Napoleon and Son August 24

What do the following historic events have in common?

a. The Napoleonic Wars (early 19th century)
b. The Opium War (Great Britain and China, 1839-1842)
c. The French and Indian/Seven Years War, 1756-1763
d. The South American Wars of Liberation (early 19th century)

The common factor is that the Center for Cryptologic History (CCH) has produced few, if any, *History Today* articles about cryptology concerning any of these events. Today, however, the CCH is happy to mention correspondence about codebreaking between French ruler Napoleon Bonaparte (Choice A above) and his adopted son, Eugene de Beauharnais.

The English translation of the French correspondence is as follows:

"My son: Keep sending me the letters from the archbishop of Silesia sent from Rome to Dresden. The key has been found here so that they can be read just like ordinary writing. But it is necessary to let them continue on their way while copying them exactly." This was dated June 24, 1806, and was sent from St. Cloud (Napoleon's residence on the Seine River west of Paris).

Admittedly, the note lacks a lot of specifics. But it is clear nonetheless that the letters from the archbishop were encrypted, being passed secretly to Napoleon, and that the French were able to decrypt them. It is also clear that Napoleon considered the contents valuable. Also interesting is the fact that Napoleon felt it necessary to remind his son not to purloin the letters, but to copy then and allow to proceed naturally.

Napoleon was then at the height of his power, having just defeated the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz and having forced Prussia to accept a humiliating treaty. Although already master of Europe, he still felt a need to extend his control east and was eyeing Silesia (now part of Poland), either through conquest. The archbishop, Prince Joseph Christian von Hohenlohe-Bartenstein,

had been communicating from the Vatican (in Italy) with Dresden, the capital of Saxony (now part of Germany), to the west of Silesia. As Napoleon wanted to keep reading this correspondence. Eugene, as viceroy of Italy, was in position to control the mail.

Source: the letter is part of the David Kahn Collection in the National Cryptologic Museum (NCM). Kahn, one of the pioneers of cryptologic history and one of its greatest practitioners, had a huge trove of cryptologic materials copied from the archives of Europe. He donated most of his holdings to the NCM, and the contents are available for reading or research. You can also find more information about this Napoleonic letter itself on the National Cryptologic Museum Library website. CCH thanks the NCM Librarian, Rob Simpson, for providing this item—and for broadening CCH's understanding of the cryptology employed during the Napoleonic Wars.

If you have information about cryptology related to any of the other events above, the CCH would love to hear about it. Thank you in advance!