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Inventory

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Edinburgh Conversations

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Manuscripts Division
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1EW
Tel: 0131-623-3876
Fax: 0131-623-3866
E-mail: manuscripts@nls.uk

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Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1974-1997, concerning Professor John Erickson's involvement in the 'Edinburgh Conversations'.

John Erickson (1929-2002) was a British military historian and the West's leading authority on the Soviet military during and after the Second World War. During the 'Cold War' he was one of the very few academics to earn the trust of both sides and a key channel for contact between the Soviets and the Americans.

After graduating in History from St. John's College, Cambridge University, he taught at St. Anthony's College, Oxford University, and at the universities of St. Andrew's, Manchester and Indiana before becoming a reader in higher defence studies at Edinburgh University in 1967. He remained there for the rest of his career and became a Professor of Politics (Defence Studies) and Head of the Centre for Defence Studies. After retiring from academia he became Emeritus Professor and Honorary Fellow.

Erickson's first visit to the Soviet Union in 1963 as a researcher allowed him to build a rapport with Red Army leaders and high-profile contacts. He returned to Moscow on many occasions and had privileged access to Soviet archives and military.

His influence on the Soviet high command reached its peak in the 1980s, when he led the 'Edinburgh Conversations'. The papers extensively document these informal exchanges between prominent Scots and their Soviet counterparts, which later became complex discussions on arms control, related security issues and the environment. The conversations alternated between Edinburgh and Moscow from 1981 to 1989. The first Soviet delegation in 1983 included the editor of *Pravda* and two army generals. Despite the increased tensions between East and West in the 1980s, Erickson's personal input allowed the conversations to continue. These exchanges gave each side in the 'Cold War' an invaluable insight into each other's views and helped to influence official and academic opinions on both sides of the divide.

Duplicates have been weeded.

The papers have been arranged into the following series:

- 1-10 Edinburgh Conversations (1981-1989)**
- 11-12 Miscellaneous correspondence and papers (1987-1997)**
- 13 Personal papers (1974-1983)**
- 14 Newspaper cuttings, 1980-1988)**

Presented, 2015.

1-10 EDINBURGH CONVERSATIONS (1981-1989)

1. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1981-1982.
2. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1983.
3. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1984.
4. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1985.
5. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1986.
6. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1987.
7. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1988.
8. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, 1989.
9. Correspondence, memoranda and related papers, undated.
10. History of the 'Edinburgh Conversations, 1980 to 1989', possibly by M. J. H. Westcott.

11-12 MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE AND PAPERS (1987-1997)

11. Correspondence, 1987-1989, concerning the establishment of the Soviet-British Commission on the History of the Second World War and the visit of several Soviet historians to Edinburgh.
12. Correspondence, 1994-1997 and undated, on Soviet military and political strategy.

13 PERSONAL PAPERS (1974-1983)

13. Biographical notes, 1974-1983, of Professor John Erickson, with photocopies of his passport.

14 NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS (1980-1988)

14. Newspaper cuttings, 1980-1988.