



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 13, 1981

TO: PA - William J. Dyess

FROM: PA - Francis Terry McNamara *FTM*
PA/HO - David Trask

SUBJECT: "To Fresh Woods and Pastures New"

UNCLASSIFIED

THE PROBLEM

We believe that the time has come for us to reassess our goals in regards to the Historian's Office. For the past two years all efforts have been bent towards reaching a twenty-year line in the publication of the Foreign Relations series (FRUS) by 1986. The outcome of these extensive endeavors has been to demonstrate that HO can readily attain a twenty-year line in preparation of manuscripts but that it cannot achieve a twenty-year line in conversion of manuscripts into published books.

Attempts to speed compilation and to reduce costs have been effective, but a breakdown in the delivery of central services, of which difficulties with declassification constitute only one dimension, have precluded maintenance of the desired schedule of publication. Even if declassification difficulties were to disappear overnight, publication cannot be hastened materially until a whole range of improvements are made in the delivery of needed central services, for example, services that emanate from the Government Printing Office (GPO) and the Foreign Affairs Information Center (A/FAIM).

Moreover, delays in publication have contributed to a budgetary crisis of unknown but significant proportions. The cost of publication has marched well beyond the assumptions made when funds were allocated for outstanding unpublished volumes (about twenty covering 1950-1954 and about 13 covering 1955-1957).

OPTIONS OPENED TO US

What is to be done? There follows a brief exposition of three options.

-- One would be to maintain the present objectives, seeking to attain the twenty-year line by 1986.

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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--Another would be to maintain the present objectives, seeking to attain the twenty-year line by 1986, mobilizing a whole range of new resources and seeking much-improved delivery of central services.

--A third would be to retain the goal of a twenty-year line but to accept some delay in reaching it, holding for the moment the present gap of 26-30 years while engaging in certain compensatory activities to mitigate the credibility gap and expand the policy oriented research program.

DISCUSSION

There is no need to indicate the requirements of option #1 since it represents merely the maintenance of the status quo.

Further, there is no need to restate the requirements of option #2, since it is the course of action that has been recommended in the recent past.

If both options #1 and #2 prove unacceptable or unattainable, the only logical alternative is to accept a hold-the line policy with compensatory activities. There follows a brief outline of the measures that could be adopted along this line with some of their advantages and disadvantages.

1. HO could divert about half of its personnel to policy-related historical research, greatly enlarging its output in this area. An early increase in the volume of such activity is entirely consistent with the present effort to upgrade the Department's role in the making of overall national policy. Policy-related historical research of the highest quality is an indispensable element in the policy process, and no other organization in the Department is qualified to provide it.

2. HO could use the other half of its personnel to sustain the publication of the Foreign Relations series at its present level and plan for a renewed burst of compiling in two or three years when declassification has overtaken compiling. To accomplish even this limited objective the Department must improve its provision of needed central services. But no truly extraordinary effort would be necessary, and upgrading could proceed at a measured pace.

A schedule for work on the Foreign Relations series would rest on twin pillars: first, priority to publication of volumes for the period 1950-1957 already compiled. Second, adjustment of the schedule for compilation of volumes covering the period 1958-1963 to the pace of declassification activity. HO would thus reduce its huge backlog of unpublished manuscripts and work

toward the ideal of processing manuscripts through publication only after completing the task of declassification. Phases in this process would be: (a) publication of volumes covering 1950-1954 that are undergoing declassification re-review at the present time; (b) publication of volumes in the triennium 1955-1957, now all but completed in manuscript form; (c) preparation of large collections of documents that might be included in the volumes covering the two triennia 1958-60 and 1961-63 for submission to the Classification/Declassification Center and other declassification authorities; (d) compilation, editing, and publication of the triennial sets for 1958-1960 and 1961-1963. HO would seek at all times to accelerate movement toward a twenty-year line, but it should not anticipate significant gains for several years.

3. HO could resume the provision of a service to its user population that would compensate to some extent for the failure to attain the twenty-year line at an early date, namely, publication of the "Current Documents" series. This series was suspended after publication of the volume for 1967 because of budgetary considerations. Given new capabilities, it seems entirely feasible to resume this activity on a much-improved basis at greatly reduced cost. Modern modes of publication involving use of word-processing equipment, electronic typesetters, and microform allow for this outcome. The new "Current Documents" would include important other-agency information and unpublished information of importance as well as the types of information included in the old series.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, this approach would involve increasing HO's policy-related research and resuming publication of "Current Documents" in compensation for accepting a temporary hesitation in the early achievement by the Foreign Relations series of a twenty-year line.

-- The disadvantage of this approach is that it probably could, if misunderstood, arouse considerable anxiety among the user population.

-- The advantage of this approach is that it would reduce the gap between announced intentions and actual accomplishments, compensating for some slowness in delivery of the Foreign Relations series by enhancing the volume of policy-related research and resuming publication of "Current Documents."

With the establishment of a central declassification office, it makes little sense for HO to work on documents prior to their

declassification. In the abstract, it might seem that this practice could afford a useful head-start in compiling volumes. Hard experience over the past two years, however, has proven otherwise. Interminable battles over declassification have resulted in a virtual standstill in publication, a lowering of morale in HO and the creation of an skepticism among important users of FRUS. Moreover, many of the cost benefits to be realized from the application of new word processing techniques have been jeopardized by delays ascribable to classification problems.

We are convinced that substantial savings in time and money can be realized by working only with declassified documents. As a start, editing and printing might be contracted out to low bidders, getting away from the need to use costly GPO classified facilities. Expensive excisions from nearly completed volumes could be eliminated. The interminable, rancorous arguments between equally dedicated historians and declassifiers could be greatly reduced. Finally, on the positive side, the historians could be of help in providing historic perspective to illuminate some of the murkier problems for the Department's policy makers.

RECOMMENDATION

We propose that you approve option #3, since it is clearly preferable to the other options in the existing circumstances. If you take this step, one that we deem fully within your authority as the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, we will proceed to develop detailed plans for putting the three principal recommendations of option #3 into effect at the earliest convenient moment.

cc: PA/HO - Dr. Trask

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