Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series
The Days of BOURBON

(U) There is an old saying, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Such was the case during World War II with the relationship between the Soviet Union and her wartime allies, the United States and the United Kingdom. Each of these countries wanted to defeat Germany, and each disliked the Germans more than they distrusted one another. However, strains in the relationship during and immediately after the war made its continuation impossible. Growing American and British distrust led to the Soviet Union becoming the main target of their postwar cryptologic activity. In fact, work against Soviet cryptosystems by the U.S. and U.K. began long before the end of the war.

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(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

~~(TS//SI)~~ About the time the war ended, a cover name, BOURBON, was officially assigned to the continuing cooperation between the British and the Americans to target and exploit Soviet communications. The cover name was officially used for only about a year. In 1946 BOURBON was absorbed into the British-United States of America Agreement, which formally established the cryptologic relationship between the two nations on a variety of targets, including the Soviet Union. However, in the United States "BOURBON" remained the code word for anything pertaining to the Soviet Union. For example, for the next few years analysts might talk about attacking BOURBON navy or BOURBON [redacted] cryptosystems.

~~(TS//SI)~~ In spite of their wartime efforts and distrust of the Russians, the U.S. and U.K.

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[redacted] The day [redacted] became known as "Black Friday." [redacted]

(U) Obviously, there was an intense investigation after "Black Friday" to determine why [redacted] In retrospect, it was probably linguist William Weisband who alerted the Soviets to American and British successes against their cryptosystems. Weisband, an American, had been employed by the Army Security Agency (an NSA predecessor) since World War II and was later discovered to be a Soviet spy. Weisband was the U.S. cryptologic effort's first great traitor, and he divulged numerous U.S. secrets to the USSR.

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~~(C)~~ The Soviet Union remained the primary target of American [redacted] cryptanalysts for almost fifty years. In December 1947 the BOURBON cover name was officially dropped and gradually the individuals involved started talking about the "Russian problem" or the "Soviet Problem." Although there were future successes against the "Russian Problem," [redacted]

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[redacted]

~~(S//SI)~~ The source for this article was [redacted] by [redacted] Copies of this book are available through the Center for Cryptologic History.

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