Research Article

# Editing Diplomatic Documents: A Review of Official U. S. and German Document Series

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**Abstract:** This paper describes and compares the history, development, and problems associated with such major documentary publication projects as *The Foreign Relations of the United States, Die Grosse Politik,* and *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945.* It deals with the relationship between the editors of such projects and the government agencies that sponsor them, with the difficulties of selecting and obtaining clearance of documents, and with the political pressures exerted on the project editors and their responses to these pressures. The paper also discusses the value of these major historical undertakings to historians and scholars and their place in the historiography of the twentieth century.

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IN ANY PERIOD, THE STUDY of history depends on the availability of relevant documents; in the case of diplomatic history, official documents must be available if the actions of governments and their representatives are to be clear to posterity. At no time is access to official documents as critical as in the aftermath of war, when historians must rely on them to distinguish fact from fiction and propaganda from policy. To assist in this task, the documents, which would otherwise remain scattered throughout hundreds of archival files, must be compiled, edited, and published. In the past hundred years, several national governments have undertaken projects to publish collections of their foreign policy documents in the hope that these documents would shed light on their actions and motives, and the results of these publication projects have played important roles in the historiography of the twentieth century.

This paper describes the processes used by the United States, the Western Allies (of the Second World War), and Germany in publishing *The Foreign Relations of the United States, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945,* and *Die Grosse Politik*, respectively.[1] Although there were differences in the procedure (e.g., in Germany, control over the editors was considerably greater than it was in the United States), there were also striking similarities. For example, the selection of documents was attended by the natural tension that exists between the desire to set the record straight and the need to preserve secrecy in certain matters of state. The document-selection process is inevitably attended by confrontations between government officials and the project's editorial staff (who often are on the government's payroll), and these conflicts are seldom won by the editors. Some of these struggles have even escalated to the point where they involve historians, journalists, and the public at large.[2]

## The Foreign Relations of the United States

The volumes of *The Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) constitute the longest continuously published series of official documents on the foreign policy of any major power. Started under President Abraham Lincoln in 1861 and continuing to this day, the series originally contained only a few documents and was intended as an appendix to the president's State of the

[1]The following abbreviations have been used respectively: FRUS, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1861– ); *DGFP* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949–83) and (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1949–83); and *GP* (40 vols.; Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1922–27); The German edition of *DGFP, Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik, 1918–1945,* (ADAP), will be discussed together with the American/English edition; both were published by their respective governments after the Second World War: *ADAP* Series A, B, and C (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971–83); Series D, vols. 1–7 (Baden-Baden: Imprimerie Nationale, 1950–56); vols 8–10 (Frankfurt: Keppler Verlag, 1961–63); vol 11 (Bonn: Hermes Verlag, 1964); and vols 12–13 (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969–70). There is also an abbreviated French edition, *Les Archives Secretes de la Wilhelmstrasse,* 9 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1950–60). For a general overview of publishing documents, see Mary-Jo Kline, *Guide to Documentary Editing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), and H. Butterfield, "Official History: Its Pitfalls and Criteria," in his *History and Human Relations* (New York: Macmillan, 1952) pp. 182–224. See also C. E. Carter, "Historical Editing," *Bulletins of the National Archives,* no. 7 (August 1952): 181–231.

[2]The best and most detailed account of such a confrontation is by Page Putnam Miller, "The Integrity of the U.S. Department of State's Historical Series Is at Stake," in *Government Publications Review,* 18, (1991): 317–23. I am indebted to Dr. Miller for calling my attention to her article and to other materials pertinent to my research.

Union Address.[3] In the first two years of publication, the documents were published in a single volume the year after the events they described. Subsequently, the number of annual volumes increased, and the time lag between the dates of the documents and the date of publication widened.

With the passage of time, the character of the series also changed.[4] Before the Second World War, the documents were selected primarily from the U.S. State Department's central files and emphasized the problems of international law. After 1939,

[3]The exception occurred in 1869, when no volume was published. See R. W. Leopold, "The Foreign Relations Series: A Centennial Estimate," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (1963): 595–612, and his "The Foreign Relations Series Revisited: One Hundred Plus Ten," *Journal of American History* 59 (1973): 935– 57, as well as E. R. Perkins, "Foreign Relations of the United States: 91 Years of American Policy," in Department of State *Bulletin*, 22 December 1952, pp. 1002–06. The volumes are now edited in the Office of the Historian, Department of State.

[4]Not until 26 March 1925, was a State Department regulation that established guidelines for the preparation of future volumes issued by Secretary Kellogg; it stated in part:

> The publication of diplomatic correspondence relating to matters which are still current often presents an insuperable obstacle to effective negotiation, but it is obvious that after the completion of the business in hand, as much of the correspondence as is practicable ought to be made public. This object is attained by the publication of *Foreign Relations* which presents, in a form economical, compact and easily accessible, the documentary history of the foreign relations of the United States. The editing of *Foreign Relations* must, therefore, be recognized as an important part of the duties of the Department of State.
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> The Chief of the Division of Publications [Division of Research and Publication] is charged with the preparation for this purpose, as soon as practicable after the close of each year, of the correspondence relating to all major policies and decisions of the Department in the matter of foreign relations, together with the events which contributed to the formulation of each decision or policy, and the facts incident to the application of it. It is expected that the material thus assembled, aside from the omission of trivial and inconsequential details, will be substantially complete as regards the files of the Department. . . .
>
> When the documents on a given subject have been assembled in the Division of Publications [Division of Research and Publication], they should be submitted to the Solicitor [Legal Adviser] or to the Chief of the appropriate division which has had immediate supervision of the topic. The Solicitor [Legal Adviser], or the heads of these divisions, respectively, are charged with the duty of reviewing the material thus assembled and indicating any omissions which appear to be required. Omissions of the following kind are recognized as legitimate and necessary:
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> (a) Matters which if published at the time would tend to embarrass negotiations or other business;
> (b) To condense the record and avoid needless details;
> (c) To preserve the confidence reposed in the Department by other governments and by individuals;
> (d) To avoid needless offense to other nationalities or individuals by excising invidious comments not relevant or essential to the subject; and,
> (e) To suppress personal opinions presented in despatches and not adopted by the Department. To this there is one qualification, namely, that in major decisions it is desirable, where possible, to show the choices presented to the Department when the decision was made.
>
> On the other hand, there must be no alteration of the text, no deletions without indicating the place in the text where the deletion is made, and no omission of facts which were of major importance in reaching a decision. Nothing should be omitted with a view to concealing or glossing over what might be regarded by some as a defect of a policy.
>
> Where a document refers to two or more subjects, provided there are no other objections, it should be printed in its entirety, and not divided for purposes of more exact classification in editing. Great care must be taken to avoid the mutilation of documents. On the other hand, when a foreign government, in giving permission to use a communication, requests the deletion of any part of it, it is usually preferable to publish the document in part rather than to omit it entirely. A similar principle may be applied with reference to documents originating with the American Government. . . .

(*FRUS*, 1930, vol. 1, pp. iii–iv). This regulation was restated by State Department Regulation 297.1 of 27 October 1947 and was followed with minor modifications until 1991.

with the proliferation of government departments and agencies active in foreign policy issues and the government's increasing role in world affairs, the task of presenting an accurate and comprehensive account of U.S. foreign policy became more and more difficult. It was not until 1952 that the final volume for 1933 was published, and thereafter the release of the annual volumes—which had increased in number from three to five-fell even further behind.[5] The problem of selecting the most significant documents from the vastly increased number of State Department records was further complicated by the need to include documents from government departments and agencies other than the State Department and, sometimes, even from private collections. Needless to say, all these documents had to be cleared before publication, further adding to the delay.[6] A constant shortage of funds and the generally unsympathetic attitude of a number of State Department bureaucrats toward the series also contributed to the difficulties of publication.[7]

To address these problems and to accelerate publication of the annual volumes, G. Bernard Noble, chief of the State Department's Historical Division, decided to respond to a request from the Senate Appropriation Committee by starting a new series dealing with the major wartime conferences of Presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S Truman and the Allied leaders.[8]

Responsibility for these wartime volumes was assigned to William M. Franklin, Noble's deputy, and Franklin and his staff began the new series in 1953 with a volume on the 1945 conferences of Malta and Yalta. In compiling this and subsequent volumes, the new group decided to include documents not only from the State Department's central, lot, and post files and from agencies outside the department, but also from the unpublished papers of Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins and the memoirs of James F. Byrnes, Winston S. Churchill, John R. Deane, Ernest J. King, William D. Leahy, Robert E. Sherwood, and Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.[9] The conference volumes

[5]Leopold, "Foreign Relations Series, 604–05.

[6]The clearance problem was not a new one; it had started at the very beginning of the series. The process required the clearance of State Department documents by the pertinent offices within the department and by other government agencies and departments in case of their documents, and the clearance of foreign documents by their respective governments (Perkins, "Foreign Relations," p. 1005). Because the use of such documents increased greatly as a consequence of the outbreak of the Second World War, the delay in obtaining clearances (and sometimes in refusing them) became greater, accounting in large part for the long delays in publication (Perkins, p. 1005). See also L. M. Lees and S. G. Treadway, "Review Essay/A Future for Our Diplomatic Past? A Critical Appraisal of the *Foreign Relations* Series," *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): especially pp. 624–25.

[7]For details, see Leopold, "Foreign Relations Series," pp. 605–07.

[8]U.S. Department of State, *The Conferences of Malta and Yalta 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. iii; Leopold, "Foreign Relations Series," pp. 606–07. The publication of a *Foreign Relations* subseries was not a new departure: separate volumes had been issued for the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the Paris Peace Conference (Leopold,"Foreign Relations Series," 601–04).

[9]*Conferences of Malta and Yalta,* pp. xvii–xix. The central files are the department's principal indexed files; most of the documentation for the volumes in the general series came from these files. In February 1963, this filing system was changed into a subject-numeric system, which gave way to a computerized system in 1972. In addition to the central files there are the post files, which are the files of the diplomatic posts outside the United States, and the lot files, which contain papers retained by officers for their own ready reference, some of which have not been indexed. (Some duplicates of these papers can also be found in the central files.) The post and lot files are significant because they sometimes contain documents describing decisions and actions that are found nowhere else, as is the case with the China mission of General Marshall and Ambassador Bohlen's notes regarding the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences (Leopold, "Foreign Relations Series," p. 610. W. M. Franklin interview, 10 March 1993). See also *The National Archives and Foreign Relations Research. A*

are notably different from the annual volumes, especially those for 1940 and 1941, both because the annual volumes deal with many different subjects and thus lack the focus of the conference volumes and because the personalities and outlook of the historians and editors working on the two series were so different.[10] Compared with the scholars involved in the annual series, the historians working on the conference volumes were generally younger, less set in their ways, and more enthusiastic about making their documents accessible to the public and to scholars interested in international politics and foreign affairs.

In time, the annual volumes also expanded their coverage and annotations significantly, leading one reviewer to assert that the "publication of the FRUS volumes on the Middle East in the late 1950s is a major development [that suggests] . . . FRUS is coming of age."[11] This expansion in coverage—and particularly the incorporation of documents from intelligence agencies and nongovernmental depositories—led to serious confrontations between the State Department and the scholarly community, confrontations that left the editors of the series occupying an uncomfortable middle ground. The scholars wanted even broader coverage, speedier publication, and the release of unpublished and still classified documents.[12] The State Department resisted most of these demands but agreed, in 1957, to establish the Advisory Committee on Foreign Relations, made up of historians, political scientists, and international lawyers.[13] The committee met regularly with editors and departmental officials at semiannual meetings to discuss problems of coverage, declassification, and personnel, and both sides profited from this exchange.[14]

With the increase in the number of annual volumes, however, declassification problems became more and more urgent; they finally came to a head on 13 June 1971, when the *New York Times* published the Pentagon Papers. This event called attention to the issues of government secrecy and the public's lack of confidence in the government's declassification process; this in turn lent support to the advisory committee's demands for speedier and more comprehensive declassification of documents.[15]

*National Archives Conference,* vol. 4, edited by M. O. Gustafson (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1974), especially pp. 3–8 and 49–70.

[10]The differences between the two sets of publications—the general and the conference volumes of the *Foreign Relations* series—is especially glaring in the case of the first two volumes of 1941 (published in 1958 and 1959) dealing with "General" topics and "Europe," respectively. For that year, during which U.S.-German relations deteriorated to the point where Germany declared war on the United States (11 December 1941), the documents selected included, "Representations to the German Government with respect to its treatment of American motion picture interests in Germany and German-occupied areas," "Closing of German consular and other offices in the United States . . . ," "Representations by the German Government regarding Americans pulling down the German flag from the Consul General's office in San Francisco," and other, similar materials. See also Lees and Treadway, "Review Essay," p. 623.

[11]P. L. Hahn, "*Glasnost* in America: *Foreign Relations of the United States* and the Middle East, 1955–1960," Diplomatic History 16 (Fall 1992): 631–42.

[12]By 1954, the time lag between the date of the documents in a volume and the date of publication was more than 16 years, and by 1962 it was 20 years (Leopold, "Foreign Relations Series," pp. 607, 609). When a set of volumes for a specific year was released, the State Department transferred to the National Archives all documents—published and unpublished—for that year, and the Naional Archives then made most of these documents available to the public.

[13]Leopold, "Foreign Relations Series," p. 609.

[14]See the State Department *Bulletin* for the earlier year; the AHA *Newsletter* and *Perspectives;* and the SHAFR (Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations) *Newsletter* for later years for the reports of the advisory committee.

[15]W. F. Sheppard, "The Plight of 'The Foreign Relations': A Plea for Action," *AHA Newsletter* 9 (November 1971): 22–27.

The publication of the Pentagon Papers and the ensuing debate had mixed effects on the FRUS series. On the one hand, publication of the annual volumes was slowed even further, increasing from 16 years in 1954 to 20 and 26 years between 1963 and 1972. On the other hand, the number of annual volumes, hence documents, for each year also increased until, for the year 1946, 11 volumes were published over the period from 1969 to 1972. Coverage for this first year following the Second World War was also extensive; the first 1946 volume included not only economic and financial matters but, for the first time, an entire section on "United States national security policy: the extension of military assistance to foreign nations; estimates of threats to the national security; coordination of political and military policy; United States policy with respect to the acquisition of military bases and air transit rights."[16]

The increase in the number of annual volumes led to a steep increase in printing costs, and the editors decided, beginning with the documents for 1952, to extend the coverage of each volume to three years and to supplement the printed pages with microfiche.[17] Although these measures made the volumes more useful, they failed to reduce the publication gap, largely because support from the departmental bureaucracy continued to be grudging at best. The trend toward greater secrecy that characterized the 1980s further stymied these efforts. Executive Order No. 12356, signed by President Ronald Reagan in April 1982, permitted government officials to delay routine declassification for thirty years and, in cases where U.S. intelligence operations were involved, for as long as seventy-five years.[18]

One effect of this order was the publication of several volumes that omitted important documents and, consequently, seriously distorted U.S. foreign policy. For example, the 1952–54 volume on Latin America (published in 1983), which dealt with the coup that overthrew the Guzman regime in Guatemala, omitted Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) material documenting U.S. initiatives and involvement in this operation; in the words of one critic, the volume presented "little more than a bare outline of United States policy in Guatemala."[19] Even more disturbing was the publication, in 1989, of the volume covering Iran for the years 1952–54, which, "because of extensive deletion . . . presented not only a woefully incomplete but even an entirely misleading account of events surrounding the ouster of Mosadeq."[20] According to Warren I. Cohen, chair of the State Department's Advisory Committee on Historical Documentation, "Evidence of covert operations against Mohammed Mossadegh was so thoroughly sanitized that the basic credibility of the

[16]*FRUS*, 1946, vol. 1, p. vi.

[17]Lees and Treadway, "Review Essay" pp. 621–29. The guides to these supplements are as follows: *FRUS* 1949–52: *Memoranda of the Secretary of State, 1949–51,* and *Meetings and Visits of Foreign Dignitaries 1949–52,* Microfiche publication (Washington, D.C., n.d.). *FRUS* 1945–54: *Current Economic Developments 1945–54,* Microfiche publication (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987). *FRUS* 1955–57: *China,* Microfiche Supplement (Washington, D.C.: GPO,1987). *FRUS* 1947–52: *Memoranda of Conversations of the Secretary of State 1947–* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988). *FRUS* 1958–60: *Lebanon and Jordan Microfiche Supplement* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1992). "These supplements publish particularly significant collections of documents, only a fraction of which are printed in *Foreign Relations* volumes. Microfiche publications supplement the record printed in specific volumes or . . . reproduce a discrete collection of records covering a broad spectrum of topics." (1949–52 Supplement. Memoranda of the Secretary . . . , p. iv).

[18]Lees and Treadway, "Review Essay," p. 628.

[19]Lees and Treadway, "Review Essay," p. 626, fn. 9.

[20]"Report of the Advisory Committee on Historical Documentation," *Perspectives* 28 (October 1990): 8; this report was based on the detailed review of the Iran volume by Bruce R. Kuniholm of Duke University, *Perspectives* 28 (May–June 1990): 10–12.

FRUS series was called into question by academic historians, members of Congress, and others. The volume was a fraud, a gross distortion.'' Cohen resigned the chairmanship of the committee shortly after this disclosure.[21] Blanche W. Cooke, another committee member, questioned whether the department should have spent ''time and money publishing historical jokes, [and] sly evasions that are not even self-serving,'' and wondered whether ''FRUS should . . . continue if it is to become a fraud.''[22]

Stung by the widespread public criticism of the Iran volume and frustrated by the fact that the advisory committee had ''not been given access to information that it needed to make informed judgments about the integrity of the series [and that] For more than two years the committee had worked unsuccessfully with State Department officials to establish an acceptable review procedure,''[23] the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and other professional groups adopted a resolution urging Secretary of State James Baker ''to take the necessary steps to restore the integrity of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* . . . [and sent] copies of this resolution to the President of the Senate'' and other high government officials.[24] Although the State Department ignored the committee's concerns and failed to respond to the OAH resolution, ''Senator Claiborne Pell (D–RI), Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, inserted a section in S 2749 [the supplemental authorization of appropriations for FY 1992 for the Department of State], which would give considerable review authority to the Advisory Committee of outside scholars; would put the series on a thirty-year timetable; and would introduce for the first time in legislation the principle of automatic declassification.''[25] In October 1990, the Senate passed a bill (S 3225) reflecting these concerns. During the debate on the bill, ''Senator Boren, Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, stressed that this legislation would continue to protect intelligence sources but would also acknowledge 'openly and explicitly' the 'role of the CIA and NSC [National Security Council] and other agencies and departments that are involved in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy.' ''[26]

These measures were without noticeable effect, however, on the bureaucracy of the State Department, and especially on its declassification unit, primarily because of objections on the part of the Department of Defense, the CIA, and the National Security Agency (NSA). Relations between the State Department and the advisory committee did not improve, and the declassification process fell further and further behind.

On 27 December 1992, the Council of the American Historical Association passed yet another resolution, citing overclassifi-

[21]Quoted by Hahn, ''*Glasnost* in America,'' p. 633.

[22]*Perspectives* 29 (November 1991): 11–14; the U.S. role in the overthrow of Mossadeq is generally known through the work of Kermit Roosevelt, one of the principal agents in this undercover operation, whose account, *Countercoup: The Struggle for Control in Iran* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979) was cleared for publication by the CIA.

[23]*Perspectives* 28 (September 1990): 14. When State Department officials ignored the advisory committee's report (see note 20), the various historical organizations turned to Congress and to Senator John Glenn, chair of the Senate's Governmental Affairs Committee, for support. Glenn's intervention produced no results; on the contrary, instead of addressing the issue, the State Department attempted to revise ''the composition of the advisory committee in an effort to dilute the voice of the historians on the committee'' (Miller, ''Integrity at Stake,'' p. 320).

[24]For the text of the resolution of 22 March 1990, see *Perspectives* 28 (May–June 1990): 13.

[25]*Perspectives* 28 6 (September 1990): 14. A similar bill, H.R. 5954, was introduced in the House by Representative Stephen Solarez (D-NY); neither bill was enacted into law.

[26]*Perspectives* 28 (December 1990): 6.

cation of records and the need to change classification/declassification policy to respond to the end of the Cold War, and urging President-elect Bill Clinton to revise the executive order on this subject.[27] One month later, Jack Anderson publicized the issue in his syndicated column.[28] He asserted that

> open warfare [has erupted] between the Department of State and members of the Advisory Committee on Historical, Diplomatic Documentation . . . [and that the committee had] fired off scathing letters to top officials, warning the department that it is in violation of the law and accusing it of 'business as usual.'. . . Besides national security, sources on the advisory committee cite two other motives for resistance to declassification . . . an unspoken and long-held belief within the State Department that diplomacy is a domain on which the public and press should not trespass . . . [and that] Some officials involved in this process, both at State and the National Archives, are angling for bigger budgets by citing [increased] workload.''[29]

In its report to the secretary of state for 1992, the advisory committee criticized the department's handling of the FRUS series. The committee recommended that future volumes include a statement in the preface explaining the committee's role and also ''contain a candid and informative assessment of the research and declassification process as it affected that individual volume.'' It also recommended a further review toward the declassification of documents pertaining to U.S. policy regarding Iran and Guatemala (1952–54) and reproached the State Department's Bureau of Administration for its procrastination and lack of cooperation in meeting the legally mandated ''30-year mark for opening records to the American public.'' The emerging problems associated with electronic data processing and its effects on the *Foreign Relations* series were also pointed out.[30]

## Die Grosse Politik

The collection of German Foreign Ministry papers known as *Die Grosse Politik der Europaeischen Kabinette 1871–1914,* published in forty volumes between 1922 and 1927, was, and to some extent remains, a significant source for late nineteenth and early twentieth century diplomatic history.[31] The *Grosse Politik* was the first authoritative publication to deal with the relationships among the major European powers and the long-range, as well as immediate, causes of the First World War. The first volumes of this series appeared in the early

[27] *Perspectives* 31 (February 1993): 4.
[28] *Washington Post,* 28 January 1993, p. D21.
[29] *Washington Post,* 28 January 1993, p. D21.

[30] *Perspectives* 31 (September 1993): 30–32. In its ''Production Status and Projection Chart'' of 11 February 1993; the Office of the Historian projected that 13 volumes for 1958–60 and 4 volumes for 1961–63 would be published in 1993. For 1994, it projected 13 volumes for 1961–63 and 2 volumes for 1964–68.

[31] The editors were Friedrich Thimme, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Johannes Lepsius; the volumes were published by the Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte in Berlin, which was, in turn, subsidized by the Foreign Ministry. (An abbreviated English edition was prepared by E.T.S. Dugdale, ed., *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871–1914,* 4 vols. [New York, Harper, 1928-31]). See also, B. Schwertfeger, *Die Diplomatischen Akten des Auswaertigen Amtes 1871–1914. Ein Wegweiser durch das grosse Aktenwerk der Deutschen Regierung,* 5 vols. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1922–27). In 1962, 17 years after the Second World War, Raymond J. Sontag, an early editor-in-chief of the *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945,* wrote, ''When all has been said, however, *Die Grosse Politik* still stands as a magnificent achievement'' (*America Historical Review* 68 [October 1962]: 57–68).

1920s, and their publication was widely hailed as an important event in diplomatic historiography. Many historians of the time believed the *Grosse Politik* would finally put to rest the major questions about German war guilt and the appropriateness of reparations raised by critics of the Treaty of Versailles and, in particular, by the treaty's "war-guilt clause."[32]

The fact that a group of well-known and universally respected German scholars had been chosen as editors of the series and that the German government repeatedly asserted that, "as independent scholars," the editors had the right to express their own convictions without hindrance or fear of repercussion and enjoyed "complete freedom and independence from any form of censorship by the [German] foreign ministry" gave the *Grosse Politik* a prestige and importance that cannot be overstated.[33] Until the publication of the British and French documents many years later, the *Grosse Politik* was the only authoritative source on diplomacy during this period and thus occupied a position in the war-guilt controversy that was virtually unassailable.[34]

A whole generation of diplomatic historians (not to mention politicians and journalists) based their research, writing, and reputations on these published German documents; several American scholars, in particular, relied heavily on them for their interpretation of events leading up to the war.[35] The French, however, considered the series (as well as several other projects undertaken by the German government to disprove its responsibility for the war) nothing but propaganda.[36]

Even after the publication of the official Allied documents, the *Grosse Politik* dominated and defined the debate on the origins of the First World War, and it continued to do so right up to 1945. The Allies' capture of the German Foreign Ministry archives (together with other ministerial, military, and Nazi party collections) at the end of the Second World War, however, was to alter this situation radically.[37] The reliability of the *Grosse Politik* was questioned publicly for the first time in an exchange

[32]H. J. Wittgens, "The German Foreign Office Campaign Against the Versailles Treaty," Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1970, pp. 149–75. See also Eric J. C. Hahn, "The German Foreign Ministry and the Question of German War Guilt in 1918–19," in *German Nationalism 1890–1945,* edited by Carole Fink and others (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985): 43–70.

[33]These assurances were given in the *Grosse Politik,* 1, p. ix, and by Thimme in a speech of 13 June 1922 on "Die Aktenpublikation des Auswaertigen Amtes. Beitraege zu Ihrere Entstehungsgeschichte," in *Einzelschriften zur Politik und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Achte Schrift, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt für Politik, 1924), p. 7. See also H. Schleier, *Die buergerliche deutsche Geschichtsschreibung der Weimarer Republik* (East Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975), pp. 143–44; George W. F. Hallgarten, *Imperialismus vor 1914,* 2 vols. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1963), vol. 1., pp. vii–ix and fn. 1 and his *Als die Schatten fielen* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1969): 168–70; Wittgens, p. 154; A. Thimme, "Friedrich Thimme als politischer Publizist im Ersten Weltkrieg und in der Kriegsschuldkontroverse," in *Russland-Deutschland-Amerika,* Festschrift für Fritz T. Epstein, herausgegeben von A. Fischer, G. Moltmann, und K. Schwabe (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978), pp. 230–32 and footnotes; U. Heinemann, *Die Verdraengte Niederlage* (Goettingen: Vandenhoock & Ruprecht, 1983), pp. 81–86, fn. 341.

[34]*British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914,* G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, eds., 12 vols. (London: Her Majesty Stationary Office, 1926–36). Commission de publication des documents relatifs aux origines de la guerre de 1914, *Documents Diplomatiques Francais 1871–1914,* 38 vols. (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1929–59).

[35]S. B. Fay, *The Origins of the World War,* 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1928); B. E. Schmitt, *The Coming of the War, 1914,* 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1930); W. L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments* (New York: Knopf, 1939); and *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902* (New York: Knopf, 1951); H. E. Barnes, *The Genesis of the World War. An Introduction to the Problem of War-Guilt* (New York: Knopf, 1926).

[36]See V. Valentin's review of the *Grosse Politik* vols. 7–12, 2nd ser., in the *Historische Zeitschrift* 131 (1925): 310. On the impact of the *Grosse Politik* in the United States and especially on American scholars, see Wittgens, pp. 205–56.

[37]See page 473 in this issue.

of letters that took place in the *Times Literary Supplement (TLS)* between July and October 1953; the initial assault began with a review of a recently published volume (number five of series D) in the series *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945,* published under the auspices of the U.S., British, and French governments. The anonymous *TLS* reviewer asserted that "so long as these German archives [the captured German documents] are in the hands of the Western Allies there need be no fear of manipulations of the texts such as those which have been discovered to have taken place in Germany after the other war."[38] The exchange of letters generated by this review involved several well-known British diplomatic historians and made public the fact that the editors of the *Grosse Politik* had, of their own volition, carefully chosen for publication documents that presented German foreign policy in the best possible light and that they had also occasionally collaborated with Foreign Ministry staff to omit or alter important documents. For example, Friedrich Thimme, the principal editor, "explained in a private letter [to his co-editor Mendelssohn-Bartholdy] that he was omitting part of a document solely for contemporary political reasons."[39]

The full story behind the publication of the *Grosse Politik* had to wait until the pre-1914 German Foreign Ministry documents had been returned to the Federal Republic by the Allies and microfilms of the most important of these documents had been placed in the National Archives in Washington and the Public Record Office in London. The existence of a microfilm copy of these documents permitted historians to compare the original documents with the versions that had been printed in the *Grosse Politik.*[40] The comparison demonstrated unequivocally that the editors of the *Grosse Politik* had altered, omitted, and otherwise tampered with the historical record.

In the general reappraisal that followed, a number of the European and American scholars published studies showing that the much-vaunted independence of the editors of the *Grosse Politik* had been compromised from the very beginning by one of its editors, Johannes Lepsius, who, as early as May 1921, submitted page proofs of the first two volumes to Foreign Ministry officials for examination and possible deletion of politically sensitive material. In addition, several of the Emperor's marginal notes had been omitted from documents before they were published and, in some cases, attempts had been made to remove selected documents from the archives altogether.[41] The German editors were also

[38]*Times Literary Supplement* (*TLS*), 31 July 1953, p. 490.

[39]*TLS* 21 August 1953, p. 535; additional letters are in issues dated 7 and 14 August, 11 and 25 September, and 16 October 1953.

[40]For an inventory of the German Foreign Ministry archives, see Committee for the Study of War Documents of the American Historical Association, *A Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1867–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). Fritz Fischer's pioneering books, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1967) and *The War of Illusions* (New York: Norton, 1975), which completely altered the interpretation of Germany's role in the outbreak of the war, could not have been written without access to the original documents.

[41]The unpublished correspondence of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Thimme revealed that the two editors considered Wilhelm II's marginalia "as very damaging expressions for the Emperor and the German Reich" and therefore decided to publish only some of them and downgrade the importance of others (Schleier, *Die buergerliche deutsche,* p. 148, fn. 91). There are also indications that they conspired to remove from the files of the German Foreign Ministry's archives a Bethmann-Hollweg memorandum dealing with a meeting of the emperor, the Austrian heir to the throne, and the German chancellor at a hunting lodge near Hanover on 9 December 1910 and to return this document to the chancellor's family papers (Schleier, *Die buergerliche deutsche Geschichts-*

criticized for using a topical rather than a chronological approach; focusing on topics allowed the editors to split documents up to lessen their impact, to suppress parts of documents, and to change the meaning or significance of others.[42]

In the decades before the *Grosse Politik* was publicly discredited, its influence on politics and public debate can scarcely be imagined. Because so many scholars and politicians, in Germany and elsewhere, were taken in by the "evidence" presented in the *Grosse Politik,* the public was persuaded that the Germans were no more responsible for the outbreak of the First World War than were the other powers, and this widespread belief contributed to the myth that the Germans had been wronged in the Versailles Treaty and in reparations agreements.[43] On one level, the editors of the *Grosse Politik* could thus be said to have succeeded in achieving their immediate nationalistic aims; on the other, however, they raised the level of scholarly skepticism to new heights and damaged the reputation of German historical scholarship for decades to come.

## The Captured German Documents

The decision of the U.S., British, and French governments to join together to publish selections from the German Foreign Ministry archives captured by the Allies at the end of the Second World War represented a major departure from earlier

*schreibung,* p. 150, fn. 96).

The most serious instance of the omission of documents for political reasons is presented by Fritz Klein in his examination of the files of the German Legation in Peking. These files were returned to the German Democratic Republic by the People's Republic of China in the early 1950s; a comparison of these documents with the corresponding documents published in volume 16 of the *Grosse Politik* shows major discrepancies, the most important of which concerns a report from Buelow to the emperor, on 5 October 1900, containing the Foreign Ministry's instructions to the new German minister to China. Instead of printing this very significant document on German policy toward the Boxer Rebellion, the editors of the *Grosse Politik* printed only a lengthy footnote (*GP,* 16, pp. 145–46) that distorted the aims of German as well as Chinese foreign policy at that time (F. Klein, "Über die Verfaelschung der historischen Wahrheit in der Aktenpublikation, 'Die Grosse Politik der Europaeischen Kabinette 1871–1914,'" *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 7 (1959): 318–30). It should also be noted that scholars who were seeking access to unpublished documents either were refused access outright or, if they were prominent historians, like Sybel, Delbrueck, or Brandenburg, given evasive answers or were allowed to examine less sensitive files. See Georges Bonin, *Bismarck and the Hohenzollern Candidature to the Spanish Throne* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), pp. 13–36, and G.W.F. Hallgarten, *Imperialismus vor 1914,* 2 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1963), p. viii and fn. 1, and his *Als die Schatten fielen* (Frankfurt: 1969), pp. 167–70.

[42]Disagreement about the relative advantage of topical versus chronological formats is universal and was not confined to the *Grosse Politik.* Thimme's defense of the topical arrangement adopted for the *Grosse Politik* is in his speech (see fn. 33), pp. 10–11, 13.

[43]The publication of the *Grosse Politik* must be seen in the wider context of the Foreign Ministry's overall campaign against war-guilt, which included, in addition to the *Grosse Politik,* publications of the periodicals *Die Kriegsschuldfrage* and *Die Berliner Monatshefte.* Both were published by the Quaderverlag, which, in turn, was founded in 1930 by the Center for the Study of the War Guilt Question (*Zentralstelle für die Erforschung der Kriegsschuldfrage*), a front organization of the Foreign Ministry. After 1922, Alfred von Wegerer was the director of the center, whose aim was "to destroy the war guilt thesis by scholarly means in order to achieve the political elimination of Article 231 [of the Treaty of Versailles]" (Wittgens, "German Foreign Office Campaign," p. 54). In addition to the popular and highly respected *Berliner Monatshefte,* the Foreign Ministry initiated and supported the publication of such pamphlets as *Falsification of the Russian Orange Book* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1923), Wegerer's *Das Franzoesische Gelbbuch* (The French Yellow Book) in 1914 (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1926), and the many publications of F. Stieve (including the various editions of the Isvolsky documents). In March 1923, Stieve became the director of the *Schuldreferat,* the Foreign Ministry office that was responsible for the initiation and coordination of all matters regarding German war guilt (Wittgens, "German Foreign Office Campaign," pp. 179, 183; for details see pp. 140–201). See also Imanuel Geiss, "Die manipulierte Kriegsschuldfrage," *Militaergeschichtliche Mitteilungen,* no. 2 (1983): 31–60. On the impact of the *Grosse Politik* on the Quadripartite Project, see pp. 478–80 in this article.

document-publishing practices. The rationale underlying the choice of a tripartite structure was the desire to avoid national bias in selecting and editing the documents. As a further check on the impartiality and historical accuracy of the *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945* (the U.S. and British edition of the project) and the *Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1918–1945* (the German edition), the project was to be administered by an international group of editors.[44] In addition, at the end of the tripartite project, microfilm copies of the more important documents were to be deposited in the National Archives in Washington and the Public Records Office in London, where they were to be made available to scholars and students.[45]

The idea of publishing the more important documents from the archives of the former German Foreign Ministry originated with the U.S. and British governments at the end of the war. The project had two underlying purposes: to demonstrate Hitler's responsibility for starting the war and to avoid a repetition of the war-guilt debate that had arisen after the First World War.[46] By the end of 1946, the two governments—which were subsequently joined by the French government—had agreed to initiate on an unprecedented size and scope a microfilming and publication project that would make available the most important foreign policy documents of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich and would reflect "the highest scholarly objectivity."[47]

**The Windsor documents.** When the Allied editors began work in 1946, they knew some of the documents in the German archives would put their governments in an unfavorable light. For example, they were aware that documents bearing on the Soviet-German negotiations preceding the Nazi-Soviet Pact and references to the Roosevelt-Bullitt correspondence were in the Foreign Ministry archives, and that this information was potentially incriminating. Nevertheless, the editors decided to move forward with the project.[48] However, the editors were not aware that the Foreign Office and the State Department had been concerned for nearly a year about the presence in these archives of the so-called Windsor documents, which described the Duke and Duchess of Windsor's sympathy for Hitler and Nazi Germany and German plans to exploit this

[44]For details on the U.S.-British-French (the Tripartite) Project, see George O. Kent, "The German Foreign Ministry Archives," in *Captured German and Related Records. A National Archives Conference,* edited by Robert Wolfe (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1974), pp. 119–30. Josef Henke, "Das Schicksal deutscher zeitgeschichtlicher Quellen in Kriegs-und Nachkriegszeit. Beschlagnahme-Rueckfuehrung-Verbleib," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 30 (October 1982): 557– 620. Robert Wolfe, "United States Exploitation of Captured German Records: Theory and Practice," in *Historians and Archivists*, edited by George O. Kent (Fairfax, Va: George Mason University Press, 1991), pp. 15–25.

[45]For an inventory of the captured German records, see American Historical Association, Committee for the Study of War Documents, *A Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1867–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959) and George O. Kent, ed., *A Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1920–1945*, 4 vols. (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1962–72).

[46]See p. 472 in this issue.

[47]*DGFP* ser. D, vol. 1, p. vii. By 1954 the editors of the Tripartite Project had decided "to limit the publication in English to the years 1933 to 1941." (*DGFP*, D, 10, ix; for the German edition of this series, see p. 478; a 9-vol., French limited edition appeared under the title *Les Archives Secretes de la Wilhelmstrasse* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1950–60).

[48]On the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 1939, see D. C. Watt, *How War Came* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), pp. 447–61; on the Roosevelt-Bullitt correspondence, O. H. Bullitt, ed., *W. C. Bullitt, for the President: Correspondence Between Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

sympathy.[49] One document revealed that Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, had informed the ambassador in Madrid that the government was "prepared to accommodate any desire expressed by the Duke," including any wish the Duke might subsequently have to assume the British throne after a Nazi victory.[50] The Germans hoped either to persuade the Windsors to follow Germany's lead voluntarily or to use force if necessary to bring the Windsors to Spain. The plan to kidnap the Windsors never materialized, and the Windsors, unaware of the plans, sailed for the Bahamas, where the Duke assumed the governorship on 1 August 1940.[51]

When the Windsor documents were first found in the German Foreign Ministry files, the British asked their American colleagues to turn them over to them or to destroy them. The Americans refused, stating that "it would be unlawful to hand over the documents to the British government or to destroy them without the approval of Congress."[52]

Shortly after this exchange, *Newsweek* reported that the State Department had postponed publication of the captured German documents in response to a request from the British Government that the documents pertaining to the Duke of Windsor's views on pre-war European policies and on the Third Reich be suppressed.[53] Although the *Newsweek* article attracted little public attention in the United States, it was not so readily dismissed in London. There, government officials were concerned that Raymond Sontag, chief of the U.S. editorial group, would insist on the publication of all relevant documents and would resign if any government interfered with this policy.[54] For whatever reason, the issue was dropped only to be raised again at the foreign ministers' conference in Moscow in March 1947, when Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin informed Secretary of State George C. Marshall that copies of the Windsor documents had been destroyed by the Foreign Office and asked Marshall to ensure that their U.S. copies were also destroyed so as to avoid embarrassing the king. The United States apparently did nothing in response to this request, but later that year, in July 1947, the British editor-in-chief, John W. Wheeler-Bennett, approached Bevin and informed him that the king had agreed to release the Windsor documents to the Allied project and to have them published in volume 10 of series D.[55] At least for the time being, this decision ended the controversy over the Windsor documents.

The issue was raised again, however, in 1951, when Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of the German Federal Republic asked the Allies to return the captured German documents to the archives of the newly established Foreign Ministry in Bonn. To appease the West Germans (on whose cooperation the Allies had begun increasingly to rely in both political and economic matters), the Allied governments agreed that, except for the Windsor material, the

[49]This and the following is based on P. R. Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher Einflussnahme auf die Edition der 'Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1933–1941,'" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2 (1991): 265–303. See also M. Bloch, *Operation Willi. The Plot to Kidnap the Duke of Windsor. July 1940* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984). On 20 October 1994, the BBC's Fourth Programme aired a roundtable discussion on the "Marburg File," which revealed many hitherto little-known details on the Duke of Windsor.

[50]*DGFP*, D10, p. 188.

[51]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 269; D. Kahn, *Hitler's Spies* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 259.

[52]*Sweet*, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 272–73.

[53]*Newsweek*, 4 November 1946, p. 17.

[54]*Sweet*, "Der Versuch amlicher," pp. 275-76.

[55]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," 277–78; see also J. Wheeler-Bennett, *Friends, Enemies, and Sovereigns* (London: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 67–72 and 80–86.

documents would be returned to the Federal Republic after they had been microfilmed.[56] Meanwhile, Winston Churchill, an old friend of the Windsors, was concerned about the adverse publicity that would result from the publication of the documents, and in a Cabinet meeting of August 1953 he suggested that their publication be postponed for ten to twenty years. Lord Salisbury objected, saying that "the documents should be published because their suppression would 'indicate that they were more damaging than in reality.' " In the end, Churchill's view prevailed.[57] However, when Foreign Minister Georges Bidault (himself a historian) was asked for the views of the French government regarding the Windsor documents, he stated that "should [the documents be suppressed] the French historians [on the project] would resign. Under the present circumstances the suppression of the documents was impossible . . . but it might be possible to postpone their publication by [publishing] documents from another period first."[58]

In the end, both the American and British editors agreed in principle to this proposal. The Americans assumed editorial responsibility for volume 9, a move that delayed the publication of volume 10, which contained the Windsor documents. Given the additional work to be done on the volumes for series C (1933–37), these actions would delay the publication date for the Windsor documents for a minimum of several years.[59] This agreement did not end the debate, however because some Windsor documents were found in volume 8 of series D, just as it was about to be released in 1954.[60] When asked in the House of Commons about these documents, Churchill explained to the members that they had been published under a joint agreement with the American and French governments and that the independent historians who had been entrusted with this task were guided

> solely by 'considerations of . . . the highest scholarly objectivity' . . . (laughter) [and that he had] show[n] them to the Duke of Windsor and . . told him that they were to be published in the United States and this country . . . . His Royal Highness did not raise any objections. He thought, and I agreed with him, that they could be treated with contempt. . . . They are, of course, quite untrue. They may rest in the peculiar domain which this formula describes as 'the highest scholarly objectivity.' (Renewed laughter) . . . [The Prime Minister further informed the House that these documents], quite irrespective of their value, their truth or any attempt to find any background behind them, were handed over to those historians who picked out what they thought was 'scholarly objectivity'—(laughter)—and published them.[61]

While work on the Tripartite Project continued, the principal editors (Paul Sweet for the United States, Margaret Lambert for the British, and Maurice Baumont for the French) met in London in July 1954 with the British Advisory Committee, the group

[56]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 289–290. It needs to be emphasized that not *all* captured documents were microfilmed; for details, see notes 44, 45 in this article.

[57]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 283.

[58]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 283–84.

[59]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 282–86.

[60]These documents, nos. 580 and 621 (D8), which came from the files of State Secretary Weizsaecker, had escaped official scrutiny, which made it likely that other such documents might be found in the future.

[61]*London Times*, 17 November 1954, p. 4.

of well-known British historians charged with the responsibility of advising the government on matters pertaining to the project. The members of the committee were unanimous in suggesting that series D be terminated to prevent publication of documents concerning the Duke of Windsor's presence in Portugal in 1940.[62] The three editors strongly opposed this recommendation. Maurice Baumont observed that the war documents in volume 10 and subsequent volumes were of particular interest to the French. Paul Sweet stressed the fact that adopting the recommendations of the advisory committee would badly compromise the independence of the editors, and Margaret Lambert informed her superiors that she would resign should there be any attempts to suppress the publication of these documents.[63] This episode, which shows that the British government was willing to put considerable pressure on the project's editors and that some British historians were willing to support the government's position, was the most important crisis of the Tripartite Project. Tensions faded, however, after December 1954, when the British government changed its mind (no explanation for this change has ever been forthcoming) and Sir Roger Makins, the British ambassador in Washington, let it be known that his government would no longer object "and would agree to the publication of the [Windsor] documents at the time agreed upon."[64] The volume, including the Windsor documents, was finally published in 1957.[65] This was not, however, the last challenge to the editorial integrity of the Tripartite Project.

**The Swiss Documents.** After the defeat of France in June 1940, the German army captured a large number of French Foreign Ministry documents, despite last-minute attempts by French archivists to destroy them before they fell into enemy hands.[66] Among these documents were memoranda of several conversations on the subject of French military support of the Swiss in the event of a German attack on Switzerland. These conversations had taken place both in 1917 and in 1937, and Switzerland was concerned that knowledge of these activities would undermine Switzerland's claim to neutrality in both World Wars.[67] The reputations of Henri Guisan, chief of staff of the Swiss army, and other high-ranking French and Swiss officers were also at stake, and both the French and Swiss authorities recognized that publication of this material by the Tripartite Project

[62]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," 291–93. The members of the British advisory committee were J. Wheeler-Bennett, E. Llewellen Woodward, R. J. Butler, L. Namier, and W. N. Medlicott.

[63]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 282–83.

[64]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 294.

[65]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 296. According to Peter Allen, *The Windsor Secret* (New York: Stein & Day, 1984), p. 12, "On the publication of the Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Volume X, a notice was inserted headed: 'Statement to be Made by Her Majesty's Government on Publication of Volume X of the German Documents.' This includes the following passage:

> The Duke was subjected to heavy pressure from many quarters to stay in Europe, where the Germans hoped that he would exert his influence against the policy of His Majesty's Government. His Royal Highness never wavered in his loyalty to the British cause or in his determination to take up his official post as Governor of the Bahamas on the date agreed. The German records are necessarily a much tainted source. The only firm evidence which they provide is of what the Germans were trying to do in this matter, and of how completely they failed to do it."

Despite a diligent search of several copies of volume 10, series D, including those published both in Washington and London, no such statement could be found; it may be that the government was considering adding such a statement at one time.

[66]On the destruction of French diplomatic documents, see *Documents diplomatiques Francais 1932–39* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), 2nd series, vol. 1, pp. vii–x.

[67]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 297.

would cause irreparable harm to the credibility of their governments.[68]

Once the Swiss realized that a microfilm copy of these documents was indeed in Allied custody, their government expressed concern both in Washington and Paris and, through Marshal Alphonse-Pierre Juin, commander-in-chief of the Allied forces in Central Europe, eventually also involved the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[69] In response to a request from NATO, the French Foreign Ministry, in the person of Maurice Baumont, suggested that the documents in question (one dated 12 September 1940 and the other 7 November 1940) be omitted from volumes 10 and 11 (of series D), respectively. When Lambert and Sweet objected, Baumont withdrew his request.

In February of the following year, in a letter to the State Department, Juin again objected to publication on the grounds that the documents "would seriously damage NATO policy." His request was also supported by the CIA and by American military officials.[70] To counter these objections, the American and British editors pointed out that these and other documents relevant to Swiss neutrality had been used in the Nuremberg trials, that all of the captured German documents would shortly be returned to the German Federal Republic (which had agreed to make them available to scholars and students), and that microfilms of these documents would also be available in Washington and London.[71] Furthermore, omitting them from volumes 10 and 11 would call even more attention to the problem. State Department officials so informed the Swiss government which, supported by the American ambassador in Bern, continued to object strongly to their publication.[72] According to Sweet, "the fact that responsible officials were of the opinion (rightly or wrongly) that national security was at stake . . . [made it] clear that the Department would consider . . . [the editors of the Tripartite Project] as completely irresponsible, should . . . [they] insist on immediate publication. A postponement in some form thus became inevitable."[73] As a result, Sweet suggested, and the State Department agreed, to publish a shortened version of volume 10 and to include the critical documents in volume 11; furthermore, it was agreed that volumes 1 and 2 of series C should be next in line for publication, which would even further delay the publication of volume 11.[74] Although the French and British editors initially objected to this approach, they subsequently agreed to it, and volume 11 was not published until April 1960.[75]

Government pressure on the editors of the Tripartite Project came initially from the British and the French; in each case, however, the Americans fully supported the other government's actions. Throughout the project, attempts at government interference were successfully defeated and the editors' independence was reaffirmed, albeit belatedly. Maintaining the integrity of the project required constant vigilance on the part of the editor, as well as a willingness to fight and to compromise without giving in. These compromises included postponing the publication of various volumes and delaying the publication of vol-

[68]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 297. Although the original documents captured by the Germans had been destroyed during the war, a microfilm copy that the German Foreign Ministry had made to preserve records of the meetings of Hitler and Ribbentrop with heads of state and other important officials did exist; these were the so-called Loesch films.

[69]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 297.

[70]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 298.

[71]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 280. See also the article by J. Henke (note 44 of this article), passim.

[72]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 298.

[73]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 299.

[74]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," p. 299.

[75]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 300–01; vol. 10 was published in 1957.

ume 6 of series C, a delay that has never, to this day, been explained satisfactorily.[76]

**The German edition: *Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1948–45.*** Chancellor Adenauer's initial request (in May 1951) that the captured German documents be returned to the newly established Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic was followed by an exchange of letters with the Allied governments and a meeting in which the German officials asked to participate in the Tripartite Project.[77] The State Department supported both requests, while the British were opposed, at least initially, to the idea of a quadripartite project. The British objections were eventually overcome, and the new project began in Bonn in 1961. British opposition "was rooted, not in any ideological hostility to Nazism, but in the continuation of attitudes formed by the War Guilt controversy over the origins of the First World War, and the damage they believed to have been caused to British interests by the willingness of American historians of European diplomacy (and of 'informed' American opinion) to accept the German case."[78]

In a summary of the problems that German participation would pose, Frank Roberts, "the coordinating undersecretary in the foreign office," noted that, among other considerations

> (viii) All the British historians consulted think that the reputation of the project for impartiality and completeness would suffer severely if the documents were returned in partial, or still more, complete German custody, with the consequent danger that key documents might be abstracted. The French government takes essentially the same view.
>
> (ix) It is also feared that, if the documents are returned and the project continued in Germany, serious friction might develop between the German Foreign Ministry and the Allied historians who would naturally look to their own Governments for support. The position of a German editor would rapidly become impossible.[79]

In December 1953, Sir Lewis Namier noted that any decision to allow the Germans to participate in the project would be based "on grounds of policy and not scholarship. The mere admission of the Germans to share in the work is already a measure of high policy and appeasement. If the wish to appease continues, scholarship will go by the board. But if a tougher line is taken towards the Germans, with the archives once more in their possession, they will be able to break off whenever they choose."[80] Arguing along similar lines, E. L. Woodward wrote to Lambert that he had "no confidence" in such an undertaking, and he pointed to the various improprieties that were only then coming to light in connection with the editing of the Grosse Politik.[81]

In the face of equally fierce opposition from the French government, the captured German documents were not returned to the Federal Republic until 1960, after the

[76]Sweet, "Der Versuch amtlicher," pp. 302–03. The page proofs of this volume were ready in the early 1960s, but the volume was not published until 1983.

[77]This and the following are based on D. C. Watt, "British Historians, the War Guilt Issue, and Post-War Germanophobia: A Documentary Note," *Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (1993): 179– 85.

[78]Watt, "British Historians," p. 179.

[79]Watt, "British Historians," p. 180.

[80]Watt, "British Historians," p. 181.

[81]Watt, "British Historians," p. 182. On the exchanges in the *TLS*, see p. 471 and notes 38 and 39 in this article.

bulk of the 1918–45 originals had been microfilmed at Whaddon Hall in Buckinghamshire. By that time, opposition to German participation had abated both in Britain and in France; in December of that year, a commission of historians from the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany met in Bonn to work out the details. Because the tripartite portion of the project had published documents in English from 1933 to 1941, the new project was to concentrate on the 1918–32 and 1942–45 periods and would mean that publication of the documents would be completed in German.[82]

The new quadripartite phase adopted the editorial policies and practices of the Tripartite Project and agreed that "the responsibility for selecting the documents was to be shared equally by all editors-in-chief, whose obligation . . . was to publish the full record 'on the basis of the highest scholarly objectivity.'"[83]

Whether the editors of the Quadripartite Project have been subjected to pressures from their governments of the kinds faced by the editors of the *Foreign Relations*, the *Grosse Politik*, and the Tripartite Project will not be known with certainty until the files of the German Foreign Ministry in Bonn are made available to outsiders. However, American and German participants in the project report that government interference has not been an issue.[84] The main difficulty for the Quadripartite Project has been a shortage of funds and the decline in U.S. support. The American attitude toward the project is best summed up by a State Department official who, early in 1963, noted that "neither Secretaries of State Herter or Rusk had ever really approved America's commitment, and Congress knew nothing about it and would disapprove if it did. 'No one above my level,' the same person lamented somewhat later, 'seems to care whether the Department stays in or not.'"[85] By 1963, Yale University, with the help of the Volkswagen Foundation and later with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, assumed responsibility from the State Department, and Hajo Holborn and (later) Hans W. Gatzke took over as editors-in-chief. By 1979, American participation had ceased altogether, and series A (1918–24) was compiled and published without the help of American editors.

The Quadripartite Project has now been completed, and the German edition—because of its coverage and presentation of the original documents—will be the definitive one. For half a century, historians and archivists from four different nations worked together to produce a collection of documents that is unique in the historiog-

[82]H. W. Gatzke, "The Quadripartite Project. *Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1918–1945:* Experiment in International Historiography," in *Russland, Deutschland, Amerika, Festschrift für Fritz Epstein*, edited by A. Fischer, G. Moltmann, and K. Schwabe (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), pp. 333–41.

[83]Gatzke, "The Quadripartite Project," p. 334. The initial work of the editors was done in the Foreign Ministry in Bonn, which assumed all administrative responsibilities and functions. The editors generally accepted the selections of the Tripartite Project and added new documents only to improve coverage. (See S. A. Stehlin, "The Publication of the *Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1918–1945,*" *Central European History 1 (June 1968): 193–99.*

[84]Conversation with members of the Quadripartite Project.

[85]Quoted by Gatzke, "The Quadripartite Project," p. 335. One problem the editors of the Quadripartite Project faced was that many documents pertaining to German foreign policy, especially for the 1918–24 period, had been published elsewhere before work on series A (1918–24) had been completed. Instead of republishing these documents, the editors decided only to refer to them in footnotes. This means, however, that users of these volumes must consult a number of other documentary collections for this period to obtain a complete picture of events. See G. O. Kent, review of *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945,* ser. A, vols., 1–9, 9 November 1918 to 30 April 1921, in the *Journal of Modern History* 60 (December 1988): 798–803.

raphy of this or any other century. The initial justification for this project—to prove Hitler's responsibility for starting the Second World War and to avoid another stab-in-the-back myth—has undoubtedly been fulfilled. Beyond that, and despite efforts by the more radical revisionists to deny Hitler's responsibility and the facts of the Holocaust, the published documents (and the microfilms) provide a rich and balanced source of political, social, and economic material for the history of modern Germany and other European nations. As an example of international scholarly cooperation, these projects are unprecedented.

## Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the problems and pressures surrounding the publication of collections of diplomatic documents by U.S., German, and Allied governments operating under a variety of conditions.

The *Foreign Relations* series was begun during the latter half of the nineteenth century as a means of informing Americans about the foreign policy of their government. The publication of the *Grosse Politik* came about under vastly different circumstances. Following the shock of a lost war and a punitive peace, successive governments of the Weimar Republic undertook the publication of pre-war German diplomatic documents to demonstrate both to the German people and to Germany's former enemies that the country had not been responsible for starting the war. The project's political goals triumphed over historical objectivity throughout the publication process, causing the editors to omit or alter documents that presented an unfavorable picture of German foreign policy. The few Germans who knew about these distortions either were part of the deception or were discredited if they spoke up;[86] had it not been for the Allies' capture of the German Foreign Ministry archives in 1945, the details of the editorial practices surrounding the publication of the *Grosse Politik* would probably still not be known.

Prior to the Cold War, the editors of *Foreign Relations* did not face the kind of political pressure imposed on the editors of the *Grosse Politik.* Beginning with the Cold War, however, various clandestine operations—the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam War, and the Iran-Contra affair—demanded an unprecedented level of secrecy that government historians and editors found very difficult to resist. Only the presence of a watchdog group, public pressure to open the archives, and a free press were able—albeit slowly—to bring about the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers and the opening of archives.[87]

The Tripartite and Quadripartite Projects were quite different from each other. Here, the multinational structure of the editorial board acted from the beginning to check the sporadic concerns raised by individual governments about their own secret wartime policies. Even in the case of the Quadripartite Project, the initial fears of Allied historians that German participation would compromise the integrity of the publication proved groundless, in large part because

[86]Herman Kantorowicz and Veit Valentin are probably the best-known Germans to have been critical of the German government's dealing with the war-guilt question and the editing of the *Grosse Politik.* On Kantorowicz and his *Gutachten*, see Wittgens, "German Foreign Office Campaign," pp. 99–118. Valentin, because of "his political convictions . . . suffered much abuse, loss of academic position, and eventually, exile" (R. H. Bauer, "Veit Valentin 1885–1947," in *Some 20th Century Historians* edited by S. William Helperin [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], pp. 103–41; see also Valentin's reviews of the *Grosse Politik* in *Historische Zeitschrift* vol. 128 (1923): 135–41 and vol. 131 (1925): 310–18).

[87]See "Fixing the *Foreign Relations* Series: The 1992 HAC Report," *Perspectives* 31, (September 1993): 30–32, and "CIA Opening Files on Cold War Role," *New York Times*, 29 August 1993, p. 7.

many German historians on the project came from a younger generation and had no interest in covering up Hitler's policies.

If the documentary projects discussed here are any example, it would appear that the secret to maintaining the editorial integrity of projects that threaten to expose the less seemly aspects of foreign policy lie in having a system of checks and balances in place—as was the case in *Foreign Relations*—or in building such a system into the project itself—as was done with the Tripartite and Quadripartite Projects.