

**November 17, 2008**

**Memorandum to Secretary of State Rice**

**From: Thomas Schwartz, President of the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations, former member of the Historical Advisory Committee**

**Re: Problems in the Office of the Historian of the Department of State**

For the last three years I have served as a member of the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, the committee created by Congress to insure a thorough, accurate, and reliable documentary record of United States foreign policy. As part of the Committee's responsibilities, it prepares an annual report which assesses the Office of the Historian's performance in the achievement of the preparation and timely publication of the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, the series which provides the American people with an honest record of the foreign relations of this country.

I was the principal drafter of this year's report, which contained some criticisms of the management of the Office of the Historian. As a result of this critical report, the Historian, Dr. Marc Susser, removed me from the committee, despite the fact the Organization of American Historians reappointed me this past summer to serve another three year term.

I was honored to serve on the Historical Advisory Committee, and I have enormous respect for the staff of the historians who serve in the Office and are attempting to fulfill their public responsibilities. However, I cannot leave this position without expressing my serious reservations about the future of the *FRUS* series and the Office under the leadership of Dr. Susser. Not only does his action against me reflect an extreme sensitivity to any criticism, however mild, it also defeats the purpose of an Advisory Committee if Susser can simply remove members who express any reservations about the performance of the Office of the Historian.

Simply put, there are enormous problems within the Office of the Historian, and they stem largely from the management style of Dr. Susser. The forced retirement this past summer of Dr. Edward Keefer, the *FRUS* series editor who had restored the intellectual quality and historical weight of the series, was only the latest example of a management style that insisted on abject and subservient loyalty to Dr. Susser at the expense of competence and performance in the achievement of the goals of the office. The departure of a significant number of the top historians in the office, and the extreme demoralization of much of the rest of the staff, only underlines the damage that has been done to the *FRUS* series, and that promises to slow to a crawl the production of the historical record of foreign policy of the late 1970s and 1980s. I can only urge the Secretary to consult with the Historical Advisory Committee and its chair, Professor William Roger Louis, and conduct her own investigation. Without any change, the future of the *FRUS* series, and the fulfillment of the Congressional mandate, will be placed in serious jeopardy.