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7 October 1944

Memorandum to Chief B-III Branch

Subject: Japanese Compromise of Vichy Code

It appears from a Japanese Tokyo circular^a which has recently become readable, that the Japanese were reading a Vichy code in August, 1943. The sentence, "(This is based on reliable secret intelligence.)", when appearing in messages from Tokyo has in the past seemed to indicate successful reading of a foreign system.^b

According to Shigemitsu's version^a of the French message, "The French Chancellor (the Ambassador's Secretary) stated that when he called on Vice-Minister Matsumoto he referred to the matter of General Affairs Head Kuriyama's return to Tokyo and that he hoped that Kuriyama would continue in office in order to improve Japanese-French relations regarding Kwang-chow Wan and an understanding viz-a-vis France."

In our French version of the same interview, Baron Fain^c in expressing gratitude for services rendered by Mr. Kuriyama said, "His knowledge of the French way of thinking and of our language permitted us to avoid many misunderstandings and contributed largely to strengthening and improving our relations."

On 17 February 1943, Tani^d, at that time the Japanese Foreign Minister, in a message to Vichy discussing French concessions and extra-territorial rights in China states that a message deciphered by the Japanese "shows that France, when she gives up her concessions and extra-territoriality in China, is going to furnish the Chungking diplomatic section with an explanatory statement."

A message filed in Shanghai on 18 February 1943 by Coase^e declares that "no renunciation has been formulated, nor any declaration addressed to the Nanking government" and further, "the declaration... was addressed to the Chinese nation" and that he is "having this formula followed, precisely to avoid any overture to the Government of Mr. WANG CHING WEI."

The French messages referred to above were both sent in FAU, a 4-letter substitution code. While the evidence does not make it absolutely certain that these messages are the ones referred to, the fact that FAU was the code generally used for the discussion of these negotiations^f would make it seem probable that FAU is the system which the Japanese had compromised.

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If the Japanese can read⁶ FAU the consequences are extremely important at the present time since at least part of the negotiations between the Vichy representatives in the Far East (Cosme, Decoux, Margerie) and the Free French Ambassador in Berne (Verge) has been conducted in this system.

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Encl 4

SSA #66627

SSA #143634

SSA #66938 - revision

SSA #94328 - revision

 Henry F. Graff
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^aSSA #143634^bCf. SSA #42878, #42915, #66627, #80792, #82913. Also, "Magic" Summary of 2 June 1943.^cSSA #94328^dSSA #66627^eSSA #66938. This message is clearly a relay since, although it is addressed to President Laval in Vichy, it twice speaks of Mr. Laval in the third person. Thus the date of the original message would probably be before 18 February.^fCf. for example, SSA #66491, #66591, #66592, #66937, #67873, #67903, and #70434.^gIt will be remembered that in February, 1943, Japanese Ambassador Oshima in Berlin reported that Vichy codes and ciphers had been turned over to the Germans. Cf. "Magic" Summary of 22 February 1943.~~SECRET~~