

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES AND TECHNICAL DETAILS

The sources for this edition, which covers the period from 1816 until 1829, are all Foreign Office documents held at the Public Record Office in Kew. The publication consists of official reports by British envoys in Germany to the Foreign Office and, where the context requires it, despatches containing instructions or inquiries from the Foreign Office to British embassies and missions in Germany. The following missions are included: Austria (Vienna), Bavaria (Munich), Diet of the German Confederation (*Bundestag* in Frankfurt), Prussia (Berlin), Saxony (Dresden), Württemberg (Stuttgart), and Hanover from 1837. So much material is available that any attempt to produce a comprehensive publication would not be cost-effective. The edition is therefore selective and presents the main positions taken on the political, economic, military, and social issues of the day in the German states.

A few remarks about the general principles of selection are necessary. There is no such thing as objective, value-free choice. Every selection which historians make among a large group of sources is influenced by various factors, both conscious and unconscious. Historians' awareness of the current state of research and the present-day debate influences the choices they make as much as their personal preference or research interests. The sources themselves, however, can also affect the contents of the edition if, for example, it proves to be the case that particular historical events figure much more prominently in the reportage than was to be expected. The detailed reports on the founding of the German Customs Union in the late 1820s, and reports about the cholera epidemics of the 1830s are examples. The editors have attempted to do justice both to present-day research interests and to the thematic emphases in the reports themselves. The inclusion of reports on well-known themes and events makes it possible to convey an image of nineteenth-century Germany drawn from English sources, while the inclusion of new or unexpected topics which turn up with surprising frequency in the sources themselves allows common historical views to be corrected or re-assessed.

This selection can reflect only to a limited extent the processes by which the envoys' reports were constructed. Envoys' reports were never complete; a topic or event was rarely exhausted in a single missive. Rather, these reports often read like a novel published in serial form

because additional information could only be added bit by bit, as it became available to the envoy. Here the constraints imposed by having to make a selection are most clearly visible.

Non-German themes that are mentioned in the reports are included only where they cast some light on the situation inside the German states (for example, news of the Spanish military revolt at the Berlin court, which reflects on Prussia as a state in which the military played a special part). Anglo-German connections, by contrast, are included as completely as possible. In many cases, extracts from newspaper articles, or copies or translations of these articles, were appended to the reports. Most of these are not reprinted in this edition, but reference is made to them in the footnotes.

The decision to publish only the envoys' official despatches and not their private letters needs to be explained. It can be argued that more 'authentic' or more 'relevant' information is found in the informal, private correspondence which every Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs maintained with the envoys, especially with those to whom he was personally close. In these private letters things could be said in a more informal and direct way than in the official despatches, which were cast in a highly standardized language. Private letters contain intimate details which do not belong in an official dispatch. In private letters envoys felt freer to express their own private views, or even to indulge in speculation. Private letters could therefore provide an important supplement to, commentary on, or explanation of official public despatches. Castlereagh, for example, made no distinction between private and official letters in his correspondence. As a result, many of his private letters are found in the Foreign Office records, bound with the official despatches. Canning first made a distinction between private letters and official despatches, and published some of the official despatches for political purposes. Palmerston followed in Canning's footsteps. Nevertheless, as Raymond Jones put it in his brilliant study on the British diplomatic service: 'Almost everyone is agreed that private correspondence was never used as a substitute for official despatches.'¹ The really important information was never delivered only in private letters, but had to appear first in the official correspondence. Although private letters, and the third category of sources relevant to Anglo-German relations in the nineteenth century, consulate correspondence, contain valuable information, the editors have decided to limit this edition to the official reports as a relatively homogeneous type of source material.

Within each single mission the documentation is ordered along

¹ Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1916* (Gerrards Cross, 1983), p. 121.

strictly chronological lines. The principles of transcription were to reproduce individual reports as completely as possible, both to maintain the authentic appearance of the sources, and in order not to anticipate any particular interpretation by providing heavily edited readings selected thematically. Nevertheless, the principle of completeness obviously could not be binding in all cases, and where it was justified, omissions were made. Omissions are marked thus: [...]. Omitted throughout without being marked are the standard greetings used at the beginnings and ends of letters. As a rule, a text critical commentary is unnecessary because this edition is based on fair copies. Only rarely did the writer make corrections after the fair copy had been made. This was more often the case in Foreign Office despatches to envoys, which were sometimes revised at the last minute. As a rule, this transcription is based on the final, revised version. These drafts are identical to the originals sent to the envoys. Footnotes give the record reference to where the originals can be found in the Public Record Office.

Despatches from the envoys were usually written by the secretary to the mission, sometimes by the envoy himself. This produced a lack of uniformity in the headings, which have generally been standardized for the purposes of this edition. The headings contain this information in the following order: the call mark of the document in the Public Record Office in Kew, that is, files of the Foreign Office (FO), with a number indicating the particular state in which the document originated (e.g., 68 for Saxony), and then the number of the volume in which the particular dispatch is bound. After this we find the names of the sender and the addressee, the number of the report² (except for letters marked 'secret' or 'confidential', which are frequently unnumbered and do not form part of the official correspondence), the place where it was written, and, finally, the date of the report. In the case of Foreign Office

² It was necessary to number the dispatches to ensure that no individual one was lost and unnoticed if it never reached London. Envoys were required to send annual statistics of all despatches which had left the mission to London.

Cf. FO 8/22: Edward Cromwell Disbrowe to Earl of Aberdeen, Separate, Stuttgart, 1 January 1829:

'In obedience to the Circular Instructions dated Foreign Office May 6 1825 I have the honor to inform Your Lordship that in the year 1828 it appears that Lord Erskine addressed to the Foreign Office 11 Dispatches (up to the 8th February) two which bear the No 7 by mistake, one gives the number of Dispatches for the year 1827 and one forwards the Extraordinary Expences of this Mission.- Total 11. Dispatches and one letter to Mr Backhouse.

Mr Hall during the period he was Chargé d'Affaires addressed 15 numbered Dispatches and 4 Separates to the office.- Total 19.

And from the period of my arrival until the 31st December inclusive, I had the honor of addressing 18th numbered Dispatches, and one Separate.'

despatches to the envoys, the details of provenance are followed by the name of the envoy preceding the usual details such as number, and place and date of issue.

The beginnings of encoded passages are marked: [code]. The ends of the encoded passages are indicated by: [code ends]. If the despatch ends encoded, no indication is made. The version deciphered by the Foreign Office and marked over the columns of figures is reproduced here. Marks made by the office, and marginal comments added as the documents were processed, are mentioned only when they have a bearing on the content.

The standardized heading is followed by a brief summary of the dispatch, printed in italics. Emphases in the original (underlining) and abbreviations etc. are retained in the version reproduced here. Contemporary spelling and punctuation are also retained, even where they differ from current conventions. Obvious orthographic errors, however, were silently corrected.

The sometimes very different contemporary spellings of names and place-names are also retained. Identifying the people named in the reports posed a significant problem. Often people are mentioned only indirectly (i.e. 'the Minister of Baden at the Court'), or their names are not given in full. Obvious orthographic errors in the writing of names were sometimes the result of oral transmission of information. Envoys mostly wrote down names as they sounded, and this was not always the correct form. Where names appear in their correct form in the reports, biographical details can be found by referring directly to the annotated name index at the end of the volume. If the name is wrong, or written incorrectly, the correct version is given in a footnote, and this can then be looked up in the annotated index of names. People referred to indirectly, and who cannot be identified from the immediate context of the document, are also named in the footnotes. An exception is made for the great European rulers. The full name of the Emperor of Russia or Austria, or of 'His Majesty the King of Prussia', is not given in the footnotes. The annotated index of names uses the authentic German spellings for inhabitants of the German Confederation. The anglicized form of names, which is often used in the reports, is listed in the name index with a cross-reference to the German name as it appears in the annotated name index, where biographical details can be found. The subject index at the end of this volume facilitates the identification of specific themes or aspects in the reports. The footnotes to the reports explain incidents and contexts, knowledge of which is often assumed in the reports.