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Vienna, 1961: Premier Khrushchev and President Kennedy meet.

IN 1960, WHEN the Central Intelligence Agency invited me to participate in a conference whose purpose was to assess the personality of Nikita Khrushchev, I promised to exercise personal discretion about publicly discussing the conference and its substance. Today, eight years later, I believe I am no longer under any such obligation, and am free therefore to offer a modest contribution to the question of the usefulness of systematic assessments of public personalities from indirect sources.

First, I must make some provisos. There is only one basis for professional medical or psychiatric diagnosis—the clinical examination of the patient. And here the ethical responsibility of the physician is clear: He is responsible for his patient's right of privacy.

The systematic assessment of public personalities from indirect sources is quite another matter, however, and there are not, as yet, clear ethical and legal criteria governing the possible publication of such studies. Until such standards are established, the scientific investigator is certainly required to withhold public comment on *publicly active* (Khrushchev is no longer publicly active) people, since the political use of such opinion could damage the person, disturb the political scene and—because of the possible repercussions—endanger scientific progress.

Plainly, by applying systematic methods and scientific controls to the examination of a person's public behavior, it is possible to make personality judgments of some scientific validity. I believe the national leaders should have access to such personality judgments of other national leaders, since an adequate un-

derstanding of "the other fellow" may determine the fate of mankind. Ultimately, too, such opinions should become public—when there is no likelihood that they will disrupt relations between leaders.

The boundaries are not yet drawn between "the people's right to know," the individual's "right of privacy" and "discretion in the public interest." Until they are, the policy scientist—the man interested in making practical use of social science—must try to act responsibly toward both his subject and the public.

A Consistent Personality

IN ANY CASE, the Central Intelligence Agency had collected a great range of information about Khrushchev, almost all of it from the public record.

Perhaps 20 experts—internists, psychiatrists and psychologists—systematically reviewed this range of material together, and we agreed that we were studying an unusually consistent and striking personality. (In my experience, almost all leaders of major nations are men of strong character—hence, the personality assessment of them is less problematical than for the common run of men.) In short, Khrushchev was predictable.

I don't know what use, if any, the CIA made of the conclusions we arrived at about Khrushchev's personality, but, knowing the ways of bureaucracy, I was pessimistic. And in 1961, when arrangements were being made for President Kennedy to meet with Secretary Khrushchev in Vienna in the spring, I became worried by comments of American officials that suggested that Khrushchev was being viewed in Washington in very different terms from our

analysis—as a wily Communist Machiavelli rather than as the ebullient activist we had observed. I therefore drafted my own opinion of Khrushchev for the President.

My message was transmitted to the President by the CIA and he expressed his thanks through the same channel. (Normally, the best channel to the White House is direct mail, but time was too pressing in this instance.)

Predicted Behavior

THE MEETING in Vienna was, as President Kennedy described it, somber. Khrushchev was subdued, the President was tense. Both men had a sense of the occasion. They were able to disagree without quarreling. Khrushchev, in a restrained way, behaved as predicted.

Returning from Vienna, President Kennedy made a report to the Nation on June 6, 1961, saying, among other things, "For the fact of the matter is that the Soviets and ourselves give wholly different meanings to the same words: war, peace, democracy and popular will. We have wholly different views of right and wrong . . . but at least we know better at the end where we both stand."

And, with remarkable reciprocity, Khrushchev returned the sentiment most clearly when he spoke before a group of American editors on July 13, 1962: "We are people of different political opinions, poles apart, one might say, and our views of what is good and what is bad in the life of society are different . . . Let's stick to our own opinions."

Now, did my letter to Kennedy, or the conference's discussion, make any difference? Evidence is hard to come by. The President, after all, had a good deal of briefing from sophisticated diplomats who knew

Khrushchev personally and had dealt with him many times. The fact that the assessments of Khrushchev led to the conclusion that his personality was of a technically recognizable type and that experience with other such personalities could be applied to this case, may have been of some help in providing a different angle of vision. Clearly, in any event the familiarity of these two men with each other did make a difference, most notably at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. It is well for mankind that they understood each other then.

Expanding the Effort

FINALLY, were our conclusions about Khrushchev's personality valid? This, of course, is a question that is not fully answerable—although the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, when it deposed Khrushchev, gave considerable confirming evidence.

What can be said with assurance is that the range and quality of behavioral data that can be collected is adequate for the construction of a coherent assessment of public personalities. In this instance, the conferees found no problem of agreement on the essential elements of Khrushchev's vivid and extremely consistent personal style.

It seems to me that we can answer such questions only when we have gone much further in systematizing the personality assessment of public figures. And we *should go* further. For, within appropriate bounds, such efforts appear scientifically interesting, ethically correct and valuable to the cause of human understanding.

—BRYANT WEDGE

Khrushchev Undergoes

By Bryant Wedge

Just before the 1961 Vienna summit meeting between President Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, social psychiatrist Bryant Wedge sent Mr. Kennedy an assessment of Khrushchev based on a study by some 20 internists, psychiatrists and psychologists. The text of that message follows; Dr. Wedge's commentary on the events surrounding it appears above. The material originally appeared in *Transaction* magazine and is reprinted by permission. Dr. Wedge is now research associate with the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy of Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where he is working on application of the behavioral sciences to international affairs.

Analysis From Afar

FIRST PARTY SECRETARY N.S. Khrushchev is a highly distinctive personality. Success in dealing with him on a personal level will depend heavily upon a recognition of his personal traits and his intellectual prejudices.

The data for this assessment were derived from the review of certain speeches, films and interview protocols, showing Khrushchev in action, and from information gained from personal discussions with Soviet officials in the U.S.S.R. and at Soviet embassies.

An Optimistic Opportunist

AS A PERSONALITY, Khrushchev is singularly uncomplicated. Technically, his is a stable hypomanic character (chronic optimistic opportunist) and his chief strength lies in traits associated with this type of character. Such characters can be managed readily in the short run and are extremely untrustworthy in the long run. Some of these traits, and the implications for dealing with him, are outlined below:

Quickness — Khrushchev is extremely fast at grasping and making use of immediate situations; his reputation for shrewdness (of which he is proud) rests on this trait, which is sheer flexible opportunism. He is very perceptive and ready to act immediately when he sees a chance for a gain toward his ends. By the same token, he is impulsive within the framework of his fixed aims and can be carried away by an attractive idea.

This is best met by flexibility in discussion. Khrushchev can exploit a fixed agenda by probing and exploiting weak spots, even peripheral ones; he cannot use this technique when he is met on whatever ground he shifts to.

Therefore, it is best to meet him with a general view of points to be covered, but with a willingness to raise them in flexible order as the conversation develops. President Kennedy's quick mind and grasp of ideas suit him ideally for dealing with this kind of man.

Directness—Khrushchev is a remarkably earthy, pithy and direct man of action. He loves to get his hands on something concrete and preferably dramatic. This crude simplicity can hardly be overrated; it is the basis of the attraction between him and farmer



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Khrushchev pretends to steal a napkin holder from a factory in West Homestead, Pa., in 1959.

Roswell Garth (an Iowa farmer of considerable directness who developed a personal friendship with Khrushchev).

Khrushchev detests and distrusts evasion. Whether the points of discussion be great or small, an immediate and direct response is called for. There is little need to repeat or to explain; Khrushchev grasps the consequences of statements the first time he hears them, if they are direct and simple.

If he seems not to understand, it is a deliberate probing attempt and should be treated as such. However, his great energy and need to talk can be exploited by keeping one's responses brief and, at first, incomplete, leaving him room to reveal himself.

Irritability and Distractibility — Khrushchev has limited tolerance for frustration and is irritable if boxed in.

He uses this trait very crudely to bulldoze opposition but he can be easily distracted to other subjects. Therefore, when firmness is necessary, it need not be emphasized but simply expressed and another subject, or aspect of the subject, introduced.

It is fairly dangerous to nail Khrushchev down without giving him alternatives—unless a temper tantrum on his part is desired.

Personal Relationships — Khrushchev needs to grasp his discussant directly—man to man. Protocol and an insistence on dignity drive him to extremes. Therefore, the direct handclasp, informality and a willingness to tolerate physical proximity please him greatly—and lead to such “trust in the man” as he is capable of. While no one should overestimate the consequences of Khrushchev's trust, there is no question of the ill results of his mistrust.

Disagreeing with Khrushchev — Khrushchev tolerates disagreement perfectly well, especially when it is stated as such; thus, “I disagree with you on that” or “We see things differently.” This is especially true in response to some of his sallies that he knows perfectly well are outrageous.

But attempts to explain, persuade or convince are useless. What Khrushchev hates is being pushed; he doesn't seem to mind being stopped. By the same token, he respects firmness against being pushed in others; e.g., he approved of (U.S. diplomat James Williams) Riddleberger's sharp response to claims that Khrushchev knew more about the working man than he did. Thus points of concern can be raised in this vein, "We will not be pushed on the question of —."

On Gaining Agreements — Khrushchev is capable of agreement "in principle" and "between equals," but on no other level and none should be asked. Thus he might well agree to the principle of inspection and control of atomic disarmament or to the need for space agreements as joint desiderata.

However, such agreements require no qualification by either side and none should be made. For example, NATO, CENTO, SEATO or other alliance commitments should not be invoked as the basis for disagreement; this should be the President's responsibility. The "Vienna spirit" could well be one of practical clarification of American and Soviet attitudes toward world problems—not of good will, but as practical questions.

On a Failure of Discussion — Khrushchev is capable of thorough un-

reasonableness and insistence on a given point; this can be dealt with in the following sequence:

a. A proposal to drop the subject until later, and discussion of other questions.

b. If he persists, an offer to break off discussions until later.

c. If he persists, walk out—see Tito's masterful iciness.

Ungraspable Concepts

AS A COMMUNIST and Russian nationalist, Khrushchev has a completely circumscribed world outlook that is not subject to revision. Those ideas of main importance for present conversations are (1) the belief that the state supersedes the individual; (2) the belief that there is fundamental conflict between "capitalism" and socialism (communism), and (3) that the reactionary-capitalist West seeks to thwart or destroy the Soviet state.

In the obverse, he cannot conceptualize the value we place on individual liberty, the possibility of neutrality between the dual contending systems or the principle of self-determination of states in the democratic sense—of government by consent of the people.

Because of the assumptions under which Khrushchev operates, he literally cannot grasp the meaning of ma-

majority rule, of individual choice versus state decision, of local autonomy or of noninterference between nations.

Least of all does he understand the principle of the rule of law, especially international law, in the constitutional sense. This applies especially to the obligations of nations; according to his doctrine, historical inevitability supersedes national commitments, and he has no concept of honor in regard to agreements that are only as good as their guarantees.

There is no point whatsoever in operating from these assumptions in dealing with him, nor can he be educated to respect them. Since his words (e.g., "freedom"—which means something like protection by the state from capitalist exploitation—or "democracy") mean something entirely different to him, one must be careful not to assume an agreement that does not exist.

There is only one basis for agreement by Khrushchev on any issue—the pragmatic self-interest of the Soviet state. Only in these terms, and only so long as they continue, can agreements be maintained. Therefore, there can be only one mode of argument—to state the realities of Western positions in unmistakable terms so that miscalculation will be avoided and practical ac-



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"Protocol and an insistence on dignity drive him to extremes"—as at the U.N. in 1960.

commodations achieved.

Explanations as to *why* U.S. positions are taken on any other than pragmatic grounds would fall on deaf ears. In these terms, however, considerable common interest exists between the Soviet Union and the United States; here, and not in questions of viewpoint, agreement may be found.

Completely Unlike Stalin

THE IMPLICATION of this formulation for dealing with Khrushchev is that one cannot seek a true meeting of the minds—only ways of doing business between fundamentally different viewpoints. One other point may be made: Khrushchev has no personal vanity, but a considerable weakness for a recognition of the virtues, progress and accomplishments of the Soviet state; a willingness to recognize these can yield great dividends.

Finally, I will mention one point of policy. Khrushchev's fear of Germany is deadly and dangerous. After all, the Soviet Union lost 20 million people to Hitler—10 per cent of her population. Khrushchev himself acted as political commissar at Stalingrad during the

German siege. Thus a prime concern of Khrushchev is to keep Germany weak—and this desire should not be underrated.

Addenda: Two further comments seem in order. Khrushchev is completely unlike Stalin in personality, and Stalin's image should not contaminate the picture. Khrushchev neither dissimulates nor is he basically suspicious. In contrast, he is expansive and seeks the limelight.

Stalin listened and drew private conclusions; Khrushchev talks and makes his conclusions moment by moment, and cannot hide them. By encouraging him to expand, one can learn his conclusions and, where necessary, confront them. He seems to learn more from such an interchange than from extended statements. Ready but brief interruptions of his exposition would appear to be the best method of getting points across. The ideal pattern of exchange might be for the President to provide the stimulus by raising question, Khrushchev to expatiate and the President to reply by fairly frequent interruptions and clear statements of disagreement where necessary.

Finally, President Kennedy, if I understand his mode of intellectual operation correctly, enjoys considerable advantage in confronting Khrush-



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"Khrushchev is a remarkably earthy, pithy and direct man of action . . . This crude simplicity . . . is the basis of the attraction between him and farmer Roswell Garth." Here, Mr. and Mrs. Garth, at left, introduce their grandchildren to the Soviet Premier and his wife.

As a technical point, no normal man can match Khrushchev's energetic performances—it is an old trick of his to wear down conferees by sheer endurance, and he is expert at prolonging conferences. Sittings should be carefully limited, probably to 90 minutes a session, and with no more than two formal discussions and one social exchange in a day. Whatever else he does, the President should rest between sessions if he is to avoid information overload.

While such concrete suggestions may be presumptuous, they are drawn from experience with such personalities, who can be exhausting—and subtly so—if one tries to keep up with them.

chev. His capacity to make concise, concrete, factual statements can be used to great advantage, as can his own quickness of grasp. However, generalizations should be avoided—they are always misinterpreted. The one exception to this is the genuine commitment to peaceful means of resolving conflicts.



Associated Press

Lunch in Pittsburgh, 1959.