

File 1405.1

3 March 1957

Mr. J. F. Byrne
1114 New York Avenue
Brooklyn 3, New York

Dear Mr. Byrne:

You appear to be so concerned about your "Chaocipher" system that I will answer your letters of 17 and 28 February 1957, despite my rather precarious state of health.

It may well be that your system is excellent - I won't say it is invincible, as you seem to think it is. I shall not even make an attempt to solve your example number 4, not only because I don't think I could do it but also because it would be meaningless whether I succeeded or failed. The days when "hand ciphers" were all that were available are gone - automation in cryptography began more than a dozen years ago and I don't think even the smaller or smallest nations today care a fig about them. It would be presumptuous on my part to give you any advice on this subject, nor would I or could I be of assistance to you in getting any government interested in whatever advantages your system may have - which I don't think it has - over the high-speed, automatic, and very secure systems now in use. Security is of course one of the desiderata - but only one. Many, many experienced and well-trained engineers have been working for a score of years on this problem, with the finest tools and facilities that our government could give them. What makes you think you have done something that they have not thought of or have overlooked? To repeat, solving or not solving your examples would prove absolutely nothing.

It may sound heartless to say this but candor compels me to say it: why don't you forget the "Chaocipher" and go about your writing of other and more interesting subjects - Joyce, for instance?

Thank you for your courtesy in offering to send me a copy of your "Silent Years." I bought a copy when it first came out and before I had any idea that it had those chapters on your cipher system. I have "collected" a bit on Joyce, you see, and forgive me if I say that you may be wrong, all wrong, when you make a categorical statement that "No book written about Joyce will ever make money." Not that I have the faintest notion of writing about him; but some day there may come a book that will make Joyce of much greater interest because it will clearly show the influence he had on writers of the 20th Century.

Sincerely,