

VF 108-11

In Reply
Refer To

HEADQUARTERS 2ND CORPS AREA
Governors Island, New York City.

August 3, 1921.

My dear Mr. Byrne:

I am returning to you herewith the machine and the accompanying papers which you let me have in connection with it. It has been impossible for me to do any connected work with it for many weeks, on account of the pressure of official business and the number of various things which I have to take care of. I am now about to leave for Washington for permanent station and I think we might as well call it a day.

As to the principle of the machine, it is undoubtedly a most ingenious and effective device. I still hold that an error in telegraphic transmission of the 36th letter or a multiple thereof would be practically fatal to its correct operation in deciphering, but this may be one of the things that is inevitable and that would cause a telegram to be repeated.

I am always sceptical of the absolute safety of a cipher which has a running element - that is, one where the latter part of the cipher depends upon the former part, but I have attempted to formulate a plan for breaking down this system of yours and so far have not been able to do it successfully.

I feel that you could safely go ahead with the commercial exploitation of the machine with confidence in the practical indecipherability of the product. I must, however, qualify this statement in two ways. First, I do not feel that I have had a proper opportunity to work on this machine and, second, I do feel that, given a large quantity of the product, together with plain text of a part thereof, the specific combinations of your wheels could be worked out and the given messages translated.

I regret that I have not been able to handle this matter with the care and deliberation which I like to give these things, but I assure you of my interest in it and I want to thank you for having let me see it and for your courtesy in putting the cards on the table for me.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) PARKER HITT

Mr. J. F. Byrne,
New York City, N.Y.