

WAR DEPARTMENT
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August 18, 1919.

WAR DEPARTMENT

General Marlborough Churchill.

My dear General:

You will find enclosed letter from Colonel Fabyan concerning Sunday's conference at Riverbank. Enclosure is self-explanatory and I can say but little in addition thereto which will add to your enlightenment.

I fail to understand why the Colonel arrived at the conclusion that I was there present as your representative, in fact, I most distinctly stated to him that I had no official interest in the conference, but was merely an interested spectator. The Colonel apparently views me in the light of a sympathetic friend in whom he may confide his numerous grievances and misunderstandings.

The Colonel appears to have little confidence in Colonel Mauborgne's sincerity of purpose and he (Colonel Fabyan) stated to me, at the conclusion of Sunday's conference, that he felt convinced that Colonel Mauborgne was not a seeker after truth, but was mainly interested in justifying his assertion to the War Department that the A. T. & T. code as used by the Signal Corps was invulnerable. Colonel Fabyan further stated he suspected that in future investigations Colonel Mauborgne would not "play fair" and supply him, for test purposes, with current work, but would endeavor to entrap the Riverbank Laboratories for the purpose of gaining from them the verification of his assertions to his superiors.

I had a conversation with the Colonel this morning and am of the impression I left him in a much better frame of mind and with a desire to continue the work in hand. The Colonel requested me to call upon you for a personal assurance that there would be no puzzles or trick codes submitted to him for this work, if it is the desire of your department that Riverbank should continue its labors.

I most respectfully suggest that a letter of appreciation will not be remiss. The Colonel is possessed of the vanity of a debutante and a little catering to that weakness would unquestionably record results.

Most sincerely,

T. B. Crockett
T. B. Crockett.

Approved for Release by NSA on 11-18-2014 pursuant to E.O. 13526

P. S. I have just this moment received a telephone message from Col. Fabyan in which he states that from data left with him yesterday by Col. Mauborgne he is prepared now to state that he can break the code in question.

T. B. C.

Riverbank Laboratories
Geneva, Ill.

August 19, 1919

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DEPARTMENT

Department of Ciphers

Dear General Churchill:

In reply to your letter of the 15th inst. in reference to the A. T. & T. Company cipher and the opinion expressed on March 27th by Riverbank that this system was not invulnerable.

Col. Mauborgne and Major Yardley were here last Sunday and we went over the entire matter, giving them each a copy of the leather bound briefs and charts explaining the method of attack on the cipher as formerly used by the Department.

Col. Mauborgne took particular pains to assure us of our error in regard to what he was pleased to call our assumption as to the manner in which this machine was used and I beg to submit for your information the attached copy of Major Fowler's letter to me. I am reliably informed that he was the officer in charge of this system during the war. When we were desperate he was invited to come to Riverbank for the purpose of determining whether or not our information in reference to the use of the cipher machine was correct. Major Fowler, on his own initiative, made a report to the Chief Signal Officer and I attach a copy of Lt. Col. Paddock's reply to Major Fowler, for your information. I also attach an extract of the conversation taken in shorthand at Riverbank. We are not informed as to Col. Mauborgne's purpose in taking the position he did, but assume it will be evidenced by his report to the Chief Signal Officer. I was most favorably impressed by Major Yardley's alert mind in following the conversation as it applied to the cipher, and believe that on a careful reading of the briefs and studying the charts he will know as much about it as we do.

Col. Mauborgne left with us a rough pencil sketch of the manner in which the machine is now used, reiterating his opinion that as now used, the cipher is invulnerable. This, in spite of the admission that neither he nor Major Yardley have made any attempt to decipher the work of this machine. A copy of this rough pencil draft is enclosed. Col. Mauborgne said further that if we could break the cipher when used in accordance with these rules he would then acknowledge that we had broken the cipher as used by the Signal Corps. We are sending you today a chart and the brief showing that this modified method of using the machine does not make the cipher invulnerable. If anything, it is more easily broken and we recommend that the chart and the brief be handed to Major Yardley and explained to Col. Mauborgne in order to save further expense in this direction. In fact, we would be happy, under the circumstances, to have this come from the M. I. 8 to the Signal Corps.

We regretted that neither Col. Mauborgne nor Major Yardley, and particularly the latter, could remain long enough at Riverbank to understand fully the principles of the decipherment of this system. And it is respectfully suggested that inasmuch as this is a Signal Corps matter, we would particularly like to have Lt. Col. Paddock detailed here long enough to be instructed in reference to the system of attack and decipherment, which would also give us the opportunity of disabusing his mind of any preconceived ideas which he has expressed in reference to the work being done here.

Sincerely yours,