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PAMPHLET ACCOMPANYING M. 61

Foreign Letters  
of the  
Continental Congress  
and the  
Department of State  
1785-1790



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
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FOREIGN LETTERS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS  
AND THE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
1785-1790

On the single roll of this microfilm publication is reproduced a volume containing copies of instructions sent to U.S. ministers and consuls abroad, 1785-90. The letters sent by John Jay, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, later Acting Head of the Department of State, are dated January 14, 1785-March 3, 1790, and by Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, March 30-December 23, 1790.

The volume, which is titled "Foreign Letters No. 121," is the successor to Item 118 of the Papers of the Continental Congress. Item 118, Transcript of the Foreign Letters of Robert R. Livingston, 1781-83, contains record copies of instructions to ministers and consuls. Earlier instructions are in Item 79, Letters of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and of Robert R. Livingston, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1776-83. The sequence of instructions represented in Items 79, 118, and 121 is broken only by a gap between June 1873 and December 1784, when the instructions apparently were not maintained in a separate file. The series "Foreign Letters" was succeeded by a series titled "United States Ministers, Instructions," which is reproduced as Diplomatic and Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1791-1801 (Microcopy 28).

The letters in the volume are arranged in chronological order. An index-register bound at the back of the volume has been filmed at the beginning of the roll.

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication and in Microcopy 28 are part of Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, in the National Archives.

In the same record group are record copies of letters that the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of State addressed to or received from foreign ministers and consuls in the United States. They are in Item 120, American Letters, 1784-92 (reproduced on Rolls 1-4 of Microcopy 40).

In Record Group 360, Records of the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, are other early diplomatic and consular records of the United States among the 194 Items of the Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-89, reproduced on Microcopy 247. Items 79 and 118 mentioned above are reproduced on Rolls 105 and 139, respectively, of Microcopy 247. Also reproduced on Microcopy 247 are copies of letters received from foreign ministers and consuls from France, Great Britain, Netherlands, and Spain; and letters received from U.S. ministers and

consuls assigned to the Barbary Powers, France, Great Britain, Martinique, Netherlands, Russia, and Spain. In the same record group are unnumbered Items, some of which duplicate documents in the numbered Item series. They consist chiefly of unbound papers and a few volumes relating to foreign affairs, naval affairs, specific States, and papers kept by the Office of the Secretary of Congress. These records are in Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-89, reproduced in Microcopy 332.

The communications in "Foreign Letters" and most of the correspondence reproduced on Microcopy 247 are in The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, edited by Francis Wharton (Washington, 1889. 6 vols.), and in The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America, From the Signing of the Definitive Treaty of Peace, 10th September, 1783, to the Adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789, compiled by William A. Weaver of the State Department and published by Francis Preston Blair (Washington, 1833-34. 7 vols.).