



Krushchev's 'Rude' Message To Kennedy in 1963 Released

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After more than 33 years, the State Department has released a message from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev that was seen as so insulting to President John F. Kennedy that his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, refused to receive it.

The Russian text was obtained recently from Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Soviet message and Robert Kennedy's memo to the president were printed for the first time in a 320-page book, Volume 6 of "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-63," a historical compilation of the complete correspondence between the Soviet and American leaders. The book was released Friday.

The message, transmitted through the Soviet Embassy in Washington, was sent on April 1, 1963.

"You now have a lot of these orators, the so-called specialists in military affairs," the message said. "We have to reply, but who stands to gain? The militarists and monopolists making millions on the production of armaments. Only they stand to gain."

Robert Kennedy interpreted the message as saying that the United States was run by capitalists interested only in war profits and that they were dictating

U.S. policy. He also noted charges that the United States was supporting Cuban exiles in attacks on their homeland, charges recently echoed by President Fidel Castro's government after shooting down two planes piloted by exiles.

Robert Kennedy wrote:

"I said . . . it was so insulting and rude to the president and to the United States that I would neither accept it nor transmit its message."

The State Department called the correspondence unique.

"It gave rise to the first informal written exchange between Cold War leaders," the department explained in a statement. "Its existence as a reliable, direct, and quick channel of communications was instrumental in avoiding international catastrophe during the Cuban missile crisis."

The correspondence—more than 100 messages and notes, many of which have been previously reported—includes formal notes and what became known as the "pen pal" letters.

Less than six months after the rejection of Khrushchev's message, the Soviet leader sent condolence on the death of Kennedy's newborn son:

"My wife, Nina Petrovna, myself and all our family, send you, your wife and your family our regards and best wishes."