

# Early “E” History

22 Jan 1944

Telford Taylor

## Editors' Preface

This one-page document, written by Lt.Col. Telford Taylor, shows that the Americans were informed about the early Enigma history and the role played by the Poles and the French. The document, in its present form, is published on the personal Web Page of Frode Weierud and has been faithfully retyped by the editor. The original document was typed and had the style and layout of a typewritten document of that period. To make the re-edited presentation more pleasing the document has been both left and right justified and a more modern type font has been used. Some minor typing errors have been corrected. Apart from these modifications to the layout the document has the appearance of the original.

The Editor,

Frode Weierud, © March 2001

### Source:

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 457, NSA Historical Collection, Box 1364, Nr. 4246.

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Memorandum for Colonels Clarke and Corderman  
Subject: Early "E" History.

1. The following may well be known to Mr. Friedman and others, and is submitted only as rough notes of possible interest, based on informal discussions with Cmdr. Denniston.

2. Prior to 1939, GC&CS had worked on the German "E" traffic, and had developed some theories as to solution methods, but had achieved no success. I gather that Knox was responsible for most of what had been accomplished up to that time.

3. Early in 1939, about February, Denniston and Knox were asked by the French to come to Paris to discuss "E" with the Poles. They went, and met the Poles, but on that occasion the Poles told them little that GC&CS did not already know. Subsequent events showed that the Poles were "holding out" on the British and French.

4. In July 1939 Denniston and Knox were invited to Warsaw by the Poles to discuss "E". It then was disclosed that the Poles had been successfully dealing with a large amount of "E". Denniston's impression is that the Poles' continuity ran well back into the early twenties. They had bombes. Knox was outraged that the Poles had been reticent in February; not realizing that the Poles understood English, he made very derogatory remarks while riding in a cab with Denniston and one of the Poles, to Denniston's great embarrassment. Denniston and Knox took back notes and ideas to England, set about building bombes, etc. Before GC&CS got well into "E" traffic, war broke out.

5. All "E" keys (possibly wheels, too) were changed on the outbreak of war, and none of the three powers by then "in the picture" (England, Poland and France) could break the traffic during the remainder of 1939. Knox and others worked away at it, and the Poles and French worked in Paris. At a meeting in Paris early in 1940, results were interchanged in face-to-face discussions and continuity was re-established. Most of the "E" was handled successfully by the British throughout the Battles of Norway and France. The Paris party, however, was not so successful, and communications difficulties prevented the French from getting full value out of Britain's technical success.

6. Several of the Poles versed in "E" work are believed to be in German hands, but apparently have not been "broken". At least two of the French – including the leading French expert, Bertrand – are still in occupied France.

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Copied by Dr. P on 10 Nov. 1954

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<sup>1</sup> The word SECRET is stamped on the original.