

Thompson & Hitt, with

Interview, Mr. William F. Friedman, Wash, DC

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Mr. Friedman spoke of government security classification practices in general. He is inclined to believe that much material is over-classified by timorous or over-zealous military and civilian officials. He points out that there is no penalty for over-classification, but rather severe ones for under-classification.

In this connection he shares the historians' frustration that the pre-Pearl Harbor cryptographical work of the SIS has not been permitted to be published in official Army histories. The Signal Corps has nothing to hide. But the omission of what is general knowledge to a large segment of the public creates the suspicion that the Signal Corps, or the Army as a whole, does have skeletons it wishes to conceal.

He assigns tremendous importance to the pre-war breaking of the various Japanese codes and to cryptological activities during the war. He says many thousands of American and Allied lives were saved because of our knowledge of enemy intentions as revealed in intercepted and decoded messages. [Ed. Undoubtedly true, if Navy and British efforts are included, as Mr. Friedman no doubt intended.]

Mr. Friedman's career in government cryptology work began in the World War I period when he joined the staff of Colonel George Fabyan at the Riverbank laboratory, Geneva, Illinois. Fabyan's library, which General Mauborgne described as "fabulous", was really not so fabulous, says Friedman. It contained almost everything that had been printed on the subject in older books, but contained little new or up-to-date material. Parker, Hitt's manual was the last work on the subject at the time. The Fabyan school, established to train Army crypto officers in WW I, was more extensive than Mauborgne indicated. Friedman could not estimate total numbers, but there were several classes and the last one alone totalled 75. He had served as an instructor and took the course himself in this last class. A picture of the class hangs on the wall of his library. The picture contains a cryptogram, constructed by the position of the men and the various directions in which they face. The message reads "Knowledge is power". (See article in Time (?) as of date of publication of Friedman's book on Shakespeare).

Friedman added that the government, which benefitted greatly from Fabyan's patriotic contributions, made no acknowledgment at all and gave Fabyan no recognition. He thinks this was a grave injustice.

After being commissioned and serving overseas in the AEF, Friedman returned to Fabyan at the end of the war. He was approached by Mauborgne, who wanted him to accept a Regular Army commission in the Signal Corps. A physical examination disclosed that he had a heart condition that prevented his acceptance. [Ed query - He did retain

a Reserve commission, right up to WW II - was there a difference in standards? Nauborgne said that if the SigC could not have him as an officer, It wanted him as a civilian, and in January 1921 both Mr. and Mrs. Friedman came to the Signal Corps as civilian employees. Mrs. Friedman, also an expert cryptographer, stayed only six months, then went to work for another government agency. Mr. Friedman stayed with the Signal Corps (and ASA, the successor to the Signal Corps SIS) 3 1/2 years, until 1955. Incidentally, Fabyan never forgave the Friedmans for leaving him.

Mr. Friedman had a number of corrections and explanations to make concerning some of the equipment - refer to GRT's notes for this.

Friedman obviously feels that the transfer of SIS to ASA was unnecessary and perhaps even harmful. He felt that the questions of personnel, administration, etc., were not important and that SIS did not suffer any handicaps by being under the Signal Corps. He, too, points a finger at Carter Clarke, as Code does, and as do other former Signal Corps officers having knowledge of the circumstances. His analysis of Clarke agrees with Code's - an extremely ambitious officer who apparently engineered the transfer of SIS to G-2 at least in part to further his own ambitions. Friedman says Strong and other G-2 chiefs reflected Clarke's viewpoints. But the transfer need not have occurred if the Signal Corps had had a strong Chief Signal Officer. Friedman had prepared a strong rebuttal to the proposal, but Ingles was not interested in fighting it. Friedman thinks there have been no strong Chief Signal Officers since Mauborgne. C Clarke

He believes we should stress the close Navy and British co-operation in our manuscript. He describes both as perfect. The development of Sigaba, for example, should be called a truly joint effort. One day before the war one of his Navy counterparts came to him to talk over the inadequacy of existing crypto equipment. He asked if Friedman had any ideas. Friedman said "Yes, I have an idea." The Navy officer said "Can you tell me?" Friedman replied "I don't know whether I can or not - it's secret." He checked with Mauborgne and Mauborgne said "Go ahead and tell the Navy." The Army, in the person of Friedman, had the idea, but no money to develop it. The Navy had the money, but not the idea. The two services together built the intricate and wonderful machine that became the Sigaba. The Army Sigaba and the Navy ECM were identical.

The government held licenses under all of Friedman's patents. All were under secrecy orders. He retained his commercial rights, but under the circumstances could not exploit the potentially very valuable patents. In the 1950's (date ?) the government purchased his commercial rights for \$100,000. Technically it is not correct to speak of it as "an award." E1 Note: It seems fairly obvious that in a sense it was an award, a recognition by means of a legal device, of a very great contribution to the government.]

In connection with pre-war activity, Friedman said his greatest handicap was lack of intercept material. Lt. Col. Mauborgne when he was Signal Officer for Maj. Gen. Malin Craig at the Presidio, in 1932 set up a radio station in the basement of his home and equipped it with reels of

paper tape able to make a record for 12 hours straight, to intercept messages sent at high speeds. Mr. Friedman mentioned only Mauborgne's station, but according to earlier info from Mauborgne, Capt Clay I. Hoppaugh ran a similar station in southern California. Also, other secret monitoring stations operated in Manila, Hawaii and Fort Monmouth. Mr. Friedman did mention an arrangement with the Coast Guard, whose cutters patrolled the coastal waters east and west on the trail of rum-runners bringing in illegal liquor. (The Eighteenth Amendment was still in effect, of course). The Coast Guard, intercepting radio messages from the rum-runners' boats, also occasionally intercepted other traffic. The coded messages they passed on to Friedman.

Later on, Friedman said, the SIS had succeeded in having organized the 2d Signal Service Company (Provisional). A detachment of this unit was sent to Hawaii under Captain Mark Rhoads to perform RI functions. But the local commander, when he heard of it, would not tolerate a unit operating under orders directly from Washington. Rhoads became ill, came back to Washington in 1935, and resigned his commission, but after a long recuperation came back to SIS to serve in World War II as a civilian.

Friedman made a vague, rather general allusion to his own library of material, saying it had always been his hope that after his death the collection would become the property of "the people of the United States." It would be interesting to know what plan he has in mind and whether on some future occasion he would welcome our suggestions. I imagine he has the details already well-worked out.

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