

FOREIGN OFFICE FILES FOR THE SOVIET UNION (Public Record Office Classes FO 371 and FCO 28)

Part 1: Complete Files for 1960
(PRO Class FO 371/151908-152050)

Publisher's Note

To supplement our microfilm projects providing British Foreign Office files for the 1960's covering the administrations of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and our projects on Cuba, Vietnam and the Cold War, we now offer a new project focusing on the Soviet Union under Khrushchev. We start by covering the complete files for 1960-1964 and plan to add further parts in due course for both the 1950's and 1960's.

In his Annual Report on the Soviet Union for 1959 (see FO 371/151908) Sir Patrick Reilly, British Ambassador in Moscow, notes: *"The XXI Party Congress was a triumph for Mr Khrushchev. The outstanding feature of the year was the growth of his authority with the Soviet people. The new cult of personality is disturbing, but does not seem to have gone to his head. Direct relations with the United States became the second main thread in Soviet foreign policy. Mr Khrushchev's visit to the USA greatly improved Soviet-American relations. But by the end of the year the effect was wearing off."*

The files for 1960 highlight the deterioration in East-West relations.

Key events and issues covered include:

- Khrushchev's visits to India, Burma and Indonesia
- the shooting down of an American U-2 spy plane over Russian territory
- the disintegration of the Paris Summit meeting (FO 371/151923 brings together assessments on the future direction of Soviet foreign policy after the Summit)
- Khrushchev's threats against US military bases in Europe and Turkey
- Soviet withdrawal from the disarmament conference at Geneva
- Bitter recriminations between China and the Soviet Union over international policy issues and the Sino-Indian border dispute
- Khrushchev's visit to Roumania and his belligerent pronouncements at the Bucharest Congress
- NATO policy and the Warsaw Pact
- statements at the UN General Assembly

There is much expert analysis by the staff of the British Embassy in Moscow and their counterparts in London. Given the rhetoric, ideology, bluster and bluff of the Soviet regime, each new event called for assessments to distinguish between reality or posturing. The documents contain numerous position papers on likely repercussions for future policy. Many files reflect Soviet attempts to exploit any hint of differences in American, British, French and German policy statements. Close attention is paid to all speeches by Khrushchev and Gromyko.

Many files concentrate on events leading to the complete breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations by the end of 1960. Differences in ideology, foreign policy and status all contributed to their increasingly differing stance on the direction which Communism should be taking throughout the world. China openly criticised Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence at an international Communist conference in Moscow. Khrushchev was pursuing a policy of *dtente*, believing that the USSR and the capitalist West could live together without hostility. China disagreed strongly with this approach. Mao Zedong saw himself as the true successor to Marx and Lenin and not as the mere junior partner in world communism.

Differences over nuclear policy and the Sino-Indian border led to the Soviet withdrawal of technical advisors to China. This meant the end of many industrial projects and the start of an ongoing war of words and further border skirmishes. Britain watched all of these events with great interest and there are files on:

- Sino-Soviet divergences
- Khrushchev and the break up the Summit Conference: extent of Chinese pressure

- Sino-Soviet relations: assessment in the light of the Bucharest gathering of Communist Party leaders

All of these events are covered in detail as London was kept up to date with all matters concerning both Soviet foreign policy and domestic issues. Files on social, economic, political and cultural policy in the Soviet Union include notes on resistance to Khrushchev's policies in the USSR, material on the police and KGB, a discussion of the problems of agriculture, heavy industry and the Seven Year Plan, reforms in education and continuing efforts at "de-Stalinisation".

In FO 371/151915 Sir Patrick Reilly comments on the significance of the abolition of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR and the transfer of its functions to the counterpart Ministries in the Union Republics:

"This is a gesture in the right direction though it does not cut very deep. I am inclined to believe that, on balance, this is a change for the good. It is at least a further step towards cutting down the authority and overt status of the Soviet police apparatus. It is as yet too early to hope that the KGB may be similarly deflated: whatever the truth of current claims that the KGB's role in Society is less punitive and more educational, such deflation would of course be a convincing criterion of any advance towards civic liberty."

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