

MOSCOW (AP)—There is no crush at Nikita Khrushchev's grave, no stream of admirers who plunge down the long alleys of Novodevichy Cemetery to the ragged hedge and dark brick wall at the far end where Khrushchev's successors decided he must lie.

Formless in a slate-colored smock, an old woman at the gate handles inquiries with a wave of her arm. "Down there. Straight on to the end," she says.

Do many ask? "Not so many," she replies, and resumes sweeping leaves with a medieval-looking broom of twigs.

On a recent Saturday, there were only occasional visitors to the grave, with its plain marble headstone.

There were a few women with string bags and men who kept their cloth hats tugged down on their heads as they surveyed the grave and a photograph of Khrushchev set atop the headstone.

Three German tourists rushed purposefully to the place, removed their hats, replaced them and then began checking their light meters for snapshots.

The grave already has an air of neglect. Pools of rainwater are cupped in the bare earth around it. On top, in damp display, are potted chrysanthemums, gladioli, pansies and violets. A compost heap of dead flowers has been piled against the wall a few yards away.

A freight train passes with a muffled rattle on the rail embankment beyond the wall. When it has gone, the cold wind made the birch trees hiss.

A gravedigger said Khrushchev's son, Sergei, was the only member of the family to return since the funeral Sept. 13. Sergei came back nine days after his father's death, as Russian custom dictates.

Most Russians have forgotten the reason for the ninth-day visit. In the Russian Orthodox Church it is believed that the soul, having been judged, takes up residence in heaven or hell on the ninth day. By all evidence the Khrushchevs are atheists and the visit probably was just a

obedience to a custom now empty of religious meaning. Long before, Khrushchev had been judged by the men in the Kremlin who toppled him from power in 1964 and had been found wanting.

No state tribute was his at death: a few words in Pravda about the passing of "personal pensioner." Khrushchev and private burial with no official representatives, only family and friends.

When he came on the ninth day, Sergei brought a new photograph to replace the first one, damaged by water through a leak in the frame. The new photo is the last one taken before his death, Sergei told the gravedigger, and is the way he wants to remember his father.

In it Khrushchev is hatless and wears a neat gray jacket without medals. He has no tie. His white shirt collar is buttoned at the neck. He looks like a peasant dressed for the market on Saturday.

Khrushchev's nearest neighbor is a man named Mikhailov who used to sing bass in the Bolshoi opera company.

Khrushchev's Grave Is Largely Ignored

Did Kennedy's Misreading Help Topple Khrushchev?

By Victor Zorza

KHRUSHCHEV's fall from power was due largely to the West's failure to understand the internal workings of the Communist world. We still have not learned the lesson.

The beginning of the war in Vietnam can be traced, in my view, to a fatal misreading by President Kennedy of a flamboyant Khrushchev speech in favor of "national liberation wars." The White House took it to be a bellicose and truculent statement of the Kremlin's intention to attack United States interests throughout the world through rebellion, subversion, and guerrilla warfare. It

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firmly resolved that Khrushchev must be shown that he could not get away with it. The first test of strength was to occur in Vietnam.

But so far as Khrushchev was then concerned — at the time of President Kennedy's inauguration — the war in Vietnam was finished and done with. He saw it as a successful example of a "war of national liberation," waged by the Vietnamese against the French. Why, he asked, had the United States not "dared" to intervene in Vietnam? Because, he said, it knew that China and the Soviet Union would help the Vietnamese. "The outcome of the war," he concluded with a typical Khrushchevian flourish, "is known — North Vietnam won."

But this was not the challenge to the United States that it appeared to be on the surface. It had more to do with the internal quarrels within the Communist system than with any serious plans for worldwide subversion. He was addressing Peking, not Washington. National liberation wars were not only justified, he said — they were inevitable.

KHRUSHCHEV's speech was an answer to Peking's attempt to challenge the Russians for the leadership of the "national liberation movements" around the world. China had been hinting that the Kremlin, in trying to make a deal with the United States, was betraying their interests.

Communists, Khrushchev retorted — meaning, of course, Soviet Communists — "support just wars of this kind wholeheartedly and without reservation, and they march in the van of peoples fighting for liberation."

This was the message that came through to President Kennedy. Government analysts who had for so long been deriding the evidence, apparent between the lines of Communist newspapers, that a secret dispute was in progress between Russia and China, could hardly be expected to see the Khrushchev statement as the latest move in that dispute. They preferred to think that the

meeting of world Communist parties just held in Moscow had resolved what differences there might have been between Russia and China, and that a united Communist movement was on the march again, against the West.

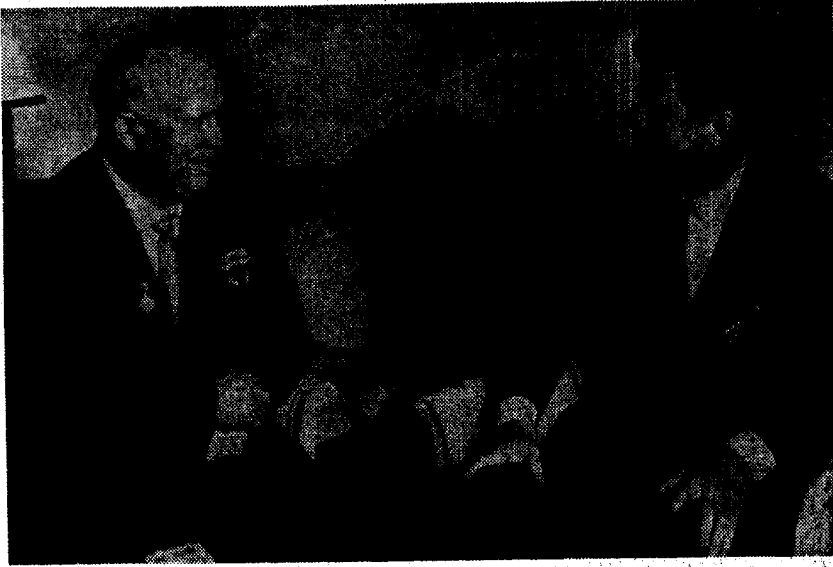
Kennedy accepted their view. "We must never be lulled," he said in his first State of the Union message, "into believing that either power has yielded its ambitions for world domination — ambitions which they forcefully restated only a short time ago." The Communist challenge in Vietnam came to be seen by the White House as the expression of Khrushchev's "national liberation war" doctrine, and it was resisted as such by both the Kennedy and the Johnson administrations. It was seen as a policy jointly or separately inspired and supported by Moscow and Peking at a time when, as we now know, and as we should have known then, the two Communist capitals were barely able to agree on the time-tables of the trains that linked them.

BUT THIS was only one in a long chain of errors. Khrushchev was at that time engaged in a tough struggle with the Soviet military, whose power and pretensions he was trying to curb. He had recently made a lot of enemies by cutting down the money and the manpower of the conventional forces and advocating instead a buildup of missile strength. President Kennedy, however, was determined to build up American conventional forces to make them capable of fighting Khrushchev's "wars of liberation." Faced with this American buildup, Khrushchev found it increasingly difficult to keep his generals at bay.

At the same time, Khrushchev's big talk about the power and the numbers of Soviet

missiles, aimed at his domestic opposition, was converted by Kennedy into a pre-election "missile gap," although American intelligence estimates showed that no such gap existed at the time or was likely to emerge in the foreseeable future. After the election, with the full access to the intelligence information, Kennedy found no missile gap — but he still proceeded quite deliberately to build up a strategic superiority of six-to-one. Khrushchev's attempt to restrain the appetites of his own military was now doubly undermined, on both the conventional and the missile fronts.

The Soviet Union did not then have the resources, technological or industrial, to keep up with the United States. Khrushchev continued to talk big, but Russia trailed a long way behind United States military power. In the Kremlin, the generals were beginning to join forces with some of the



Khrushchev and President Kennedy at their meeting in Vienna in 1961.

politicians hostile to Khrushchev's destalinization policies. He had to move fast to show that his strategic policy was not the failure they claimed — and he did this by putting his missiles into Cuba. If the gamble had worked, he might have been able to claim that the Soviet Union had closed its own "missile gap" by emplacing in Cuba the medium-range missiles that made up for its shortage of intercontinental weapons. The move into Cuba certainly posed a strategic

threat to the United States, but it was designed to outwit the growing internal opposition to Khrushchev as much as to outflank the American strategic deterrent.

By treating the Cuban missile crisis purely in the context of the Soviet-American strategic equation, instead of seeing it also as a move in the internal Soviet power struggle, and by imposing on Khrushchev a resounding defeat, President Kennedy had fatally weakened the Soviet leader's position in the Kremlin infighting.

THERE WERE some ways in which the United States could have achieved its purpose without undermining Khrushchev's position so dangerously. The Kremlin intrigues continued on their devious course for a few more years, but Khrushchev had never recovered his full power in the face of an opposition that was gradually building up its strength in order to pounce on him when a suitable opportunity presented itself.

Once again, as in the case of the Sino-Soviet dispute, most government analysts closed their eyes and their minds to the evidence of this internal struggle. Toward the end of his reign, in a final attempt to shore

up his position, Khrushchev was reaching out for an accommodation with the West that would enable him to keep the military and political conservatives in the Kremlin in their place, and to go on with his destalinization program. He was trying to reduce the power of the conservative party apparatus by breaking it up into smaller sections. He was telling the military that the new weapons they were demanding were both too costly and too ineffective in modern warfare. He was making private approaches for a deal with West Germany of the kind that is only now, so many years later, being put

into effect. And he was visibly, almost anxiously, disengaging from Indo-China, and refusing to give to North Vietnam the weapons it was demanding.

IF KHRUSHCHEV had stayed in power, the war in Vietnam might not have become the bloody tragedy into which it grew, and a settlement in Europe might well have been much farther advanced than it is now. Almost as soon as his successors were firmly in the saddle, they increased the flow of aid to Vietnam, and began the military buildup which has put the Soviet Union on the way to strategic parity with the United States, and is giving it a navy that increasingly challenges the West's command of the high seas. Internally, destalinization has been stopped, and Solzhenitsyn, whose first book was published on Khrushchev's express orders, over the objections of the conservatives, is treated like a cultural criminal.

But there is more in the Soviet political scene than meets the eye. Once again, the West sees the Communist leaders as united in pursuing clear aims, whether in the strategic arms limitation talks or in the new grand design for Europe, and ignores the evidence of

new dissension between Communist leaders both in Russia and outside. The might-have-beens of history are never easy to assess, but a good case could be made for the argument that the world would have been a very different place now if the West has recognized

in time the facts of the internal Communist struggle, both between Russia and China, and within the Kremlin, and had shaped its own policies accordingly. Now with the advantage of hindsight, it ought to be able to apply to the future the lessons it failed to learn in the past.

I, too, now know something that I did not know then. There were people in Washington who clearly saw the emerging Sino-Soviet dispute, and the internal challenge to Khrushchev, even when the administration's leading spokesmen publicly dismissed any such notion. But those analysts who did take this view were overruled by their superiors, and the policies that could have been based on such analyses were never even seriously considered. These errors are now freely admitted, even as new errors of the same kind are being made.