

Khrushchev, in Letter for Archives, Extolled John Kennedy as Statesman

By HENRY RAYMONT

On June 29, 1964, Nikita S. Khrushchev, then the Soviet Premier, wrote a warm tribute to the memory of an American with whom he had engaged in several battles of will.

"John F. Kennedy will, no doubt, take his place in history as an outstanding statesman," the Soviet leader declared.

The tribute was in the form of a 1,000-word personal assessment of the President for the oral-history program of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library. It was accompanied by three cartons containing tape-recordings of speeches by Mr. Khrushchev relating to Soviet-United States relations, his account to the Soviet people of his meeting with Mr. Kennedy in Vienna in 1961 and Soviet newspaper clippings about the President from 1961 to 1963.

The existence of Mr. Khrushchev's memoir and the other Soviet contributions to the library's collection became known last week when transcripts of 300 oral-history interviews were opened to scholars and researchers at the library's temporary home, the Federal Records Center in Waltham, Mass.

Man of Broad Views

Mr. Khrushchev's statement written in Russian, was addressed to Robert F. Kennedy in response to the then Attorney General's request for a personal memoir for the library collection. In an English translation released in its entirety, Mr. Khrushchev said the President "proved to be a man of broad views who sought to realistically assess the situation in the world and to look for ways of solving unsettled international problems through negotiation."

As examples of Mr. Kennedy's contribution to world peace, Mr. Khrushchev cited the treaty banning tests of nuclear weapons, which was signed in July, 1963, and the President's speech on East-West relations a month earlier at American University in Washington, in which he called for "not merely peace in our time but peace for all time." The Soviet leader wrote:

"The signing of that treaty was a convincing proof that however complex present international problems may be, their solutions can be found. To reach these solutions in the interest of maintaining and strengthening universal peace

was and remains the most important task of all governments — their duty before the people."

Referring to Mr. Kennedy's speech at American University, Mr. Khrushchev, who was ousted four months after he wrote, went on:

"That statement can be called courageous and more realistic than what the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist world often heard from American shores. Although that statement of the President of the United States, too, had some conflicting points and a tribute unfortunately was paid in it to the so-called policy of 'containment and pushing back of Communism,' as a whole, however, it proceeded from acknowledgment of the inevitability and necessity of coexistence of states with different social systems.

"Today, I would not like to go into details of the negative points of that statement by John F. Kennedy since, let me say it again, it contained the main idea: in that statement the President said—'let us re-examine our attitude toward the Soviet Union'; he said that 'peace need not be impracticable and war need not be inevitable.'"

"That speech by John F. Kennedy," Mr. Khrushchev continued, "as one could assume, was a sort of preparatory—the President defined a platform for future election campaign. Although everyone knows that President John F. Kennedy was a man of an ideology which is opposite to ours, and represented interests of a state standing on a political platform which is opposite to ours, nevertheless in that statement of his he was already outlining more realistic principles of the relations between countries with different social systems and thus, if his idea is broadened, between two social systems."

A Threat in Vienna

Mr. Khrushchev's tribute contrasted sharply with the tough language he used when he met with Mr. Kennedy in Vienna in June, 1961. At the time, the Soviet leader voiced a threat to conclude a unilateral peace treaty with East Germany, abrogating Western occupation rights in West Berlin, and said that if the decision were to be defied, "force would be met by force."

Discussing the meeting in his 1965 Kennedy biography, "A

Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House," Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., the historian, said: "Each man came away from Vienna with greater respect for the mind and nerve of his adversary. Having survived their personal confrontation and defined the impassable difference over Berlin, they now faced their first battle of wills."

Upon Mr. Kennedy's return from the Vienna meeting—his only personal encounter with Mr. Khrushchev, with whom he exchanged a voluminous correspondence—he signaled the West's determination not to be intimidated on Berlin by calling up some military reserves and increasing the defense budget. Tensions were heightened in August, when East Germany erected the wall separating East and West Berlin, but Mr. Khrushchev eventually relented on his threat to conclude a separate peace treaty.

Professor Schlesinger, commenting on Mr. Khrushchev's tribute to the President, said yesterday: "It seems to me much more than a perfunctory letter. It is an expression of nostalgia and hope."

DeGaulle Did not Reply

Mr. Khrushchev was the first foreign statesman to be asked to participate in the unusual oral-history program, started in March, 1964, by Robert Kennedy and President Kennedy's widow, now Mrs. Aristotle S. Onassis. The Soviet leader headed a long list that included Gen. Charles de Gaulle of France, former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of Britain and Pope Paul VI.

John F. Stewart, the acting director of the library, which is to be established on the campus of Harvard University by 1972, said in Waltham yesterday that several leaders, including General de Gaulle and Mr. Macmillan, never responded. Other taped interviews and statements from foreign and American public figures will remain closed in accordance with stipulations set by the donors, who determine when their contributions are to be made public.

In his letter, Mr. Khrushchev offered Soviet documents relating to the activities of the President, "especially in the field of Soviet-American relations."