

# **British Foreign Office: Japan Correspondence 1941-1945**

## **GUIDE**

to

**The Scholarly Resources microfilm edition of  
the Public Record Office Collection**

**Text: F.O. 371**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Content and Organization of the Foreign Office Records

The British Foreign Office Records of General Political Correspondence for Japan, 1941-1945, in F.O. 371, is a collection of documents describing Anglo-Japanese relations prior to and during World War II.

Normal diplomatic activity between Japan and the United Kingdom was interrupted during most of the period covered in this collection. Most of the material in these files originates with other government departments including the Colonial Office, the War Cabinet, and the service departments (Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry). Information regarding Japan from other British embassies, e.g. the British embassy in Washington, is included as is British diplomatic contacts with Japan by way of third parties. Evaluations of the Japanese military and political situation by Military Intelligence and the Special Operations Executive are of particular interest.

Each document arriving at the Foreign Office was processed by the Opening Branch, which identified the origin and sender and the country to which an incoming paper pertained. The document was then sent to the appropriate division of the Archives Branch according to geographical region. Each division of the Archives Branch assigned its documents registry numbers from its own annual series. The Japan Correspondence was sent to the Far Eastern Department, which identified itself by preceding its registry numbers with the letter "F." After a document had been assigned a registry number, it was assigned a "kept with" or file number. The file number was usually the same as the registry number of the first document in the file. Files ran in length from one document (i.e. "kept with" itself) to many documents totaling hundreds of pages. After filing, the document was indexed according to the country that it concerned. The index number for Japan is 23. At the end of every year, the files were bound together into volumes. Page numbers were assigned at this stage, with stamped pagination beginning at page 1 for each volume.

Scholarly Resources has published the bound volumes of the Japan Correspondence, 1941-1945, on reels of microfilm. The reels consist of from two to four complete volumes and are numbered consecutively with each year beginning at reel 1.

### Format of the Scholarly Resources Guide to Japanese Correspondence, 1941-1945, F.O. 371

The Subject Guide to the Scholarly Resources edition of the British Foreign Office Japan Correspondence, 1941-1945, F.O. 371, lists each file in the order in which it appears in the volumes of correspondence, followed by a condensed description of the documents it contains.

The Subject Guide has a new heading for every change in year, microfilm reel, or volume. The secondary heading identifies the columns for the reference registry number of the first document in each subject description group (DOCUMENT), the number of each file (FILE), a subject description of the documents (SUBJECT), and the page number of the first document in each subject group (PAGE).

Document subjects have been arbitrarily divided into subject groups that are a maximum of two typed lines long. Semicolons separate different

document subjects within a subject group. The document number given for each subject group refers only to the first subject in the group; subsequent subjects' document numbers are not listed but follow that of the first subject. Similarly, the page number given for each subject group refers only to the location of the first subject in the group. Subsequent subjects in the group appear on pages after that of the first subject and before that of the next subject group.

To illustrate: "Treatment of Japanese firms in India; Japanese attempts to obtain control of Asiatic Petroleum Company's assets in Japan" is a subject group. It is found in File 207. Document 207 refers to a document on the subject of "Treatment of Japanese firms in India." "Japanese attempts to obtain control of Asiatic Petroleum Company's assets in Japan" will have a document number higher than 207 but lower than 784, since document 784 is also in File 207, and document numbers run in ascending order within files. "Treatment of Japanese firms in India" starts on page 2; Japanese attempts to gain control of Asiatic Petroleum Company's assets in Japan" appears after page 2 but before page 51.

It is important for the researcher to note that within subject groups, a subject is listed only the first time it appears. Thus there may be several documents on the same subject within a subject group, with only the first one mentioned. Researchers should scan all pages included in a subject group to determine whether more than one document on their desired subject occurs there.

#### Document Retrieval

To locate a document on a desired subject using the Subject Guide, check the page number of the subject group in which the desired subject occurs. The document will follow this page number and precede the next page number listed. The heading then supplies the proper year, microfilm reel, and volume in which to find the document.

For example: If the researcher wants to retrieve a document dealing with "Transfer of British properties to Nanking Government," he or she proceeds to page 108 of volume 35944 of reel 2 of 1943.

YEAR 1943		REEL 2	VOLUME 35944	
DOCUMENT	FILE	SUBJECT		PAGE
207	207	Treatment of Japanese firms in India; Japanese attempt to obtain control of Asiatic Petroleum Company's assets in Japan-----		2
784	"	The disposal of enemy property in Japanese occupied China: transfer to the Nanking Government-----		51
1412	"	Treatment of property in Canada of persons residing in enemy or prescribed territory; Japanese property in Southern Rhodesia-----		94
1556	"	Peking Legation Rights: details of agreement; Treatment of Australian property in Japan and Japanese property in Australia-----		102
1709	"	Transfer of British properties to the Nanking Government; Treatment of Japanese firms in India-----		108

## SAMPLE DOCKET (1941-1945)

1. Year - The current year was written or stamped on all documents by the Opening Branch.
2. Department - The department code was also stamped by the Opening Branch. "F" designates the Far Eastern Department.
3. Country - The country to which the document pertained was stamped by the Archives Branch division that handled the document.
4. Page Number - This number was stamped consecutively on every page of each document when files were bound into volumes at the end of each year. Pagination always begins anew with each volume. These numbers, for reference documents in the Subject Guide, are listed under the PAGE heading.
5. Registry Number\* and Date of Receipt - When a document was received by a division of the Archives Branch, it was assigned a registry number from the annual series of that division, which was stamped in the upper right corner of the document's docket sheet along with the date of receipt. The registry numbers from each departmental series were preceded by the department code letter--"F" for Far Eastern, in the case of Japan.  
  
\*Note: In the Subject Guide, the column containing the reference registry numbers is labeled DOCUMENT, to distinguish these numbers from the full registry numbers (see item 6 below).
6. Full Registry Number - Typed under the heading of "Registry Number," this number is in fact the full registry number. It consists of the departmental letter code ("F" for Far Eastern in this case), the registry number for the document (item 5 above), the file number for the document, and the index number indicating the country to which the document pertains (in this case, Japan's index number 23). This full registry number is very important because the file number appears here and nowhere else on the docket. The file numbers for reference documents in the Subject Guide are listed under the FILE heading.
7. Origin of the Document and Identification - This box and the "Subject" box to the right of it (see item 8 below) were typed from information supplied by the appropriate Section Clerk, in four copies. The original was gummed to the docket sheet, the copies going to the précis jacket, the Day Book, and the Chronological File, insuring uniformity of cross-referencing information. Under the heading "Registry Number" was typed the full registry number. Also typed are the author of the document and place of origin, the number of the document in the sender's local correspondence series, the date of the document, the date of its receipt, and the departmental

② →

① → 13

③ →

⑥ → Registers Number } F 1573/207/23

⑦ → FROM Dominions Office

No. WT 650/1  
Dated 22nd March, 1943.  
Received in Registry } 23rd March, 1943.

P : Japan

**Last Paper.**

⑨ →

⑩ → **References.**

⑪ →

⑫ → (Print.)

(How disposed of.)

⑬ →

⑭ → (Action completed.)

⑮ → E7 24/3

**Next Paper.**

⑯ → F 1709

F

F 1573

JAP.

Treatment of Australian property in Japan and of Japanese property in Australia.

Transmits copy of Australian Government telegram No. 68 of the 19th March. In reply to Dominions Office telegram No. 116 of the 27th February states that Japanese property is subject to same law as that of Nationals of other enemy and enemy occupied territory. Procedure in Australia similar in all major points to that of United Kingdom, but they are willing to investigate specific complaints regarding illegal acquisition of controlled assets. Commonwealth wishes to be associated in further protest through the Swiss Government. Copied to Trading with the Enemy Department, Treasury, Department of Overseas Trade Colonial Office. India Office. Burma Office. Board of Trade.

(Minutes.)

*still await S. Africa & New Zealand*

1/43  
24/3

2482a 1/43 F.O.P.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
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designation letter, followed by the name of the country to which the document pertained. If the document was a telegram, the words "Telegram From" appear below the registry number, and the docket was printed in red. Dockets were normally printed in black, with secret documents distinguished by a band of green stripes across the top of the docket. Parliamentary questions were handled by gumming a copy of the question to be asked from the printed minutes, and "Parliamentary Question" was stamped in the Origin box. The Foreign Office reply was taken from the printed report of the session and gummed either below the printed question on the docket or inside the docket on the continuation of the "Minutes" section.

8. Subject - This box is the other part of the typed paper gummed to the docket sheet. It consists of a brief title for the document followed by a précis of the document's contents.
9. Last Paper - This is the number of the previous document in the case or file. It may refer to a document in the same case in a previous year, usually with a different file number than that of this document's file.
10. References - This box lists documents in the file, both forward and backward, which are particularly relevant to this document.
11. Minutes - These notations, which may run to several pages within the docket, include any comments and instructions pertaining to the document, with the initials of all those who read the docket. This section therefore records the progress of the document through the clerks and secretaries of the Foreign Office, and sometimes to the foreign minister.
12. Print - A notation in this box indicates an order for the document to be printed in the CONFIDENTIAL PRINT of the Foreign Office.
13. How Disposed Of - This box contains notations of copies of the document sent to other departments, missions, or embassies, usually as a result of instructions found in the "Minutes" section. The tick marks in this box indicate those actions completed and entered in the General Register.
14. Action Completed - This box contains the initials of the Sub-Registry Clerk responsible for the paper, indicating that he has checked that every direction given in the "Minutes" has been carried out.
15. Index - This box contains the initials of the clerk in the Main Index Branch who indexed the document.
16. Next Paper - When the next document in the file came in, its registry number was entered here.

17. Target - A target accompanies every text page photographed by the Public Record Office. It includes the Record Class of General Correspondence for Political Affairs--F.O. 371--followed by the number of the volume. The page numbers given in the Subject Index refer to these volume numbers.

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316	"	Japan's southward expansion; Possibility of entry of Japan into the war; Effect on British Empire of "New Order in East Asia"-----	20
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390	"	Diet speech by Mr. Matsuoka on Japan's Foreign policy; Southward expansion of Japan---	56
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3566	"	Japanese Foreign Relations; Japan's southward expansion; Japanese attitude toward situation in the East-----	113
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