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7 December 1948

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Security
311.5

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. W. Park Armstrong, Jr.
Special Assistant for Research and Intelligence
Department of State

SUBJECT: The Whittaker Chambers Microfilm.

With reference to the question as to what actual or potential damage to the communications security of the United States might result from the public disclosure of the contents of the subject microfilm, it is at this moment possible only to state the following:

1. Without an opportunity for communication security technical personnel to examine the film it is impossible to make any categorical statements as to possible damage. The reason for this is that although the alleged period covered by the microfilm - namely, early 1937 to April 1938 - would perhaps not deal with the methods and devices currently employed by any United States Government department, including the Department of State, Department of the Army, Department of the Navy and Department of the Air Force, it is barely possible that new developments in progress during the stated period might form a part of the subject matter of the film. These developments have culminated in the production of the machines and systems currently in use; and while the disclosure of these developments would not make it possible for a foreign power to cryptanalyze United States communications, it would place in the hands of that foreign power cryptographic principles of such soundness as to have serious repercussions upon United States communication intelligence capabilities if such principles were adopted for its own use.

2. With the exception noted above it is believed that disclosure of any cryptographic information covering materials actually in use during the period stated would not result in any consequential damage to the communication security of the United States so far as concerns current or future communications.

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3. The public discussion and publication of any cryptographic information concerning principles or methods used by the United States Government would not be in the interest of national security. The policy of the government has consistently been to withhold such information to the greatest degree possible.

HAROLD G. HAYES
Colonel, Signal Corps
Chief, Army Security Agency

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