Washington, D.C. 20520

UNCLASSIFIED

March 18, 1981

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP
Change to _____
(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny ( ) Declassify
Exemptions b ( ) ( ) E.O. 13526 25x ( )( )( ).
Declassify after _____
With concurrence of:
_____ obtained _____ not obt.
IPS by _____ Date 10/18/17

MEMORANDUM

TO: PA/HO - Mr. Trask

THROUGH: PA/HO/FR - Mr. Slany
PA/HO/WAM - Mr. Claussen

FROM: PA/HO/WAM - N. Stephen Kane NSK

SUBJECT: "Fast track" publication of Foreign Relations, 1952-1954, IV ("The American Republics")

ISSUE

Should HO go forward with publication of the subject volume before 1) receiving a written response from the CIA regarding declassification of a supplementary package of editorial notes based on CIA cables, and 2) appealing NSC deletions of material which has appeared almost verbatim in previously published volumes?

DISCUSSION

The recent decision to go forward with "fast track" publication of the subject volume raises a number of important questions relating to the future of the Foreign Relations series. Foreign Relations is the pre-eminent publication of its kind anywhere in the world. It vividly demonstrates the United States Government's commitment to the principle that an informed public is essential to the democratic process. Its credibility as an accurate historical record of United States foreign relations is widely accepted, and its objectivity is praised by scholars and practitioners alike. The status accorded to Foreign Relations is the result of the traditionally conscientious efforts of those who compile the series to document all significant aspects of United States relations with other countries. In the 1970's, these efforts extended to well-known covert episodes, in spite of the enormous difficulties encountered by HO historians in securing access to and declassification of the necessary papers. In the absence of a high-level policy decision prohibiting coverage of covert activities, HO has an obligation, consonant with its original mandate, to make the effort, and to account for its failure, if necessary. If HO permits silence to substitute for substance, and gaps in the record for accountability, the series' reputation as a credible and objective official documentary publication will not endure.

In any declassification controversy, there is a point at which HO must opt to cut its losses, but I regard the decision to go forward with publication

in this case as premature for the following reasons:

--it puts the onus for failure to publish the record of, or to account for, a well-known covert episode squarely on the Department of State and the Office of the Historian, thereby seriously eroding the credibility of the series;

--it sends a clear signal to the CIA that if it defers a decision long enough HO will make it voluntarily, thereby encouraging the CIA to employ the same tactic of inaction in other cases;

--it radically changes the nature of HO's mission, in spite of its current mandate, without the sanction of higher levels in the Department of State or the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation;

--it imposes a form of self-censorship on the series, and suggests that there is compelling logic to move the threshold of self-censorship from the declassification to the collection phase of the production process;

--it eliminates the possibility of testing the CIA's claim that there is a distinction between policy and operations, and that the former may be releasable;

--it forecloses an appeal to the NSC on deletions of materials appearing almost verbatim in previously published volumes, thereby encouraging the NSC to widen this practice;

--it establishes a strong negative precedent for other Foreign Relations volumes in progress, thereby jeopardizing a substantial aggregate of documentation; and,

--it weakens the position of the Department of State in dealing with the anticipated negative reaction of the consuming public.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the foregoing, I recommend that we reconsider the decision to publish the subject volume at this time, and instead adopt the following series of steps:

1) defer publication until we receive a definitive written decision from the CIA on the supplementary editorial notes at issue and have an opportunity to appeal certain NSC deletions, or until the volume is thirty years old, whichever comes first;

2) select another volume for rapid processing in its place, one free of major declassification problems, possibly Foreign Relations, 1955-1957, III ("The American Republics");

3) if the CIA decision on the editorial notes is negative, insert a meaningful disclaimer at the front of the Guatemala compilation to account

for the lack of coverage, as a countervailing precedent against further loss of similar materials in other volumes; and,

4) initiate the appropriate process at higher levels in the Department to redefine the official mandate of the Foreign Relations series and the principles guiding its compilation in accordance with current realities.

xc: Mr. Glennon
Mr. Sampson

PA/HO:NSKane
3-13-81