

# *Consular Reports and International Statistics in the British Parliamentary Papers (1830-1914)*

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The "trade reports" received from consulates and embassies all over the world, and printed regularly in the British Parliamentary are "a rich but neglected historical source". Nearly as rich, and perhaps more neglected, are the international statistical abstracts, which also appeared regularly in parliamentary papers. To historians studying the individual countries and regions from which such informations were sent, these sources are important; they are indispensable to anyone studying comparative and/or quantitative study of more than one country, regions, or ports.<sup>1</sup>

Since the material is printed it seems, at first sight, to be easily accessible. There is, however, some delusive long and tedious research problems to solve. This is, perhaps, why these sources have not been used as much as they deserve. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is not only to describe and evaluate them, but also to point out the difficulties, propose solutions, and eventually serve as a time-saving guide to anyone wishing to use this source extensively and exhaustively.

A starting point for the study of these sources could be 1854, when statistics and reports became more numerous and varied than during earlier periods — and, therefore, much more useful for comparative research. However, the period actually covered by the material goes further back, as the in-

<sup>1</sup> THEO BARKER, "Consular Reports: A Rich but Neglected Historical Source" and "Consular Reports of the United Kingdom" in *Business History*, XXIII/3, November 1981, pp. 265-267. The issue contains a number of contributions on the consular services and reports of various countries (pp. 265-308), given during and after the international Historical Congress of Edinburgh, in 1978. See also J.W. Cortada, "British Consular Reports on Economic and Social Developments in Catalonia, 1842-1875", in *Cuadernos de Historia Económica de Catalunya*, vol. X, Barcelona 1973; and George B. Dertilis, "Οι βρεταννικές προξενικές εκθέσεις, πηγή ελληνικής και συγκριτικής ιστορίας", (The British Consular Reports, a Source of Greek and Comparative History), in *Historica* 1/2 (Athens), December 1984, p. 402-412. Concerning the Parliamentary Papers in general, see T.P. O'NEILL, *British Parliamentary Papers; a Monograph on Blue Books*, Shannon, Irish University Press, 1968, pp. 15, 18, 20, 25.

formation contained therein often goes back to the 1830s. Therefore, the chronology for this paper begins with the 1830s; and it ends in 1914, because of the war, of course, but mainly because the Parliamentary Papers lose part of their importance from then on, as other sources of figures, information and commentary become more abundant and readily available.<sup>2</sup>

The first section of the paper deals with the reports, the second with the statistics. The general information contained in both sections may help newcomers to the historical period or to the particular sources. Detailed information is in the Appendix.

### Diplomatic and consular trade reports

The attention paid to detail which is characteristic of the British diplomatic and consular trade reports can be compared only to that found much earlier in the reports of the Venetian Consuls. In 1873, in fact, the British Consul in Corfù speaks with admiration of his Venetian predecessors on the island, a dominion of the Republic long before it became a dominion of the Crown.<sup>3</sup> These similarities are not surprising; imperial interests to were a common concern for both British and Venetian representatives, whether trade followed the flag or the flag followed trade. In the British case, the tendency toward detail and precision was reinforced by nineteenth-century positivism, the cult of empirical observation, and the fashion for exhaustive descriptions.

Quantitatively, the material is no less impressive. Every year, each individual country is covered by numerous dispatches. Over the century preceding the "Great War", this yields an uninterrupted series of information extending to thousands of reports, over a hundred thousand pages, packed with information on economic, social, and sometimes political matters.

The titles of the reports reveal the variety and quantity of the material. Alongside certain recurring general themes, such as trade and general statistics (e.g. of the Mexican Empire, 1864/65) or agriculture and finance (e.g. in Wallachia and Moldavia, 1874/75), there are also reports on very specific subjects, such as the cultivation of flax in southern Russia (1865), cattle breeding in Switzerland (1881/82), or the summary of Dr. Lagneau's pamphlet on immigration into France (1883).

The variety of subjects is striking within each single year. To take a few examples from years chosen randomly: in 1886 there are reports on the use of foreign machinery in the mills of Novara, taxation in Portugal and custom-house returns, the vintage of Andalusia, the Uscup-Vranja section of the Balkan Railway; in 1887, on the history of the Austro-Hungarian Lloyd Steam

<sup>2</sup> Printing of all the reports without exception became standard practice in 1865, although prints do exist before that year and, more scarcely, even before 1854.

<sup>3</sup> FO 32.439, 39/16.6.1873, Sebright to Stuart, p. 169-170.

Navigation Company, the yield of cocoons in Italy, the "native" cotton manufactures of Japan; in 1898, on the dairy industry of Italy, the coal industry of the Westphalian Provinces, the administration and institutions of Florence, the Commercial High School at Leipzig, the sponge fisheries of Tripoli, North Africa; in 1904, on German cement, immigration into the United States, livestock in Mexico, and the hotel industry in Switzerland.

The titles indicate the type of comparative research that can be assisted by the material. The potential range of subjects extends from business climate and expectations to economic cycles, or from fluctuations of prices and crops to the evolution of trade and shipping. As for the geographical range of comparison, it might extend over sets of countries, e.g. southern or central Europe, the Near East, the Balkans, Latin America; or groups of comparable regions, e.g. Catalonia and Lombardia-Piedmont, the Peloponnese, Sicily and Valencia; or a constellation of interconnected ports, e.g. those of the Baltic and the North Sea, of Japan and the western American coasts, or of the Levant and the Black Sea routes — e.g. Trieste, Piraeus, Varna, Odessa, Istanbul, Izmir, Syra, Alexandria, Palermo, Marseille, Barcelona, Alicante.

The possibilities of comparison are enhanced by the common traits of the reports: similarities in their structure, of course, but mainly the common "language" of the Consuls and Secretaries who wrote them, the common viewpoint from which they looked at local realities, the interests of the imperial state they served, and the ideas most of them shared. The obvious disadvantage, that some of the authors were strangers living in strange lands, is moderated by the fact that others resided and did business in these countries, with which they had become quite familiar — and of which some of the consuls were even native. In fact, the ambiguous position of the consuls in particular is a plausible argument for their objectivity — reinforced.

Of course, the comparative utility of the source depends on whether the historian can locate and use large numbers of documents, covering the widest possible range — chronological, geographical, and thematic.

As already mentioned, the material seems, at first sight, easily accessible. It is printed and is available in microfiches. A number of trade reports sent from certain countries have been put together and reprinted by the Irish University Press. The original lists and indices still exist. More indices have been compiled recently and are available, though not always published. Finally, the trade reports as well as the statistical abstracts are but parts of a well-known source, the Parliamentary Papers, about which much has been written already.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the apparent accessibility of these sources is deceptive, for ma-

<sup>4</sup> a. Microfiches: the complete PP series has been filmed by Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge (see Appendix, paragraph 1.d).

b. Indices and lists, official publications: see Appendix, paragraph 1.a, 1.b.

c. Indices and lists, recent authors: see Appendix, paragraph 1.c.

d. The Irish University Press edition: T.P.O'NEILL's *British Parliamentary Papers*, a

ny reasons. It takes time to understand how the published documents are classified and how they relate to their counterparts at the archives. It is easy to locate individual documents, but difficult to be exhaustive with long chronological series and a wide range of reports. Although the material is printed, it appears in thousands of heavy, folio-size volumes — seventy to a hundred for each year. The microfiches are mere reproductions of these volumes. The Irish U.P. publications have been discontinued. The original lists and indices are not always practical for massive retrievals. Finally, the existing bibliography deals with the Parliamentary Papers in general, but information specific to the reports or the statistics is insufficient and too dispersed.<sup>5</sup>

*Monograph on Blue Books*, Irish University Press, Shannon 1968, very informative, is closely related to the reprint edition of the Papers undertaken in the 1960s by the Irish University Press. This project, followed up only to a certain point, included papers pertaining mainly to the history of Great Britain, the Colonies, and British industrialisation (see the *Catalogue of British Parliamentary Papers in the Irish University Press* 1000-vol. series and area studies series, 1801-1900, Dublin, I.U.P. 1977).

e. Bibliography: apart from those mentioned elsewhere in the endnotes, the following books and articles have also been helpful:

— P. FORD and G. FORD, *Select List of British Parliamentary Papers, 1833-1899*, Oxford, 1953.

— Winifred Gregory, *List of the Serial Publications of Foreign Governments, 1815-1931*, New York, 1932.

— Eve Johansson J. Pearson (eds.), *Checklist of British Official Serial Publications*, London, British Library Reference Division, 1980.

— D.C.M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service; British Consuls since 1825*;

— El. Prevelakis, *Τα βρεταννικά κοινοβουλευτικά έγγραφα και η νεώτερη Ελληνική Ιστορία, 1801-1960*, (The British Parliamentary Papers and the History of Modern Greece), Salonica, 1960.

— S. Richard, *Directory of British Official Publications: a Guide to Sources*, 2nd edition, London, Mansell 1984.

— Edward Di Roma and Joseph A. Rossenthal, *A Numerical Finding List of British Parliamentary Papers Published 1833-1961/62*, New York, New York Public Library 1967.

— M.B. Sakellariou, *Τα Αγγλικά Κρατικά Αρχεία και η Ελληνική Ιστορία*, ("The Public Record Office and Modern Greek History"), in 'Nea Hestia', Athens, v. 40, 1946.

— R.L. Taylor, *Guide to the Serial and Periodical Publications in Great Britain: Parliament, Sessional Papers, 1914-1933*, Chicago, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> In describing the process of filming the material for the University of Illinois, E.L. Erickson refers to some of these difficulties (The Sessional Papers: Last Phase", in *College and Research Libraries*, 21/5, September 1960, p. 343 ff. See also T.P. O'Neill, *British Parliamentary Papers (...)*, p. 15, 20, 25. The general numbering of the Parliamentary Papers by Command Numbers, begun in 1833, is not to be confused with the specific numbering of the diplomatic and consular trade reports begun in 1885, along with the distinction into Annual and Miscellaneous Series. H. Temper-

The rest of this section, therefore, will codify this dispersed information, supplement it where it is insufficient, and suggest a practical alternative to the voluminous Parliamentary Papers: the set of volumes containing exclusively diplomatic and consular trade reports, available at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library.

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The rationale behind the material is the first problem to clarify. Locating the reports is not possible without a minimal knowledge of how the Consular Service functioned. Therefore its historical evolution merits a quick look.

In 1824, the "local traders abroad" serving as British Consuls became civil servants by Act of Parliament.<sup>6</sup> Some of their reports before 1854 may be found in manuscript form in the Foreign Office Papers at the Public Record Office. After 1854 their reports were regularly published as parliamentary papers. The initial manuscript reports written by the Consuls, as well as the "trade" reports written by embassy officials, were sent to the Foreign Office. Usually they were listed in the FO registers, where they should be today. However, many of them are missing from the FO Papers, although the letters which accompanied them are still in their places. This is because most of the reports were detached from their accompanying letters and sent to the Board of Trade, from which, as well, they are missing today, probably because they were regularly forwarded to H.M.S.O. for printing.<sup>7</sup>

ley and L.M. Penson, *A Century of Diplomatic Blue Books 1814-1914*, Cambridge, 1938, p. XIV. P. and G. Ford, *A Guide to.....* p. 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> Th. Barker, *ibid.*, p. 267. During the earlier period, many reports were linked with the activity of the Trade Companies — the reports of the Levant Company, for example, well known to the historians of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>7</sup> An early comment on this problem (and on the usefulness of the reports for the historian) in M. Levy-Leboyer, *Les banques européennes et l'industrialisation internationale*, Paris, P.U.F., 1964, p. 721-722, specifically on the 1825-1845 period. As for the second half of the century, the practice of detaching the manuscript reports has been verified for the following cases: FO 32.438, 9/3.3.1873 and 10/3.3.1873, Stuart to Granville; 39/17.6.1873, Sebright to Stuart; 9/27.9.1873, Baring to Granville; 22/26.11.1873, Stuart to Granville (where the initially attached report by Consul Ongley, of 15 March 1873, is missing). The practice was also confirmed for 1869, through cross-checking between FO 32.420, List of Dispatches received from and sent to the Consulate during 1870, mentioning the annual report sent by Vice-Consul Cohen on 28 April 1869, and FO 32 to 411, where the Consul's letter d. 28 April 1869 does exist, but not the report to which it refers. Most of these accompanying letters are stamped as follows "Received, Board of Trade", and bear on the stamp a date somewhat later than the one appearing on the letter. Consular reports for the period 1826-1846 can be found at the PRO under FO 881, FO 83 and BT 2 (Board of Trade). Occasionally, one finds manuscripts in the correspondence files of individual countries. See also FO 36:12 and FO 46:150 and 173.

By the mid-nineteenth century, two major types of reports had been established. They were filed as two separate series under distinct, although inconsistent names. They were distinguished by their scope and their objectives, but mostly by whether or not the persons writing them were Consular or Diplomatic officials. The "Commercial Reports by H.M.'s Consuls" were usually of a local character, providing information on economic activities in the towns and provinces covered by the consulate. The "Reports by H.M.'s Secretaries of Embassy and Legation" usually encompassed a whole country or region, dealing most of the time with a particular subject, occasionally with a wider range of topics.

With time, however, these distinctions and hierarchies became less strict. Whereas a young secretary of an Embassy, for example, could well be restricted to a relatively marginal subject, such as the cultivation of tobacco in Baden and Wurtemberg (1868), an experienced man like Consul Merlin, who spent a lifetime in Athens, would send a sophisticated report on a general subject like the financial condition of the country (1875).

In 1886 the two series began to appear under new names, "Annual" and "Miscellaneous". This change co-incident with an effort of the Foreign Office to standardise at least those few basic traits that distinguished the two categories. Indeed, by the end of the century each one of the series became more uniform. In the Annual Series one could now find truly annual reports from Consuls reporting almost exclusively on the standard topics of trade, shipping and navigation, agriculture and industry. However, Consuls posted in capital cities continued to send annual-series reports of a wider scope, mainly on the budget and the financial condition of the country. The Miscellaneous Series as well became more homogeneous with time, featuring reports on specialised topics only. Of course, occasional reports in this series continued for a few years to deal with general subjects, like the finances or the international trade of a country. These may now cause confusion to the historian, precisely because their themes are identical with those of the Annual Series; but they became less and less frequent and finally disappeared in the twentieth century.

Fortunately, publication of all the reports created the need to list them individually and, after 1885, to number them independently of the Parliamentary Papers "Command Numbers". One of the objectives was to facilitate the circulation and sale of the reports to the public, especially British businessmen, by a convenient reference and numbering system, as well as by establishing the appropriate price lists (see Appendix).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Numbering the reports began in 1833; however, command numbers were not inscribed on the reports themselves before 1869. See Temperley and Penson, *A Century of...*, 1938, pp. 24-5; Ford and Ford, *A Breviate of Parliamentary Papers, 1900-1916*, Oxford, 1957, pp. 24-29. The practice of selling the papers began in 1836: *The Sale Catalogues of British Government Publications, 1836-1921*, first published in

The listing and the ad-hoc numbering had a beneficial side effect: government departments and libraries could now compile complete series of the reports, put them into their chronological and numerical sequence, and bind them together. Such a set, containing exclusively diplomatic and consular trade reports, is available at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library (FCOL).<sup>9</sup>

The FCOL set of reports is bound chronologically in four series of volumes, classified by country or by subject and, after 1886, numerically as well (see Appendix, paragraph 1). All the reports are contained in 197 volumes. These are far easier to use than the several thousand folio volumes of Parliamentary Papers. They are more practical even than the PP microfiches, especially for the allocation and retrieval of reports covering long periods and many comparable countries or subjects. Such wide-range research, if conducted through the Parliamentary Papers microfiches, would involve delicate indexing and then careful perusing through hundreds or even thousands of fiches, with increased risks of missing some of the documents. The relatively compact and well classified material of the FCOL helps minimise risks and simplify large-scale research.

### International Statistics

The large number of statistics collected by the Board of Trade on foreign countries were also regularly published, after 1854, as Parliamentary Papers. These statistical abstracts go back, in many cases, to the 1830s, and were based on the official national statistics sent to the BT by the competent authorities of the various countries concerned. Thus, as a comprehensive source of international statistics in uninterrupted chronological series, the Parliamentary Papers are unique for the period before the League of Nations and its own statistical series.<sup>10</sup>

1836-1889, ... reprinted ... 1977, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., 1977; P. Ford & G. Ford, *A Guide to parliamentary Papers. What they are; How to find them; How to use them*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1955, p. 29; H. Temperley and L.M. Penson, *A Century of Diplomatic Blue Books*, ... p. XVI.

<sup>9</sup> A similar set of volumes is also available at the Library of the London School of Economics, but a few volumes are missing. There is no such set at the PRO. The complete FCOL set, therefore, is the safest access to the reports.

<sup>10</sup> In his report introducing the abstracts published in Vol. 1876, LXXVII/77, p. 354, R. Giffen, of the Statistical and Commercial Department, Board of Trade, thanks "the Statistical Departments of the various Foreign Countries for assistance they have given in supplying and correcting the greater portion of the figures". An introduction to an earlier volume, signed R. Valpy, Statistical and Commercial Department, Board of Trade (1874 LXIX/69 p. 133-135), reads as follows: "the assistance of the chief officers of the several foreign statistical departments was invited (...). These gentlemen were supplied with printed proofs of the tables (compiled so far as they could in this

The range of statistical information covered in the Parliamentary Papers is impressive. The main headings of a typical Statistical Abstract (vol. 1899 CV/105) are the following (Subtitles not included).

Weights and measures (with English equivalents)

Moneys (with English equivalents)

Area and Population

Population (Births, deaths, marriages)

Mercantile Marine (by country)

Shipping (Tonnage, Cargoes, Steam vessels)

Imports and Exports:

- merchandise, value;
- bullion and specie;
- total value, distinguishing food, raw materials and manufactures;
- quantities and values of principal articles;
- percentage proportion by land and by sea;
- customs duties levied on imports.

Agriculture and livestock

Railways

- length, cost of construction, traffic;
- total length of line in various countries, 1840 to 1897.

Telegraphs

- length, cost of construction;
- number of messages forwarded.

Postal statistics

Emigration and Immigration

Finance (revenue, expenditure, public debt)

Coinage

Mining production

- by country;

Department from the foreign official returns), and many corrections and additions were received from such official sources".

The statistics published by the League of Nations go back in most cases to 1909-1913 and occasionally to 1900. *International Statistical Year-Book, 1926*, Economic and Financial Section, Geneva 1927, see esp. p. 7-8. Sources for the Yearbooks and the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* were the national statistical services of the various member-States. Much of the material appeared first in the Memoranda published by the League of Nations, the International Labour Office and the International Institute of Agriculture (Rome), e.g. *Memorandum on Production and Trade, 1926*, and so on afterwards; *Memorandum on Central Banks, 1913, 1918-1923*, *Memorandum on Public Finance 1922-1926*, *Memorandum on Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade Balances, 1910-1924, 1911-1925*, and so on. Important, but less comprehensive than the British source, are the international statistics collected during the same period, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century, by the authorities of other powers, e.g. France, or, especially on agriculture, the United States.

- production of coal, iron ore, pig iron, steel, steel rails, salt (in selected principal countries);
- production and consumption of pig iron and steel rails (in selected countries).

Beet-sugar industry

Fisheries

Wrecks

Miscellaneous

Seldom have historians or economists exploited this source directly. Some simply have used it indirectly, by reproducing material partly drawn from it by other authors, mainly M.G. Mulhall (published in 1892 and 1909), or George Paish (1909, 1911 and 1914).<sup>11</sup>

There are, of course, two more general reasons for not using this material. The first is that the historian, after consulting standard works of reference, such as those by B.R. Mitchell or P. Flora, should use the official publications of the countries he examines rather than the British source. However, the high cost of comparative research in local sources, dispersed in different countries, might prove a net loss in case the initial hypotheses were finally refuted. Instead, the historian might find it more rewarding to do some preliminary research in an international source like the Parliamentary Papers, which would enable him to verify or refute his initial hypotheses with greater speed.<sup>12</sup>

The other reason is the perennial argument about compatibility of statistics compounded by different people, at different times, with different criteria and classifications. The BT officials responsible for this job were fully aware of the problem and mention it repeatedly in the source itself. However, to accept this argument would rule out most international quantitative

<sup>11</sup> In S. Kuznets' works there are frequent references to M.G. Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics*, London 1892 (revised edition, 1909). One of Mulhall's sources has been the PP Statistical Abstracts. D.C.M. Platt tracks down the long series of authors using Mulhall's and Paish's figures, in his interesting and polemic *Britain's Investment Overseas on the Eve of the First World War; the Use and Abuse of Numbers*, London, Macmillan, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> B.R. Mitchell's *European Historical Statistics, 1750-1970*, London, MacMillan 1975, is based primarily on the various national sources, which is natural for a work of this scope; Mitchell's bibliography mentions, from the PP publications, the *Statistical Abstract for the Principal and Other Countries, 1877-1912*; to quote the author, "occasional collections of tables relating to foreign countries were published in Parliamentary Papers from 1844 to 1870 and have been used" (p. XVII).

For a comprehensive list of the Statistical Abstracts, arranged by command number, see William H. Patch and Ruth Sanderson, *A Finding List of Statistical Abstracts in the British Sessional Papers*, University of Kentucky Library, Occasional Contribution No. 106, February 1959 (also available at the OPL/British Library).

comparisons. The alternative, of course, is circumspection in using whatever is available and awareness of the many pitfalls.<sup>13</sup>

The Statistical Abstracts are more easily accessible than the Reports. However, there are several difficulties. Firstly, although there are officially published reprints, these do not cover all the Abstracts, making the use of the voluminous Parliamentary Papers obligatory. Secondly, not all the Abstracts are included in the PP indices under the same heading ("Foreign Countries"); some are indexed under various other headings, which cover also Abstracts about the U.K., the colonies and the dominions. Therefore, to trace all of them one has to use numerous indices and frequently cross-check with the Parliamentary Papers volumes themselves. Such a procedure, in fact, followed during the author's research, has led to a list of abstracts for the period 1865-1914, which is quite comprehensive and should help anyone wishing to use this material (see Appendix, paragraph 3).

<sup>13</sup> See R. Valpy's introductory report for 1874 (LXIX, p. 133-135): "Unfortunately, the statistics of many countries cannot now be compared, owing to differences in dates and in the classification of details". Two years later, in 1876, (LXXVIII, p. 354), R. Giffen writes: "the divisions (i.e. categories) of the more important states are so dissimilar and the terms (...) employed (...) mean such different things, that a comparison (...can be) most misleading". A few years later, he returns to the problem: "For any special purpose where much detail is required recourse must always be made to the original Foreign Books, of which a very complete collection is now in the possession of this Department, some hundreds of volumes being annually acquired in exchange for our own publications" (1878, LXXVII, p. 287/4). A similar introduction precedes Volume 1878/79 LXXV.

APPENDIX

**1. Diplomatic and consular trade reports: indices and lists**

The lists and indices mentioned below are official publications and most of them can be located in major archives and libraries: PRO, BL/OPL, FCOL, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Therefore, only the location of manuscripts will be expressly mentioned hereafter.

*a. General Indices*

(pertaining to Parliamentary Papers in general):

- General Index to the Bills, Reports, Estimates, Accounts and Papers Printed by Order of the House of Commons and Papers Presented by Command, 1852/53 - 1868/69.
- Ditto, 1870-1878/79.
- Ditto, 1880-1889; and so on by decade.
- Ditto, 1852-1899, published in 1909.
- Ditto, 1900-1948/49, published in 1960.

The latter two are compound fifty-year editions of the ten-year indices. There are differences, however, and the decade editions should be used for cross-checking whenever comprehensiveness and accuracy are of prime importance. The ten-year indices are reprints from annual volumes of the Parliamentary Papers.

*b. Specific Indices and Lists*

(made specifically for Trade Reports, diplomatic and consular):

The first three documents are manuscripts available at the FCOL; the remaining Indices are published in print:

- List of Commercial Reports of Her Majesty's Consuls, 1854-1875: (useful in locating reports dated before 1862/65 and not bound in the FCOL set of volumes).
- Ditto, 1876-1886.
- Index to Consular and Diplomatic Reports, 1858-1885.
- Index to Reports by Her Majesty's Secretaries of Legation on the Manufactures, Commerce, etc. of the Countries in Which they Reside, for the years 1871-1877, Inclusive.
- Index to Reports of Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives Abroad on Trade and Subjects of General Interest, 1886-1890: PP, vol. 1890/91 LXXXIV, pp. 383 ff. The first of a series of indices, it contains an introduction and an appendix with useful information on the material. Thereafter, similar indices appear regularly in the PP and are often published as reprints. The following editions are particularly useful:
  - Ditto, 1886-1896.
  - Ditto, 1896-1897.
  - Ditto, 1898-1899.
  - Ditto, 1900 and from then on annually.
- A useful "Index to Trade Reports" for the 1898-1914 period, arranged geographically and thematically, is available at the Reference Desk of the BL/OPL.

*c. Indices and lists compiled by recent authors:*

An index to Consular Reports, arranged by country, has been compiled at the Official Publications Library (British Library) by Dorothy Walker and Robert Howes and is available (date: 1986) at the reference desk, in five ring-binders. Apparently, this index was compiled for research on Latin America and Europe rather than as an exhaustive listing of the reports. Miscellaneous Series reports, therefore, are not included.

*d. Indices and lists of the PP microfiches:*

As already mentioned, the complete PP series has been filmed by Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge. The fiches are available at major libraries in the U.K. and other countries (in France, e.g., at the Bibliothèque Nationale).

"The Subject Catalogue of the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1801-1900", compiled by Peter Cockton, published by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd, Cambridge 1987, provides the historian with a subject classification of the Papers, covering not only the microfiche edition, but also the original PP set. The catalogue is very helpful in locating statistical abstracts, as it is in locating particular consular reports. When it comes to large-scale retrievals, however, the microfiches have the same disadvantages as the source they reproduce, because of the size and complexity of the source.

## 2. The reports at the FCOL: classification, indices and lists

*a. Classification:*

The FCOL material is assembled in four sets of volumes containing exclusively the reports published between 1860 and 1914. The titles of the sets, as they appear on the volumes, do not correspond precisely to the titles appearing on the reports, which vary through the period examined. The titles chosen here are those corresponding most precisely to the actual contents of the four sets, as follows:

Set a: "Commercial Reports from H.M. Consuls", 1861/62-1885 (50 vols.).

Set b: "Reports by H.M. Secretaries of Embassy and Legation on the Manufactures, Commerce... of the Countries, in Which they Reside", 1865/66-1885 (21 vols.).

These two series are followed, after 1885/86, by the Annual and the Miscellaneous Series respectively. Thus, the third and fourth sets of volumes are here entitled as follows:

Set aa: "Diplomatic and Consular Trade Reports, Annual Series", 1885/86-1914 (containing numbered reports 1 - 5242, 109 vols.).

Set bb: "Diplomatic and Consular Trade Reports, Miscellaneous Series", 1885/86-1914, (containing numbered reports 1 - 687, 13 vols.).

Some reports escape the above classifications and are neither included in the two series nor bound in the FCOL volumes. These are, firstly, the Reports of Select Committees, Departmental Committees, and Royal Commission Reports; and secondly, the odd reports requested occasionally from all representatives abroad on a particular subject and then, usually, bound together in volumes of Blue Books - Commercial Series. Here are some examples of the latter: "Tenure of Dwelling Houses and Building Lands", Command 4136, Commercial 1884; "On Co-operative Societies

Abroad", C. 4783/1886; "On Laws Relating to Employers' Liability Abroad", C. 4783/1886; "Laws Affecting Adult Labour", C. 5866/1889; and so on. Unfortunately, there is no short-cut to such reports: they should be searched for in the general indices, as well as those appearing at the end of each annual set of PP volumes (see e.g. 1890/91 LXXXIV p. 386, 617 ff).<sup>14</sup>

There are two minor shortcomings in using the FCOL set. First, it leaves out a number of reports before 1862/1865 and after 1913/1914. However, the missing reports before 1865 are not many; those following 1914 are easier to find in the Parliamentary Papers than those of the nineteenth century. The second shortcoming is that the new numbering begins only in 1885. For previous years, therefore, any large-scale retrieval of individual documents from the FCOL set cannot be cross-checked through the numbers. Checking must be based on the general Parliamentary Papers indices and the price-lists (see below, paragraph 2), but this is, of course, only a minor difficulty. Thus, all things considered, the convenience of the FCOL set offsets its minor disadvantages.

#### *b. Indices and Lists*

Apparently, there were no original indices for the FCOL material. An index for the particular geographic area covered by the material at the Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece is available there. Moreover, the unpublished general catalogues which have been compiled for the whole FCOL material also constitute an elementary chronological/geographic index, as their contents are presented in chronological sequence and are subdivided geographically for each year listed.

#### *c. Price-Lists*

The Parliamentary Papers price-lists can be of great value, as they are arranged numerically and may thus assist the extraction of complete sets pertaining to specific subjects or geographical areas. Moreover, the lists help minimise the risk of missing out some of the reports, which is the main disadvantage of the conventional indices.

For the period 1836-1887, the following price-lists are most comprehensive:

- List of Parliamentary Papers for Sale, from Session 1836 to Session 1872, Inclusive, with the Prices Affixed; and an Alphabetical List, London, (HMSO) 1874.
- List of Parliamentary Papers for Sale, With the Prices Affixed, 1873.
- Ditto, for the years 1874-1887.

For the years following 1886, frequent and overlapping price-lists are published

<sup>14</sup> The "Blue Books - Commercial Series", mentioned in the text, should not be confused with the Diplomatic Blue Books or any other series, for that matter. "Blue Books" is merely a common term, designating all prints of parliamentary papers, and coined during the nineteenth century because the prints were usually bound in blue covers. Temperley H. and Penson L.M.: *A Century of...*, pp. XI-XVI, 1-7, 3-37, 46, 49-50 and so on for all the introductions to the partial catalogues of Blue Books to the end of the volume, pp. 495-503. See also T.P. O'Neill, *British Parliamentary Papers ...*, pp. 5-8, for a good and concise description of the distinctions between Reports of Select Committees, Departmental Committees, and Royal Commission Reports, as well as various other technicalities concerning the Parliamentary Papers.

with the Parliamentary Papers. The price-lists concerning the reports are more easily accessible in the FCOL set of volumes, where they are also bound.

### 3. The Statistical Abstracts

A list of the abstracts follows this text. It has been compiled by a search in the corresponding volumes of the Parliamentary Papers and their indices, and has been cross-checked with the "Index of House of Commons Papers" (1852-1899 p. 1313 ff, and 1900-1949 p. 635 ff.).

The statistical abstracts were published annually. Each abstract contains tables featuring retrospective data, going back several years, usually a decade. With every new annual abstract, figures for the current year are added and the first year of the decade is dropped (e.g. one abstract may cover the period 1865-1874, the next may go on to 1866-1875, the third on to 1867-1876, and so on). Of course, such a "rolling" system tends to display a lot of repetition and overlapping information from year to year. Therefore, one may easily be tempted to use only one abstract every ten years. However, the annual abstracts are not really superfluous: as some of them feature additional data or replace erroneous or elliptical information, they should always be consulted for cross-checking. For example, around the end of the nineteenth century, new tables were added to the "Mining and Metal Production" statistics; and again, in the beginning of the twentieth, interesting figures on telephones were added in an abstract, where little else was changed. For all the above reasons, the list below contains all the abstracts, except those very few which seemed to be truly superfluous.<sup>15</sup>

Some individual tables or odd statistical data on various countries can be found in the abstracts about Great Britain or the colonies, e.g. figures about the public debt of various countries. Such abstracts are not included in the list that follows. The same applies to the extensive material contained in the statistics of U.K. shipping and trade with foreign countries; it is not included in the list, because it is easily accessible and more widely known than the other types of statistics published in the Parliamentary Papers.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A further example of important changes in the Abstracts is the Tables on railways ("Length, Cost of Construction, Traffic"), displayed in volume 1904, CII/102, p. 862-883/252-273, which are almost identical to the Tables of volume 1904, CIII/103, pp. 240-257/238-255; but the latter contains an additional table on Italy (p. 254/252). Another example of a major change is the Abstract in vol. 1914, XCVII/97, Table 28, "Trade by Land and Sea", in which all the figures for Russia are amended or revised.

<sup>16</sup> Such additional statistics, e.g., were published under "Miscellaneous Statistics of the U.K. (see *Index to House of Commons Papers ... 1852-99*, p. 1316).

LIST OF STATISTICAL ABSTRACTS  
IN PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS, 1854-1914

All numbers in column 2 of the list refer to endnotes. The following abbreviations are used in the last column:

“end” = end of volume or of abstract;

“S” = statistics;

“A” = statistics of agriculture;

“M” = statistics of mining;

“Msc” = miscellaneous.

Year	Note Nr.	Vol. Nr. (orig.)	Vol. Nr. (arabic)	Pages	Contents:
1854-55	17	LII	52	543- end	S
1854-55		LII	52	697- end	S
1857		XVI	16	257- end	S
1857		XL	40	329- end	S
1857-58		LVIII	58	361- end	S
1859		XXXI	31	465- end	S
1861		LXI	61	481- end	S
1862		LVII	57	495- end	S
1864		LX	60	487- end	S
1866		LXXIV	74	1- end	S
1867-68		LXX	70	553- end	S
1870	18	LXIX	69	1- end	S
1874	19	LXIX	69	131- 197	S
1875	20	LXXX	80	193- 291	S
1876		LXXVII	77	349- 482	S
1877		LXXXV	85	357- 477	S
1878		LXXVII	77	281- 460	S
1878-79		LXXV	75	265- 469	S
1880		LXXVI	76	421- 643	S
1881		XCH	93	359- 589	S
1882		LXXXIII	73	457- 698	S
1883		LXXVI	76	563- 821	Index
1884	21	LXXXV	85	1- 313	A

<sup>17</sup> Vol. 1854-55 LII, pp. 1-542 contains the statistics of Trade of the U.K. “with different foreign countries and possessions”, 1841-50. These statistics are usually indexed under the British and not the Foreign Statistical Abstracts; therefore, they are not followed up in this paper, as they can easily be traced in the published indices.

<sup>18</sup> Volumes 1870 LXVI, 1871 LXVIII and 1872 LXII contain information on “the condition of the working classes” in most countries where Consuls were appointed.

<sup>19</sup> Volume 1874 LXIX/69 contains statistics covering the period 1860-1872.

<sup>20</sup> The introductions to the Abstracts of this year and of 1877 contain some quite useful information.

<sup>21</sup> Statistics on agriculture in foreign countries begin to appear regularly in 1884 (LXXXV). These are not printed with the Abstract for foreign countries, but in a dif-

## Segue - Tab. 1

Year	Note Nr.	Vol. Nr. (orig.)	Vol. Nr. (arabic)	Pages	Contents:
1884-85		LXXXII	82	453- 726	Index
1884-85		LXXXIV	84	1- 201	A
1886		LXIX	69	1- 554	S (2 yrs)
1886		LXX	70	1- 236	A
1887		LXXXVIII	88	1- 277	S
1888	22	XCIII	93	257- end	For. Trade
1888		CIV	104	535- 811	S
1888		CVI	106	1- 213	A/M
1889		LXXXIII	83	196- 213	A/M
1890		LXXVIII	78	729-1009	S
1890		LXXIX	79	215- 235	A/M
1890-91	23	LXXVII	77	89- end	For. Trade
1890-91		LXXXIX	89	541- 824	S
1890-91		XCI	91	201- 221	A/M
1892		LXXXVII	87	1-307	S
1892		LXXXVIII	88	201- 231	A/M
1893-94		C	100	1- 323	S
1893-94		CI	101	205- 255	A/M
1894	22	LXXX	80	781- end	For. Trade
1894		XCI	91	245- 573	S
1894		XCIII	93	93- 103	A/M
1895		CV	105	1- 332	S
1895		CVI	106	279- 314	A/M
1896	24	LXXVI	76	1021- end	For. Trade
1896		XCI	91	1- 337	S
1896		XCII	92	279- 303	A/M
1897		XCVI	96	269- 610	S

ferent volume, along with the Abstract for British agriculture. Similarly, substantial statistics on mining and labour (especially labour in mines) concerning foreign countries begin to appear regularly in 1888 and 1889, along with the Abstract for the U.K. Although not listed under "foreign countries" in the PP indices, these mining and labour statistics are nevertheless listed here.

<sup>22</sup> A special series of statistical tables "Relating to Progress of Foreign Trade of U.K. and Other Contries in Recent Years", presented with a report to the Board of Trade.

<sup>23</sup> Another interesting series of foreign trade statistics covering the long 1854-1890 period and the usual range of countries, "in continuation of Tables presented to the Royal Commission on Trade Depression, 1886".

<sup>24</sup> The same series, "in continuation..." but for the years 1854-1895. On the depression as the problem which actually led to this statistical series, the author of this paper is now completing an article under the provisional title: International Trade (1854-1895) and the Depression: contemporary viewpoints".

*Consular Reports and International Statistics in the British Parliamentary Papers*

Segue - Tab. 1

Year	Note Nr.	Vol. Nr. (orig.)	Vol. Nr. (arabic)	Pages	Contents:
1897		XCVIII	98	317- 357	A/M
1898		C	100	269- 617	S
1898		CII	102	245- 319	A/M
1898		CIII	103	85- end	M
1899	25	CV	105	365- 728	S
1899	26	XCII	92	119- end	Labour
1899		CVI	106	1- 43	A
1899		CVI	106	281- 303	A
1899	27	CVII	107	91- 759	M/Msc (2 yrs)
1900		XCVIII	98	275- 641	S
1900		CI	101	265- 307	A
1900		CII	102	91- 261	M
1901		LXXXVI	86	281- 647	S
1902		CXV	115	389- 760	S
1904		CII	102	609- 976	S
1904		CIII	103	1- 362	S
1904		CV	105	1- 333	A
1904		CVI	106	347- 551	M/Msc
1905		XCVI	96	443- 803	S
1905		XCVII	97	1- 335	A
1905		XCVIII	98	349- 559	M/Msc
1906		CXXXII	132	469- 845	S
1906		CXXXIII	133	1- 369	A
1906		CXXXIV	134	445- 761	M/Msc
1907		XCVI	96	473- 853	S
1907		XCVII	97	451- 663	M/Msc
1908	28	CXX	120	485- 874	S
1908		CXXI	121	1- 112	A
1908		CXXI	121	463- 591	M
1908		CXXII	122	471- 673	M/Msc
1909	29	CII	102	693- 973	S

<sup>25</sup> The year 1899 was obviously considered important; a greater quantity and range of material was compiled and printed during this last year of the century.

<sup>26</sup> Subtitles: "Cooperative Societies; Hours of Labour; trade Disputes; Wages".

<sup>27</sup> Gradually, incoming data grew in variety. The additional tables were usually printed in the volumes containing information on mines, labour etc. These additions are denoted on the list as "miscellaneous".

<sup>28</sup> Volumes 1908 CXX and 1910 CV contain statistics for the whole period between 1896 and 1906. Other volumes for 1908 go back to 1854. Such longer abstracts have been used in historiography more widely than the annual statistical publications.

<sup>29</sup> This volume is not included in the "Index of House of Commons Papers (...)", p. 635; this seems to be an error of indexing.

Segue - Tab. 1

Year	Note Nr.	Vol. Nr. (orig.)	Vol. Nr. (arabic)	Pages	Contents:
1909		CIII	103	185- 388	M/Msc
1909		CIII	103	523- 669	M/Msc
1910		CV	105	1- 847	S (2 yrs)
1910		CVIII	108	1- 133	A
1910		CIX	109	497- 702	M/Msc
1910		CIX	109	855- 999	M/Msc
1910		CX	110	637-1164	Labour
1911		C	100	1- 139	A
1911	29	CI	101	331- 530	S
1911		CI	101	699- 843	M/Msc
1912-13		CV	105	1- 476	S
1912-13		CV	105	613- 756	A/Labour
1912-13		CVI	106	377- 522	A
1912-13		CVII	107	1- 193	M/Msc
1912-13		CVII	107	371- 516	M/Msc
1913		LXXIV	74	467- 973	S
1914	30	LXXXI	81	whole vol	Customs duties
1914		XCVII	97	305- 839	S
1914		XCVIII	98	1- 149	A
1914		XCIX	99	383- 584	M/Msc
1914		XCIX	99	741- 885	M/Msc

<sup>30</sup> Volume 1914 LXXXI contains information on customs duties in a large number of countries. Such information is often available in previous years as well, but not for as wide a range of countries as in 1914.

N.B.: A complete microfilm set of the reports covering Portugal, Spain, Southern France, Italy, the Balkans, as well as the ports of the Levant and the Black Sea is available at the Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece (112, V.Sophias Avenue, Athens). A catalogue of the contents of all the FCOL volumes compiled by the author, as well as the lists of all the reports therein, is also available at the archive.

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