



'Poplach' Country of origin: Czechoslovakia

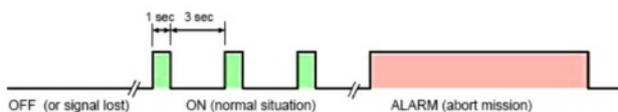
DATA SUMMARY

Organisation: ŠTB - Štátna bezpečnosť (Secret State Police) and Správa 1 - rozvedka (Government, Department 1, espionage).
Design/Manufacturer: Správa 6 - spojovacia technika 2. (Government, Department 6, communication technics 2)
Year of Introduction: Late 1950's/early 1960's.
Purpose: Covert surveillance operations.
Frequency: Crystal controlled channel in the 27 MHz band.
Power Supply: 9V. (9V and 3V initial version) AA batteries.
Size (cm): (Estimated from the photos)
Transmitter: Height 1.9, length 16, width 7
Remote control unit: Height 1.9, length 7, width 5.8

REMARKS

'Poplach'* was a covert wireless alarm transmitter used in combination with an associated agents receiver. Both receiver and transmitter were developed in the late 1950's or the early 1960's in Czechoslovakia by Správa 6 - spojovacia technika 2 for use in covert surveillance operations. It was primarily developed as a counter-counter measure system, for example to warn a spy that he or she was being followed. It was used by the Czech secret intelligence agency ŠTB - Štátna bezpečnosť (Secret State Police) and Správa 1 - rozvedka (Government, Department 1, espionage). A complete set consisted of a receiver with an external vibrator concealed under the agents's clothing and a transmitter with a hand-carried remote control unit by the follower. (At the time of issue of this chapter no example or illustration of the receiver was found.) The units were crystal controlled, fully transistorised and operating in the 27 MHz band. The transmitter used a wire aerial and was connected via cable running through the sleeve of the coat to an inconspicuous remote control unit which was carried in the hand. The receiver was worn under the clothing with the wire aerial running in a sleeve with the vibrator carried close to the body e.g. behind the waist belt.

* As the devices were unmarked and no original name or number was found, 'Poplach', (the Czech word for 'alarm') was a provisional name given to the transmitter and associated receiver. This most likely incorrect name was also used for other types of Czechoslovakian alarm transmitters.



Functional operation of 'Poplach'

In order to ensure that the agent's alarm receiver was still within range of the follower's alarm transmitter, an ingenious though simple solution was developed. After switching on the transmitter with the slide switch on the remote control unit, the unit was 'armed' and transmitted a short tone modulated signal every 3 seconds. This resulted in a short buzz of the agent's vibrator who was certified that the situation was safe and he could proceed. If the agent and the follower got separated, the signal would be lost and the vibrator in the agent's pocket would no longer give a buzz every 3 seconds. If the follower suspected an insecure situation, he would press the push-button on the remote control unit, causing a continuous signal to be sent. As a result, the agent's vibrator would buzz continuously which indicated he should abort his mission.

References:

- This chapter is an abridged version based on a full account of the 'Poplach' described in www.cryptomuseum.com
- Photos taken from a 'Poplach' held in the collection of the museum and information from their website was published with kind permission of the Crypto Museum, Eindhoven, Holland.



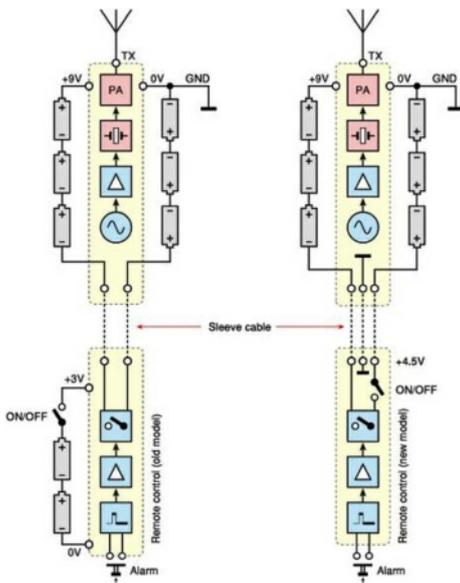
Internal view of two variations of the 'Poplach' transmitter unit: an earlier produced (left) and a later built transmitter which had a green hammer tone enclosure. Stacks of three AA batteries were placed on each side of the transmitter board inside the enclosure.



Two variations of the initial version of the transmitter remote control unit using two AA batteries.



A later version transmitter remote control unit. It was powered by the transmitter batteries.



Initial version.

Later version.

Block diagram of 'Poplach' transmitter and remote control unit.

The block diagrams left show how the working of the Poplach transmitter and the remote control unit. When switched on, the transmitter sends a AM-modulated tone that triggered the vibrator in the receiver. The transmitter was switched on by closing the two battery sections via the sleeve cable in the remote control unit. Inside the remote control unit was a pulse generator with an adjustable duty-cycle which closed the contact every three seconds, and an alarm push button which override this contact.

The initial version of the remote control unit was powered by two 1.5V AA-size batteries installed inside the unit. A later version used the 4.5V from the rightmost battery section of the transmitter, simply by using an extra line in the sleeve cable. As a result, the remote control unit was only half the size of the initial version.