

# Sturgeon, The FISH BP Never Really Caught

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## 1 Introduction

The German armed forces employed three different types of teleprinter cipher machines during the Second World War, the Lorenz machines SZ40 and SZ42 also called Tunny by Bletchley Park (BP), the Siemens *Schlüssel fernschreibmaschine* (SFM) T52, and the one-time-tape machine T43, also manufactured by Siemens. The Lorenz machines, which existed in three different models, SZ40, SZ42a, and SZ42b, are well known as the machines that were broken at BP with the aid of Colossus. The Siemens T52 existed in four functionally distinct models, T52a/b, T52c and T52ca — which was a modified version of the T52c machine, T52d, and T52e, all going under the BP code name of Sturgeon, while the Siemens T43 probably was the unbreakable machine that BP called Thrasher. The T43 machine came into use relatively late in the war and appears to have been used only on a few selected circuits.

This paper will, for the first time in the open literature, explain in detail the events that led to BP breaking the Sturgeon machines. In 1964, the Swedish Under-Secretary of State Erik Boheman first revealed that Sweden had broken the German Geheimschreiber (T52) during the Second World War. [4] In 1967, David Kahn gave further details about this achievement. [16] However, it was only in 1984, when Hinsley et al. published part one of the third volume of “British Intelligence in the Second World War,” that it was officially acknowledged that BP also had experienced some success against the Siemens T52. [13] Previously, many authors had confused the T52 with the Lorenz SZ40/42 machines and had erroneously linked the Siemens T52 to Colossus. Since 1982, Donald Davies has published detailed information about the electrical and mechanical construction of the machines. [6–8] And Wolfgang Mache has through his contacts and interviews with former Geheimschreiber operators and technicians presented the evolutionary history of the Siemens T52 machines. [17–19] Apart from Sir Harry Hinsley’s and Professor Tutte’s [22] references to BP’s attack against the T52 there has so far not been any detailed account of this part of BP’s history. It is hoped the present paper will fill this void.

The first section of this paper gives a short overview of the German teleprinter cipher machines and their use, followed by a short section explaining how and when BP first encountered the Sturgeon traffic. The third

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section explains the cryptographic principle used by the Siemens T52 machines. Here, for the first time, the “Pentagon” is introduced and an explanation is given of how important this device was for BP’s attack against the first T52 model it encountered. The following two sections continues the historical presentation of BP’s attack on the T52 and its struggle to keep abreast with the German cryptographers continuous changes to the machines. For the first time, it is revealed that BP broke the T52d, a machine with irregular code wheel movement. This was indeed a major achievement. Sections seven and eight explain what knowledge BP gained from the captured machines and the information they acquired through both FISH and Enigma decodes. The section entitled The Cryptanalytical Problem gives new and detailed cryptanalytical information about the structure of the T52 key generators and how this information was used to attack the machines. A constructed example of how to perform an attack on T52 messages in depth<sup>1</sup> concludes this section.

## 2 The Machines and Their Use

All the German teleprinter cipher machines were on-line machines. This means that when an operator types his plain text message on the transmitting machine, A, the same plain text appears immediately on the receiving machine, B. Neither of the operators ever sees the cipher text. The Lorenz machines were from their inception designed to be suitable for use on high frequency radio circuits operating in the 3 to 30 MHz bands. Radio signals in this frequency range are affected by both slow and fast fading, Doppler shift and multipath propagation which can easily play havoc with the digital teleprinter signals. All these machines used the standard teleprinter speed of that time, 50 Baud, which results in an element time of 20 ms. They were asynchronous machines using a start and stop pulse for each transmitted character. The SZ40/42 machines had a better receiver design than the T52 and were therefore more successful in reconstituting severely distorted teleprinter pulses. Towards the end of the war Lorenz worked on the development of an improved machine, the SZ42c, which applied the cryptographic process directly to the radio signal itself.<sup>2</sup> It was used in conjunction with a continuously operating, synchronous teleprinter which maintained its speed with the help of a crystal controlled oscillator. The SZ42c was an advanced design and the German engineers were clearly leading in this area.

It may therefore seem that technical reasons led to the Lorenz machines being used on radio teleprinter circuits. However, the author believes that lo-

<sup>1</sup> Two or more cipher texts or messages are said to be in depth when the texts have been aligned such that the entire texts or parts thereof have been enciphered by the same key. This process, that messages are enciphered by the same key, can occur when a cipher machine or system is used incorrectly or from the use of keys that have been constructed wrongly.

<sup>2</sup> “European Axis Signal Intelligence in World War II – Vol.2”, 1 May 1946, A TICOM Publication released under the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

gistics are more likely to have been the reason. The Lorenz SZ40/42 machines were a German Army development, while from an early stage the T52 machines were adopted by the Air Force and the Navy. The T52 machines were only allowed to remain on board naval ships while they were in harbour. It is evident that they would mainly be connected to the well developed telegraph line network which covered the most of German occupied territory. This was also the situation for the machines used by the German Air Force. On the other hand, a large part of the German Army tended to be continually on the move and it was relatively seldom that they could connect their machines to the fixed telegraph network. With time the T52 machines also appeared on radio circuits. Initially they were used on radio relay connections using frequencies in the VHF and UHF range, while later they would also appear on circuits in the HF (3–30 MHz) area.

### 3 The First Encounter

BP first observed Siemens T52 traffic in the summer and autumn of 1942. Most of the traffic passed on a radio link between Sicily and Libya, which BP called the “Sturgeon” link. [1] In the same period there was also another link from the Aegean to Sicily that BP called “Mackerel”. The operators on these links were in the habit of sending a large number of cipher text messages using the same machine settings. When using the machine, they sent a short cipher text, followed by some operator chat in clear text. They then transmitted in clear the signal “UM UM” (*Umschalten* — switch over) and the cipher text continued but with the machine set to its initial setting. These interruptions and operator exchanges were frequent and the cipher texts in depth would continue to accumulate. The depths allowed the BP cryptanalysts to analyse the machine in detail and they soon discovered that the machine had 10 code wheels whose patterns appeared to be fixed. At least that was their assumption based on the intercepts during September and October and the first two days of November. After that, the Sturgeon link and its traffic came to an end. In the period before September the interception was too bad to allow any of the traffic to be read.

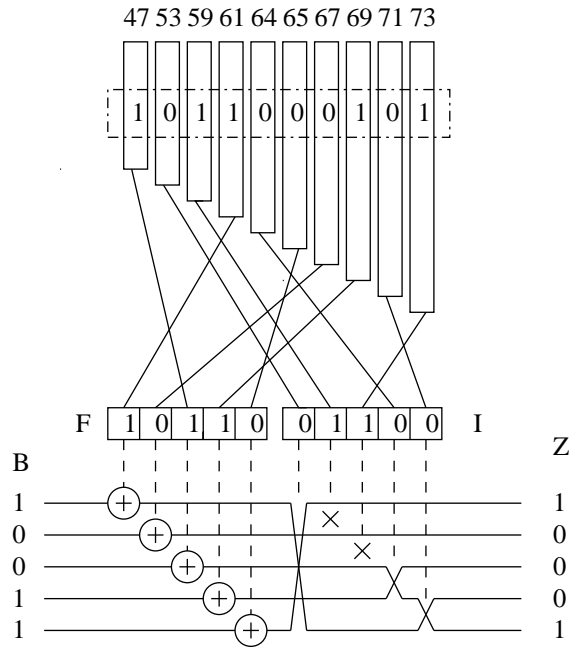
### 4 The Cryptographic Principle

The analysis of the intercepts showed that the Sturgeon machine was using two operations, a modulo two addition (XOR) and a permutation of the resulting five teleprinter code elements. The modulo two key was called the *subtractor* and represented by the symbol  $\Sigma$ , while the permutation key was called the *permutor* and represented by  $\Pi$ . The cryptographic algorithm, transforming a plain text character P into its cipher text character C, is given by

$$C = \Pi(P \oplus \Sigma) \tag{1}$$

where  $\oplus$  signifies modulo two addition. The plain text character is first added to the subtractor modulo two and the permutator then permutes the result. On reception the inverse permutation took place before the addition of the subtractor, which gives

$$P = C\Pi^{-1} \oplus \Sigma \tag{2}$$



**Figure1.** SFM T52's functional diagram.

A schematic diagram of the basic operations of all the T52 machines is given in Fig. 1. The ten rectangles of varying heights symbolize the ten code wheels whose circumference carried bit patterns of different lengths. The wheels were bakelite disks with protrusions which were sensed by one or more electrical contacts. A more modern analogy for the code wheels is shift register sequences of different lengths. In Fig. 1 the length of the code wheel sequences is written above each of the ten wheels. The code wheels were labelled A to K from right to left, omitting I. These wheel identities are used later in Fig. 4 which gives a description of the wheel stopping logic for the T52d machine.

Below the wheels, the plug connections that make up the main inner key are shown connecting each of the ten wheels to the various elements of the XOR and transposition circuits. The figure is an accurate representation of

the functioning of the T52a/b and T52d machines. In these two models each code wheel consisted of four identical cams, each fitted with a changeover contact which was used in either the XOR circuits or the transposition circuits of the transmitter and receiver part of the machine. The plugs connected to the code wheel contacts were labelled with the corresponding wheel identities A to K, each wheel being equipped with two plugs, one red and the other black. The corresponding sockets in the transposition circuit, ten in total, were labelled from 1 to 10. Sockets 1 and 2, 3 and 4, etc. were paired together but we will see later that any of the two plugs of a given wheel can be plugged into any of the transposition sockets. Further, the red/black order had no electrical significance and the two plugs could be swapped. The ten sockets in the XOR circuit were labelled with Roman numerals from I to V in pairs, where each socket in a pair carried an additional a or b label, e.g. sockets Ia and Ib. For the XOR circuit the plug order had to be strictly adhered to and the two plugs of a given wheel had to be plugged to the sockets with the same Roman numeral pair, e.g. red K would plug to IIa and black K to IIb. If the plugs of a given wheel were connected to two different Roman socket pairs a short circuit of the  $\pm 60$  volt signalling supply would be the result.

The T52c/ca and T52e machines modified this relatively complex circuit by using relays with multiple contact sets for the functions in the XOR and transposition circuits. These so-called SR relays were controlled via a logic circuit driven by the cam contacts on four different code wheels. On these machines the code wheels had one single cam on each wheel; the other three cams became superfluous and were therefore removed. The relays SR1–SR5 were used in the permutation circuit, while SR6–SR10 made up the substitution circuit. The machines also did away with the flexible transposition circuit of the T52a/b and d models which allowed full freedom in the configuration of the circuit as will be explained later. The T52c/ca and T52e machines used a standard configuration of the transposition units which were wired permanently in place.

Instead of changing wheel order by plugging, these machines used ten switches, one for each wheel, which could be set to one of ten positions labelled 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, I, II, III, IV, and V. There were no longer any pairs of plugs and sockets such that the previous paired designations, e.g. 1–2 and IIa–IIb would be represented simply by respectively 1 and II. The ten outputs from the wheel order selection circuit carried the same labels as the switch positions; here the outputs are called the output channels. Any of the ten wheels could be connected to any of the ten output channels via the ten switches with the restriction that a given output channel could only be selected once. If this rule was not obeyed a short circuit of the  $\pm 60$ V supply would occur. Furthermore, the labels had lost their previous meaning of Arabic numerals belonging to the transposition circuit and the Roman numerals belonging to the XOR circuit. Instead the three machines, T52c, T52ca and T52e, controlled each of the SR relays via a wheel combination logic which consisted of the modulo two sum of four different output channels. The wheel combination logic for

the T52c has previously been published by Donald Davies in his paper on the T52 machines [7] and is reproduced here in Fig. 2. The wheel combination logic was different on each of the three machines. The logic for the T52e machine has also been published by Donald Davies in his paper on the T52e machine, [6] while the logic for the T52ca machine will be presented later. The information in Fig. 2 has also been compared with information from the archives of the Swedish signal intelligence organization, FRA,<sup>3</sup> and found to be correct.

Relays		Code Wheel Outputs												
		1	3	5	7	9	I	II	III	IV	V			
Permutator	SR1	X	X				X		X					
	SR2		X	X				X		X				
	SR3			X	X				X		X			
	SR4				X	X	X			X				
	SR5	X				X		X				X		
Subtractor	SR6			X	X			X		X				
	SR7		X	X					X		X			
	SR8	X	X						X			X		
	SR9	X				X	X	X		X				
	SR10				X	X	X				X			

**Figure 2.** Wheel combination logic for T52c.

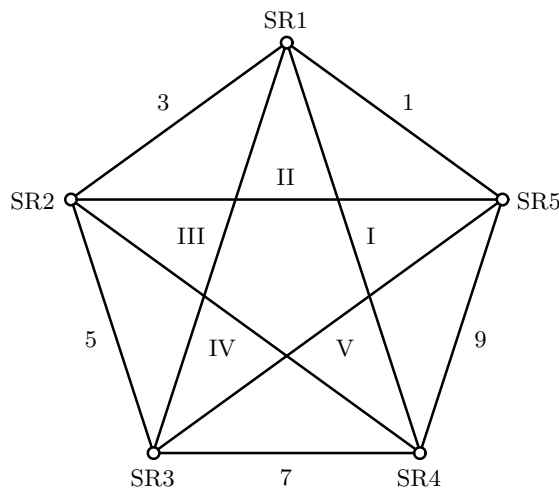
The T52c and T52ca machines introduced yet another complexity, the message key unit. This unit, which consisted of 15 transposition units and which will be introduced later, was connected between the code wheel cam contacts and the wheel order selection circuit. Its function was to further permute the order of the wheels before their contacts were selected in the wheel order selection circuit which was the main inner key. As explained later, a new setting of the message key unit would be selected for each new message. This meant that even if the main inner key would remain the same the wheels would still have a different function for each new message.

The T52d and e models also had irregular movement of the code wheels, a so-called stop-and-go movement. The movement of each wheel was controlled by contacts on two of the other wheels. These two machines also had a switchable autokey<sup>4</sup> element where the third bit of each plain text character would control the movement of the wheels in addition to the control given by the wheels themselves.

<sup>3</sup> FRA, Försvarets Radioanstalt. See [3, 23].

<sup>4</sup> Autokey or autoclave is where a part of the key is generated from the plain text or the cipher text.

Here is how the machine works in an example as shown in Fig. 1. First, a plain text character, B say, will be represented by its Baudot code equivalent 10011 or  $\times \bullet \bullet \times \times^5$  as given in the Baudot alphabet in Fig. 5. The plain text character B is then added bitwise modulo two to the subtractor character, F say, and the result routed through the transposition circuit, which is controlled by the permutor character, I say. The resulting cipher text character is Z. The two key characters, F and I, are determined from the code wheel setting and the inner key configuration once the plain text character B enters the machine. In addition, the figure shows that an element of the transposition circuit, the transposition unit, is active when the controlling bit is 0 or, as BP said, a dot.



**Figure3.** The Pentagon

The analysis of the T52 key generator showed that the 10 code wheels were combined in fours. They named this circuit the “Pentagon”. The author has not been able to find any documentary information about the Pentagon, however, largely inspired by Professor William Tutte’s beautiful little book on graph theory, [21] he thinks he has found the answer.

The graph in Fig. 3 is constructed from the wheel combining logic in Fig. 2. The code wheel output channels are labelled 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and I, II, III, IV, V. A cross in the row for one of the SR relays means that the control of the relay depends on the marked output channels, e.g. the function for the SR4 relay is given by

$$SR4 = 7 \oplus 9 \oplus I \oplus IV \tag{3}$$

<sup>5</sup> BP used the terms cross and dot to describe the Baudot code elements mark and space, logical 1 and 0.

In the graph in Fig. 3 the SR relays are represented by the vertices and the controlling wheel output channels by the edges which join in a given vertex. The advantage of the graph is that it quickly shows the relationship between the different SR relays; it clearly shows the topology of the circuit. The symmetry of the graph is such that it is highly likely that it corresponds to what BP called the Pentagon.

The Pentagon was cryptographically a weak device. Only four different subtractors could be associated with a given permutation. Furthermore, the subtractor character was always even, i.e. the 5 code impulses always summed to zero. [1] Therefore the plain text character was even whenever the cipher text character was even, and odd whenever the cipher text character was odd. For the cryptanalyst this was similar to the Enigma's peculiarity that no letter can encipher to itself, and it was of great help in reading depths and placing cribs.

The first Sturgeon message to be read was at a depth of 40, an almost incredible depth, which clearly shows that the German operators had no idea of the detailed functioning of the machine and that they must have disobeyed orders or been wrongly instructed. Eventually, with the detailed knowledge of the limitations imposed by the Pentagon device, depths of four or five could be read fairly easy. The 10 code wheels were set once a day and this initial setting remained in force during the whole day. However, the machine was equipped with a small crank which allowed the operator to easily bring the machine back to its initial code wheel settings. This was the main reason for the large number of messages in depth. With this knowledge, it was possible to read messages at depths of two or three as soon as the daily wheel settings had been recovered. When they could make a guess at a crib of about six letters even single messages could be broken with the help of the Pentagon limitations.

The different messages were sent using different wheel orders. There was some form of message key device that changed the connections between the code wheels and the Pentagon. However, as the machine was brought back to its initial position, the binary streams from each of the wheels were always the same. Five letters were given as a message key, and these always came from the reduced alphabet: P S T U W X Y Z. A letter could appear more than once in the group of five — once the indicator WWWW was even observed. BP noticed that when two indicators agreed in  $n$  positions, then usually but not always,  $2n$  of the wheels had the same function in the Pentagon. However, this rule did not apply to indicators sent on different days. The indicator system of this machine was never broken cryptanalytically.

Comparing the above description with what is known about the different Siemens T52 models it is evident that BP was confronted with the T52c machine. [6–8, 17–19] This machine had a code wheel combination logic like the one described for the Pentagon. It also had a message key unit with five levers that could be set in eight different positions indicated by the letters P S T U W X Y Z. Like the T52a/b, the c model also had the small crank that



allowed the code wheels to be brought back to an index position. This was a conceptual error in this model as the main reason for this wheel resetting mechanism was to allow the operator to set the message key easily on the wheels. The T52a/b machines were not equipped with a message key unit like the T52c and therefore the message key was set directly on five of the code wheels. The 10 wheels were therefore brought back to the initial position and the five wheels selected as message key wheels would be set to their new position. It is debatable whether even this limited wheel resetting on the T52a/b was a good idea. However, it is evident that the complete wheel resetting used on the T52c machines was a blunder of some magnitude.

The Sturgeon and Mackerel links came to an end with the second battle of El Alamein which started at the end of October 1942. One other signal transmitted on a T52c machine was intercepted later in November. It was believed to have come from the Caucasus. It consisted of the usual messages in depth and was successfully attacked. The messages dealt with the situation on the Russian front. That was the last appearance of traffic from a T52c machine.

## 5 The Reappearance

In the first six months of 1943 other teleprinter links appeared which also used “UM UM”. Some of the links were known to use the Tunny machine and from this moment it was often difficult to distinguish between links using the two machines. Both types of link gave only a QEP number for the indicator. The only exception to this rule was a link named Salmon where some groups of letters were sent, apparently as indicators. They were quite different from the normal Sturgeon indicator groups. Messages on Salmon, which linked Königsberg and Mariupol, were intercepted from 11 January to 6 February 1943. The machine was of a much simpler construction than the Pentagon machine and there was no combination of the wheels. Five of the wheels made up the subtractor key while the other five wheels constituted the permutator key. The messages consisted mainly of operator chat.

Even though the new machine was simpler than the Pentagon machine (T52c), it was more difficult to break. The absence of the Pentagon meant that the parity of the cipher letter was no longer the same as the parity of the corresponding plain text letter. And instead of having only 60 different alphabets this new machine had 960. From this description it is evident that the machine must have been the T52a/b.

In May 1943, a new link, codenamed Sardine by BP, started to operate between Sicily and Sardinia. This link was never broken. Later in the year, two operator log books were captured which contained references to the intercepted traffic on the Sardine link. Time, numbers and priority codes corresponded to those of the intercepted traffic. Also the same type *Luftwaffe* addresses that had earlier been used on Sturgeon appeared on this link.

A new link codenamed Halibut by BP appeared in July 1943. The link, which operated between Königsberg and Munich,<sup>6</sup> ceased to operate in August but reappeared in a changed form in 1944. In its first period, from July to August, a few depths of four and one of five were found. One depth of four from August was read and was found to have been enciphered in the same way as the depths that had earlier appeared on Salmon (T52a/b). Like the Salmon messages it consisted of operator chat. However, the July depth of five resisted all attempts to break it. It only succumbed a year later, in June 1944, to a sustained attack. It then turned out that it was enciphered on a new machine, the T52d.

## 6 A Historic Achievement

This break constituted the first break of the T52d machine, a machine similar in construction to the T52a/b but with irregular, stop-and-go, code wheel movements. The Halibut message did not use the autokey element, *Klartextfunktion*, of this machine but in June 1944 other Sturgeon links were suspected of using this machine with the autokey function. The break was nevertheless an outstanding achievement. The T52d was completely broken from reading a depth of five for a part of the message, while for the remainder it was only a depth of four. [12] From BP's subsequent analysis of the machine a depth of four appeared to be the absolute minimum. How was it possible to break such a complicated machine from only one message in depth of four and five? One answer is that BP was not confronted with a completely new machine. It was mainly the stop-and-go code wheel movements which differentiated this machine from the T52a/b. The code wheels themselves had the same patterns as on the T52a/b and T52c machines. It would turn out later that all the machines in the T52 series used the same code wheel patterns. The patterns were fixed and no changes were ever made to them. This constituted a very serious weakness of these machines.

The break itself was a manual operation, but assisted by a large number of catalogues which showed the possible alphabets that resulted from an assumption of a plain-cipher text pair of characters. BP did not develop a machine to assist in deciphering. All the operations were done by hand so that even developing the subtractor and permutor keys from a given wheel order and setting was a very slow and tedious process. BP also tried to use masks and inverse probability calculations, but it is not known if this was successful. As will be shown later, the permutation circuit only produced 30 out of the 120 possible permutations. Thirty-two permutations should have been possible with the five double changeover contacts used for the

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<sup>6</sup> A list of FISH links in one of the Fried reports gives the link as operating between Memel and Königsberg. [10] However, as the distance between Memel (Klaipeda) and Königsberg is only 120 km, mainly over water, the use of an HF link does not sound right.

permutation function, but / and Z produced identical permutations, as did T and E.<sup>7</sup>

The break was a success, but it also showed the difficulty this machine presented cryptanalytically. BP launched a substantial research effort to understand the T52d machine fully and to explore possible cryptanalytical attacks against it. BP realised that solutions through depths could not be relied upon in the future because of the increasing use of the autokey function. Another problem that presented itself was how to differentiate between this traffic and ordinary Fish traffic generated by the Lorenz SZ40/42 machines. BP hoped to find statistical techniques that would allow it to identify the traffic.

Wheel		Controlled by
ID	Length	
K	47	E crosses, D dots <sup>a</sup>
J	53	K crosses, A dots
H	59	K dots, J crosses
G	61	J dots, H dots
F	64	H crosses, G crosses
E	65	G dots, F crosses
D	67	F dots, E dots
C	69	F dots, E dots
B	71	F dots, E dots
A	73	F dots, E dots

<sup>a</sup> Dot and cross are BP parlance for 0 and 1, space and mark.

**Figure4.** Wheel stopping logic for T52d.

It is not known how long the July 1943 message was but it is nevertheless an extraordinary feat to have fully deduced the “motor wheel” logic of the T52d. In contrast with the Lorenz SZ40/42, the T52d did not have separate “motor wheels.” Instead, each “motor” was formed by the modulo two addition of two other wheels, sometimes with inverted logic for one or both of the wheels. The “motor” or wheel stopping patterns were read from a different part of the code wheels than those used for the subtractor and permutor keys. And of course the movement of these wheels was again controlled by others. Four of the wheels, with the lengths 73, 71, 69 and 67, were controlled in parallel by two of the other wheels. This was presumably done to ensure a periodicity of at least  $73 \cdot 71 \cdot 69 \cdot 67 = 23\,961\,009$ . The wheel stopping logic as derived cryptanalytically by BP is given in Fig. 4. [11] The figure shows

<sup>7</sup> BP replaced the six teleprinter control characters *carriage return*, *line feed*, *letter and figure shift*, *space*, and *null* with the special characters *3,4,8,+ ,9*, and */*. See the teleprinter alphabet in Fig. 5 and Appendix A of [23].

how the movement of a given wheel depends on two other wheels, e.g. the K wheel, which is the leftmost wheel in the machine and with a sequence length of 47, will not move if there is a cross (1) on the E wheel and a dot (0) on the D wheel. The other wheels have similar relationships to two other wheels.

The deciphered messages referred to experiments with a machine the operators called T52d, which gave BP the final proof that it had broken a new Sturgeon model. Later two captured T52d machines were found to contain the same logic as had been derived cryptanalytically from the Halibut message.

In September 1943, the link named Conger appeared between Athens and Berlin. Hundreds of messages were sent and all were in depth so there was no great difficulty in reading them. However, their intelligence value was nil. The messages contained only operator chat.

Conger contained references to the T52b, a machine that had previously been captured in Tunisia. By correlating the recovered code wheel sequences with those of the actual machine it was found that the initial position corresponded to that of all wheels set to one. The wheels were used in the order of their periods, while the operation of the machine corresponded to what had earlier been observed on Salmon, and in the August Halibut messages. In November, similar Conger messages in depth were sent; this time the wheels were all set to two.

The description of the Conger usage is frankly amazing and shows a complete disregard for applying secure keying instructions for the machines. It would seem that the machines were used by operators who had never read the instructions and who had not been issued with operational keys for these machines. One also gets the very strong impression that the majority of these links were not operational links, but reserve channels kept open mainly with operator chat and test messages. However, their usage was cryptographically damaging to the machines.

Both Conger and Halibut reappeared early in 1944 in a slightly changed form. The new Halibut messages were all short, while earlier they had often been very long. Conger, on the other hand, often contained long messages. Depths, in this case messages with the same QEP number, of up to four occurred. However, the messages had no repeats, which strongly indicated that the autokey function was being used. This hypothesis was further supported by the intercept logs which contained phrases like "*Mit KTF*" and "*Ohne KTF*" where KTF was the abbreviation for "*Klar Text Funktion*". BP did find one depth of two without the autokey function, but a depth of two was considered to be unbreakable.

Shortly afterwards it was decided to cease the interception of links using the Sturgeon machines as it was considered to be unprofitable. In the autumn of 1944 many Tunny links, which also used an autokey element, ceased to use this function and Enigma messages were found ordering the Sturgeon operators to stop using autokey on the T52d and T52e machines. During the same period, one day's traffic on Conger was intercepted. It was found to be in depth of two and without the autokey function. However, there are no

further indications that a lot of effort was invested in the Sturgeon machines and their traffic.

## 7 The Captures

The first Sturgeon machine to be captured was a T52b which was found in Tunisia. It was discovered that the code wheels on this machine moved regularly and that they did not combine. It was therefore evident to BP that it was not the Pentagon machine (the first Sturgeon type of machine to be intercepted and broken).

Later a full technical description of a machine which combined the functions of the T52a/b and T52c was captured on Elba. It appeared from this description that the T52c machine was related to the Pentagon machine as it combined the code wheels in fours. However, the number of alphabets was found to be 256 instead of 60 as for the Pentagon machine. It will be shown later that this T52c machine was the modified version, T52ca. The T52a/b mode showed that the machine could have been used for the Salmon, August Halibut messages and the early Conger traffic.

The Elba description also showed that the T52c machine was equipped with a wheel permuting mechanism corresponding to the message key unit described earlier. It was found that the unit consisted of five levers each of which controlled three switches out of a set of 15. Each switch interchanged two wheels in its active position and left their order unaffected in the inactive position. A switch was active or inactive depending on the position of the controlling lever, but the correlation of active switch position and lever position was different for the three switches controlled by a given lever. This circuit has been described in Donald Davies' paper on the T52 machines. [7]

In addition, it was found that all the machines were equipped with a set of switches or plugs which constituted the main inner key setting. The switches or plugs selected which of the ten code wheels controlled a given functionality in the cryptographic process. After the capture of the Elba description, an actual machine of this type was captured at Naples. This was clearly a T52c machine, but the message key unit with the five levers had been removed. It was noted that the machine was very similar to the first captured T52b machine; the T52b also had room for a message key unit although none was actually fitted. Yet another machine was captured at Naples. On this machine the original type number, T52b, had been altered to T52d. This machine was equipped with the wheel stopping logic and had a switch to enable or disable the autokey function KTF. Without KTF the code wheels had the same movement as the one derived cryptanalytically from the July Halibut message. When the KTF was active, the wheel movement logic became more symmetrical and the third impulse of the clear text governed part of the logic. Two of the wheels were controlled by a plain text cross (1), while two others were controlled by a dot (0). This logic has also been described in detail by Donald Davies. [6-8]

Later yet another T52d machine was captured, which had been altered from a T52a. Comparing this machine with the T52b, it became obvious that the two models must have been very similar. It is known from German sources that the only real difference between the two machines was that the T52b was fitted with extra filters to reduce interference to radio installations. [18, 20]

Together with the T52c machine description captured at Elba, allied forces also captured two key book pages, one for the T52d, and one for the T52a/b and T52c machine. One side of each page gave the table for 3 June 1944, while on the other side was the table for 4 June. Each table consisted of 25 rows labelled with the letters from A to Z, omitting J. A similar table for the T52d/e machine is reproduced in Appendix A. The message key QEP FF OO PP AA ZZ VV CC MM HH UU corresponded to setting the leftmost code wheel to 19, as can be found in column 1, row F. The wheel to its right is set to 11 as given in column 2, row O etc. The complete code wheel setting for this message key was: 19 11 56 31 59 33 13 46 02 25.

The corresponding table for the T52c machine is reproduced in Appendix B. The same method of indicating the code wheel setting applies to this table, but in addition the lever settings for the message key unit are in the first five columns. The same QEP message as above would give the code wheel settings: 47 23 09 27 34 45 26 09 02 48 here, with the message key levers at: p t p s x. The use of these tables and the method of disguising the code wheel settings that were transmitted as QEP numbers or letters changed several times throughout the war, but the tables themselves largely retained their original structure and layout. The main instructions for the use of teleprinter cipher machines, *Wehrmacht Schlüsselfernschreibvorschrift (SFV)* [9], indicate there were three basic key tables in use, *Fernschreibgrundschlüssel* (main inner key), *Fernschreibwalzenschlüssel* (code wheel key), and *Fernschreibspruchschlüssel* (message key). An example of the *Fernschreibgrundschlüssel* for the T52d is reproduced in Appendix C.

## 8 Intelligence From Decodes

References to the Sturgeon machines were frequent in both Tunny and Enigma traffic. In 1942 the decodes referred only to the T52a/b and T52c machines. The *Wehrmacht SFV* as referred to above was issued on 1 December 1942 and also refers only to the T52a/b, T52c and SZ40 type of cipher machines. It is therefore very likely that these were the only machines available in 1942. BP also appears to have captured a copy of the *Wehrmacht* instructions some time before November 1944.

On 17 October 1942 a message<sup>8</sup> from C.S.O.<sup>9</sup> *Luftflotte 2* to *Fliegerführer Afrika* mentioned that T52c had inadequate security. It gave orders that

<sup>8</sup> Message on the *Luftwaffe's* Red (the main Air Force) key, 121-2-3, 17/10, 6610.

The author has so far not been able to trace any of these messages.

<sup>9</sup> C.S.O. = Chief Signal Officer.

“Secret” and “Secret Commands Only” (probably translation of *Geheime Kommandosache* — Top Secret) are to be enciphered on Enigma before being sent over *Sägefisch* (Sawfish) links.

This message passed between stations served by the Sturgeon link using the T52c machine. Nevertheless, seemingly important messages continued to pass over this link without being previously enciphered on the Enigma. However, many Enigma messages also passed over this link before it ceased operation on 2 November 1942.

This message doubting the security of the T52c stands in contrast with the *Wehrmacht SFV* which contains a clear instruction not to use the T52a/b over radio and radio relay connections (*Richtstrahlverbindungen*). The T52c was the only machine authorized for use over radio and radio relay links. However, we have seen that the *Luftwaffe* for some reason did not obey these instructions and that they used the T52b machine for practice messages on the Salmon, Halibut and Conger links. This shows that *Luftwaffe* cipher officers must have been unaware of the close links and similarities between the different T52 models and that they did not see the danger these practice transmissions were to the other machines.

In February 1943, decodes show that the Germans suddenly had discovered that something was seriously wrong with their *Sägefisch* machines. A message from Madrid to Paris<sup>10</sup> said that the T52 was very badly compromised and that enemy decipherment was possible. “Secret” and “Top Secret” messages were no longer to be sent over the T52.

On 18 February 1943, a new set of instructions for using the T52 machines were issued:<sup>11</sup>

1. The indicator systems in use with the T52a/b and c are cancelled.
2. Henceforth the ten wheel settings are to be given instead and sent on a specific emergency key.
3. A new method of indicating the settings of the five message key levers is to be used.
4. The device for setting back all the wheels to the so-called zero position is to be removed.

Point four of these new instructions shows that the Germans had finally discovered the faulty operator practice of sending many messages on the same key due to the facility for doing so offered by the T52 wheel resetting mechanism. Apparently they also suspected some weakness in the use of the message key procedure and therefore introduced new, temporary measures. They would later abandon the use of QEP numbers and use the QEP structure with ten bigrams that has already been presented in the previous section. It is not clear why this was considered a better procedure but it is possible it

<sup>10</sup> Message on the *Abwehr* link Madrid–Paris, RSS 6713/2/43.

<sup>11</sup> Message on the Army’s Bullfinch II (Italy) key, 1735/18/2/43.

offered more flexibility in choosing messages keys than the previous method using QEP numbers.

On 19 February, yet another message<sup>12</sup> gave further instructions:

1. T52a/b is not to be used for “Secret” and “Top Secret” messages, except when other means are not available.
2. If teleprinter links are used there must be previous encipherment on Enigma.
3. After the changes to the T52c, and after a change in the indicator system, “Secret” and “Top Secret” messages may again be forwarded without previous encipherment on Enigma.

In March two messages<sup>13</sup> said that traffic on the *Aptierte* (adapted) T52c no longer needed to be enciphered on the Enigma. From then on there were references to the T52ca, which probably stands for T52c *Aptierte*. Then finally on 14 June 1943 there was a message<sup>14</sup> to the Naval Communications Officer in Sulina and other addressees that said: “On the completion of the adaptation to SFM T52c, the designation T52ca will no longer be used. The designation T52c only is to be used from now on.” The changes made to the T52c concerned the wheel combining logic which BP had found to be of such great help when breaking the Pentagon machine. This indicates that the Germans must have made a detailed analysis of the machine and found this part of the logic to be particularly weak.

The knowledge of German security evaluations and analysis of their own cipher machines has not yet been fully declassified and released. It is therefore not yet possible to give a detailed picture of what the Germans knew and suspected with respect to the security of their crypto systems. However, it is known that Dr. Eric Hüttenhain, the chief of the cryptanalytic research section of OKW/Chi (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht/Chiffrierabteilung*), examined the T52a/b machine in 1939.<sup>15</sup> He found that this machine had an extraordinarily low degree of security and could be broken with about 100 letters of cipher text without a crib. This study could have resulted in the *Wehrmacht SFV* instruction prohibiting the use of the T52a/b on any form of radio channel. However, it is perhaps more likely the discovery by the Germans on 17 June 1942 of the Swedish success in breaking this machine led to the restriction. [23] OKW/Chi suggested changes in the machine, including ways of producing non-uniform code wheel stepping but for engineering reasons Siemens refused to accept these changes. Instead a new machine, the T52c, was produced which overcame some of the more obvious weaknesses of the earlier model. The T52c was studied by the Army cryptanalyst, Doering,

<sup>12</sup> Message on the Army’s Merlin (Southern Europe) key, 19/2/43.

<sup>13</sup> Message on the *Luftwaffe’s* Red key, Nos. 322/4 and 387/7 of 6 March 1943.

<sup>14</sup> Naval message 14/6/43, 77, Mediterranean.

<sup>15</sup> “European Axis Signal Intelligence in World War II – Vol.3”, 1 May 1946, A TICOM Publication released under the FOIA.



from OKH/Gen d Na (*Oberkommando des Heeres/General der Nachrichten Aufklärung*) in 1942. He showed that it could be broken on a text of 1000 letters. This study was apparently assisted by cryptanalytical machinery in use by OKW/Chi, but it is not known how involved Dr. Hüttenhain and his people were in the actual study and its recommendations. The investigations resulted in the design and production of the T52d. The security analysis of the T52d was continued, mainly by Doering, and early in 1943 he showed that this machine was also insecure. This resulted in the production of the T52e. However, it was known that both the T52d and T52e machines were open to attacks through messages in depth and that at a depth of ten messages could be read without a crib.

However, the cries of alarm from the German cryptographers were not heard, or at least not acted on, by the German Army and Air Force. In the summer of 1942 the totally insecure model T52a/b was still in use and the equally insecure T52c was being distributed. The Army's position was that the teleprinter traffic went over land lines and could not be intercepted, hence there were no need to worry about inadequate security. Evidence of tapping of the teleprinter lines that appeared in Paris in 1942 and 1943 gave the Army a serious jolt and the Army's signal authorities were forced to reconsider their views on teleprinter cipher security. However, it was too late and the newly developed T52e was only slowly being introduced at the end of 1944.

The first reference to the T52d machine appeared in the decodes in October 1943.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, there were frequent references to all three models, T52 a/b, c, and d. From September 1944 onwards, there were also references to the newly developed machine T52e. Traffic from this machine was never observed or at least identified as such by any of the allied cryptanalytical services and the machine remained unknown to them until the end of the war.

## 9 The Cryptanalytical Problems

On 29 July 1944 Captain Walter J. Fried, the US Army Signal Security Agency's (SSA)<sup>17</sup> liaison at BP, sent his report No. 68, [12] which he devoted entirely to the Sturgeon problem, to the SSA headquarters at Arlington Hall. He started the report with the following assessment: "The problem of solving current traffic seems completely hopeless. The only feasible method of solving messages enciphered on the T52d machine seems to be through depths. Sometimes the "motor" action is switched off and this gives rise to several

<sup>16</sup> Message on the *Luftwaffe's* Red key, 279/0, 4/10/43.

<sup>17</sup> The agency went through a number of changes in both name and organization during the period 1939–1945. It was named Signal Intelligence Service, Signal Security Division, Signal Security Service, Signal Security Branch, etc. before it was redesignated Signal Security Agency on 1 July 1943, later to be changed to Army Security Agency on 15 September 1945.

possible techniques of solution.<sup>18</sup> For the most part, however, the problems which seem capable of solution are comparatively trivial. The fundamental difficulty of the general problem arises from the fact that that a crib does not yield key.”

To give a better feeling for the fundamental cryptanalytical problems I will attempt to give an overview of what is involved in breaking the T52 machines, and how certain features of the machine hampered this task, while other features made it easier for the cryptanalyst. The basic algorithm of the machine has already been explained. To recapitulate, a five element teleprinter plain text character will first be added modulo two to a five element *subtractor* character and then permuted under the control of another five element *permutator* character as given by the encipherment formula (1).

	0	1	2	3	4	5
	/	E 4 9 3 T	A S D Z I R L N H O	U J W F Y B C P G M	K Q + X V	8
1	•	• • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	•
2	•	• • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	•
3	•	• • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	•
4	•	• • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	•
5	•	• • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •	•
<sup>a</sup>	#	3 # # # 5	- ' # + 8 4 ) , * 9	7 # 2 * 6 ? : 0 * .	( 1 # / = #	

<sup>a</sup> In the figure shift row control characters and other special functions are marked with #, while the national special characters are marked with \*.

**Figure5.** International Telegraph Alphabet No. 2 in class order

A simple way of representing the relationship between the four elements P, C,  $\Sigma$  and  $\Pi$  is through a  $32 \times 32 \times 32$  cube. One of the elements P, C or  $\Sigma$  can be placed in the cube and the other three elements along the three axes.  $\Pi$  cannot be placed inside the cube as it is not uniquely defined by P, C and  $\Sigma$ . The cube can then be cut by planes along any of the axes and it will then be represented by 32 squares slices each of the size  $32 \times 32 \times 1$ . The choice of the representation will entirely depend on the problem to be solved. It is now easily seen that a plain text character from the 32 element teleprinter alphabet will be transformed into a cipher text character through  $32 \cdot 32 = 1024$  cipher alphabets. However, this theoretical limit was seldom achieved in practice. If we analyse the basic permutation circuit used in the T52c and T52e machines we will find that / and Z produce identical permutations, as do T and E. This means that, instead of producing 32 permutations, the

<sup>18</sup> The author’s studies of the T52d and e models have not revealed any possibility of switching off the “motor” or wheel stopping function on these machines. It is more likely the observed absence of wheel stopping was due to the use of the T52a/b machine.

circuit only generate 30 unique permutations. Therefore these machines only have  $32 \cdot 30 = 960$  cipher alphabets. However, this was only achieved in the T52e. In the T52c and T52ca machines the wheel combination logic reduced the number of cipher alphabets even further.

		Subtractor																																		
		/	E	4	9	3	T	A	S	D	Z	I	R	L	N	H	O	U	J	W	F	Y	B	C	P	G	M	K	Q	+	X	V	8			
Permutor	/	*					*							*													*									
	E																																			
	4																																			
	9																																			
	3																																			
	T																																			
	A							*	*		*	*																								
	S							*	*		*	*																								
	D																																*	*		
	Z	*						*																					*							
	I	*						*																					*							
	R								*																							*	*			
	L							*	*		*	*																					*	*		
	N								*		*	*																				*	*			
	H							*	*		*	*																				*	*			
	O																															*	*			
U																																				
J																																				
W																																				
F																																				
Y																																				
B																																				
C																																				
P																																				
G																																				
M																																				
K																																				
Q	*						*																					*	*							
+								*		*	*																	*				*	*			
X								*		*	*																	*				*	*			
V																												*	*			*	*			
8																												*	*			*	*			

Figure6. Alphabet distribution for T52c.

Before we use the cipher squares in our analysis it is useful to introduce the concept of Baudot classes. The class of a Baudot character is defined as the number of crosses (or 1's) that it contains. It is clear that we have six classes labelled from 0 to 5 inclusive. There are various ways of arranging these classes but the method used here is the one used at BP, and is shown in Fig. 5. The Baudot classes are indicated in the top row with the letter shift alphabet used by BP in the row below. The Baudot control characters have been given the special BP values as previously indicated in footnote 7 on page 11. Below the alphabet are the five bits of each character's Baudot code

value indicated by dots and crosses. The bottom row shows the corresponding figure shift characters.

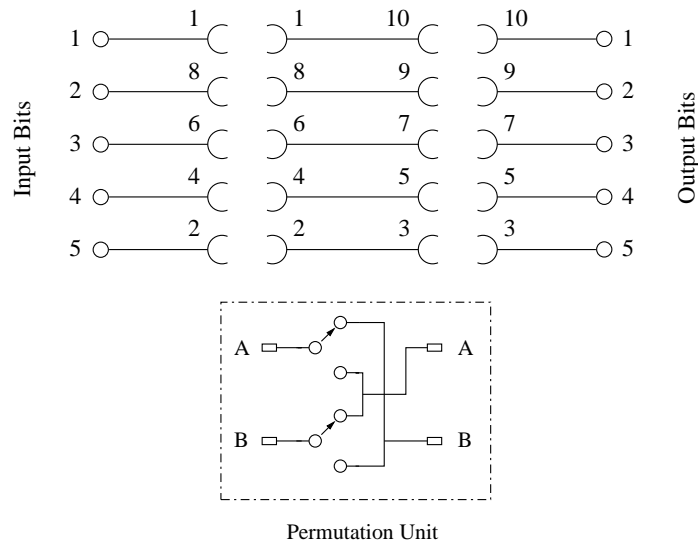
Using computer simulations, the T52c's wheel combination logic has been analysed: a plot of the  $32 \times 32$  permutor/subtractor square is given in Fig. 6. The alphabets along the permutor and subtractor axes are in the Baudot class order: an asterisk indicates the existence of an alphabet. We see that there are no alphabets in the odd classes 1, 3 and 5. All the alphabets are clustered in the even classes 0, 2 and 4. This is a confirmation of BP's finding that the parity of the subtractor character was always even. We further see that there are  $16 \cdot 4 = 64$  alphabets which, with our knowledge of the reduced permutor alphabet, gives a total number of 60 cipher alphabets. As the parity of the characters T and E is odd, the doublet T-E is not possible. Only the doublet /-Z exists, hence we get  $15 \cdot 4 = 60$  cipher alphabets. We also see that for each permutor character there are only four possible subtractor characters as mentioned by BP. The plot clearly shows that this machine was extremely insecure.

Relays		Code Wheel Outputs										
		1	3	5	7	9	I	II	III	IV	V	
Permutor	SR1			X	X		X				X	
	SR2	X	X	X	X							
	SR3			X			X	X				X
	SR4	X			X		X		X		X	
	SR5	X			X				X		X	
Subtractor	SR6	X	X				X				X	
	SR7						X	X	X	X		
	SR8		X	X	X						X	
	SR9			X	X		X		X			
	SR10	X	X						X		X	

**Figure 7.** Wheel combination logic for T52ca.

The wheel combining logic of the modified T52ca machine has been reconstructed using data from the FRA archives. The truth table is given in Fig. 7 while the corresponding permutor/subtractor plot is in Fig. 9. In the plot in Fig. 9 the alphabets are in the binary order, not the Baudot class order, since such a representation shows more clearly the inherent structure of the wheel combining logic. As we can see, the alphabets are well spread out and are no longer exclusively of even parity. However, the linear structure is there and changing one single entry in the truth table will drastically change both the structure and number of possible alphabets. Each permutor character is associated with eight subtractor characters, which is twice as many as for the T52c logic. However, if we plot the permutor/subtractor square in Baudot

class order, we find that when a permutor character is even, the alphabets have an even subtractor character, and when the permutor character is odd, so is the subtractor. This information can still be exploited by the cryptanalyst. The possible number of alphabets is  $32 \cdot 8 = 256$  but, due to the reduced permutor alphabet, there are only 240 unique cipher alphabets.



**Figure 8.** SFM T52's transposition circuit.

The T52a/b and T52d machines use the same layout of the transposition<sup>19</sup> circuit as the T52c and T52e, but instead of using relays for the transposition units, these machines directly use the cam contacts on each coding wheel. What distinguishes the a/b and d models from the others is that the transposition units, which consisted of double changeover contacts, were not wired permanently into the transposition circuit. Each of the five contact sets was equipped with two plug connections which were then plugged into the transposition circuit. Figure 8 shows the layout of the transposition circuit together with the circuit of a single transposition unit. The figure shows that there are two possible contact points in each Baudot bit or element branch.

The connection 1–3 means that either the A or B plug of a transposition unit will connect to the socket marked with 1's, while the other plug will go to the socket marked with 3's. If A goes to socket one, the left part of the A plug will plug into the left-hand side of socket one, while the right part of the A plug goes to the right-hand side of the socket. In this particular case, bit one will end up in position five when the transposition unit is inactive, while

<sup>19</sup> The terms transposition circuit and transposition unit reflect the cryptographic usage; mathematically speaking the circuit performs a permutation.

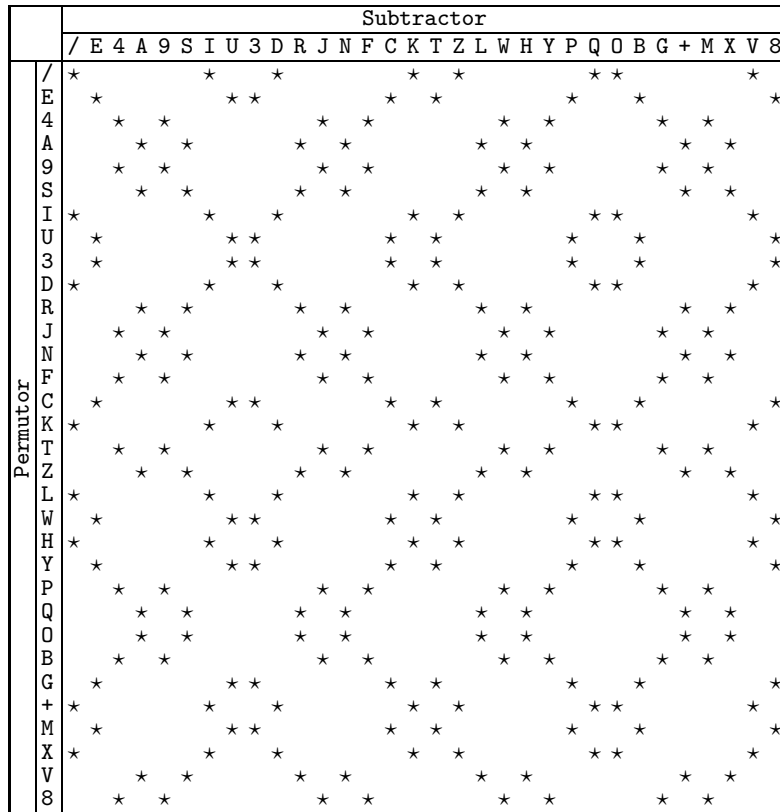


Figure9. Alphabet distribution for T52ca.

in the active position bit one will leave on the branch connected to socket ten. Its final position will depend on the connection that is made from socket ten.

There are  $9 \cdot 7 \cdot 5 \cdot 3 \cdot 1 = 945$  different ways that the five contact sets can be inserted into the transposition circuit. Computer simulations show that each of these 945 connection variants results in unique permutation sets. However, the majority of the permutation sets, a total of 561, are degenerate in the sense that each set contains only from 1 to 16 unique permutations.

The set with only one single permutation is a special case — it contains the identity permutation, hence no transposition takes place. There are further variants on this where one, two or three of the Baudot character pulses will not be permuted. There are in total 300 cases where one pulse remains in place, 80 cases where two pulses are fixed and 20 instances where three pulses are unaffected. All of these cases belong to the set of the degenerate permutations. Figure 10 gives an overview of the distribution of the different

permutation sets. The figure shows that among the remaining 384 permutation sets, 24 sets have 27 unique permutations, 240 sets have 30 permutations and 120 sets contain all the 32 permutations. Figure 10 shows that of the degenerate sets only the sets with 10 and 12 unique permutations also have normal permutations, in the sense that none of the bits remain in place. All the other degenerate sets have one or more bits that are not affected by the permutations.

Bits Stuck	Number of Unique Permutations in a Set												Total
	1	2	4	5	6	10	12	14	16	27	30	32	
1 bit			60				30	180	30				300
2 bits				20	60								80
3 bits		20											20
5 bits	1												1
None						40	120			24	240	120	544
Total	1	20	60	20	60	40	150	180	30	24	240	120	945

**Figure10.** Permutation distribution for T52d.

Looking at the *Wehrmacht* SFM T52d Key table reproduced in Appendix C, it can be shown that all the connections in this table belong to the two groups with 30 and 32 unique permutations. This means that in reality only 360 permutation sets were used by the German cryptographers during the period this key list was in use. It also means that there are not always only 960 cipher alphabets — there can be as many as 1024. This might be an indication that the Germans were aware of the fact that not all of the permutations could be used for cryptographic purposes. This knowledge may have been of a relatively recent nature. The T52a/b machine may have been used earlier with connections which resulted in degenerate permutation sets. When the Swedish cryptanalyst Lars Carlbom analysed the transposition circuit, he found four main permutation families, of which two could be divided further into three sub-groups. One of these families, he said, consisted of connections where one of the transposition units was inactive or disconnected. It is not possible to disconnect a transposition unit and still expect the machine to function, but Lars Carlbom did not know this as he had never seen a T52 machine. He based his analysis entirely on cryptanalytical evidence. In practice, what happened was that an input impulse exited the transposition circuit at the same level as it entered; hence no Baudot element permutation was taking place. The identity permutation referred to earlier is caused by such a set of connections: 1–10, 2–3, 4–5, 6–7 and 8–9, which leave all the bits in their original positions. If one or more of these special connections are combined with other more random connections, the other cases of one or more bits stuck will occur.

			C															
			/	E	4	9	3	T	A	S	D	Z	I	R	L	N	H	O
			8	V	X	+	Q	K	M	G	P	C	B	Y	F	W	J	U
$\Phi$	/	8	32															
	E	V	9	9	2	4	8											
	4	X	8	8	16	0	0											
	9	+	4	4	8	16	0											
	3	Q	2	2	4	8	16											
	T	K	9	9	2	4	8											
	A	M							8	6	1	2	6	1	2	2	4	0
	S	G							4	2	6	1	2	6	1	4	2	4
	D	P							2	1	2	6	1	2	6	0	4	8
	Z	C							4	2	4	8	2	4	8	0	0	0
	I	B							0	8	4	0	8	4	0	8	0	0
	R	Y							0	4	2	4	4	2	4	4	8	0
	L	F							8	6	1	2	6	1	2	2	4	0
	N	W							0	0	4	2	0	4	2	8	4	8
	H	J							4	2	6	1	2	6	1	4	2	4
O	U							2	1	2	6	1	2	6	0	4	8	

Figure 11. SFM T52's dibit distribution.

During the year when BP struggled with the July Halibut message enciphered on the T52d it developed and tried out various methods of attack. Several of them were of a statistical nature and were based on knowledge gained through the use of statistical techniques on the Lorenz SZ40/42 machines. The statistical methods BP developed only applied to the “motorless” machines and would not work on machines with wheel stopping. The T52 code wheels had an almost even distribution of dots and crosses with a slight preponderance of crosses. This meant that the modulo two addition was nearly random. However, this was not the case for the permutations, since certain impulses were more likely to go to some positions than others. Therefore the statistical techniques were based on developing statistics for certain impulse combinations of the “pseudo plain text” character,  $\Phi$ , and their probability of ending up in certain positions in the cipher text character. Here the “pseudo plain text” is the real plain text transformed by the subtractor key.

$$\Phi = P \oplus \Sigma \tag{4}$$

The method applies to both single impulses or to pairs, dibits, but plain text characteristics are more pronounced when using a pair of impulses. For a given permutation it was possible to enumerate how often dibits of a given “pseudo plain text” character,  $\Phi$ , and its inverse would be associated with dibits in different cipher text characters, C. This is shown in Fig. 11 where the permutation is generated by the transposition circuit used on the T52c and e models, and which used the connections: 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8 and 9–10.



0	1	2	3	4	5
/	E 4 9 3 T	A S D Z I R L N H O	U J W F Y B C P G M	K Q + X V	8
A	4 E U J W	/ I R L S D Z K Q +	9 3 T C P G F Y B 8	N H O V X	M
B	0 + X Z D	G M T 3 8 W J Y F E	V L R H N / Q K A S	P C 4 9 U I	Z
C	K N R I V	F J U 8 3 9 M 4 G P	D S X A + Q / O H L	E B Y W T	P
D	3 J F E B	R N / O K A + S X Z	C 4 G 9 M T U 8 W Y	I V L H Q	Z
E	/ A S D Z	4 9 3 T U J W F Y B	I R L N H O K Q + X	C P G M 8	V
F	N K D S X	C 3 9 M J U 8 E B Y	R I V / O H A + Q Z	4 G P T W L	S
G	+ O V L R	B 8 W J M T 3 P C 4	X Z D Q K A H N / I	Y F E U 9	J
H	Y P T M 9	Q Z X S L V I O / N	W 8 U B E F G 4 C 3	+ A K D R N	S
I	U 9 4 C P	S A K Q / N H R L V	E F Y J W 8 3 T M G	D Z X + O	B
J	R D K A +	3 C 4 G F E B U 8 W	N / O I V L S X Z Q	9 M T P Y	H
K	C F J U 8	N R I V D S X A + Q	3 9 M 4 G P E B Y W	/ O H L Z T	F
L	W T P G 4	Z Q + A H O / V I R	Y B E 8 U J M 9 3 C	X S D K N	T
M	X V O H N	8 B Y F G P C T 3 9	+ Q K Z D S L R I /	W J U E 4	A
N	F C 3 9 M	K D S X R I V / O H	J U 8 E B Y 4 G P T	A + Q Z L	W
O	B G M T 3	+ X Z D V L R H N /	8 W J Y F E P C 4 9	Q K A S I	U
P	Q H L V I	Y W 8 U T M 9 G 4 C	Z X S + A K O / N R	B E F J 3	D
Q	P Y W 8 U	H L V I Z X S + A K	T M 9 G 4 C B E F J	O / N R D	3
R	J 3 C 4 G	D K A + N / O I V L	F E B U 8 W 9 M T P	S X Z Q H	Y
S	9 U E F Y	I / N H A K Q D Z X	4 C P 3 T M J W 8 B	R L V O +	G
T	Z L H O /	W Y B E P G 4 M 9 3	Q + A X S D V I R N	8 U J F C	K
U	I S A K Q	9 4 C P E F Y J W 8	/ N H R L V D Z X +	3 T M G B	O
V	8 M G P C	X + Q K O H N L R I	B Y F W J U T 3 9 4	Z D S A /	E
W	L Z Q + A	T P G 4 Y B E 8 U J	H O / V I R X S D K	M 9 3 C F	N
X	M 8 B Y F	V O H N + Q K Z D S	G P C T 3 9 W J U E	L R I / A	4
Y	H Q Z X S	P T M 9 W 8 U B E F	L V I O / N + A K D	G 4 C 3 J	R
Z	T W Y B E	L H O / Q + A X S D	P G 4 M 9 3 8 U J F	V I R N K	C
3	D R N / O	J F E B C 4 G 9 M T	K A + S X Z I V L H	U 8 W Y P	Q
4	A / I R L	E U J W 9 3 T C P G	S D Z K Q + N H O V	F Y B 8 M	X
8	V X + Q K	M G P C B Y F W J U	O H N L R I Z D S A	T 3 9 4 E	/
9	S I / N H	U E F Y 4 C P 3 T M	A K Q D Z X R L V O	J W 8 B G	+ 9
+ 9	G B 8 W J	O V L R X Z D Q K A	M T 3 P C 4 Y F E U	H N / I S	+ 9
/	E 4 9 3 T	A S D Z I R L N H O	U J W F Y B C P G M	K Q + X V	8

Figure12. Baudot XOR square in class order

The alphabets in the figure have only a length of 16, as the normal 32 element Baudot alphabet has been folded in half, with each position in the alphabet occupying a given Baudot character and its inverse, e.g. E and V, which have the Baudot vectors  $\times \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$  and  $\bullet \times \times \times \times$ . The characters  $/-8$  (which are all dots and all crosses) can only go to one place under all the 32 different permutation, while in all the other cases there are varying distributions. The characters belonging to classes 1 and 4 have single cross/dot distributions, while the characters in classes 2 and 3 have double cross/dot distributions. This is the reason for the clustering of the distributions in the two squares of size 5 and 10.

But on the T52a/b and d models the permutations were not fixed but variable depending on the connections of the transposition units. Therefore, the permutation probabilities, and hence the statistics, depended on the given permutation set which, of course, was unknown until the machine was broken. So the statistical techniques available in 1944 were nothing more than tools

for getting a better knowledge about the cryptanalytical problem. They were not of much use in attacking the machines.

It appears that messages in depth were the only viable attack on these machines in 1944. It is far too involved to illustrate a full blown attack on a real example, but looking at a very small constructed example with a depth of two and a known crib will give a feeling for the problem. As mentioned earlier, the attacks in depths were helped by the use of tables and catalogues. One such table is the Baudot XOR or modulo two square. However, the table becomes a lot more useful when one of the alphabets is arranged in class order. This is illustrated in Fig. 12, where the plain text alphabet is in its normal order along the left hand column and the key alphabet is arranged in class order along the top row. The intersection of a plain text character and a key character will give the resulting cipher text character. However, due to the properties of modulo two addition any of the two alphabets, the one in normal order or the one in class order, can be used for any of the three elements plain, cipher or key characters.

To see what is actually taking place and how one might attack two messages in depth it is of interest to return to the principal encipherment equation (1)

$$\Pi(P \oplus \Sigma) = C$$

It is easily shown that permutation is distributive under modulo two addition

$$\Pi(X \oplus Y) = \Pi X \oplus \Pi Y \quad (5)$$

If we apply (5) to (1) we get

$$\Pi P \oplus \Pi \Sigma = C \quad (6)$$

In other words, the cipher character can also be obtained by first applying the permutation on the plain text character and the subtractor before combining these two transposed elements by modulo two addition. In the case of two messages P and Q enciphered in depth by the subtractor key  $\Sigma$  and the permutor key  $\Pi$  we can write the following

$$\Pi P \oplus \Pi \Sigma = C \quad (7)$$

$$\Pi Q \oplus \Pi \Sigma = D \quad (8)$$

Combining (7) and (8) by modulo two addition eliminates the  $\Pi \Sigma$  term and gives at the basic equation for messages in depth

$$\Pi(P \oplus Q) = C \oplus D \quad (9)$$

Equation 9 shows that if either P or Q is known the value of the other cannot be automatically determined, as with pure Vernam [24] encipherment where there is only a subtractor function and no permutor function. In reality

there might be as many as ten possible solution for P or Q depending on the Baudot class in which the operation took place. If the operation takes place in class 0 or 5, P and Q are uniquely determined, while in class 1 and 4 there are five possibilities and in class 2 and 3 there are ten possible solutions.

One opening for attack is the fact that the permutation only reorders the Baudot code elements: it does not change the elements themselves. Therefore if  $C \oplus D$  contains  $m$  crosses and  $n$  dots, it must also be the same for  $P \oplus Q$ . So if we know or can make a guess at P we will have a limited number, from 1 to 10, of choices for Q. This is the basis for an attack on messages in depths enciphered on the Siemens T52.

The two messages in Fig. 13 have been enciphered with the same key on a computer simulation of the T52d machine.<sup>20</sup> They are enciphered without the KTF and the main inner key, *Fernschreibgrundschlüssel*, is 6–8, 1–2, 5–7, III, 4–10, IV, II, I, 3–9, V, which is the key for day one in the *Norwegen Nr. 7* key table in Appendix C. The message key, *Fernschreibspruchschlüssel*, is the same as given on page 14, QEP FF OO PP AA ZZ VV CC MM HH UU. The second message is suspected to start with “three” or “four”, since message numbers in the region of three to four hundred are expected.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	P	G	I	+	L	X	G	L	T	N	E	3	Y	O	X	P	J	3	B	V
2	Y	N	+	8	4	I	P	P	9	E	B	D	K	W	E	8	E	I	4	H
n	2	3	4	1	1	4	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	4	2

**Figure13.** Two messages in depth.

The class numbers appearing in the last row are found by forming the modulo two sum of the two cipher text characters and looking up in which class the resulting character belongs. Taking the first two cipher text characters T and E and combining them modulo two results in Z. This result is found by using a simple Baudot XOR square or using the class XOR square in Fig. 12. Looking up T in the vertical left hand alphabet and E in the horizontal class alphabet, we find Z at their intersection. Looking in the top row class alphabet, we find that Z belongs to class 2. The class information can also be found from the Baudot class alphabet in Fig. 5. Another, perhaps even faster, method is to look up one of the cipher text characters, say T, in the left hand vertical alphabet and then searching down the row to find the other cipher text character, E. Doing so we find E situated in one of the columns for class 2.

<sup>20</sup> The T52 computer simulation will be made available on the Cipher Simulation Group’s (CSG) Web servers which are accessible through the author’s Cryptology Web page at URL: <http://home.cern.ch/~frode/crypto/>

Trying the word “three” with a space, here represented by 9, as a crib for the beginning of the second message gives the following possible solutions for the characters of the beginning of the first message, as shown in Fig. 14. The possible solutions for each character is given in the generatrices<sup>21</sup> which have been obtained from the class XOR table. Looking up the first clear text letter of the crib, T, in the left hand vertical alphabet the corresponding generatrix is found further along the row in the columns for the Baudot class 2. The generatrix characters are: WYBEPG4M93 which have been entered in alphabetical order to ease the search for a possible plain text word.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
n	2	3	4	1	1	4
2	T	H	R	E	E	9
1	B	B	H	A	A	A
	E	C	Q	D	D	G
	G	E	S	S	S	J
	M	F	X	Z	Z	W
	P	G	Z	/	/	8
	W	U				
	Y	W				
	3	3				
	4	4				
	9	8				

**Figure14.** Trying the crib “three” in message no. 2.

The most prominent plain text word is the beginning of the word “MESSAGE”. We can now try to extend the plain text in the second message by using the expected “E9” (E and a space) as a further crib in the first message. This is shown in Fig. 15a.

Since the beginning of the first message is suspected to contain a message number the continuation is expected to be another number. Of the numbers from one to ten the only possible solutions are “THree” or “FIve”. “ThREE” and 9 do not give any promising plain text in message number one but “five” and 9 give “ONE” as shown in Fig. 15b. This is even a unique solution as none of the other characters needed for the other numbers are present in the first generatrix. The rest of the solution is left as an exercise for the reader. However, solutions are not always as straightforward as here: often it will not be possible to carry on with only two messages in depth. Very often the messages contained numbers or abbreviations which made it extremely

<sup>21</sup> Generatrix, plural generatrices, is a decipherment or encipherment out of a set of decipherments or encipherments of the same text under a given hypothesis or cryptographic principle.

	7	8
n	2	1
1	E	9
	B	H
	F	I
	J	N
	T	S
2	U	/
	W	
	Y	
	3	
	4	
	9	

	9	10	11
n	2	3	2
2	V	E	9
	H	H	C
	I	I	E
	K	K	F
	L	L	M
1	N	N	P
	○	○	T
	Q	Q	U
	R	R	Y
	X	X	3
	+	+	4

(a)
(b)

Figure15. Continuing the cribs in messages no. 1 and no. 2.

difficult, if not impossible, to extend the messages with only a depth of two or three.

It is one thing to break a number of messages in depth. However, the aim is to break the machine, so as to be able to recover the key streams and hence to break all other messages for the rest of the key period. For this purpose it is necessary to be able to uniquely determine the permutation  $\Pi$  for each encryption step. It can be shown that at least a depth of four is necessary, but that it is generally not sufficient. With a depth of four one has only a 20% probability of finding a unique permutation. With a depth of seven or eight the probabilities are such that a workable key extraction can take place. As the code wheel patterns are fixed, it is possible to determine from the extracted key streams which code wheel is used where and for what purpose. From this information it is then possible to recover the plug connections and starting positions of the machine.

## 10 Conclusion

Not only did Bletchley Park intercept traffic enciphered on the Siemens SFM T52, but it also broke all the different models that it discovered. However, it was clear from the very beginning that the T52 was a very difficult machine to break. It probably would have remained unbroken had it not been for the German security blunders in using the machines. The blame should not be put entirely on the German teleprinter operators. The Siemens designers of the machine are equally responsible for not listening to the advice of the German cryptographic experts. The Siemens engineers appear to have been more focused on the engineering problems than on the cryptographic security of the machine. The T52a/b and the original T52c machines were basically machines with very limited security. The T52c is an extraordinary example

of how not to go about designing cryptographic algorithms. The wheel combining logic, which clearly was meant to strengthen the machine, had exactly the opposite effect — it eased the task of breaking the machine.

On the other hand, the T52d was a relatively well-designed machine. If this machine been the first to see service and the teleprinter operators had been properly instructed in using the machine, it is highly unlikely that it would have been broken. Another weakness of all of these machines is the fixed code wheel patterns. It is understandable that the designers thought that with the complexity of the machine it would not be necessary to vary the code wheel patterns. However, with variable code wheel patterns the machines would have been strengthened considerably. Due to the transposition circuit, cribs would not have led to the recovery of the key stream and even complete plain text of thousands of characters would not have resulted in recovered code wheel patterns.

Sir Harry Hinsley's statement, [13–15] that BP decided to concentrate its non-Morse interception, cryptanalytical, and decryption resources on the Army's Tunny traffic because of a need to husband resources and the need for good intelligence on the German Army, is undoubtedly correct. However, these were probably not the only reasons why BP abandoned its efforts against the Sturgeon machines. The cryptanalytical difficulties BP faced in attacking these machines, the small number of Sturgeon links, and the very limited intelligence that could be derived from the traffic must have played important roles in the outcome of BP's decision to concentrate on the Tunny traffic.

## 11 Acknowledgements

The author should like to thank Bengt Beckman who, through his friendship over the last five years, has been a constant inspiration for my research into the history of the Siemens SFM T52 machines. His help with obtaining material about the Swedish cryptanalysts and their success against these machines has been crucial to this work. As usual, Ralph Erskine has been very helpful with suggestions and improvements, not to forget his help with proof reading and archive material. David Alvarez has given generous support and supplied several documents. Special thanks go to Captain Jon Ulvensøen and The Armed Forces Museum (Forvarsmuseet) in Oslo for supplying many German documents and for giving me access to their collection of cipher machines. I should also like to thank Donald Davies for answering my questions about the T52c wheel combining logic and generally for his help over a great many years. Furthermore, I am very grateful to Geoff Sullivan who has helped me with the simulations of the permutation circuit, and whose computer simulation of the complete cipher machine in all its versions and models has been of the utmost importance to this research.

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12 Appendix A


**W. Föhr. Spr. Schl.**  
**SFM T 52 d/e** Prüfnr. 104  
 Norwegen Nr. 4  
 1. Tag ab 0900 Uhr DGZ

**Geheim!**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
A	18	20	38	31	54	47	67	54	70	17	A
B	05	30	22	60	63	29	35	42	55	04	B
C	37	28	58	36	03	46	13	47	20	67	C
D	46	27	42	32	10	07	64	41	08	15	D
E	23	13	30	29	24	56	20	31	39	32	E
F	19	45	57	07	55	61	27	58	68	72	F
G	42	22	19	26	08	11	53	29	16	58	G
H	35	08	28	55	58	22	19	68	02	19	H
I	29	49	17	47	36	30	61	08	40	65	I
K	02	19	48	43	42	20	24	14	31	47	K
L	33	51	25	10	32	05	52	28	18	22	L
M	38	06	35	05	60	17	04	46	64	11	M
N	43	01	09	27	35	44	66	12	59	30	N
O	47	11	37	59	64	25	22	56	71	14	O
P	14	07	56	49	13	19	44	38	27	07	P
Q	44	25	11	21	48	28	51	17	35	29	Q
R	17	12	15	40	34	12	57	05	48	57	R
S	15	26	52	46	62	45	26	37	44	62	S
T	39	21	18	14	01	38	11	50	56	21	T
U	03	52	23	53	26	14	49	69	61	25	U
V	36	24	54	16	37	33	23	59	34	52	V
W	16	50	44	24	53	43	18	21	53	50	W
X	40	48	41	33	51	65	45	34	46	12	X
Y	34	37	20	39	18	23	33	63	36	73	Y
Z	10	53	34	45	59	02	48	16	54	37	Z
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Figure 16. T52d Spruchschlüssel — message key.

## 13 Appendix B

**Geheim!**      **Gr.-NB-F. Spr. Schl.**      Prüfnr. 

**NB 51**                      **T 52c**

**1. Montag ab 0900 Uhr DGZ**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>A</b>	11 z	19 x	49 u	27 s	59 p	61	19	42	10	17	<b>A</b>
<b>B</b>	26 y	29 w	50 t	08 p	07 z	08	24	63	14	62	<b>B</b>
<b>C</b>	05 x	10 t	39 s	56 z	22 y	04	26	12	52	65	<b>C</b>
<b>D</b>	36 u	09 s	13 z	12 x	17 w	32	30	11	17	06	<b>D</b>
<b>E</b>	09 s	17 z	25 x	13 u	15 t	47	45	41	34	11	<b>E</b>
<b>F</b>	47 p	14 y	38 w	14 t	03 s	12	19	03	15	66	<b>F</b>
<b>G</b>	12 w	16 t	56 p	09 y	42 u	30	27	02	58	57	<b>G</b>
<b>H</b>	08 t	32 p	17 y	23 w	46 x	65	09	44	02	64	<b>H</b>
<b>I</b>	42 p	19 s	27 t	13 u	58 w	08	67	40	52	20	<b>I</b>
<b>K</b>	34 x	28 y	26 z	21 p	10 s	11	45	61	57	50	<b>K</b>
<b>L</b>	29 t	20 u	43 w	32 x	52 y	23	09	60	49	11	<b>L</b>
<b>M</b>	27 z	27 p	33 s	41 t	15 u	52	11	09	12	59	<b>M</b>
<b>N</b>	28 w	09 x	34 y	59 z	47 p	40	53	66	39	24	<b>N</b>
<b>O</b>	45 s	23 t	14 u	44 w	19 x	48	57	67	32	48	<b>O</b>
<b>P</b>	35 y	43 z	09 p	53 s	10 t	52	49	30	43	31	<b>P</b>
<b>Q</b>	03 u	35 w	52 x	02 y	08 z	26	34	10	23	28	<b>Q</b>
<b>R</b>	46 p	14 s	06 t	32 u	18 w	62	15	66	24	17	<b>R</b>
<b>S</b>	16 z	38 y	32 x	30 s	12 p	12	35	50	20	15	<b>S</b>
<b>T</b>	14 w	04 t	27 p	29 x	45 z	20	32	04	47	40	<b>T</b>
<b>U</b>	19 s	27 u	28 z	21 w	39 t	31	38	57	66	48	<b>U</b>
<b>V</b>	45 x	05 w	09 u	03 z	46 y	45	14	19	05	03	<b>V</b>
<b>W</b>	44 t	34 p	20 s	56 y	05* u	38	62	62	34	16	<b>W</b>
<b>X</b>	33 p	03 x	10 t	59 u	24 w	15	24	37	39	10	<b>X</b>
<b>Y</b>	30 u	45 t	55 z	02 x	21 p	52	30	18	21	12	<b>Y</b>
<b>Z</b>	14 y	22 z	09 w	28 s	34 x	39	02	13	16	61	<b>Z</b>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Figure 17. T52c *Spruchschlüssel* — message key.

14 Appendix C

NORD NR. 3

Geheime Kommandosache!

Nr. 00114

Norwegen Nr. 7

Wehrmacht-Fernschreibgrundschlüssel für die SFM T 52 d  
(W.Fsohr. Grd. Schl.)

Wechsel täglich um 0900 Uhr DGZ.

Nach Ablauf der Gültigkeit tageweise abschneiden und vorschriftsmäßig vernichten!

Monats- tag	Einstellungen									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K
303x	V	IV	3-8	III	1-6	4-10	I	2-5	II	7-9
2830.29	7-9	II	V	1-3	III	4-10	2-6	5-8	I	IV
3629.34	6-9	3-7	I	5-10	V	2-4	1-8	III	II	IV
2428.25	6-10	I	2-5	V	3-8	II	III	1-4	7-9	IV
2227.23	IV	4-8	II	1-9	V	III	6-10	I	3-5	2-7
2026.21	2-9	I	6-8	1-3	II	4-7	V	IV	5-10	III
1825.19	6-8	3-7	I	9-10	2-5	V	IV	1-4	III	II
1624.14	8-10	V	4-6	I	III	3-9	2-5	II	1-7	IV
1423.15	I	III	3-6	8-10	II	1-5	IV	7-9	V	2-4
1222.13	V	2-8	6-9	I	3-10	IV	1-5	4-7	II	III
1021.11	3-5	IV	II	1-6	III	2-10	I	V	7-9	4-8
820.9	V	5-6	IV	7-10	I	1-3	4-9	III	2-8	II
619.7	9-10	IV	7-8	V	3-5	1-4	I	2-6	III	II
418.5	3-10	V	II	7-8	I	2-4	IV	1-9	III	5-6
217.3	4-6	1-2	IV	II	5-9	III	3-7	I	8-10	V
3116.1	II	III	2-6	I	5-10	7-8	IV	1-3	4-9	V
2915.30	I	6-10	III	2-4	V	1-8	5-9	IV	II	3-7
2714.27	3-8	III	2-7	V	1-4	I	IV	5-6	II	9-10
2513.26	1-7	II	3-8	4-6	IV	5-9	I	2-10	III	V
2312.24	II	1-3	V	2-9	I	4-6	7-8	IV	5-10	III
2111.22	III	5-10	IV	4-8	2-7	I	V	1-6	3-9	II
1910.20	2-8	III	6-10	5-7	II	V	3-4	IV	I	1-9
179.18	1-2	5-8	III	I	4-6	7-10	IV	V	3-9	II
158.16	6-8	IV	2-10	III	5-7	V	1-4	II	I	3-9
137.14	V	9-10	IV	1-3	5-8	I	II	4-6	2-7	III
116.12	IV	II	1-9	2-10	III	4-8	I	3-7	V	5-6
5:	1-3	III	I	IV	4-7	V	6-8	II	2-5	9-10
4:	IV	4-8	1-5	II	6-9	3-10	V	I	2-7	III
3:	2-8	IV	I	9-10	II	1-6	4-7	V	III	3-5
2:	V	9-10	I	4-8	IV	1-6	III	3-5	II	2-7
1:	6-8	1-9	5-7	III	4-10	IV	II	I	3-9	V

Figure 18. T52d Grundschlüssel — main inner key.

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