

Review of Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland, Volume 24

Nov 08, 2013

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Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz
Documents Diplomatiques Suisses
Documenti Diplomatici Svizzeri
Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland

Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland is the work of a group of historians under the auspices of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences who search the Federal Archives in Bern for pertinent documents that they then make available to the public. Their online database Dodis (dodis.ch), with thousands of documents, e-dossiers and information on actors and organizations is a treasure chest for

those interested in Swiss foreign policy. A select number of particularly pertinent documents are published in their printed DDS volumes, which are comparable to the U.S. collection of documents in the Foreign Relations of the United States volumes. In contrast to their American counterparts, the DDS volumes are not further subdivided by thematic or geographical criteria beyond an initial chronological division. Volume 24, their most recent publication, therefore covers a broad range of foreign policy issues through 190 documents from the beginning of 1967 to the end of 1969.

During this time period, Switzerland's foreign policy continued to be guided by its traditional neutrality. This policy runs like a thread through this volume, but it becomes particularly apparent with regard to the United Nations. The Swiss UN membership was impeded by the requirement to participate in UN sanctions, such as those imposed on Rhodesia and South Africa (<http://dodis.ch/33242>). It was argued that such an obligation was incompatible with Swiss neutrality.

While Switzerland approached UN membership with reservation, it was involved in world affairs in other ways. In the last three years of the 1960s, Swiss officials travelled in all directions to strengthen bilateral ties (<http://dodis.ch/32485> and <http://dodis.ch/32783>). Swiss development aid, likewise, found its way into different corners of the world (<http://dodis.ch/32839> and <http://dodis.ch/32847>). This was linked to the increased involvement of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs in Swiss foreign policy, which hoped to advance Swiss business interests abroad. A side effect of this development was a rivalry between the Federal Political (i. e. Foreign) and Economic Departments in the field of aid development (<http://dodis.ch/32830>).

Economics and trade are major themes in volume 24, with numerous documents addressing bilateral and multilateral economic questions. In this time period, the Swiss not only tried to advance their economic interests in individual countries, but also participated in international discussions, such as the Kennedy Round. The successful conclusion of these GATT negotiations, which were held in Geneva, was an important accomplishment for an export-oriented country like Switzerland (<http://dodis.ch/33255>). For related reasons, it approached European integration in a positive, albeit reserved, manner (<http://dodis.ch/33241>). When discussions on European integration encountered difficulties, Switzerland advocated economic interim solutions (<http://dodis.ch/33021> and <http://dodis.ch/33014>). The Swiss financial center is another aspect of Swiss foreign policy addressed in this volume. The banking secrecy, for example, which features prominently in today's news, was already a contentious topic in the late 1960s that occasionally strained bilateral relations (<http://dodis.ch/33015> and <http://dodis.ch/33138>).

During this time period, Switzerland continued to provide its good offices in various ways. While volume 24 contains relatively few documents on Switzerland's good offices compared to documents that address economic issues, it does illustrate this important aspect of Swiss foreign policy through documents on Switzerland's protecting power mandates (<http://dodis.ch/33714> and <http://dodis.ch/33283>), its

efforts to mediate in conflicts (<http://dodis.ch/33253>) and its (unsuccessful) promotion of Geneva as the location for peace talks on Vietnam (<http://dodis.ch/32172>). With foreign countries affected by economic and political challenges, Switzerland opened its doors for foreign nationals in search of jobs (<http://dodis.ch/32342>), particularly from Italy, Spain and Yugoslavia, as well as for displaced refugees (<http://dodis.ch/33048>). Amongst the latter, the Czechoslovaks in particular captured the sympathy of the Swiss public (<http://dodis.ch/32192> and <http://dodis.ch/32194>), while refugees from Tibet severely strained Sino-Swiss relations (<http://dodis.ch/33131>). DDS volume 24 conclusively shows that while Switzerland continued to adhere to its neutrality, it was far from being isolated.

This volume is not, nor does it claim to be, comprehensive on individual topics. This collection of documents is rather the gateway to more in-depth research. The publishers were meticulous in providing the location of documents or topics referenced in their published text in a footnote, by either listing the permalink to the digital copy on their database Dodis or citing the folder accession number for the Federal Archives. The volume is further user-friendly as it is equipped with brief summaries of the documents, a thematic listing of the documents, a bibliography where especially relevant files are bolded, and individual registers for persons, organizations and geographical entries. This DDS volume in itself provides an overview of Swiss foreign policy from January 1967 to December 1969. Together with the referenced resources on their database Dodis and in the Federal Archives, it is an ideal starting point for topic specific research.

Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz, volume 24, 1. 1. 1967 – 31. 12. 1969, ed. Sacha Zala (Zurich, Switzerland: Chronos Verlag, 2012).