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**John H. Tiltman**

25 May 1894 - 10 August 1982

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### John H. Tiltman: A Reminiscence (U)

~~(FOUO)~~ Even though we had often crossed paths during the 40 years of cryptologic work we shared, I did not get to know the Brig at all well until my last tour [redacted]. These personal reminiscences will be confined to that period, dating from 1974.

~~(S-CCO)~~ I knew, of course, that the Brig had an office [redacted] and that he did cryptanalysis. I also knew he had retired from GCHQ and was employed by NSA in some capacity. I had been on the job a few days when the Brig dropped in to see me. He explained that he was under contract to NSA [redacted] on a yearly basis, that he was to conduct cryptanalytic studies of certain cipher systems to be agreed upon, that he was to write a report monthly on his activities, and produce an annual report summing up the year's work. He then asked what I would like him to do. I asked him if he would mind very much just carrying on as before. He simply said, "Thank you," and left.

~~(TSC)~~ I consulted the files and found out that the arrangement had been going on since the end of 1964 and that there was a thick folder of monthly and annual reports from him. I leisurely browsed through these and discovered that the Brig had done a superb job of diagnosing, and in many cases solving, [redacted]

[redacted]

~~(TSC)~~ He worked largely in support of [redacted] which was then, as now, spread too thin to cover adequately anything but the most important current systems. Over the years his reports treat of [redacted]

[redacted] and a host of others.

~~(S-CCO)~~ The monthly reports are a fascinating mixture of handwritten notes, worksheets, machine runs, diagrams, and other cryptologic ana. There is, for instance, a superb handwritten report on the solution of a [redacted]

[redacted] — an outstanding piece of cryptanalysis. It was during a time when the Brig's health was poor, and he had apologized to me (too) often for "missed days." There is a note in the file appended to this report which reads:

20 May 1978

Brig.

The report is excellent — you are obviously making effective use of the time you are able to put in. Don't worry about the missed days — the quality of your work is what counts, and it continues to be first-rate.

WL

(U) The Brig, for all his enormous talents and great accomplishments needed this kind of reassurance that he was, indeed, earning his money. I can recall pointing out to him that the marvelous effect on the C/A interns who were good enough (and fortunate enough) to be assigned to work with him was more than worth the little we paid him, even if he never solved another message again. And it was true — the people assigned to him were starry-eyed about the experience, and much the wiser in cryptanalytic lore for it.

(U) The Brig was a modest man. No matter how great the accomplishment, he would deprecate, or give the credit to others, or speak of luck, good fortune, or a fluke. Praise embarrassed him; I think it made him physically uncomfortable. His lectures, marvels of presentation that they were, simply fascinated the audience. When told so, he would say, "Oh, it was poorly organized," or "There was far too much material," and the like.

(U) The Brig was a gentleman. He never raised his voice. It is hard to recall him being angry and I can only recall hearing him use an unprintable word on one occasion. That was the time he came to see me after reading F.W. Winterbotham's *The Ultra Secret*. He was obviously upset and spoke to the effect that there were so many who could have written the book, and deserved to, and could have done it so much better, and yet "that ----- Winterbotham does it, and so atrociously that he thinks ULTRA is the ----- ENIGMA and even has the Japanese using it in the Pacific because there is ULTRA end product there, and if the end product is ULTRA they must be using the machine." This all came out in a rush of words, very untypical of the Brig; I think I was the first person he discussed the book with, for subsequently he was his usual gentle, controlled self. His views on the man and the book did not change, however; but the expletives were no longer used.

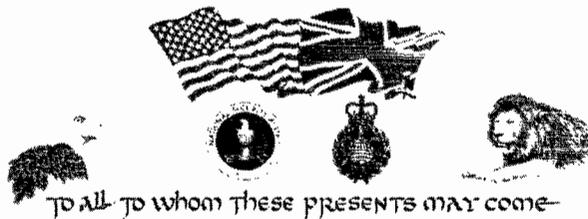
(U) The Brig was a shy man, but warm and generous in his friendship. He couldn't do enough for friends. I recall a conversation about nonwork hobbies, and mentioned lapidary; he mentioned weaving, and I asked some questions. Next day there appeared on my desk a book on weaving and operating a hand loom.

(U) The Brig was a man of many parts — orchids, weaving, bookbinding; literature, music, art; name it, and he was in it or knew much of it. His inquiring mind and keen intellect had him always acquiring knowledge, seeking answers.

(U) I was thrilled to be asked by Ann Caracristi, D/DIR at the time, to find words suitable for celebrating the Brig's completion of 60 years in our business. (These words were inscribed on a scroll which is reproduced on the following page.)

(U) The Brig was a legend in his own time. To know the Brig at all well was to love him. I did.

WILLIAM LUTWINIAK



TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS MAY COME

### GREETINGS:

**O**n the occasion of his completion of sixty years of distinguished cryptologic service we hereby extend to:

**Brigadier John H. Tiltman CMG, CBE, MC (RETD)**

*Our sincere and enduring esteem and respect*

*In acknowledgement of the uncountable contributions and successes in cryptology which attest to his technical brilliance;*

*For leadership, inspiration and encouragement to those who take up the cryptologic burden;*

*For setting exemplary standards of professionalism and performance in cryptology for all to emulate;*

*For contributing mightily to the archives of cryptologic lore;*

*For sharing his wisdom and judgment, his maturity and outlook, his vast store of experience with all who love cryptology;*

*And above all for his trusted friendship, much valued now and to be cherished for the years yet to come;*

*by us, for and in the name of the Cryptologic Communities of the United States of America and of the United Kingdom*

*With Great Affection*

*In witness whereof we herunto affix our names on this first day of August in the year of Our Lord, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty.*



~~(S)~~ Presented to Brigadier John H. Tiltman by Vice Admiral B. R. Inman, Director, NSA, and Sir Brian Tovey, Director, GCHQ.

~~(Illustration is classified SECRET)~~

**John H. Tiltman**

25 MAY 1894 - 10 AUGUST 1982

*Editor's Note: The following biographical sketch, prepared from notes provided by Brigadier Tiltman, first appeared in the Collected Writings of Brigadier John H. Tiltman published by the Cryptologic History and Publications Staff.*

(U) John Hessel Tiltman was born in London on 25 May 1894. He left public school at the end of 1911 and became a schoolmaster. He joined the army "in ranks" in September 1914, but was granted a temporary commission in the King's Own Scottish Borderers shortly thereafter, and received a regular commission in the same regiment in 1916. He served in France from October 1915 to May 1917, at which time he was wounded.

~~(S-CCO)~~ After the First World War, he was attached to the British military mission in Siberia before returning to his regiment in late 1919. Between March and July 1920, Tiltman was assigned to an elementary Russian language course in London, with the understanding that he would return to his regiment on its completion. Instead, in the Brigadier's words, "On 1 August 1920, when I was due to go back to regimental duty, I was borrowed for two weeks to work on a backlog of Russian diplomatic ciphers at the Government Code and Cypher School. . . ." Thereafter, he stayed at GC&CS for one year as an attached officer, and in fact never rejoined the K.O.S.B.

~~(S)~~ After his initial assignment at GC&CS, Tiltman was ordered to Simla, India, for service as a cryptanalyst, remaining there until the end of 1929. He formed the military section of GC&CS in March 1930 and "remained there till 1964 when I was retired from British service on reaching the age of 70." Tiltman was employed as a civil servant from 1925 to 1939. On the outbreak of the Second World War, he was recalled to the army as a lieutenant colonel and placed in command of Number IV Intelligence School at Bletchley Park, serving there until 1946. He was (from 1942 on) one of four deputy directors of GC&CS, and held the honorary title of Chief Cryptographer from 1942 to 1945. He returned to civil service status in 1946, and became Senior U.K. Liaison Officer to the United States in 1949, remaining in that post until 1954. He returned to the U.S. for a second liaison tour from 1958 to 1964, at which time he retired from British service. Brigadier Tiltman then served under contract to the United States Government until 1980.

(U) In addition to the papers republished here, Brigadier Tiltman is also the author of "The Voynich Manuscript, the Most Mysterious Manuscript in the World," published in 1968. According to the Brigadier, this is his only unclassified publication.

**Honors (U)**

Military Cross - 1917

O.B.E. (Order of the British Empire) - 1930

C.B.E. (Commander, Order of the British Empire) - 1944

C.M.G. (Commander, Order of St. Michael and St. George) - 1954

Legion of Merit (U.S.) - 1946

**Publications (U)**

(C) From the *Collected Works of Brigadier John H. Tiltman*:

“The Tunny Machine and Its Solution” (C) (1961)

“A Cryptologic Fairy Tale” (1962)

“The Development of the Additive” (1963)

“Some Reminiscences” (1966)

“Cryptanalytic Diagnosis—Some Personal Views and Experiences” (1969)

“Experiences 1920-1942” (1972)

“Double Transposition—A Special Case” (1972)

“Addendum to ‘A Cryptologic Fairy Tale’” (1973)

“Some Principles of Cryptologic Security” (1979)

(U) From the *NSA Technical Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 3:

“The Voynich Manuscript: The Most Mysterious Manuscript in the World” (1967)