

EO 12958  
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs  
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

● ROUTINE

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# Intelligence Information Cable

COUNTRY ITALY/USSR

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DISTR. 9 NOVEMBER 1964

SUBJECT

PCI UNDERSTANDING OF THE REASONS FOR KHRUSHCHEV'S DOWNFALL AND THE EFFECTS ON THE PCI

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PLACE & DATE ACQ.

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SOURCE AND APPRAISAL:

FIELD REPORT NO.

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1. THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) DID NOT KNOW OF THE KREMLIN CHANGES IN ADVANCE AND WAS SURPRISED THAT NIKHITA KHRUSHCHEV WAS CHARGED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORSENING RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST CHINA. TALKS WITH LEONID BREZHNEV AND KHRUSHCHEV BY PCI LEADERS DURING THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS HAD GIVEN THE PCI THE IMPRESSION THAT KHRUSHCHEV WAS SLOWLY CHANGING HIS MIND ABOUT THE MEETING CALLED FOR 15 DECEMBER 1964 AND THAT HE WOULD END BY POSTPONING IT. THE PCI ALSO HAD THE IMPRESSION FROM REMARKS MADE BY BREZHNEV DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO ROME THAT HE WAS THE ONE WHO WAS PUSHING THE MEETING.

2. IT WAS THIS EXPECTATION OF A CHANGE IN SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS CHINA

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THAT LED THE PCI TO DECIDE THAT PALMIRO TOGLIATTI, DURING HIS VISIT TO THE USSR, SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SEE KHRUSHCHEV PERSONALLY. A FEELING THAT HE MIGHT BE SHUNTED OFF AND CONFINED TO TALKS WITH LESSER SOVIETS WAS THE PRINCIPAL REASON WHY THE PARTY DECIDED THAT TOGLIATTI SHOULD COMMIT HIS IDEAS TO PAPER, TO BE FORWARDED TO KHRUSHCHEV. THE TOGLIATTI MEMORANDUM WAS ACTUALLY WRITTEN IN YALTA BUT THE DECISION THAT IT SHOULD BE WRITTEN WAS MADE IN ROME BEFORE TOGLIATTI LEFT FOR THE USSR.

3. THE THREE-MAN PCI DELEGATION THAT JUST RETURNED FROM MOSCOW HAS REPORTED THAT THE PLOT AGAINST KHRUSHCHEV HAD BEEN MATURING OVER THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR AND THAT THOSE INVOLVED HAD KEPT POSTPONING IT BECAUSE OF KHRUSHCHEV'S GREAT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A MIKHAIL SUSLOV REPORT; MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND PRESIDIU MEETINGS WERE TAKEN BUT THERE IS NO SUSLOV REPORT AS SUCH, IN THE REPORTED SENSE OF A SPEECH THAT TURNED THE SCALE AGAINST KHRUSHCHEV. IN FACT, SUSLOV'S ROLE OR THAT OF ANY OTHER INDIVIDUAL SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED. IT WAS A COLLECTIVE ACTION; LEADERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION (CPSU) ALL AGREED THAT KHRUSHCHEV WAS GETTING OUT OF HAND AND THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE.

4. ACCORDING TO WHAT THE DELEGATION LEARNED, THE TIMING OF THE AFFAIR WAS THE RESULT OF TWO FACTORS: (1) WLADISLAW GOMULKA WAS PRESSING FOR AN END, ONCE AND FOR ALL, TO THE FLIRTATION WITH THE WEST GERMANS, AND (2) A FEELING THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO ELIMINATE KHRUSHCHEV BEFORE THE COSMONAUTS

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CAME DOWN. IN THE LATTER CONNECTION, THERE WAS RECOGNITION OF KHRUSHCHEV'S KNACK FOR SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAKING DRAMATIC MOVES AND IT WAS FELT THAT KHRUSHCHEV MIGHT USE THE COSMONAUTS' RETURN AS THE OCCASION TO MAKE SOME STARTLING, IRREVOCABLE STATEMENT ABOUT GERMANY OR CHINA, FOR EXAMPLE, AN ULTIMATUM TO CHINA TO DESIST FROM THE SCHEDULED ATOMIC TEST, ABOUT WHICH THE SOVIETS KNEW.

5. THE PCI HAS NO INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, THE SOVIET ARMY OR THE SECRET POLICE (KGB) PLAYED IN THE EVENT.

6. THE PCI DELEGATION WAS ASSURED THAT THE SOVIET POSTURE TOWARDS THE WEST WOULD NOT CHANGE. THIS ASSURANCE WAS GIVEN IN ANSWER TO THE DELEGATION'S QUESTION OF HOW THE PCI SHOULD ADAPT ITS TACTICS TO ALLOW FOR SOVIET POLICY CHANGES. HOWEVER, THE DELEGATION WAS TOLD THAT THERE WOULD BE CHANGES IN INTERNAL POLICIES, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS AGRICULTURE. AS REGARDS CHINA, THE DELEGATION WAS TOLD THAT "THE FIRE WILL BE BANKED," ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE STILL ENORMOUS PROBLEMS DIVIDING THE TWO COUNTRIES.

7. THE DELEGATION WAS ALSO ASSURED THAT KHRUSHCHEV WAS ALIVE AND WELL, THAT HE WAS STILL A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER ATTEMPT TO BLACKEN HIS NAME.

8. THE PCI BELIEVES THAT THE KHRUSHCHEV AFFAIR HAS HAD BOTH ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES FOR THE PCI. ONE DISADVANTAGE IS THAT THE PARTY HAS HAD TO DEVOTE TIME TO EXPLAINING AWAY THE AFFAIR THAT IT SHOULD HAVE DEVOTED TO THE CURRENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IT FEELS THAT IT HAS NOW ACCOMPLISHED THIS

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SATISFACTORILY AND IT INTENDS HENCEFORTH TO DEVOTE ALL ENERGIES TO THE CAMPAIGN. ANOTHER DISADVANTAGE IS THAT THE STEALINISTS IN THE PCI ARE AGAIN MAKING THEMSELVES FELT. BEFORE, PCI LEADERS COULD MORE OR LESS IGNORE THEM; NOW THE LEADERS MUST LISTEN TO AND DEBATE WITH THEM.

9. THE PRINCIPAL ADVANTAGE TO THE PCI IS THAT IT HAS GIVEN THE PARTY AN OPPORTUNITY AGAIN TO REASSERT ITS INDEPENDENCE. THE STATEMENT THAT ENRICO BERLINGUER, THE PCI DELEGATION HEAD, MADE AT THE AIRPORT ON HIS RETURN FROM MOSCOW, IN WHICH HE EXPRESSED PCI DISSATISFACTION WITH THE EXPLANATIONS MADE BY THE SOVIETS, WAS NOT SPONTANEOUS AND WAS DESIGNED FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL PURPOSES. HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT HIS STATEMENTS ACCURATELY REFLECTED PCI OPINION.

10. [REDACTED]

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