

**Presentation of Eric Flury-Dasen, Switzerland
Poster Session, 19th International Congress
of Historical Sciences,
6 - 13 August 2000 in Oslo**

**Swiss Diplomatic Documents
on the Internet:
opportunities and disadvantages
of a new way of publishing**

Introduction

The fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War took place a few weeks ago: The invasion of South Korea by North Korean troops marked a transition from cold war to shooting war, bringing into focus the antagonism between the two power blocs and their competing ideologies. While no direct conflict took place between the new super-powers – the USA and the USSR – the effects of the Korean War were felt throughout the world, especially in Europe – and with it Switzerland – where previously the East-West rivalry had generated the most intense confrontations.

Next year will see the publication of the new volume of the print edition of the Swiss Diplomatic Documents series, containing several papers which are directly or indirectly concerned with the Korean War. The Swiss Diplomatic Documents series is a collection of documents on Swiss foreign policy and international relations. To date 17 volumes have appeared, covering the years 1848-1949. The DoDiS database, which has been accessible on the Internet since 1997, considerably enhances and expands the selection of available documents relating to the post-war period.

This morning I will be showing you a document from this collection in the form of an electronic facsimile which I will access online via the Internet. First I will outline the international background against which the document should be seen. Then I will consider the document itself and show the contribution which the Swiss Diplomatic Documents collection makes to international history. Finally, I will be looking at the pros and cons of electronic publishing as compared to traditional print publishing.

The international context

The Korean War had a direct impact on Swiss domestic and foreign policy.

1. The policy of neutrality came under strong pressure, as every act of foreign policy was closely observed by either one ideological bloc or the other and was liable to draw severe criticism or undesired consequences (e.g.: receiving visits from senior officers of other armies).
2. Switzerland's doctrine of armed neutrality demanded an increase in military procurement – it became necessary to purchase tanks, aircraft and other defence systems from abroad.
3. Switzerland faced difficulties in obtaining the strategic goods and raw materials needed by its economy from abroad, as the producer countries, in particular the USA, stepped up their regulation of the world market.
4. The USA put pressure on Switzerland to prohibit the export of goods to Eastern Europe (using the COCOM lists).

As well as the Korean conflict, Swiss policy makers also had to contend with the increasing integration of (Western) Europe. While Switzerland had felt able in 1948 to participate in the Marshall Plan and in the resultant Organization of European Economic Co-ordination (OEEC), it elected not to become a founder member of the Council of Europe in 1949 because of the implications this would have for its policy of neutrality.

The challenges facing Switzerland were to chart its own course at a time when the new international order was highly unstable and to come to terms with the consequences of the new international balance of power. From 1947 on, these challenges resulted in a continuous exchange of information with Sweden, another small neutral country with an identical or at least similar set of problems to resolve.

The document

The document I propose to discuss is an unpublished document from the Swiss Federal Archive, a confidential report written by Alfred Zehnder, then Head of the Political Affairs Division of the Federal Political Department and the Number 2 in the Swiss Foreign Ministry.

That this was an important document is evidenced by the fact that Zehnder had it circulated to all ministers and to selected heads of department as well as to the Swiss ambassadors in London, Washington, Paris, Rome and Stockholm. The report is concerned with the key issues and challenges facing Swiss foreign policy in the post-war period.

In the document, Zehnder reports on his three-day visit to the Swedish capital in March 1951, during which he had meetings with the Swedish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and with Dag Hammarskjöld, Minister without portfolio and Political Coordinator for international economic questions. It was Hammarskjöld who had invited Zehnder to Stockholm. In the years prior to the visit, Hammarskjöld and Zehnder had held regular exchanges of information and views on matters of interest to both countries. The growing degree of consultation between the two countries on foreign policy issues is also evidenced by the meetings which took place each year in Berne, beginning in 1951, between Dag Hammarskjöld and the Swiss Foreign Minister Max Petitpierre, culminating in the official visit by Petitpierre to Sweden in 1957, the first ever official foreign visit made by Petitpierre.

The principal topic of discussion was the East-West trade of the two countries. Since 1947 the USA had been stepping up its efforts to prevent the USSR and its satellite states from obtaining war materials and strategic goods and had been bringing pressure to bear on the countries of Western Europe in this regard. Sweden and Switzerland were special cases: as non-NATO countries they could not be so easily brought into line with the other European countries in terms of export restrictions. Later in 1951 the two neutral states were to make far-reaching concessions on their neutrality policy, after yielding to the American pressure. In March 1951 however, these developments still lay in the future. Zehnder is cautioning Hammarskjöld against entering into negotiations with Washington, arguing that such negotiations will inevitably result in acceptance of the application of the American export lists.

In a period of world-wide rearmament, raw materials were in particularly short supply. Both Sweden and Switzerland were dependent on imports of the key raw materials of that time, coal and steel, both for their own military requirements and for their civilian industries. Sweden had no qualms about accepting American invitations to join international committees on the distribution of raw materials, whereas Switzerland did not join until several months later.

Hammarskjöld and Zehnder differed in their attitudes to European policy. With Sweden being a member of both the OECE and the Council of Europe, Hammarskjöld advocated the merger of these two European organizations in order to head off the threat of withdrawal by the United Kingdom. Switzerland had explicitly decided not to join the Council of Europe in accordance with its policy of

neutrality, because it feared that the Council of Europe would gradually evolve into a political organization with supranational character. The Swedish proposal for a merger of the two organizations ran directly counter to the Swiss position. However, Zehnder did not attempt to dissuade Hammarskjöld from pursuing this approach as he knew that any such attempt was doomed to failure given the high degree of importance attached to this issue by the Swedish Foreign Ministry.

An urgent mutual concern of the two countries was the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. In September 1950 the three Western Powers had announced their decision to grant West Germany sovereignty over its foreign policy. It was very much in the economic interests of both Switzerland and Sweden to foster good relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Both countries decided to establish diplomatic relations with the West German government and sent diplomatic representatives to Cologne/Bonn in the months that followed. Furthermore, both states wanted to give de facto recognition only to the Bonn government within the borders of its own territorial sphere of influence, although the Swedish government was aware that by doing so it would be siding with West Germany.

Swedish legal experts attempted to construct a rationale for this position in terms of international law: According to their analysis, Germany was an occupied country whose sovereignty was exercised by the Allied Control Council. By virtue of this fact, recognition of the West German government could not be construed even as an implicit recognition of the West German claim to total sovereignty or its claim to be the sole legitimate successor to the German Reich.

Zehnder pointed out the untenability of the Swedes' legal analysis and set out the Swiss interpretation, which was based on two governments remaining "in a state of war" in the territory of the former German Reich. Even in legal theory, recognition had never been given simultaneously to both governments in such a situation. It was legitimate to accord recognition on the basis of one's own interests. The Federal Council had never accepted the division of Germany, nor had that division been accepted by the two German states. To counter the potential charge of one-sidedness, the Federal Council left open the possibility of establishing de facto relations with the German Democratic Republic.

The discussions also led to the conclusion that Swiss neutrality was of a different nature to the Swedish variant. Sweden regarded itself as bound by its ties to its fellow Scandinavian countries in the Nordic Council. It therefore had to take into consideration the different position of its Scandinavian neighbours – both Norway and Denmark having given up their neutrality in 1949 to join the North Atlantic Alliance.

Value of the SDD as a whole

The presentation of this document has shown that we learn just as much about the general foreign policy orientation of the Swedish government at the beginning of the 1950s as we do about that of the Swiss, since Zehnder provides a detailed description of the views of the Swedish policy-makers and contrasts these with the Swiss position. Original material from the Swedish foreign ministry in such detailed and concise form on the position of a small neutral country is unlikely to exist in respect of other countries.

In addition, we obtain some new information about the foreign policies of the USA (on East-West trade), West Germany (its claim to be the only legitimate German state) and the United Kingdom (European policy) and about the multilateral European organizations (OECE, Council of Europe).

Finally, the document illustrates the role of the small neutral countries in the international community of nations. It reveals the material constraints with which a small country had to contend (East-West trade) and shows the room it had to manoeuvre (European integration, Germany policy).

Potential and limitations of the Internet database

As the Swiss Diplomatic Documents collection is intended to constitute a contribution to the historiography of international relations, it is a natural step to make it available world-wide in the form of an online database accessible over the Internet, in order to provide historians with an insight into the bilateral or multilateral relations of Switzerland.

Past experience has shown that the best approach is a combination of both print and electronic distribution channels since they complement each other perfectly. The following section focuses on the advantages and drawbacks of online publishing because we believe that this form of publishing is bound to become increasingly widespread and that it is therefore time to carry out a critical appraisal of its potential and limitations.

The advantages of online publication

The advantages of the Internet over the print medium are as follows:

Distribution issues

- World-wide access as opposed to the largely domestic coverage achieved by the print-based collections.
- The information potential of the World Wide Web is increasingly being exploited by the younger generation of historians, who use the World Wide Web more and more for research and to publish their work.
- Documents can be made available to the public within a very short timeframe (e.g.: for anniversaries of historic events, international events such as this congress, public debate about the role of Switzerland in the Second World War, etc.).

Financial issues

- Electronic scanning of documents and the other processes required to prepare them for publication on the Internet are much less expensive than the process of manually transcribing documents for the print edition.

Usability issues

- Searches can be carried out over entire time periods rather than just over specific short periods as is the case with the print editions
- Retrieval of the data is faster and more versatile (multi-lingual instructions on use, information in several languages, truncation of inquiries where the spelling is uncertain, direct access using the DoDiS document number, etc.)
- The database greatly expands the search possibilities, which can be also used in combination (to include several entities; searching by the role of individuals, by organizations and geographical place-names or by topic, search within the class, Boolean operators.

Editorial issues

- Information can be amended or added to at any time, which is not possible with a print volume once it has been issued.
- It is always possible to subsequently add documents from a time period already covered by an earlier volume.
- The number of documents and other items of information can be expanded at will.
- Electronic publication of documents can take place at short intervals.

Source-related issues

- The documents reproduced in the collections can be compared to the original version.
- There is certainty as to the authenticity of documents, particularly original documents which bear the signature and the date stamp of the ministry to which they were addressed.
- Document history:
 - list of individuals who have read the document
 - times at which the document was read
 - comments and emphasis added in the margins by the recipient

Shortcomings of online publication

The drawbacks of electronic publication on the World Wide Web compared to print publication are as follows:

Distribution issues

- Positioning and marketing is more difficult: there is the risk of the individual supplier being submerged in the vast amount of material available. This problem can be countered by
 - indexing the website effectively,
 - creating links to ones own website from other related academic sites, particularly historical sites,
 - enhancing the Internet offering by providing additional useful features and
 - promoting the site offline (articles in specialist journals and periodicals, direct mail, etc.).

- Part of the potential audience is not reached either because the individuals concerned have no Internet access or do not know how to use the Internet.

Usability issues

- It is more difficult to keep track than with the print edition as the list of hits for search queries continually increases.
- An important criterion is the speed of searching and of opening and downloading documents in graphic format. For many private users this speed is not (yet) available.

Financial and legal issues

- The aforementioned advantages of electronic publication can result in a situation where the electronic version is in competition with the print edition. This competition is heightened by the fact that access to the online version is free, whereas the traditional publication has to be paid for. The print publisher will be reluctant to agree to prior online publication of documents which are also published in the printed collection. The concern here is not with the copyright issue, since the archived documents constitute public property, but rather with strategic and financial considerations.

Source-related issues

- The single most important drawback compared to print publishing – given the number of documents and other items of information – is the absence of an annotation device (identification of individuals, explanations of events, references to documents containing further details, etc.).
- Electronic documents can be manipulated and their content doctored and distorted. This danger can be averted by making documents available only in read-only format.

In short, electronic publication on the Internet is more versatile, more flexible, faster and cheaper than conventional print publication and is thus the ideal complement to the existing distribution channel.

You are invited to try out the online database using the PCs in the hall.

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