Call for Papers:

The Hidden History of Decolonization

What do the ‘migrated archives’ reveal about British withdrawal from Empire?

A One-Day Workshop at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London

Between April 2012 and November 2013, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) transferred to the National Archives thousands of files in eight separate tranches, relating to the administration of former British territories in the final years of colonial rule. The files, which were released under the FCO 141 classification, had been generated by British colonial governments and were returned to the UK at the time of independence. From 1994 they were stored at the government communications centre at Hanslope Park. Their existence was only officially revealed in 2011, against the background of a case brought against the British government by a group of former Mau Mau detainees.

The announcement of the existence of the files led to speculation that they might reveal a ‘secret history’ of decolonization, transforming our understanding of the end of empire. This workshop provides the first opportunity to take stock of the research that has so far been conducted on the files. Have they lived up to expectations, or have they proved to be a disappointment to scholars? To what extent have the documents been censored, and do they suggest that significant amounts of sensitive material are still being retained?

We invite offers of papers from scholars who have conducted research on the ‘Hanslope Park’ files with respect to one or more former colonial territory. Presentations should last no more 20 minutes. We do not ask for copies of papers in advance of the workshop. Proposals, with the names and affiliation of the speaker and a brief abstract of the paper, should be sent to philip.murphy@sas.ac.uk by Friday 16 January 2015.

Event Details:

This workshop will take place on 20 February 2015 from 11:00-19:00; Room 349 (3rd Floor) of Senate House South Block, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU. Visit the ICwS website www.commonwealth.sas.ac.uk for further details.