

JAILBREAK FROM WOMEN'S PRISON VIA TUNNEL



THE FEMALE FUGITIVES CRAWLED THROUGH A TUNNEL TO ESCAPE FROM CABILDO PRISON IN MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY. THE ESCAPE WAS ORGANIZED EXTERNALLY BY THE PRISONERS' BUDDIES, SINCE THEY WERE ALL PART OF THE TUPAMAROS URBAN GUERRILLA GROUP.

OPERATION STAR: ESCAPE OF 38 WOMEN

THE FEMALE PRISONERS CREPT DOWN A TUNNEL TO THE SEWERS, THEN TO A NEIGHBORING HOUSE

WHEN:
THE NIGHT OF
JULY 30, 1971

WHERE:
CABILDO PRISON,
MONTEVIDEO,
URUGUAY

WHO:
38 WOMEN
PRISONERS
OF THE MLN-T

CONVICTION:
VARIOUS CONVICTIONS FOR BELONGING
TO URUGUAY'S TUPAMAROS URBAN
GUERRILLA GROUP

OUTCOME:
THE 38 FUGITIVES MANAGED TO ESCAPE,
BUT MOST OF THEM WERE ARRESTED
AGAIN OVER TIME

OUTSIDE HELP

A group of 38 female prisoners escaped from Cabildo women's prison in Montevideo. They belonged to the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros* (National Liberation Movement, MLN-T), ideologically on the far left, and acted as an urban guerrilla group throughout the 1960s and early '70s. The people of Uruguay were starving, and the Tupamaros intended to challenge the government.

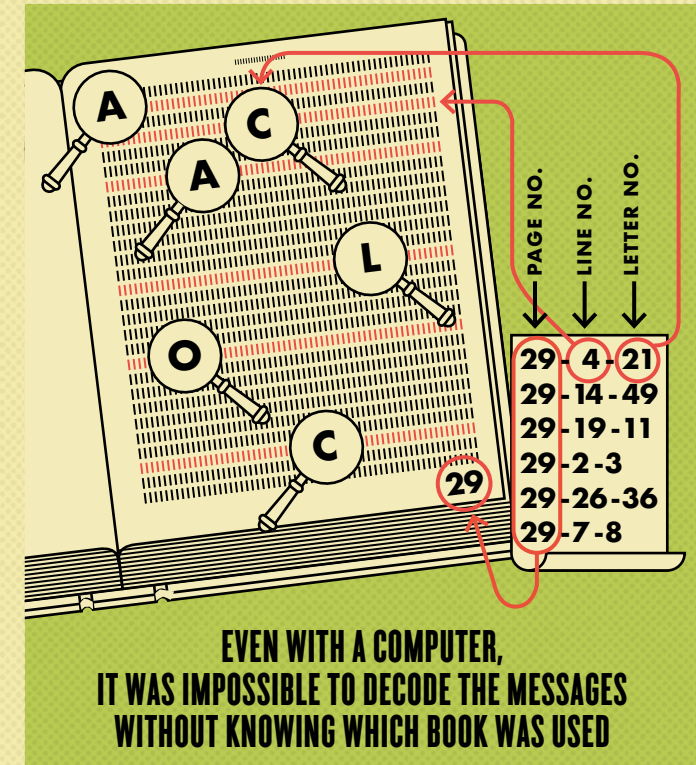
A SECRET OPERATION

The head of the Tupamaros masterminded the escape, code-named *Operación Estrella* (Operation Star), from outside the prison.

Communication with the prisoners group members was by a clever numerical code. During visits, family members would pass coded messages on rolled-up cigarette paper to the inmates. They called these "pills" and hid them in their mouths. The prisoners decoded the messages to prepare for their escape. They also received miniature pencil-drawn plans.



THE TUPAMAROS'S SYMBOL, A STAR, INSPIRED THE NAME OF THE ESCAPE PLAN: OPERATION STAR.



A SECRET CODE WAS USED TO INDICATE LETTERS IN A PARTICULAR BOOK. THE PRISONERS WERE GIVEN A PAGE, LINE, AND LETTER NUMBER. THEY COULD FORM WORDS FOLLOWING A SEQUENCE OF CODES. USING THE REAL CODES PICTURED HERE, WE CAN DECODE THE SPANISH WORD FOR "SEWER": C-L-O-A-C-A.

EVEN WITH A COMPUTER,
IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DECODE THE MESSAGES
WITHOUT KNOWING WHICH BOOK WAS USED

CABILDO PRISON WAS A WOMEN'S JAIL. AT THE TIME OF THE ESCAPE, IT HELD 43 INMATES, ALL OF WHOM BELONGED TO THE TUPAMAROS MOVEMENT.

