

## Confidential British Foreign Office Political Correspondence:



*Sir Douglas Haig and General Joffre talking to  
Lloyd George with Albert Thomas looking on.*

# WORLD WAR I

relates years of crowded and terrible events, whose drama and historical significance hardly need be described. Seldom used by scholars outside of Great Britain and micropublished now for the first time, these documents from the Confidential British Foreign Office Political Correspondence file cover the period from the outbreak of the war between the European powers in August 1914 to the armistice between Germany and the Allies in November 1918.

### New micropublication fills gap in scholarly resources

Documentation falls chronologically between the collections of Foreign Office material included by G.P. Gooch and H.V. Temperley in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, and by E.L. Woodward, et al., in *Documents on Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*. Unsurprisingly, the Blue Books presented by the Foreign Secretary to Parliament in the war years contain little of interest.

The present microfilm publication fills the gap between these two established references. Scholars will find in *Confidential British Foreign Office Political Correspondence: World War I* remedy to a dearth of published evidence that for many years impeded historical research into international relations during the wartime period. With this rare documentation, scholars can also draw fruitful comparisons with the years that preceded and followed World War I.

### Foreign Office organization reflects wartime effort

The wartime role of the Foreign Office was inevitably circumscribed. It withdrew its diplomatic missions from the enemy capitals. And other branches of the government, especially during David Lloyd George's government after 1916, threatened its traditional preeminence in the conduct of foreign affairs.

In August 1914, the existing Western [Europe] and Eastern [Europe] Departments of the Foreign Office were merged into a single War Department

to deal with military and political questions arising from the war. Among the other wartime creations were the Political Intelligence Department, set up in 1918 to report on countries where diplomatic representation had ceased, and the Contraband Department, which in February 1916 developed into the Ministry of Blockade. Lord Robert Cecil (parliamentary undersecretary) combined the position of Minister of Blockade with his Foreign Office post. The principal subdivisions of Lord Robert Cecil's ministry included the Finance Ministry, the Foreign Trade Department, the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Department, the War Trade Intelligence Department, and the War Trade Statistical Department. Scholars will find in material from these departments an abundance of detailed correspondence to promote analysis of wartime situations, policy, and progress.



*David Lloyd George with the cabinet  
at No 10 Downing Street.*

*(Over, please)*

## Diplomatic papers cover broad range of topics

This publication contains copies of only the Political Class of General Correspondence. The Foreign Office was internally divided into departments. The political departments were those in which the diplomatic business of the Foreign Office was conducted.

Diplomatic business was very broad. It included not only the maintenance of formal relations between two countries but also the gathering of information needed by the British government to conduct diplomatic relations—the domestic political, economic, social, and cultural conditions of another country; that country's relations with other nations; and British internal political concerns. Consequently, scholars will discover a wide range of subjects covered in this collection. Topics include

- the role of British diplomacy in attempts to bring the neutrals into the war on the Allied side, or at least to prevent them from joining the enemy.
- review of Anglo-American relations, including efforts to draw the United States into the war and British attitudes on American mediation efforts and on American public opinion.
- antecedents of Turkish entry into the war.
- Anglo-Balkan negotiations; inter-Balkan rivalries; collapse of Serbia; vagaries of Greek politics, including the conflict between the King and E. Venizelos; and Allied landings at Salonika.

- British failure at Gallipoli and Foreign Office notes on the Dardanelles Commission of Inquiry.
- intervention diplomacy and the United States.
- diplomatic efforts to acquire allies, including Portugal, Rumania, and Italy.
- reporting on the domestic situation of the Allies and the European neutrals and on belligerent war aims.
- R.H.B. Lockhart's reporting on the Russian revolutionary upsurge.
- reporting on the parliamentary and morale crisis in France and Italy, as well as on the military and regional unrest in the largest European neutral, Spain.
- blockade and economic warfare, especially blockade diplomacy between the Allies and European neutrals, partly Spain and Greece but mainly Germany's neighbors Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. (After March 1915, the Allies attempted to ration these neutrals' imports to prewar levels as part of a series of measures designed to halt exports and re-exports to the Central Powers. Sweden presented the British with their most difficult problem of enforcement.)
- economic conditions in Germany and Austria-Hungary.

**Source note:** Filmed unedited from the records in Class FO371 at the Public Record Office, Kew, London.

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**Confidential British Foreign Office Political Correspondence**

## WORLD WAR I

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