

British Foreign Office: Russia Correspondence 1887-1891

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 → 10/2
 ④ → St. P. by - Nov. 10 ← ③
 Sir R. Morris ← ⑤
 ⑥ → No. 278.
 ⑦ → Most confidential
 ⑧ → Recd 14th by letter here. ← ⑨

Pamir Question

- ⑩ → to. piece of very important article in "Nov. Vremya" on
 ⑪ → seen at Berlin

The Queen

- ⑫ → Print (copy)
 India Office
 Intelligence Div.
 ⑬ → *uh*

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PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
1	2	3	4	5	6
F.O. 65 1443					
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①

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

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YEAR: 1887	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1294
Jan.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1295
Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1296
Apr.-May	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1296
May-Jul.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1297
Aug.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1298
Oct.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	3	1299
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams; Drafts; Paraphrases-----	3	1300
Feb.-Dec.	Consular Drafts, Telegrams, Foreign Treaty-----	4	1301
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts; Dispatches-----	4	1302
Jan.-Jul.	Commercial Telegrams-----	4	1303
Aug.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches-----	4	1304
Jan.-Sep.	Political (Drafts)-----	5	1305
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Dispatches (Other)-----	5	1306
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Dispatches; (Commercial)-----	6	1307
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts (Commercial)-----	6	1308
Aug.-Oct.	Commercial; Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	6	1309
Sep.-Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic); Domestic (Consular); Domestic (Commercial); Domestic (Treaty)-----	7	1309
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Diplomatic) Drafts, Dispatches-----	7	1310
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular) Various (Treaty)-----	8	1311
Jan.-Jul.	Various (Commercial)-----	8	1312
Aug.-Dec.	Various (Commercial)-----	9	1313
Jan.	Domestic (Diplomatic) Drafts; Telegrams-----	9	1314
Feb.	Domestic (Diplomatic) Telegrams and Paraphrases-----	9	1315
Mar.	Domestic (Various)-----	10	1316
Apr.	Domestic-----	10	1317
May	Domestic (Drafts) Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	11	1318
May-Jun.	Domestic (Drafts), Telegrams-----	11	1319
Jun.-Jul.	Domestic Telegrams and Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	12	1320
Jul.-Aug.	Domestic; Drafts; Telegrams-----	12	1321
Aug.-Sep.	Domestic; Drafts; Telegrams-----	13	1322
Sep.-Oct.	Domestic; Drafts-----	13	1323
Nov.-Dec.	Domestic; Telegrams; Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	14	1324
Jan.-Dec.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches; Treaty-----	14	1325
Jan.-Aug.	Other (Various Diplomatic); Treaty-----	14	1326
Sep.-Dec.	Other (Various Diplomatic); Treaty-----	15	1326
Jan.-Dec.	Other (Diplomatic)(Political) Telegrams; Dispatches-----	15	1327

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

YEAR: 1888	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1328
Jan.-Feb.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1329
Mar.-May	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1330
Jun.-Aug.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1331
Aug.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	3	1332
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	3	1333
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams, Drafts and Paraphrases-----	4	1334
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Dispatches; Treaty-----	4	1335
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts-----	4	1336
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial; Diplomatic; Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	5	1337
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts; Political-----	5	1338
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Administrative; Commercial; Diplomatic; Consular-----	6	1339
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic (Political); Consular; Commercial-----	6	1340
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic; Consular; Commercial; Treaty; Diplomatic; Consular; Commercial; Secretaries, etc.-----	7	1341
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic); Domestic (Consular); Domestic (Commercial); Domestic (Treaty)-----	7	1342
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Diplomatic)-----	8	1343
Jan.-Nov.	Various (Consular)-----	9	1344
Jan.-May	Various (Commercial)-----	9	1345
Jun.-Dec.	Various (Commercial)-----	10	1346
Jan.-Feb.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	10	1347
Mar.-Apr.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	11	1348
May	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	11	1349
Jun.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	12	1350
Jul.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	12	1351
Aug.	Domestic (Diplomatic) (Political)-----	13	1352
Sep.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	13	1353
Oct.	Domestic (Political) (Diplomatic)-----	14	1354
Nov.	Domestic (Diplomatic) (Political)-----	14	1355
Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	14	1356
Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic)-----	15	1356
Jan.-Dec.	Other (Diplomatic) Drafts, Telegrams, Print, etc.; Consular (Miscellaneous)-----	15	1357
May-Dec.	Various (Political) (Miscellaneous)-----	15	1358

RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

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YEAR: 1889	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1359
Jan.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1360
Apr.-May	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1361
May-Jul.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1361
Jul.-Sep.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1362
Oct.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	3	1363
Jun.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams, Drafts and Paraphrases-----	3	1364
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Paraphrases of Telegrams; Treaty-----	4	1365
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams-----	4	1366
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches; Telegrams-----	4	1367
Jan.-Dec.	Political; Diplomatic; Consular-----	5	1368
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams; Dispatches-----	5	1369
Feb.-Sept.	Political; Consular; Commercial; Diplomatic; Consular; Commercial; Consular-----	6	1370
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Commercial; Treaty; Diplomatic; Consular; Commercial; Consular; Commercial-----	6	1371
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial; Secretaries, etc.; Consular; Domestic (Diplomatic); Domestic (Commercial); Domestic (Treaty)-----	7	1372
Jan.-May	Various (Diplomatic)-----	7	1373
May-Dec.	Various (Diplomatic)-----	8	1373
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular) Various (Treaty)-----	8	1374
Jan.-Apr.	Various (Commercial)-----	9	1375
May-Sep.	Various (Commercial)-----	9	1376
Sep.-Dec.	Various (Commercial)-----	10	1376
Jan.-Feb.	Various (Political) (Domestic)-----	10	1377
Mar.-May	Various (Political)-----	11	1378
Jun.-Dec.	Various (Political)-----	12	1379

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

YEAR: 1890	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1380
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1381
May-Jun.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1382
Jul.-Aug.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1382
Sep.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1383
Jan.-Nov.	Diplomatic Telegrams and Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	2	1384
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Dispatches (Commercial) Treaty-----	3	1385
Jan.-Dec.	Political Dispatches; Consular-----	3	1386
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Commercial; Treaty; Political; Consular; Commercial-----	4	1386
Feb.-Dec.	Political; (Consular) (Commercial) Political-----	4	1387
Feb.-Dec.	(Consular) (Commercial) (Consular) (Commercial)-----	5	1387
Jan.-Dec.	Political (Consular) (Commercial) Treaty; Secretaries, etc.; Domestic (Diplomatic); Domestic (Commercial); Domestic (Treaty)-----	5	1388
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence-----	6	1389
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular) Various (Treaty)-----	7	1390
Jan.-Jul.	Various (Commercial)-----	7	1391
Jul.-Dec.	Various (Commercial)-----	8	1391
Jan.-Mar.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence; Precis-----	8	1392
Apr.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	8	1393
Apr.-Jun.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1393
Jul.-Sep.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	9	1394
Oct.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence-----	10	1395

RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

YEAR: 1891	DESCRIPTION	REEL	VOLUME
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts-----	1	1396
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	1	1397
May-Jul.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1398
Jul.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches-----	2	1399
Mar.-Nov.	Diplomatic Telegrams; Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	2	1400
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Treaty-----	2	1401
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts; Telegrams-----	3	1402
Feb.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches; Telegrams-----	3	1403
Jan.-Nov.	(Diplomatic) (Political)-----	3	1404
Jan.-Dec.	(Diplomatic) (Political); Paraphrases of Telegrams-----	4	1404
Jan.-Dec.	(Consular) (Commercial); Treaty; (Consular); (Commercial); Treaty; (Consular)-----	4	1405
Jan.-Dec.	(Consular) Treaty (Commercial) (Consular) (Commercial)-----	5	1406
Feb.-Dec.	Consular Drafts; Treaty (Commercial) Consular-----	5	1407
Jan.-Dec.	Secretaries, etc. (Commercial); Domestic (Diplomatic); Domestic (Com- mercial); Domestic (Treaty)-----	6	1408
Jan.-May	Various (Diplomatic)-----	6	1409
May-Dec.	Various (Diplomatic)-----	7	1409
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular)-----	7	1410
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Commercial)-----	8	1411
Jan.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	8	1412
Jan.-Feb.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	9	1412
Mar.-Apr.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	9	1413
Apr.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	10	1413
May-Jun.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	10	1414
Jul.-Sep.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	11	1415
Oct.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	11	1416
Oct.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	12	1416
Nov.-Dec.	Other (Diplomatic) Various Dispatches-----	12	1417