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 Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act
 PL105-246

MEMORANDUM to Dr. Rogers

From: R. H. Knapp

By: _____ Date: _____

Subject: Rumor as a device for instigating assassinations.

It is a well established fact in psychology and sociology that crimes of violence, i.e., rape and assassinations, come in strings. This is particularly true if wide publicity or notoriety is given the first crime. It would seem that the publicizing of a single crime of this sort captivates the imagination of certain types of near psychotic personalities, and serves as a suggestion and pattern for their own crazed actions.

With this in view, would it not be possible to circulate persistent rumors to the effect that attempts had been made to assassinate Mussolini. These stories might well be accompanied by stories to the effect that a secret terroristic organization had been founded in Italy, with the purpose of killing ~~the~~ the Italian leader. An appropriate name could be devised for this organization. Once these rumors are current, they could be reenforced by open propaganda and by clandestine propaganda in Italy. For example, it might be very effective, immediately after the first rumor of attempted assassination, to have the words "next time" scrawled on side-walks and buildings. The populace, seeking the meaning of these cryptic

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words, would by this process become acquainted with the fable of the secret vengeance society.

The prime hope of such a program would be that by repeatedly suggesting the assassination of Mussolini, someone might actually undertake to carry it out. Lacking such an outcome, the program would still have merit in focusing hatred ~~against~~ against the Italian leader and probably give encouragement to those already disaffected toward the regime. Finally, it might lead to further security measures to protect the leader which would be a nuisance to the regime and perhaps tend to separate him still further from direct contact with the public.

On the other hand, it might well be that rumors of this sort would foster sympathy for the Italian leader or lead to additional security regulations which would prove an impediment to our subversive operations already in action. My judgment is that on the whole the plan is feasible, although I grant there is room for disagreement.

These rumors would probably find a ready reception among the Italian people. First of all, assassination is a venerated political institution among the Italians. Secondly, reports of attempted assassination ~~are~~ lend credence by the fact that repeated attempts have been made in the past. Third, the tradition of the "vengeance society" has precedent in the history and folklore of the people. Finally, such rumors directly exploit the deep hostility which many Italians feel for Mussolini and his regime.

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