

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
THE DIVISION OF PUBLICATIONS

UNDER SECRETARY,  
APR 6 1925  
DEPT. OF STATE

DP

March 26, 1925.

Dear Mr. Secretary.

The attached memorandum addressed to yourself together with the appended statement of the principles to guide the editing of "Foreign Relations" is designed in such a way that it can, if it meets with your approval, be mimeographed and used in answering inquiries from historical students as to the principles which now govern the editing of diplomatic correspondence in the Department.

You may, therefore, wish to scrutinize the memorandum and draft with a view to its possible circulation outside of the Department. It is an attempt to define some of the aspects of the necessary limitations upon "open diplomacy".

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*I see no objection*

*Keenan*

*Noted. —  
[Signature]*

SECRETARY OF STATE  
MAY 6 1925

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THE DIVISION OF PUBLICATIONS

March 26, 1925.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

At a recent conference of the Solicitor and the Chiefs of the geographical divisions, called by Mr. MacMurray and held in his office, there was a thorough discussion of the principles which ought to guide the editing of "Foreign Relations". As a result of this conference, the Chief of the Division of Publications was requested to formulate the principles upon which those present were agreed and to present them to the Secretary for his formal approval.

I beg to call your attention to the fact that in the attached outline two innovations are proposed. It is believed that "Foreign Relations" is the proper place in which to publish the decisions of the Department on subjects of international law which are of peculiar interest to students. Hitherto, material of this nature has usually not been available for study. Also, the publication of important documents concerning treaty negotiations ought greatly to increase the value of "Foreign Relations" as a source-book of American history. This proposed new material ought to contribute to the promotion of interest in questions of foreign policy and

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in turn assist in the maintenance of an intelligent public opinion. The attached outline otherwise is important not so much for new principles as because it sets up a uniform standard for the guidance of the many officers of the Department who are related to the editing of diplomatic correspondence.

If this statement commends itself to your judgment, I shall be glad to have for it your formal approval.

*Wm. Dennett*

*W. A. M.*

*U. S. P.*

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Principles to Guide the Editing of  
"Foreign Relations".

Although the Secretary of State is not by law required to make an annual report, it is recognized that a well-informed and intelligent public opinion is of the utmost importance for the conduct of foreign relations.

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 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.

The development of the science of international law has become a matter of such weight and general concern that it is recommended that the Chief of the Division of Publications, with the help and counsel of the Solicitor, should ~~be~~ give special attention to the publication of all important decisions made by the Department relating to international law, with a view to making available for general study and use, the annual contributions of the Department to this important branch of jurisprudence. It is likewise believed that the Department may profitably inaugurate the  
practice

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practice of printing a record of treaty negotiations, and it is, therefore, suggested that such material be added, beginning with "Foreign Relations 1918", which is now in the process of editing.

When the documents on a given subject have been assembled in the Division of Publications, they should be submitted to the Solicitor or to the Chief of the appropriate division which has had immediate supervision of the topic. The Solicitor, 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:

- (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

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(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.

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The Chief of the Division of Publications is expected to initiate, through the appropriate channels, the correspondence necessary to secure from a foreign government permission to publish any document received from it and which it is desired to publish as a part of the diplomatic correspondence of the United States. Without such permission, the document in question must not be used. The offices and divisions concerned in this process of editing may be expected to cooperate heartily with a view to the preparation of an adequate and honest record.

*Approved*  
*James B. Keenan*

*Approved*  
*1/24/45*

*[Signature]*

*[Signature]*  
E. E.  
W. E.

*[Signature]*  
F. E.  
S. H.

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L. A.  
U. S.

*[Signature]*  
M. E.

*[Signature]*  
I. E.