

# **British Foreign Office: Russia Correspondence 1900-1905**

## **GUIDE**

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

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## Primary Source Media



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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. 14<sup>th</sup> by letter here. ← ⑨

Pami's Question

- 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 → uh

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



## BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

Year	Description	Reel	Volume
1900	Diplomatic Drafts	1	1597
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches	1	1598
Jan.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1598
May-June	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1599
July-Aug.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1600
Sept.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1601
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	4	1602
1900	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	4	1603
1900	Diplomatic Telegrams	4	1604
1900	Consular	5	1605
Jan.-June	Consular Telegrams	5	1606
July-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	6	1607
1900	Commercial Dispatches	7	1608
1900	Commercial Telegrams	7	1609
1900	Political	8	1610
1900	Consular: Administrative	8	1611
1900	Consular: Administrative	9	1611
Jan.-Nov.	Consular; Treaty; Commercial	9	1612
Nov.-Dec.	Domestic	9	1613
Jan.-June	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence	10	1613
Jan.-June	Domestic Incoming Correspondence	10	1614
July-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence	11	1614
Jan.-Mar.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence	11	1615
Apr.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming: Consular	11	1616
1900	Domestic Incoming: Consular	12	1616
1900	Domestic Incoming Correspondence: Commercial	12	1617

# RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

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Year 1901	Description	Reel	Volume
Jan.-Nov.	Diplomatic Drafts	1	1618
Jan.-Feb.	Diplomatic Dispatches	1	1619
Mar.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1620
May-July	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1621
July-Sept.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1622
Oct.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1623
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	4	1624
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	4	1625
Jan.-Aug.	Consular Telegrams	5	1626
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Drafts	5	1627
Jan.-June	Commercial Dispatches	5	1628
July	Commercial Dispatches	5	1629
July-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	6	1629
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams	6	1630
Jan.-July	Political	6	1631
July-Dec.	Political	7	1631
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Treaty; Commercial	7	1632
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Administration; Commercial	8	1633
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic	8	1634
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Consular); Treaty	9	1635
Jan.-July	Domestic Drafts	9	1636
Aug.-Dec.	Domestic Drafts	10	1636
Jan.-July	Domestic Various (Consular)	10	1637
Aug.-Dec.	Domestic Various (Consular)	11	1637
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial)	11	1638

## BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

Year 1902	Description	Reel	Volume
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts	1	1639
Jan.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches	1	1640
Mar.-May	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1641
May-Sept.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1642
Sept.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1643
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	3	1644
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Diplomatic; Treaty	4	1645
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams	4	1646
Jan.-June	Commercial; Diplomatic	4	1647
July-Dec.	Commercial; Diplomatic	5	1648
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	5	1649
Jan.-Dec.	Political	6	1650
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Diplomatic; Commercial	6	1651
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Administrative; Commercial; Treaty	7	1652
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence	7	1653
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Consular); Commercial; Treaty	8	1654
Jan.-Aug.	Domestic Drafts	8	1655
Sept.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial) (Miscellaneous)	9	1655
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Various (Treaty)	9	1656
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial)	10	1657

# RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

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Year 1903	Description	Reel	Volume
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts	1	1658
Jan.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches	1	1659
Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1659
Apr.-July	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1660
Aug.-Sept.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1661
Sept.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1661
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1662
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	4	1663
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Diplomatic; Treaty	4	1664
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	4	1665
Jan.-June	Commercial Dispatches	5	1666
July-Sept.	Commercial Dispatches	5	1667
Sept.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	6	1667
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams	6	1668
Jan.-Dec.	Political Telegrams	6	1669
Jan.-July	Political; Diplomatic; Miscellaneous	7	1669
Jan.-Dec.	Political Drafts and Correspondence; Commercial	7	1670
Jan.-Apr.	Consular; Commercial	7	1671
June-Dec.	Consular; Commercial; Treaty	8	1671
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial; Consular Drafts and Telegrams	8	1672
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic)	9	1673
Jan.-July	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence	9	1674
Aug.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence	10	1674
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence	10	1675
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Incoming Correspondence	11	1676
Feb.-Mar.	Domestic Dispatches	11	1726
Mar.-May	Domestic Telegrams	12	1726
June-Dec.	Domestic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	12	1727

## BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE

Year 1904	Description	Reel	Volume
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts	1	1677
Jan.-Feb.	Diplomatic Dispatches	1	1678
Feb.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1678
Mar.-Apr.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1679
May-July	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1680
Aug.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1681
Aug.-Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches	4	1681
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	4	1682
Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	5	1682
Jan.-Sept.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	5	1683
Jan.-Mar.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	5	1684
Mar.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	6	1684
Jan.-Dec.	Consular; Commercial; Diplomatic; Treaty	6	1685
Feb.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	7	1686
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	7	1687
Jan.-Dec.	Commercial Telegrams	7	1688
Jan.-Dec.	Political Dispatches and Telegrams	8	1689
Jan.-Dec.	Political Dispatches and Telegrams	9	1690
Jan.-Dec.	Consular Telegrams and Dispatches; Commercial	9	1691
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Commercial) (Treaty) (Political)	10	1691
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Commercial) (Treaty)	10	1692
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Commercial) (Treaty)	11	1692
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic	11	1693
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic	12	1693
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial)	12	1694
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial)	12	1695
May-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial)	13	1695
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic Outgoing Correspondence	13	1696
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts	14	1729
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams and Dispatches	15	1730
Nov.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	16	1731
Nov.-Dec.	Diplomatic and Consular Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	17	1732
Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	18	1733

# RUSSIA: CORRESPONDENCE F.O. 65

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Year 1905	Description	Reel	Volume
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Drafts	1	1697
Jan.	Diplomatic Dispatches	1	1698
Jan.-Feb.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1698
Feb.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches	2	1699
Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1699
Apr.-May	Diplomatic Dispatches	3	1700
June-July	Diplomatic Dispatches	4	1701
Aug.-Sept.	Diplomatic Dispatches	5	1702
Oct.	Diplomatic Dispatches	5	1703
Oct.-Nov.	Diplomatic Dispatches	6	1703
Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	6	1704
Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	7	1704
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	7	1705
Jan.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	8	1706
Jan.-Oct.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	8	1707
Oct.-Dec.	Diplomatic Telegrams: Drafts and Paraphrases	9	1707
Jan.-Dec.	Consular	9	1708
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Commercial)	9	1709
Jan.-Mar.	Commercial Dispatches	9	1710
Mar.-July	Commercial Dispatches	10	1710
Aug.-Dec.	Commercial Dispatches	10	1711
Jan.	Political	10	1712
Jan.-Dec.	Political	11	1712
Jan.-Dec.	Consular: Administrative	11	1713
Jan.-Dec.	Consular: Administrative	12	1713
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Political): Dispatches	12	1714
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Political): Dispatches	12	1715
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Political): Dispatches	13	1715
Jan.-Dec.	Consular (Political); Commercial; Treaty	13	1716
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial); Domestic (Consular)	14	1717
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic: (Consular), (Commercial), (Treaty)	14	1718
Jan.-Dec.	Domestic (Diplomatic) Drafts	15	1719
Jan.-Aug.	Domestic; Various (Consular); Various (Political)	15	1720
Aug.-Sept.	Domestic; Various (Commercial); Various (Treaty)	16	1720
Oct.-Dec.	Domestic; Various (Commercial)	16	1721
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Commercial); Various (Treaty)	17	1722
Jan.-July	Domestic (Commercial)	17	1723
Aug.-Dec.	Domestic (Commercial)	18	1723
July-Sept.	Domestic; Various (Diplomatic); Various (Commercial)	18	1724
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular)	18	1725
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular); Various (Political)	19	1725
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular)	19	1728
Jan.-Dec.	Various (Consular)	20	1728
Jan.	Various (Consular)	20	1734
Jan.-Mar.	Various (Consular)	21	1734
Feb.-Mar.	Diplomatic Dispatches	21	1735
Mar.-Dec.	Diplomatic Dispatches	22	1735
	Withheld by the Foreign Office	22	1736
Sept.-Nov.	Commercial	22	1737
Mar.-Dec.	Various (Commercial)	22	1738
	Withheld by the Foreign Office	22	1739