describing blackmail is comparatively short. Noting that it's used “against the same targets and can be used for the same purposes as bribery,” the manual explains that threats are a stick that can

be used in conjunction with, or in place of, the carrot. A typical blackmail threat would be release information about them that would cause them harm. Whether or not the information was accurate didn't necessarily matter. If the subject could be made to believe that it was, or convincing evidence fabricated, the end result would be the same.

g. BLACKMAIL

(1) Blackmail is directed against the same targets and can be used for the same purposes as bribery. It differs from bribery in that threats, rather than rewards, are used to induce action. They are ordinarily threats to divulge information about the individual which would cause him serious harm, socially, politically, or physically. This information can be based on acts committed by the individual in the past, acts now being committed, acts which the individual *believes* he has committed, or acts which he has not in fact committed but for which evidence is planted against him.

Expanding on the idea introduced in the section on bribery, the manual explains that blackmail is often the second stage of a bribe. Once someone had accepted a bribe, additional bribes could be used alongside the threat of exposure, creating a bribery-blackmail one-two punch. The continuing use of bribes would often be necessary due to the need to keep the persuasion proportionate to the risk. If the risk of being exposed was less than the risk they would undertake by acquiescing to the blackmail, it was doomed to fail. A bribe could make up the difference in motivations.

(3) Blackmail is often a secondary stage of bribery. After a man has accepted bribes, he is kept in line by threats that his duplicity will be exposed; or both may be used at the same time.

(4) The action demanded of the victim should be consonant with the blackmail risk involved. That is, care should be taken to see to it that the action demanded of him does not entail greater risks than the consequences of exposure of his original "misdeed."

Ideally, blackmail should be genuine and based off of intelligence that have exposed the individual's vulnerabilities. However, there were bound to be times "when incriminating information is difficult to secure, or when no such information exists." In these instances, "it may be possible either to create it or to plant it." This would, of course, be the most difficult and dangerous route to take.

h. TYPE OF INTELLIGENCE REQUIRED

(1) Blackmail requires intimate intelligence on the man, his family, his friends, or his associates. Documentary or photographic evidence is valuable.

(2) When incriminating information is difficult to secure, or when no such information exists, it may be possible either to create it or to plant it. A study of the individual's character should suggest special vulnerabilities (drugs, alcohol, women, luxury, power), which may be exploited and result in transgressions. If this is not feasible, spurious documents, and bits of "telltale evidence" can be used to build up a case. The latter procedure, however, will be extremely difficult and dangerous. Closest collaboration with X-2 should be maintained.

With patience, timing and careful selection there were few subversive goals that the manual didn't think could be accomplished with bribery and/or blackmail. Everyone had a weakness, and it was up to American intelligence to find and exploit it. In those instances where no weakness existed, it could be created either by fabricating evidence, or by getting them hooked on drugs.

Of course, most of the activities described in the manual would be illegal if undertaken by a private citizen. [MuckRock is not responsible if you follow the advice of the Father of Central Intelligence.](#)