

British Foreign Office: Russia Correspondence 1883-1886

GUIDE

to

**The Scholarly Resources microfilm edition of
the Public Record Office Collection
Text: F.O. 65**

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INTRODUCTION

The British Foreign Office Records of General Correspondence for Russia, 1883-1905, in record class F.O. 65 is the basic collection of documents for studying Anglo-Russian relations during a period of fundamental change in international affairs. The microfilm edition of this collection, published by Scholarly Resources Inc., contains all the annual volumes of correspondence with Russia as bound by the Foreign Office Library and now deposited at the Public Record Office. This edition also includes the departmental registers as arranged by the library.

The office of principal secretary of state for foreign affairs and, with it, a separate Foreign Office came into existence in 1782. Before that time the conduct of foreign relations as well as various aspects of domestic administration had been the responsibility of the sovereign's principal secretaries of state, generally two in number.

The Foreign Office establishment gradually increased throughout the nineteenth century and regular divisions of labor and procedures were instituted. By 1898 the office consisted of the secretary of state; the permanent undersecretary, who became the acknowledged professional head of the office and supervised the main political departments, Western and Eastern (Europe); and the parliamentary undersecretary, who was involved with political affairs. It became customary that if the secretary of state sat in one of the houses of Parliament, the parliamentary undersecretary would be a member of and represent the Foreign Office in the other house. Below these three officials were three assistant undersecretaries and the senior clerks of the various departments. The secretary of state and the two undersecretaries each had a private secretary and the secretary of state had an assistant private secretary who, until 1915, held the title of *précis* writer. It became a normal procedure to choose private secretaries from among the Foreign Office clerks. After 1854 there were four Foreign Office clerks resident at the office, whose duties included opening and distributing the undersecretaries' dispatches; sending copies of telegrams to the undersecretaries, the sovereign, and the prime minister; and decoding and encoding telegrams received by or sent from the Foreign Office outside of normal hours. After 1886 three junior clerks handled the translating duties.

Correspondence arriving during office hours was opened by an undersecretary or his private secretary, sent to the appropriate department for entry in the departmental register, and returned to the undersecretary for transmission to the secretary of state.

Either the undersecretary or the clerks might minute the correspondence and initial the addition. (Originally all clerks used the initials "F.O.," but later came to use their personal initials.) The secretary of state also might make observations on the dispatch and initial it to indicate that he had seen it. Dispatches arriving after office hours were opened by a resident clerk and sent to the departmental senior clerks for registration and finally forwarded to the dispatchers or clerks, undersecretary, and secretary of state.

Dispatches and drafts relating to important matters were copied and circulated to the prime minister and the sovereign. The most important papers were circulated to the cabinet.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the task of drafting replies had devolved upon the junior clerks under supervision of the senior clerks and guided by instructions of the secretary of state and the undersecretaries.

The Foreign Office was organized along departmental lines, with the departments grouped into two basic categories: political and nonpolitical. The political departments, which were responsible for the conduct of diplomatic relations with other countries, were reorganized several times during the nineteenth century and varied in number from two in 1827 to six in 1857. The general reorganization of 1882 reduced the number of political departments to three. The Eastern (Europe) Department was responsible for Russia as well as Greece, Montenegro, Rumania, Serbia, Turkey, Egypt, Persia, and Central Asia. Among the nonpolitical departments were the Consular, Commercial, and Treaty Departments. The Treaty Department did not participate in the substance of negotiations, which was the responsibility of the political departments, but dealt with the preparation of formal documents, matters of protocol, and the engrossment of the final version of treaties. Until 1906 each department was responsible for maintaining a register of its incoming documents; after 1906 this was the responsibility of the Registry, which was part of the Foreign Office Library.

The correspondence arriving in the Foreign Office was divided between "foreign" correspondence (material originating abroad, generally from British embassies and consulates) and "domestic" correspondence, which was further divided into notes from foreign representatives in London and notes from other British government departments, institutions, and individuals known as "domestic various." Foreign correspondence was categorized by department (political, consular, commercial, etc.)

Dispatches originating in British embassies and consulates followed a prescribed format. Each dispatch was to be on a single topic, enclosures were to be numbered, and any enclosure in a foreign language other than French was to be accompanied with a translation; when possible, two copies of any printed material were required. Each post, embassy or consulate, indicated the sequence of dispatches by numbering them consecutively; this "local" or "dispatch" number enabled the Foreign Office to determine if dispatches had been lost in transit or unduly delayed. (Where there was a known risk of loss or delay, multiple copies would be sent by various means.) The heads of missions docketed their own dispatches with their name, date the dispatch was sent, place of origin, number of enclosures, means of conveyance, and a précis of the contents. The Foreign Office docketed domestic correspondence and, after 1882, telegrams.

Diplomatic correspondence was normally carried by the regular mail or by a trustworthy traveler. Confidential dispatches were ciphered and sent in a diplomatic bag entrusted to a Foreign Office messenger whenever possible. There was regular messenger service to the major posts, including St. Petersburg. Telegrams went out in code, with paraphrases sent through normal channels as a check on decipherment.

The Foreign Office kept all correspondence that pertained to current business. Normally, documents were transferred to the library for binding one year after the end of the calendar year in which the material was created. However, a department would retain material if it dealt with a matter of ongoing concern until that matter was settled. This material normally would not be integrated into the annual volumes but would be bound in separate case volumes.

Under arrangements effective 1 January 1881, each department was to maintain a daily register and index of its correspondence. These registers were later separated and rebound on a country, rather than departmental basis; this material forms the Register of General Correspondence (F.O. 566). The registers for Russia are part of this publication. The indexes, over which the library acquired responsibility in 1900, form Indexes to General Correspondence (F.O. 804) and are not included in this series.

- ② → 18/2
- ④ → St. P. by - Nov. 10 ← ③
- Sir R. Hoare ← ⑤
- ⑥ → No. 278.
- ⑦ → Most confidential
- ⑧ → Recd. 16th by hand here. 1. Incls ← ⑨
- Pamir Quarter
- ⑩ → tr. piece of very important article in "Nov. Vremya" on
- ⑪ → seen at Berlin
- The Queen
- ⑫ → Print (copy)
India Office
Intelligence Div.
- ⑬ → *hr*

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PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
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SAMPLE DOCKET

1. Reference: class and volume numbers
2. Year
3. Date dispatch was sent
4. Post of origin, St. Petersburg
5. Head of mission
6. "Local" or dispatch number
7. Classification
8. Date of receipt
9. Enclosure
10. Précis
11. Indicates that the material had been seen by the
British ambassador at Berlin
12. Distribution list
13. Initial of secretary of state

The registers provide the initial access to the microfilm edition of the General Correspondence. They are arranged by department and provide information as to date, origin, and general subject of the document. With this information available, the researcher can refer to the printed guide and determine the appropriate volume number and reel of film. A target indicating the volume number is photographed on each frame of the film. Because of the procedure for transmitting material from the departments to the Foreign Office Library, more than one volume may have to be consulted. The film is arranged by year, with each year having its own series of reel numbers. Therefore, to locate a dispatch listed in the commercial department register for June 1893, the researcher should read the description and date columns of the guide to find the entry dated "Feb.-Aug." under 1893 and described as "Commercial Dispatches." Then referring to the right column, it can be determined that the document is found on reel two within volume 1451. Material within the volumes is arranged in chronological order.

RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

YEAR: 1883	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1154
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1155
May-Jul.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1156
Aug.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1157
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1158
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams, Drafts and Cyphers-----	2	1159
Apr.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Treaties-----	3	1160
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts-----	3	1161
Jan.-June	Commercial Dispatches; Commercial Telegrams-----	3	1162
Jul.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches; Canal maps-----	4	1163
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Consular), Domestic (Commercial) Drafts; Domestic Treaty; Various-----	4	1164
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches; Drafts-----	5	1165
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Consular Telegrams-----	5	1166
Apr.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Consular Telegrams; Various Commercial-----	6	1166
Jan.-Dec.	Political Dispatches; Consular Dispatches; Commercial Dispatches-----	6	1167
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Commercial Drafts-----	6	1168
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence; Secretaries; Domestic Drafts-----	7	1169
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (War Office) Outgoing Correspondence-----	7	1170
Jan.-Mar.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	8	1171
Apr.-June	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1172
Jul.-Aug.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	10	1173
Sept.-Oct.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	11	1174
Nov.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	11	1175
Nov.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	12	1175
Apr.-Jul.	Commercial Treaty; Diplomatic Dispatches; Drafts-----	12	1176
Aug.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	13	1177
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts, Telegrams (Miscellaneous)-----	13	1178
Feb.-Dec.	Consular Drafts (Miscellaneous)-----	14	1178
Jan.-Aug.	Consular Dispatches (Various); Consular Drafts-----	14	1179

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

YEAR: 1884	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1180
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches; Telegrams-----	1	1181
May-Jun.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1182
Jul.-Sep.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1183
Oct.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1184
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts and Telegrams-----	2	1185
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Treaty-----	3	1186
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts-----	3	1187
Jan.-Jun.	Commercial Dispatches-----	3	1188
Jul.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches-----	4	1189
Feb.-Nov.	Political-----	4	1190
Jan.-Nov.	Commercial Drafts-----	4	1191
Jan.-Nov.	Consular; Drafts; Dispatches-----	4	1192
Apr.-Nov.	Consular; Dispatches; Administrative-----	5	1192
Jan.-Dec.	Political; Consular-----	5	1193
Jun.-Dec.	Consular; Treaty; Political Drafts; Commercial-----	5	1194
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial) Domestic Treaty; Treaty, Domestic, Various----	6	1195
Jan.-Aug.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence-----	6	1196
Sep.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence; Drafts and Telegrams; Miscel- laneous-----	7	1197
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Domestic-----	7	1198
Jan.-Dec.	Secretaries; Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	8	1199
Jan.-Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	8	1200
Jul.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	8	1201
Jan.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1202
Feb.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1203
Mar.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	10	1204
Apr.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	10	1205
May	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	11	1206
Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	11	1207
Jul.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts; Telegrams-----	12	1208
Aug.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts; Telegrams-----	12	1209
Sep.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts; Telegrams-----	13	1210
Oct.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	13	1211
Nov.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams-----	14	1212
Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams-----	14	1213

RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

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YEAR: 1885	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Jul.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1214
Aug.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1215
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1216
May-Aug.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1217
Sep.-Nov.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1218
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1219
Feb.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts; Telegrams; Paraphrases-----	3	1220
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Treaty-----	3	1221
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts-----	3	1222
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches-----	4	1223
Jan.-Dec.	Political Drafts-----	4	1224
Jan.-May	Consular Administrative-----	4	1225
May-Dec.	Consular Administrative-----	5	1225
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts and Dispatches; Treaty; Political; Consular-----	5	1226
Jan.-Dec.	Political; Consular; Commercial; Consular; Commercial; Commercial-----	5	1227
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Dispatches; Commercial; Political; Consular; Commercial-----	6	1228
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Consular; Domestic (Commercial); Domestic Treaty; Various-----	6	1229
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial-----	7	1230
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence; Commercial-----	8	1231
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence; Drafts-----	8	1232
Jan.-Apr.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1233
May-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1234
Jan.-Feb.	Domestic Drafts and Telegrams; Dispatches; Various-----	10	1235
Feb.	Domestic Telegrams, Drafts and dispatches; Various-----	11	1236
Mar.	Domestic Telegrams and Drafts-----	12	1237
Mar.	Domestic Drafts (Various); Incoming Correspondence-----	13	1238
Apr.	Domestic Drafts; Incoming Correspondence-----	13	1239
Apr.	Domestic Drafts; Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams-----	14	1239
Apr.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	14	1240
Apr.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	15	1241
May	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	15	1242
May	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	16	1243
Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Abstracts; Drafts-----	17	1244
Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	17	1245
Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams; Drafts-----	18	1245
Jul.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	18	1246
Jul.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts; Telegrams-----	19	1247
Aug.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	19	1248
Aug.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams-----	20	1248
Aug.-Sep.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	20	1249
Sep.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams-----	21	1250
Oct.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	21	1251
Oct.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence (Telegrams)-----	22	1251
Nov.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence (Miscellaneous)-----	22	1252
Nov.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence (Telegrams)-----	23	1252
Jan.-Aug.	Domestic (Commercial) Drafts-----	23	1253

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

YEAR: 1886	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Jun.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1254
Jul.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1255
Jan.-Feb.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1256
Feb.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1257
Apr.-May	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1258
Jun.-Jul.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	3	1259
Jul.-Aug.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	3	1260
Sep.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	4	1261
Oct.-Nov.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	4	1262
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	4	1263
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts; Telegrams; Paraphrases-----	5	1264
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams; Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	5	1265
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Administrative; Treaty-----	6	1266
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Commercial) Drafts-----	6	1267
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches-----	6	1268
Mar.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial); Domestic Treaty; Various-----	7	1269
Jan.-Jun.	Domestic Commercial (Drafts)-----	7	1270
Jul.-Dec.	Domestic Commercial (Drafts)-----	8	1271
Jan.-Dec.	Political (Drafts); Telegrams; Paraphrases-----	8	1272
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Drafts)-----	9	1273
Mar.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts; Consular; Political; Treaty-----	9	1274
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Commercial Dispatches; Political-----	9	1275
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Commercial-----	10	1276
Jan.-Dec.	Political; Consular-----	10	1277
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Political) Commercial (Various)-----	10	1278
Jan.-Dec.	Secretaries, etc. (Various); Domestic-----	11	1279
Jan.-Jul.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	11	1280
Aug.-Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	12	1281
Jan.	Domestic; Telegrams; Dispatches-----	12	1282
Feb.	Domestic (Various) Abstracts; Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	13	1283
Mar.	Domestic Drafts-----	13	1284
Mar.	Domestic Drafts; Telegrams-----	14	1284
Apr.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	14	1285
May	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegrams-----	15	1286
Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	15	1287
Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	16	1287
Jul.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	16	1288
Aug.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	17	1289
Aug.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Telegram Paraphrases-----	17	1290
Sep.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts; Paraphrases-----	18	1291
Oct.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	18	1292
Nov.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Drafts-----	19	1293