

MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON
HISTORICAL DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTATION

TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

November 8, 1985

American Historical Association

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Organization of American Historians

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Other Persons Present

Bureau of Public Affairs (PA):

Bernard Kalb, Assistant Secretary and Spokesman;
George B. High, Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary

The Office of the Historian (PA/HO):

William Z. Slany, The Historian; Neal H. Petersen, Deputy Historian; John P. Glennon, Foreign Relations Division Chief; Paul Claussen, Policy Studies Division Chief; David S. Patterson, Operations Staff Chief; Carol A. Becker, Information Staff Chief and Assistant to the Historian; David H. Herschler, Assistant to the Historian for Records Policy; David M. Baehler, Suzanne E. Coffman, Karen Collias, William Deary, Evan Duncan, Evans Gerakas, Nancy Golden, Kay Herring, Nina D. Howland, Edward C. Keefer, Ronald D. Landa, David W. Mabon, James E. Miller, Nina J. Noring, David S. Painter, Charles S. Sampson, William F. Sanford, Harriet D. Schwar, Louis J. Smith, Sherrill B. Wells

Classification/Declassification Center (A/CDC):

Ambassador John R. Burke, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Classification/Declassification; Dwight Ambach, Director, Office of Systematic Review

Foreign Affairs Information Management Center (A/FAIM):

Paul Washington, Chief, Publishing Services Division; George Mattis, Assistant to Mr. Washington; Rita Baker, Documentary Editing Section Chief; Vicki Futscher, Documentary Editing Section

Others:

Milton O. Gustafson, Chief, Diplomatic Branch, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Edwin A. Thompson, Project Director, Records Declassification Division, NARA; _____ Hopper, Scholarly Resources, Inc.

List of Abbreviations

A - Bureau of Administration
AHA - American Historical Association
CDC - Classification/Declassification Center
CIA - Central Intelligence Agency
CIS - Congressional Information Service
DOS - Department of State
FAIM - Foreign Affairs Information Management Center
FAIS - Foreign Affairs Information System
FOIA - Freedom of Information Act
FRUS - Foreign Relations of the United States
FSO - Foreign Service Officer
GPO - Government Printing Office
HO - Office of the Historian
JCP - Joint Committee on Printing
LC - Library of Congress
NARA - National Archives and Records Administration
PA - Bureau of Public Affairs
SADI - Secretariat Automated Data Index

Morning Session

Prof. Kuehl convened the meeting at 9:08 a.m. and welcomed Prof. Dallek and Prof. Perkins as new members of the committee. Prof. Kuehl commented that Prof. Perkins' presence was especially noteworthy since his father Dexter Perkins had served on the original advisory committee.

Prof. Holsti moved the reelection of Prof. Kuehl as committee chairman. Prof. Gruber seconded the motion and Prof. Kuehl was reelected unanimously.

Mr. Slany introduced the others present and explained the use of PA/HO staff as note-takers, adding that under the present system of note-taking, the minutes would be less detailed than during the 1960's, when a Court Reporter was employed.

Prof. Kuehl introduced Mr. High while awaiting Mr. Kalb's arrival. After a moment's delay, Mr. Kalb entered and apologized for his late arrival, remarking that in this respect he was somewhat like the Foreign Relations series. He extended a cordial welcome to the committee on behalf of the bureau. He remarked that his battle to move the bureaucracy to clear daily press guidances made him sympathize with the effort to clear 25 to 28 year old documents. He noted that as a journalist he had found the series useful, and he congratulated the committee on its efforts to accelerate the clearance process. He stated that he looked forward to his afternoon meeting with the committee, and then excused himself from the proceedings.

Mr. High stated that he was new to his job, and that he was present as an observer, to learn. He noted that he had been in the management field for several years and had rarely come upon more difficult and yet fascinating managerial problems than those posed by the Foreign Relations series. While he was discouraged that the harder we worked at the problem, the further behind we seem to get, he was satisfied that the program was being well-managed. He welcomed the advice of the committee. Although the problem was serious, he was encouraged by the positive response of the Secretary to the work of the historians, and he hoped for increased support from the bureau and the "seventh floor."

Report of the Historian

Mr. Slany said that his comments would supplement rather than duplicate the status report contained in the committee's briefing package. He invited self-introduction of the PA/HO staff and others present. He referred to the staff study, which called for the acceleration of the Foreign Relations series to a 30-year line within five to six years. The staff study is being used by PA/HO as a guide in the management of resources and in setting deadlines. One result was the chart in the briefing package showing workflow plans and deadlines in the publishing of Foreign Relations volumes.

He stated that the presidential directive had gone to the White House, and he was confident that it would be signed, perhaps today. He remarked that the presidential directive probably will be the most important thing that has happened to the Foreign Relations series in ten years. It will produce a more effective clearance process; it will enable the Department to take the lead in publishing the foreign affairs record; and it will provide PA/HO with improved procedures and the leverage to ensure that the process moved forward. He added that Mr. High planned--as an early follow-up to issuance of the presidential directive--to convene a meeting of high-level State, DOD, CIA, NSC, and other agency officials to develop steps to achieve a 30-year line.

CIA Documents

Prof. Kuehl commented that the inclusion of CIA documents in the series was encouraging. Mr. Slany said that the Central Intelligence Agency had made an arrangement with the Senate that exempted CIA operational records from declassification in return for which the Agency had agreed to declassify older non-operational records of historical interest. It had enlarged its historical staff enabling it to accelerate declassification of records and accession by NARA. PA/HO can gain enhanced access to Agency records in exchange for publishing some of the more important records in supplemental volumes to the series. He stressed that the supplementary volumes would not be allowed to delay publication of the series, but the important documents should be published in the supplements.

Mr. Petersen said that two supplementary volumes, currently being blocked out, would cover intelligence organizational development from 1945 to 1950, the establishment of intelligence within the NSC system, and intelligence estimates of the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1954. The precise terms of reference of both intelligence volumes have to be negotiated with the CIA before PA/HO actually undertakes the projects. Mr. Slany added that these supplements would provide an opportunity to deal with important intelligence records that could not be published in the earlier Foreign Relations volumes.

Microform Supplements

Mr. Slany observed that printed supplements were only one limited line of development. He then elaborated on proposed microform supplements to the Foreign Relations series, to include: the NSC meetings from 1947 to 1954, meetings with heads of state of the Soviet Union and other major powers, the internal publication Current Economic Developments, top secret daily summaries, the Secretary's memoranda of conversations, and memoranda of conversations of the Secretary with the President for the late 1940s and early 1950s. Mr. Slany reiterated that the proposed supplements were intended to enhance, and would not delay, the printed Foreign Relations series. Since it is beyond the

Historical Office's ability to include all important documents in printed volumes, the microform supplements would truly help. He added that the publication schedule for Foreign Relations calls for 50-60 print volumes, covering the period through 1960, to be published between now and 1990, which in itself seems impossible. The level of documentation in print volumes has been greatly scaled down from that of the volumes covering the early 1950's.

Prof. Kuehl stated that the committee had not taken an official position regarding the microfiche supplements. SHAFR has been skeptical. He urged that the committee discuss the matter.

Mr. Glennon explained that the first of the microfiche supplements, targeted for publication in 1986 with the related print volumes on China (1955-57, II and III), contained a verbatim record of the Wang-Johnson talks. The print volumes would contain only summaries of the talks. The microfiche supplement would contain 30 fiche, or 3000 pages.

Prof. Perkins observed that there was outside concern that the supplements would delay publication of the print volumes and that there may not be adequate resources to compile the next three-year series. Mr. Slany stated that full-time compiling for the 1960's would begin around 1987. Most of the current compiling was for the Vietnam volumes and to a lesser extent the 1958-60 series. The supplements should not require an extensive compilation effort, if the process can be perfected. We need to explore the methods for publishing bodies of records on microfiche. It may be necessary in FY 88 to buttress resources for compilation, but such a request would be neither necessary nor advisable at present.

Prof. Larson found annotation useful that indicated who saw daily summaries and the Secretary's staff committee minutes, and she asked whether this annotation would be left out of microform supplements. She also expressed concern that some important documents would be omitted from the printed volumes if published in the microfiche supplements.

Prof. Dallek wanted to be assured that access to declassified or newly discovered material not published in the early volumes would not be delayed because they were to be published on microfiche by the Department of State. Mr. Slany stated that publication of the microfiche would in no way keep the documents out of the public domain.

Prof. Dallek asked if an index of open materials could be published in cooperation with the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. Mr. Thompson stated that the National Archives prepares a quarterly report on the opening of records, including declassified records. This report is sent to 200 journals for widespread dissemination.

Mr. Slany said that the Office had decided that it would be most useful for the microform publications to be packaged and shelved in libraries with the print volumes. Ms. Becker showed a mock-up of a microfiche container made by GPO that resembled, and could be shelved with, the print volumes. Inside the container would be a vinyl folder, containing the fiche on one side and a

printed guide on the other. She related that she had seen in person what had happened at the Library of Congress to the first PA/HO microfiche publication, American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1981, Supplement--the fiche were stored in a drawer while the paper guide to the fiche was stored next to the print volume on the shelf--in other words, the wrong two parts were together. The new packaging, which has been approved in theory by GPO and by the Depository Library Council, is now in the final design stages.

Relation of Microform Publication to NARA

In response to Prof. Larson's previous concern, Mr. Sampson asserted that multi-subject memoranda likely will not be omitted from the printed Foreign Relations volumes, if they are important. Where document extracts appear in the print volume and the full texts appear as a unique block in the microfiche publication, there will be a footnote in the print volume, if possible. As to the daily summaries, he stated that an annotated set likely will appear in the microfiche publications.

Prof. Larson inquired if the paper copy would be available at the National Archives. Mr. Gustafson responded that it is National Archives policy not to make available to researchers the paper original if a document has been microfilmed, although there are a few exceptions to this rule. He emphasized that National Archives microfilm publications duplicate exactly the paper original. Prof. Larson stated that often several copies of a document existed, some containing historically important marginal writing. Mr. Gustafson agreed, emphasizing the importance of selecting the proper copy of a document to be filmed or, for that matter, transferred to the National Archives. Prof. Larson suggested that criteria be developed for the selection and filming of records on microfiche.

Mr. Gustafson questioned the publication of documents in Foreign Relations microfiche supplements that to a substantial extent may have been filmed by the National Archives, or are planned to be filmed by NARA when they have been declassified. Mr. Slany stated that PA/HO is trying to avoid duplicating the microfilm publications of the National Archives. The purpose of the Historical Office microfiche publications is to make available some documents that cannot be transferred to the National Archives at an early date, and to provide the full texts of important documents that have been published in part in print. Mr. Gustafson acknowledged that these were useful objectives, and agreed that the PA/HO microfiche program might speed the declassification of documents. He added later that he thought the program should be pursued because of the new packaging plan for the fiche, and because the GPO's readiness to distribute copies to depository libraries would allow the Department program to go beyond what the National Archives was able to do with its microform publications.

Guidelines for Microfiche Decisions

Prof. Kuehl inquired if the Historical Office used a systematic list of guidelines to determine what to publish in microform. Mr. Slany stated that this had been discussed in committee meetings within the office. Mr. Glennon mentioned that there were internal office memoranda concerning this matter. He added that the 1965 Vietnam volume would include a microfiche supplement in order to keep the print volume to 1000-1200 pages. The volume would cross-reference documents published in the microfiche with a brief summary in the print volume. Prof. Kuehl said that perhaps the term "supplement" had been applied too loosely; it sounded like not all the Historical Office microfiche publications would be true supplements. Mr. Slany responded that the term would be applied across the board to ensure that the microfiche publications were linked to and shelved with the printed Foreign Relations volumes in libraries. Prof. Kuehl asked for assurance to the scholarly community regarding the nature of the microfiche supplements. Can the Department provide a statement and work with the National Archives? Mr. Slany responded that he would give the committee a document detailing the microfiche program, and coordinate the microfiche publications with the National Archives.

In response to Prof. Perkins' expression of surprise at the size of the compiled volumes, Mr. Slany explained that in the late 1970's a Senate Foreign Relations Committee report on a Department of State authorization bill had contained language admonishing the Department to consult with the Senate and House Committees before specific page cuts were made in the size of the Foreign Relations series. Mr. Glennon remarked that although there are many volumes in the offing, the problems thus far have not been in the compiling, but in the declassification and publication processes. Mr. Slany asserted that what is needed is support and understanding from the committee for the necessity to provide at least part of the Foreign Relations series to the public in a form other than paper. Mr. Gustafson suggested that future status reports on the series should indicate the average number of pages per printed volume for the time period, and that the microfiche supplements should contain true supplemental material and not replace the printed volumes. This should alleviate concerns from the scholarly community.

Paper Guides to Microfiche Publications

Prof. Kuehl inquired about the cost of the printed guide to the microfiche supplement to Current Documents. Mr. Patterson stated that the guide was produced on the WANG equipment in-house, and sent out for preparation of camera-ready copy and printing. The cost of the guide was part of the total cost of the microfiche package, and thus was difficult to determine. Prof. Kuehl asked how distribution of this printed guide-type of publication, which he considered to be valuable even without the accompanying fiche, can be extended, perhaps even to the entire SHAFR membership. Mr.

Slany asserted that if it is a small size guide, it can easily be disseminated to large numbers of scholars. Mr. Mabon remarked that the guide to the 1955-1957 China supplement will be similar to the printed guide to the Current Documents supplement.

Reviews of Microfiche Publications

In regard to the China microfiche supplement, Prof. Kuehl suggested that someone should review the publication in the SHAFR Newsletter to publicize it more widely. As the first non-print supplement to the Foreign Relations series, it is imperative that the publication be reviewed by the scholarly community. Mr. Slany thought this was an excellent idea. It would provide feedback for the next committee meeting. Prof. Kuehl stated that the reviewer should be a respected scholar and asked the committee for nominees. There was no immediate response from the committee, but Prof. Kuehl indicated that the reviewer should be someone well versed in Sino-American relations.

Prof. Kuehl asked the committee to note items in the status report regarding declassification issues that would be discussed in the afternoon session. Prof. Dallek remarked that at some point Prof. Larson's letter should come before the committee. Prof. Kuehl indicated that it would come up during the afternoon session.

Prof. Larson complimented the Historical Office on the 1952-1954 Foreign Relations volume on national security. She asserted that the volume may change the historical impression of Eisenhower. She thought the volumes were thorough and not much was omitted. Prof. Larson then inquired about the distribution of Foreign Relations volumes to the overseas posts. Mr. Slany responded that Mr. Paul Washington of the Department's Publication Services Division could discuss that later in the meeting.

The Presidential Directive

Prof. Gruber inquired what clear guidelines or mechanisms for action would derive from the presidential directive. Mr. Slany stated that the mechanism will allow for the Secretary of State to convene meetings of other agency officials to discuss the Historical Office access to documents, and ask agencies to give priority to the Historical Office requests for records. The directive should give the Department authority to coordinate the declassification process, and this would allow for an integrated, rather than an ad hoc, approach to declassification and access to other agency records.

Prof. Gruber inquired whether these interagency meetings would discuss substantive criteria for declassification as well as procedural questions. Mr. Thompson responded that he thought, with luck, both could be discussed, but Mr. Ambach thought the meetings would deal mainly with procedural questions.

Mr. Slany asserted that the resolution of substantive declassification questions would have to be done on a case-by-case basis. There was no sense of purpose held in common among the agencies, and it was difficult for the Department to convince other agencies of the importance of this work. He thought that the meetings would help create a common purpose and may lead to a greater sense of urgency on the part of other agencies. He added that procedures can be improved through these meetings.

Prof. Perkins inquired whether the NSC had any structure to deal with the historical perspective. Mr. Slany responded that they have a sense of history, but declassifying our volumes is a low priority. Ms. Coffman, who has been assigned to the NSC from the Historical Office on detail, remarked that Bromley Smith, a former Executive Secretary of the NSC, has been commissioned by the NSC to write a history of it. She asserted that Brenda Reger's staff of four was diligent about keeping up with what had been compiled, what needs to be reviewed, and what has been released. The NSC staff maintains internal checks to ensure it is not denying access to documents that have been released. The staff also sends copies of released documents to the presidential libraries.

Prof. Larson asserted that the problem of lack of agency cooperation is demonstrated in the chart provided in the briefing package. She inquired whether this remained a problem and, if so, whether the problem was more stringent declassification criteria in other agencies or lack of resources. She was concerned about the continuing delays. Mr. Slany asserted that agencies sometimes are not aware of the importance of getting clearances, and this will be remedied in the presidential directive. He indicated that this could be discussed further in the afternoon session.

Prof. Larson inquired what indication there was that the presidential directive would be effective. Mr. Mabon stated that if the directive were followed up properly there would be an across-the-board impact. Prof. Gruber commented that the directive would serve mainly as a procedural tool, and Mr. Slany concurred. Prof. Larson stated that the general perception in the presidential libraries was that President Reagan was not eager to release information. She could not see how the directive would have a beneficial impact if the president's attitude was well known.

Mr. Ambach responded to the question of resources by stating that this was a considerable problem. He asserted that in his opinion the principal anticipated benefit of the presidential directive would be to focus on the resource problem.

Prof. Perkins inquired whether future status charts could indicate the dates when clearance action was requested from agencies. Prof. Dallek agreed that this would be useful. The chart could then be sent to agencies, and would clearly indicate which agencies are holding up the process.

The committee took a brief recess at 10:40 a.m.

Special Volumes and Policy Research

Chairman Kuehl reconvened the meeting at 11:05 a.m. and asked what criteria the Office used in engaging in "special publications", as described on page 7 of the Status Report. Specifically, he questioned the appropriateness of Documents on Germany--were there not more recent topics more worthy of the Historical Office's resources? Mr. Slany assured Prof. Kuehl that the resources used to produce Documents on Germany came from outside the Foreign Relations staff and did not subtract from Foreign Relations production. Such special publications quite often were prepared in response to policy-makers needs and were done for public affairs reasons.

Prof. Gruber asked whether the agenda for policy research was set outside the office. Mr. Claussen responded that the Historical Office worked with the rest of the bureaucracy, and the policy research agenda was a compromise. We did not do everything we were asked to do, nor did we self-generate all research. Mr. Claussen added that Documents on Germany was fully funded outside the Office. It was a useful guide requested by an interagency committee on the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II. The committee thought that the previous publication on Germany needed updating and reprinting. Mr. Claussen noted that research studies were often generated along similar lines.

Prof. Holsti asked if policy research diverted resources from production of Foreign Relations. Mr. Slany pointed out that the Historical Office assigned policy research to units in the office which were not involved in producing Foreign Relations. He added that it was important bureaucratically for the office to have contacts with the rest of the Department of State beyond nagging them to release 30-year old documents.

Prof. Gruber asked how many policy research projects were classified. When Mr. Slany responded that most of them were classified, she asked did they not then add to the amount of classified material which eventually had to be reviewed for release? Mr. Claussen stated that policy studies were usually classified by derivation (based on the classification of the sources used in preparing the study). Indeed, he believed that they expedited declassification because the studies were easier to declassify than the raw documents themselves. Mr. Slany added that policy studies captured and saved documentation which might otherwise be lost. Prof. Holsti asked whether the Historical Office deliberately initiated research in some areas in order to capture the present for future historians, to which Mr. Slany answered yes.

Marketing and Distribution of Foreign Relations Volumes

Paul Washington presented a report on his efforts in the past year to convince GPO that Foreign Relations is a unique series and has to have special attention. In effect, GPO has been asked to allow longer press runs for the series, to increase the shelf life of the sales copies, and to keep the sales price down. He believes he has been half successful in his efforts.

In addition, Mr. Washington outlined the steps which GPO and his office are taking to improve sales promotion. The Department of State press release on the publication of a volume is now turned into a one-page ad for journals and used in radio advertisements. Special promotional flyers mailed out by GPO in other book orders are now prepared for new volumes; each of these flyers contains an order form with a "tracer number" on it that can be tracked to measure its sales effectiveness. Forty-nine new orders can be traced to this new promotional activity. In response to Prof. Larson's query, Mr. Washington explained that copies of Foreign Relations volumes are indeed sent to U.S. posts abroad, but said that he did not know exactly how volumes are plugged into the USIA distribution system.

Prof. Holsti asked if the emphasis on GPO doing a better job meant that the search for a private publisher of Foreign Relations--a topic of much discussion at last year's advisory committee--had been abandoned? Mr. Washington responded that although GPO is under new direction and can probably now do a better job than in the past, the Department is still pursuing a "direct deal" contract with a private publisher.

Prof. Perkins asked about the size of the print run at GPO, and Prof. Gruber asked what percent of the print run goes to libraries. Mr. Washington responded that approximately 2000-2500 copies are printed, one thousand of which are distributed to the depository libraries, 350 are bought back by the Department, and about 825 are eventually sold (the sales figure is a 10% increase over the last 10-15 years.) The decision of how many copies to print rests with GPO.

Prof. Larson remarked that the "best seller" volumes for 1952-1954--National Security, Korea, and Indochina--were quickly sold out, and she thought there should be some way to produce a second run of them. Mr. Washington replied that GPO based its print runs on average sales of the volumes in the past and had no way to determine what would be a big seller. Some volumes never come close to selling out. He confirmed, however, that the Department of State would press GPO to rerun out-of-print volumes for which there is continuing interest, and to make more of an effort to base print runs on subject content rather than on previous overall series sales statistics.

Prof. Perkins asked how many volumes were bought by individuals and how many by institutions. Mr. Washington did not have the hard figures, but he guessed it ran about 60% to institutions (not counting the depository libraries which get the volumes free) and the rest to individuals.

Prof. Holsti asked who gets the money for volumes sold. Mr. Washington responded that the money goes to Treasury and then back to GPO to reduce their production costs. Mr. Slany added that the Department must convince GPO that if they publicize the Foreign Relations volumes more, they will sell more, and they will make more money.

Prof. Gruber asked how the market for the volumes can be expanded. Mr. Slany answered that it is difficult to publicize the volumes because they come out so sporadically. Mr. Washington agreed that this is precisely the problem he faces. He cannot

predict and plan for a certain number of volumes to be produced each year. Mr. Slany pointed out the sad fact that by the time scholarly journals get around to reviewing a Foreign Relations volume, they are often out of print. He added that some journals do not review them at all. Prof. Larson asked whether it would be possible to put advertisements in academic journals, for example, in World Politics. Mr. Washington replied that the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser has frowned on use of government funds for advertising.

Mr. Gustafson noted that, as explained in a Department handout giving sources for both print and microform editions of out-of-print Foreign Relations volumes, Foreign Relations is published as a House document and then microfiched by CIS for sales purposes. He asked when this started. Ms. Becker explained that the series has been a House document for a long time, but that only recently has CIS been filming and offering the volumes as part of its microfiche sales program.

In response to a question from Mr. Hargrove, Mr. Washington described the depository library system. Mr. Slany added that a major research university, even if it was a depository library, usually bought additional copies of Foreign Relations volumes.

Prof. Kuehl summed up the discussion of marketing and distribution of Foreign Relations by stating that the day's report gave him encouragement. Last year's advisory committee report had recommended an improved effort in this area and it seemed to have been followed.

Records Management Issues

Mr. Slany then suggested that the committee turn its attention to the Historical Office's response to last year's report. The Office has tried harder to be involved in Department of State records maintenance, even though that function is the responsibility of another bureau. As a reflection of his concern, the Office has now hired a records historian, David Herschler. Slany stated that Department records were being lost, not intentionally, but because of the vast volume of records being created. It is the Historical Office's mission to remind the Department of State to keep and maintain its historically valuable papers. He stated again that this was one of the important side effects of the Office's policy studies program.

Prof. Perkins asked if the Department of State had any policy about logging or summarizing telephone calls. Mr. High answered that while officers were encouraged to write memoranda of important calls, time constraints often prevented it from being done.

Prof. Larson returned to her fear, expressed earlier in the meeting, that the Department of State was losing valuable annotation contained on multiple copies of documents. Mr. Claussen assured her that Secretary Shultz's staff is very conscientious about indicating what he sees. Nina Noring added that each administration has different record-keeping practices. Mr. Washington, who had helped to set up the SADI system on the Seventh Floor, reported that SADI only tracked correspondence, action

memos, and special summaries, not who saw what. William Deary stated that documents that he had worked with had control numbers on them indicating which official they went to. He stated that it would be impossible to save all annotated copies of documents. Milton Gustafson added that it was a problem of technology. Once copying machines became widely used in government, there was no way any longer to account for all copies. The Archives tries to accession only one copy, and that copy may not be the one with the most historically significant annotation.

Prof. Kuehl asked what the Advisory Committee could do to help save electronic records beyond its previous recommendations that they must be identified as important records, saved, and eventually made available to the public? Prof. Perkins noted that the Advisory Committee had little experience with this issue, and that the Historical Office had better expertise. He hoped it would use that knowledge to assure better records management and preservation. Mr. Slany admitted that the Historical Office had to shoulder its share of the responsibility. It had been remiss in the past, but it was doing a better job now by becoming more involved.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 11:57 a.m.

Working Luncheon

The Committee held a working lunch in the Department which was also attended by Mr. High, Mr. Slany, Mr. Petersen, Mr. Glennon, and Mrs. Becker . The major topic of discussion was the organization and functions of an editorial board as well as the use of academic consultants for the Foreign Relations series. The discussion elicited the expression of a wide variety of views on the feasibility of such a proposal, first suggested at last year's meeting and outlined in some detail in a draft paper prepared for the Committee by Mr. Slany.

A number of options for the use of an editorial board and consultants were explored. Mr. Slany underscored the necessity for working more closely with academic experts and enlisting the support of the scholarly community for difficult editorial decisions concerning the series. These ranged from organization of material and selection of topics to the inclusion of particular documents. Mr. Slany reminded the Committee that it had given less attention to the substantive contents of volumes in recent years as it became more concerned with general publication policies for the series. Avenues discussed by the Committee included: appointment of a board by the Advisory Committee; the Committee constituting a board from its own membership; and the Committee itself assuming the duties of an editorial board. It was the sense of the Committee that it should exercise direction over whatever new unit was established. Mr. High reminded the Committee and the Historical Office about the budgetary constraints that existed on new activity.

During the course of the discussion, the concept of a senior private historian playing a role in the Foreign Relations clearance process was mentioned. This suggestion reemerged at the Committee's afternoon session.

Afternoon Session

(Closed to the public)

Declassification Questions

Prof. Kuehl called the session to order at 2:15 p.m. Ambassador Burke joined the committee at the conference table. Prof. Kuehl led off with a series of questions:

- why has the series slipped to 34 years behind currency in the recent publication of 1951, Volume IV?
- can the committee do anything to help with the implementation of the presidential directive?
- how can a 30 year line be established if much of the documentation at the Johnson Library has not been processed yet, and if the Nixon Library has not yet been established because of the court case?

Prof. Larson asked another set of questions:

- is it true that the Executive Order of 1982 allows already declassified material to be reclassified?
- is the delay in NSC clearance of the 1952-54 volume on Germany and Austria the result of NSC "censorship"?
- why has there been no the Historical Office-CDC agreement on the 1952-54 volume on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

Prof. Gruber asked:

- what are the categories of classification?
- are there written guidelines that the CDC reviewers follow for Foreign Relations declassification?

Ambassador Burke responded by giving a brief history of the various executive orders dealing with declassification since the first one under Truman, and then gave a general description of how the CDC operates in clearing Foreign Relations volumes under the current Executive Order. He said that there are only three levels of classification: Top Secret, Secret, and Confidential. He pointed out that declassification often involved other agencies such as the Department of Defense. If a document was purely of State Department origin, declassification could be decided by CDC without referral to another agency. After looking at the document, however, the CDC reviewer might decide to consult the desk or office from which the document originated.

Prof. Perkins commented that this sounded as if each case was decided on an ad hoc basis and asked again if there were any guidelines for declassification.

Ambassador Burke replied that there were informal guidelines but not necessarily written ones to cover every case. He pointed out that CDC reviewers are experts in their individual areas and that CDC depends upon their judgment.

Prof. Holsti asked whether the recent executive orders on declassification differed significantly. Ambassador Burke said that there were not any significant differences. Some criteria for classification have been added through the years, but the thrust has not changed dramatically. Reclassification was done only if the material in question was recoverable, i.e. if it had not already been copied and distributed. He agreed that the recent executive order was more stringent than its predecessors in this regard, but he pointed out that it had been drafted not by the White House but by the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO). It reflected the experience of many officials from different agencies.

Mr. Thompson said he could recall only three or four attempts to reclassify documents, and only one case where it was accomplished. He said that processing was going on in all the Presidential libraries. The Nixon material was a special case, because access was not yet regularized. He felt, however, that the Nixon material would be available in time for the Historical Office to compile volumes and adhere to the 30-year line.

Mr. Glennon said that the Historical Office was examining ways to speed up the processing of Vietnam material at the Johnson Library, which now was processed only through 1965. In the meantime, we were considering the possibility of gathering Vietnam documentation from other sources and saving the Johnson Library research for last.

In response to a question from Prof. Kuehl, the Ambassador said he did not anticipate any major declassification problems with the Vietnam volumes, given the quantity of documentation that has already been declassified.

Mr. Ambach pointed out that the absence of agreement between declassifiers and historians did not mean that matters were necessarily at an impasse. In some cases, the two offices were in the process of working out an agreement. Prof. Perkins commented that 16 volumes in this category, however, was a very large number.

Prof. Larson asked whether the delay in releasing the 1952-54 Germany volume was due to the sensitivity of U.S. relations with West Germany. Mr. Ambach answered that this was a tough volume to clear and noted that there was a conflict between the Department's desire to publish and the NSC concern about still sensitive issues. He added that clearance also required resources.

Prof. Dallek asked what the Advisory Committee could do that would be constructive to help get the Foreign Relations volumes out and maybe even reach the 30-year line. Prof. Gruber asked specifically whether a committee recommendation that more resources be added to the CDC or NSC would be helpful. The Ambassador said that in surveying the status report, it seemed that only 3 volumes fell beyond the 30-year line. All the rest were in the 1955-57 triennium. Most of the delays in this group were due to the GPO.

Prof. Larson asked whether the Department felt it had to wait 30 years before a volume could be published. Ambassador Burke answered that 30 years was a goal and he was reasonably hopeful it could be attained. He mentioned in particular the problems posed for clearance by long-lived foreign officials who were active in the 1950's and are still active.

Prof. Perkins asked whether the CDC could clear the 27 volumes for the 1955-1957 triennium in a two-year period of time so as to reach the 30-year line. The Ambassador replied that it was feasible, and that Under Secretary of State Spiers was committed to supporting the Foreign Relations series with resources. In reply to Prof. Gruber's question, he said that a recommendation by the committee for more resources for the CDC would be helpful.

In further response to Prof. Perkins' question, Mr. Ambach said that clearance time for a volume averaged six months in CDC, but the time to clear with other agencies varied considerably from volume to volume. Ambassador Burke expressed his belief that the new presidential directive would encourage other agencies to respond more quickly.

Prof. Gruber asked whether the new presidential directive would encourage the NSC to clear more material for Foreign Relations. Ambassador Burke answered that on a close call, it might make a difference with the NSC, but in general it was unlikely to have much effect with that agency.

Prof. Kuehl asked what Secretary Shultz meant by the word "disclosure" in his reply to last year's committee report? He used the word in referring to the process whereby documents are released to the public after thirty years. Ambassador Burke answered that the word referred to the transfer of records to the Archives where they become fully accessible. Mr. Slany said that the word "disclosure" appears in the new presidential directive as well, and means that its purpose not only is to facilitate publication of the partial record in the Foreign Relations series but also to provide access to the full record at NARA.

Scholarly Community Involvement with Declassification Process

Prof. Dallek suggested there might be a way for the scholarly community to figure in the declassification process on particularly important disagreements between the Historical Office and the declassification staff. In reply to the Ambassador's comment that his official position wouldn't let him recommend circumventing the system, Dallek said that he was not advocating a lobbying effort. He proposed that a scholar with an excellent reputation be cleared to become part of the process. Although this would not resolve all the problems, it would open up the process more and might reduce some of the suspicion that exists in the scholarly community.

Prof. Larson said that many people felt that the declassification decisions were made arbitrarily, especially in the apparent absence of written criteria. At the Eisenhower Library, she frequently saw withdrawal slips and was told by library staff that these were Churchill-Eisenhower communications that were routinely removed because of the provisions of the executive order. She asked whether it was true that anything written by a foreign leader automatically retained its classification. Entire folders at the Eisenhower Library were pink-sheeted. She specifically mentioned the Churchill-Eisenhower correspondence on trade issues.

Ambassador Burke said that her general impression was not valid. Many communications from foreign leaders, including Churchill, had been declassified. At David Painter's suggestion, Burke briefly defined "foreign government information" for declassification purposes. He said that, as distinct from "foreign government documents" which are those documents authored by foreign governments, "foreign government information" is information contained in U.S. documents that was obtained from foreign governments. Permission is requested from friendly governments before publishing foreign government documents or foreign government information of a sensitive nature. Foreign government information is not withheld or cleared simply because it is foreign.

Ambassador Burke asked Prof. Dallek whether the procedure he had suggested might not lead to the outside scholar being coopted. Nevertheless, Ambassador Burke said he would be willing to try it if the right person could be found--someone who was willing to devote the time needed to review the documents. In response to Prof. Gruber's question as to how he envisioned the process working, Ambassador Burke said that one possibility was for the outside scholar to be given a position in the Historical Office or Classification/Declassification Center. A key question would be how this person was to be recruited.

Prof. Dallek remarked that the selection should probably be handled by the organizations represented on the committee. It would have to be a person in whom the academic community had the highest confidence.

Prof. Kuehl suggested that a retired distinguished historian, like Richard Leopold, would be ideal.

Mr. Hargrove questioned whether the participation of an outside scholar in the process would be that helpful. He asked whether there was not something structurally deficient about the declassification system. How much of the backlog in publishing Foreign Relations volumes was due to a lack of means for resolving disputes, and how much was due to other factors? He said that the committee needed more information about how the process worked.

Ambassador Burke stated that they had to be practical concerning the operation of the government and inter-agency disputes. He noted that there are fiefdoms within the government and that, if an agency felt strongly about a particular document, it could stop it from being released. He pointed out that there was no oversight agency with the power to monitor the declassification process except the NSC and the President. He said that they could use more resources. He suggested that a representative of the historical profession would function best in an ombudsman capacity. He or she could not become involved in each individual dispute. Ambassador Burke noted again that he was in favor of the Presidential Directive because it would reinforce the primacy of publication of Foreign Relations and would help with other agencies in declassification disputes.

Prof. Perkins asked whether Ambassador Burke himself had the power to arbitrate a simple case, such as a dispute between the historians and the declassification reviewers. Ambassador Burke

responded that in almost all cases the decision of the bureau would be final. Prof. Perkins emphasized whether he had the power to act in such cases. Ambassador Burke replied that he did, but that this was not a common occurrence.

Mr. Hargrove asked whether declassification disputes were ever taken to the NSC for resolution. Mr. Slany replied that the NSC only wanted to see documents upon which agreement had been reached by all other agencies.

Mr. Hargrove asked whether a review group at a sub-cabinet level could not be created. Prof. Dallek said this idea was consistent with his suggestion about an ombudsman, and that it would be more practical to start with an individual. At some later point a group might be created.

Mr. Slany commented that the Historical Office had not pushed some disputes to an early resolution in the hope that delay might ultimately help clearance. He noted that an early enforced decision might be negative and/or leave no possibility for appeal. He pointed to the danger of a conflict resolution procedure that worked well but resulted in many documents being left out. It would be possible to have Foreign Relations volumes published in 20 years but without much in them. He stated that the atmosphere concerning disclosure of information had changed in the last ten years and that a new Executive Order might prove even more restrictive. He commented that those who wanted to protect information from disclosure could do it more effectively than ever. This was why the Historical Office viewed with skepticism involvement in the hasty resolution of declassification disputes. Slany noted that the Historical Office was working more cooperatively with CDC than ever before and was finding more ways within the system to resolve disputes.

How the Declassification Review Process Works

Ambassador Burke stated that in the end it has to be the Department's action officers who retain ultimate decision. They are the ones who are aware of whether a delicate negotiation is in progress that would be jeopardized by the publication of the material in question.

Mr. Hargrove said there was a built-in bias in the system favoring continued classification. An action officer's career might be damaged by disclosure, but never by recommending continued classification. The risks to a person's career would be reduced by having a higher organ of resolution. Ambassador Burke said decisions were made not only to protect careers. There were real issues at stake, particularly current negotiations. Prof. Perkins said it was obviously a question of degree. Some disclosures would only cause a ripple of trouble, not an explosion. He agreed with Mr. Hargrove that the desk officer was not the most dispassionate person.

Ambassador Burke pointed out that the declassification reviewer often has considerable influence on the desk officer. The reviewer is often someone who had first-hand experience with the material in question and who has the broader historical perspective that the desk officer lacks.

Prof. Kuehl said that the Advisory Committee did not know enough about the clearance process. He could not understand how the Presidential Directive would accelerate the process. How would the Presidential Directive help in the dispute over specific issues concerning the 1952-1954 volumes? Ambassador Burke stated that it would speed up the process. It would give the Department the power to go to other agencies and use the Presidential Directive to say this should be released.

Prof. Kuehl asked Ambassador Burke whether he could prepare a paper describing the functions of the Classification/Declassification Center and whether this paper could be given to the scholarly community. Ambassador Burke asked that the Committee, outside the terms of its formal report, tell him what sort of paper it would like.

Prof. Perkins asked what priority clearing Foreign Relations volumes had for a desk officer. Ambassador Burke responded that it used to be very low but noted that now the declassification reviewers approach desk officers directly as needed. He also commented that, if the documents in question happened to be related to a declassifier's experience in the Foreign Service, the officer was generally more eager to clear them.

Prof. Perkins expressed the feeling that the retired Foreign Service Officers serving as declassifiers were most likely concerned with protecting U.S. policy-makers. Ambassador Burke said it was just the opposite. The reviewers feel that generally the documents reveal a good record and are anxious to get it out. There has been no case where a bad policy had been covered up. Prof. Perkins said he was happy to receive these assurances, but he wanted only to mention that this view did persist in the academic community. The Ambassador said he was aware of this, and that he had heard similar sentiments voiced.

Prof. Perkins asked what was the main concern at CDC. Was it sensitivity--the impact of the release of historical records on policies today? Ambassador Burke agreed that this was the principal consideration.

New DOS-NARA Agreement

Ambassador Burke stated that last week Under Secretary Spiers had concluded a new agreement with the National Archives to help support declassification of State Department records for the 1955-1959 period. This renews the previous subsidy, which had been for the 1950-1954 record block. Mr. Thompson said that for this block, NARA will pay a larger percentage than it had for the 1950-1954 block. He said that NARA's review of the 1955-1959 block will begin in March 1986 and will be completed in four years.

Committee's Private Meeting

Prof. Kuehl adjourned the meeting at 3:55 p.m. The committee met privately to prepare its report.