

## Notes on a 1963 Visit With

# KHRUSHCHEV

By NORMAN COUSINS

*NOTE: On April 12, 1963, SR's editor had a seven-hour meeting with Nikita Khrushchev. Because the editor's role at that meeting was not as journalist but as private emissary, no report of the visit was published at that time. The account appears now in view of recent events in the Soviet Union and for whatever light it may throw on the man who has been ousted from his office and whose whereabouts and condition are still a mystery as of press time for this issue.*

THE ASPHALT road from Sochi to Gagra along the edge of the Black Sea curls, climbs, and dives through the rugged and verdant hills that drop down to the water. The automobiles proceed cautiously, not only because of the sudden turns but because this road is a paradise for bicycle clubs. Long skeins of cyclers, their backs bent low and their bodies seemingly fused into the frames, come shooting at you in endless swift files around the curves.

It is on this road, some sixty miles from the airport at Sochi, that Nikita Khrushchev, former Chairman of the

Council of Ministers of the USSR, had his country retreat. The house, large but not ostentatious, was set back from the road behind a low wall in a grove of silver-streaked pine trees. The place appeared to be lightly guarded. One man was posted at the gate and waved us in when he recognized the driver.

AS soon as we turned into the estate, I discerned a heavy-set figure standing in the driveway in front of the house. It was Mr. Khrushchev, patiently waiting to welcome us. He was wearing a green-and-tan tweed cape and a large gray unblocked fedora. He greeted my two daughters and me. I said I regretted that our various connections en route from Moscow had made us a half-hour late. He replied that he would refer our apologies to the chef and suggested we proceed immediately to the luncheon table.

The dining room with its large glass doors looked out on the sea. Mr. Khrushchev did the seating, explaining that Mrs. Khrushchev was in Moscow. Lunch was actually a full Russian dinner, with a vast assortment of appetizers, then fish, soup, pancakes, veal, wines,

cheeses, and pudding. The Chairman steered the table conversation; he had an anecdote to fit every course.

When I found some excuse for not going all the way with the substantial pourings of vodka, the Chairman told of the time he was in the company of some Georgians, who, in keeping with tradition, were drinking out of a massive wine bowl. As the bowl was passed, each man was expected to hold his own in terms of the duration and depth of a single gulp. The Chairman said he knew he was traveling in fast company but decided to take the bowl and the plunge nevertheless. "Served me right," he said. "I was sick for a week."

During tea, he told the story of a frustrated tea drinker whose wife never gave him sugar for his tea. When away from home, he took out his resentment against his wife by thickening his tea with sugar to the point where he could hardly get it down. At home or away, therefore, the poor chap went through life without ever getting his tea just the way he liked it.

This is not to say that the luncheon was entirely without serious conversation. The Chairman asked whether we

had observed all the flags on display along the roads and streets. This day, April 12, marked the anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's first flight into space.

"I was down here at the time and rushed up to Moscow to congratulate him," the Chairman said.

I said I understood from Eugenii Fedorov, one of the leading scientists of the Soviet Union, that ordinary people would eventually be able to go up into space; in fact, that this was the way many people would want to take their vacations.

"It will be an interesting development, but it won't happen next week. Still, things are being simplified very rapidly and we hope before long to announce that we have trained a female cosmonaut. My scientists tell me they are ready right now, today, to put a man on the moon. But they can't assure me they can get him off and back home again. Of course, I told them it would have to be a round trip. I understand that the United States is very eager to be the first to do it. I say all the more power to you and good luck"—and he swept his arms in front of him in a polite gesture of stepping aside.

I asked the Chairman if he came to his Black Sea retreat in order to rest.

Not always, he replied. Sometimes he came here when he had important problems to think through or important speeches to write. He would walk through the pine grove or along the beach, and he would read and dictate. At such times, he would shut off the telephone and tell the people in Moscow not to bother him.

"There are some things that can be done right only if you take the time they require," he said. "A chicken has to sit quietly for a certain time if she expects to lay an egg. If I have something to hatch, I have to take the time to do it right. It is here that I thought through the problem of what to do about Stalin—whether to tell the people the truth about the man—especially about the tyrannical and irresponsible methods he used in personal dictatorship, or to perpetuate the myth of his greatness.

"Not that everything that happened in his regime was bad," the Chairman continued. "We made progress in a number of respects. But we were also held back in many ways because of the unbelievable irrationality and brutality of Stalin.

[Four months earlier at my meeting with him at his office in the Kremlin, he said that there was "an important difference between Lenin and Stalin; Lenin forgave his enemies, and Stalin killed his friends." He also said how astonished he was, after all this time, to meet reasonably intelligent people who still thought Stalin was sane.]

"It was not an easy decision to make,



—N. C.

**K: "To play this game right you've got to hit the bird hard and fast and only a few inches above the net."**

whether to tell the people the truth. Men had gone off to war and had died with his name on their lips. It would come as a profound emotional shock to them—and many others—to know what kind of man Stalin really was. I came down to this place and thought carefully about the problem and then decided to tell the Party Congress everything I knew. It was here that I also drew up the new economic program to increase production.

"It is very quiet here, as you can see," he said. "I have some visitors now and then; it's good to have a respite. Two weeks ago, some Somali government officials were here for some brief talks. You are not the first Americans to visit this place. A few months ago Secretary Udall was here. He made a fine impression on me. He said he had learned some things in observing our hydroelectric power developments. It is a big man who is willing to admit he can learn something from others.

"Also your John McCloy was here a few years ago. A very fine American and a gentleman. We went swimming together in the Black Sea. I think he enjoyed it. Then, your Walter Lippmann was here a couple of years ago. He went swimming, too. Also, your Eric Johnston was here. Americans make lively conversation.

"Now if you aren't too sleepy, we will walk around the grounds—if you would like to see the place."

I assured him we would, although I

confess I got up somewhat heavily from the table.

Outside, we walked through the soft flooring of the grove of pine trees. The Chairman identified the trees as belonging to the rarest species of pine trees in the world. This was the only place, he said, where such trees had survived from their ancient beginnings. He was fond of these trees and had given many of them individual names but, like his grandchildren, there were so many of them that he was tempted to give them numbers instead.

The shaded walk soon led to a modern ranch-style structure on a hilltop. It had large glass windows and overlooked the sea.

"This is my sport house," the Chairman explained. "First we will see the swimming pool."

**W**E walked through a small indoor gymnasium and came upon the glass-enclosed pool. I judged it to be about thirty feet by seventy-five feet.

"The glass doors are electrically operated," Mr. Khrushchev said. "Here, I will show you."

He pressed a button and the giant doors began to retract.

Tongue in cheek, I told the Chairman that nowhere in the capitalist world had I seen a private swimming pool as magnificent as this.

The Chairman, with an equally straight face, consoled me, saying our society was still very young and that we

would probably have one in due course.

When my daughters marveled at the swimming pool, the Chairman invited them to try it. They said they had not brought bathing suits.

"Don't let that worry you," the Chairman said. "Papa and I will look at the rest of the sport house and then we will have our serious talk on the terrace and you will be all alone. You will have the pool to yourselves and will be undisturbed."

The girls decided they would like to complete the tour of the house first. The Chairman escorted us into the small gymnasium, with its exercising equipment. When I asked what form of exercise he preferred, he pointed to the badminton racquets.

"I play badminton twice a day. Early morning and late afternoon. Then a swim and a rubdown."

I picked up one of the badminton racquets and bounced it against the flat of my hand.

"Do you happen to know anything about this little game?" he asked.

I confessed to a modest knowledge of the sport.

"Very well," he said, "we will have a go at it."

We picked up the racquets and started to play. Discretion seemed to me to require that I hit the shuttlecock high and to his right side, just as I would if I were playing with one of my daughters.

After a minute or two of this kind of play, the Chairman shook his head.

"*Nyet!*" he said. "That's not the way to play. My gymnasium instructor says that to play this game right you've got to hit the bird hard and fast and only a few inches above the net, like this—" Wham! And the bird came straight at my head.

Now that the ground rules were explicit, I no longer felt bound by excessive restraint. We went at it. I was astounded at the speed of the Chairman's reflexes and his agility. He not only kept the bird in play but made it whistle as he rifled his shots.

When we stopped, I observed that he was not winded or flushed. In a few days he would be sixty-nine. I thought of some newspaper stories I had read in Rome only four or five days earlier to the effect that he had had a heart attack or a stroke and that he had gone to the Black Sea to recuperate. Under the present circumstances, these stories were less than convincing.

I asked the Chairman if he would permit me to take some photographs of him at his favorite sport. He assented readily and played badminton with my daughters while I operated the camera.

The tour of the sport house was resumed. Just outside the small gymnasium was the sun deck. Even on the

coldest days, the Chairman said, he would come here to enjoy the sun. On these occasions he made ample use of a giant bear coat. He held it up; it was a massive garment indeed.

"Maybe the girls would like to see my disappearing act," he said.

He climbed into the coat, grinned, and went into a going, going, gone routine, finally sinking into the coat until he was completely out of sight.

There came a few growls from inside the encased mass. My daughters were delightfully terrified. Then suddenly the top flap flew open and he reappeared with a loud "Boo!" It was obvious that he had developed certain skills as a grandfather.

The Chairman put the great coat down and said the time had come for serious talk.

"The girls are free to do what they wish," he said. "Papa and I will get down to business."

The girls went back to the pool and the Chairman and I sat at a small table inside the glass-enclosed terrace. We had our interpreter, Oleg Bykov (my own choice), and a rapporteur, Boris Ivanov, both of whom had accompanied us from Moscow.

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**T**HIS was my second meeting with Mr. Khrushchev in four months. In December 1962, the trip to Moscow was concerned with religious matters. I was acting in behalf of church leaders who felt the time might be opportune for exploring the possibilities of enlarged religious freedoms inside the Soviet Union. In particular, the object of the mission was to obtain the release of Bishop Slipyi, head of the Ukrainian Rite Orthodox Church. Bishop Slipyi had been interned for seventeen years.

On that previous visit, we had three hours together in his office in the Kremlin. He was relaxed, optimistic, confident. But now, in April 1963, he seemed somewhat weighted down, even withdrawn. I couldn't be sure, but he seemed to be under considerable pressure.

Understandably so. Many things had happened to change the atmosphere since December. The Chinese had been exploiting the Russian missile withdrawal from Cuba, charging that Nikita Khrushchev was guilty of appeasing the imperialistic Americans. They claimed he had demonstrated his unfitness to lead the world revolutionary movement and that he had no real desire to overthrow or defeat the capitalist West, preferring to coexist with the very forces Marx and Lenin said must be violently overthrown. In return, Nikita Khrushchev had asserted that appeasement was in no way involved. He said the missiles had been installed in Cuba be-

cause of the possibility of an American invasion. Once the invasion threat was removed, there was no need to keep missiles there. At any rate, he had said that a nuclear holocaust over Cuba had been averted: this was the important thing. Anyone who knew anything about atomic weapons, he had declared, knew there was no alternative to peaceful coexistence. He had charged that the Chinese were absolutists who were attempting to use ideological dogma in places and situations where it didn't fit.

Even so, as the result of Cuba, it seemed clear that Nikita Khrushchev felt compelled to prove he was not an appeaser. He could try to do this either by being tough and militant, or by producing evidence that his coexistence policies were yielding results.

It was evident, just after Cuba, that he had decided in favor of the latter course. He was apparently confident he could conclude an early agreement with the United States banning nuclear tests, thus proving the practical wisdom of his policies. But the hoped-for agreement had become stalled over the question of inspection, and there was mounting uneasiness inside Mr. Khrushchev's own inner councils about the effect of this impasse on the situation inside the Communist world. The Chinese had pounced upon this failure, referring to it as yet another example of Khrushchev's ineptness. Some of Khrushchev's own advisers began to stress the need for unity inside the Communist world. They wanted to set reasonable limits to the differences between the two countries.

It was not at all surprising, therefore, that Mr. Khrushchev should seem preoccupied at Gagra. He had two critically important events coming up in rapid succession—the Plenum of the Communist Party and the confrontation with the Chinese. Either one called for important leadership decisions and actions. The combination of both would put him to the severest test since coming to office. He had come to Gagra before when he had serious problems to think through; this time the totality of his policies was involved.

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**W**E began our terrace discussion with matters that carried over from our talk of four months earlier. At that meeting—December 7, 1962—I had stated the case for the release of Bishop Slipyi. Bishop Slipyi had been imprisoned since 1947. I was authorized to say that Pope John was hopeful that the Bishop might spend his few remaining years—he was now in his seventies—at some distant seminary.

The Chairman had said at that December meeting that he would like to establish good relations with the Vatican and that he had a profound regard for

Pope John, but he feared that the release of Bishop Slipyi would have exactly the opposite effect.

"In what way?" I had asked.

"The moment he is released, there will be big headlines saying the Bishop was tortured by the Reds," he had said. "This would not exactly help the cause of improved relations."

I had replied that it was my understanding that Pope John was not seeking the release of Bishop Slipyi for the purpose of propagandist exploitation. He was genuinely concerned about the health and well-being of the Bishop. As a matter of basic human justice, he hoped the Bishop would be freed.

The Chairman proceeded to expound on the case of Bishop Slipyi for almost twenty minutes. He traced the long history of rivalry between the Ukrainian Rite Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. He spoke about Bishop Slipyi's predecessor, Metropolitan Sheptytsky, who died, the Chairman said, under circumstances that suggested his departure from this earth may have been unnaturally accelerated, although he did not say by whom. In any event, he said the Bishop had been imprisoned for good and sufficient reason.

**M**Y purpose was not to argue that point, I had said. But it was seventeen years since the arrest took place. Surely any further punishment could serve no useful purpose.

You may be right, he had said, adding

that he would look into the matter and let me know.

At that December meeting, as I got up to leave, the Chairman reached into a drawer and took out two letters on which Christmas greetings to Pope John and President Kennedy had already been engraved. Then he signed the letters and asked me to deliver them on my return to Rome and the United States.

Several weeks later, after I had returned to New York from the December meeting in Moscow, I had received a telephone call from the Soviet Ambassador in Washington. Ambassador Dobrynin asked if I could come to Washington soon. He had some news to transmit to me.

Two days later, at the Soviet Embassy, the Ambassador said he had been asked to convey the greetings of Premier Khrushchev and also to say that the Premier was happy to arrange for the unconditional release of Bishop Slipyi. The Ambassador asked where and how and to whom the Bishop should be delivered.

I thanked the Ambassador for the good news and immediately communicated with Father Felix Morlion, President of Pro Deo University in Rome, who was then in the United States. Throughout all the arrangements leading up to the appointments in Moscow and the Vatican, Father Morlion had occupied a liaison role.

Father Morlion telephoned Rome immediately and conveyed the good news.

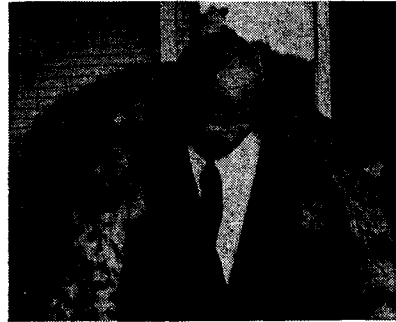
Within a few hours Vatican officials drew up a plan for Bishop Slipyi's return to freedom. The plan, accepted immediately by the Soviet government, called for the Bishop to be flown to Vienna, where he would be met by the Pope's personal representative and flown to Rome.

The plan was successfully carried out within a week. Bishop Slipyi was brought to the Vatican where Pope John, despite his now advancing illness, greeted him and told of his joy at seeing him reunited with the Church. Following this meeting, the Bishop was escorted to a secret retreat some miles outside Rome. No reporters were permitted to see the Bishop. Indeed, it was only after the Bishop had arrived at his secret retreat that the news of his liberation was released.

The day following this announcement, I received a telephone call from Ambassador Dobrynin in Washington asking me if I had seen the afternoon newspapers. I said I had not. The Ambassador suggested that I do so. Then he read to me a news story under the following headline:

#### BISHOP TELLS OF RED TORTURE

He asked me if I would care to make any comment concerning what appeared to be a breach of good faith. I said I had no direct knowledge of what had



On the sun deck of his sport house, a grandfatherly Khrushchev conceals himself in a great bear coat, then gleefully emerges with a loud "Boo!"

happened but I was absolutely certain that there had been no breach of faith. I said I would telephone the Vatican directly and find out what I could.

Vatican officials were profoundly shocked when I told them of the news break in the U.S. Bishop Slipyi had spoken to no newsmen. They termed the story a pure concoction. They said they would set the record straight immediately. In particular, *Osservatore Romano* would carry a front-page statement quoting Pope John to the effect that the news stories about Bishop Slipyi were without authority and were repudiated by both Pope John and Bishop Slipyi.

What troubled Vatican officials most of all was that this incident might interfere with further attempts to bring about release of churchmen imprisoned in Communist countries.

I telephoned Ambassador Dobrynin and informed him that the news stories were completely unauthorized and that the next issue of *Osservatore Romano* would set the record straight on the authority of the Pope.

. . .

**I** BEGAN our talk at Gagra in April, 1963, therefore, by thanking the Chairman for his affirmative response to the request for Bishop Slipyi's release.

Once again, I expressed the regrets of Vatican officials at what had appeared to be a breach of faith in some of the news coverage that followed the Bishop's release and of the profound elation of Pope John at being reunited with Bishop Slipyi.

The Chairman said he understood, adding that some journalists didn't know what to do with good news.

The Chairman then inquired about the health of Pope John, saying he had often thought of, and been inspired by, Pope John's desire to contribute to world peace in whatever time remained to him.

This seemed like a propitious moment to transmit to the Chairman an advance copy, translated into Russian by Vatican officials, of Pope John's Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*.

The Chairman said he was pleased to know about the Encyclical in advance and would read it with great interest.

I then brought up the matter of Archbishop Beran, of Czechoslovakia, who had been interned for some years. Cardinal Augustus Bea, of the Vatican, had told me of his great concern for the Bishop's health.

The Chairman said he was unfamiliar with the case of Archbishop Beran, and that this was a matter that concerned the Czechoslovak government.

Recognizing this, I said that Cardinal Bea was hopeful that the Chairman might be willing to use his good offices

to explore the matter with Czech government officials.

The Chairman said he would take the matter under advisement.

The discussion then turned to the matter of a nuclear test ban. The Chairman had been quoted in news dispatches from Moscow as saying that the United States had not been acting in good faith on the matter of a nuclear test ban, reneging on its own proposals for three inspections, and that there was reason to doubt whether the United States really wanted a test ban at all. If he had been correctly quoted, I said, his conclusions were inaccurate.

I had come to see him, I said, on no official mission; I was a private citizen. President Kennedy, knowing I was to see the Chairman, had asked me to try to clarify the Soviet misunderstanding of the American position on the test ban. If the Chairman construed the American position on inspections to mean that we actually did not want a treaty banning such testing, then that interpretation was in error.

The Chairman leaned forward in his chair. There was a perceptible tightening in his expression.

"If the United States really wanted a treaty, it could have had one," he said in measured tones. "If it wants one now it can have one. The U.S. said it wanted inspections. We don't believe inspections are really necessary. We think they are an excuse for espionage. Our scientists proved to me that the new instrumentation makes it possible for you to detect any violations from outside our borders. But we wanted a treaty and the U.S. said we couldn't get one without inspections. So we agreed, only to have you change your position."

"There was a misunderstanding as to what our position really was," I said.

"A misunderstanding? How could there be a misunderstanding? Fedorov had a meeting with Wiesner in Washington last October. Wiesner told him that the United States was ready to proceed on the basis of a few annual inspections. Ambassador Dean told Kuznetsov the same thing. Kuznetsov is a very meticulous reporter. He always tells me exactly what happened. How can there be a misunderstanding?"

The President had asked me to say that he had a high regard for Ambassador Kuznetsov and did not doubt for a moment that the Ambassador reported the conversation with Mr. Dean as he understood it. He also had a high regard for Ambassador Dean, who, like Ambassador Kuznetsov, had a reputation as a meticulously correct reporter. Rather than carry on a fruitless debate over the precise nature of the Kuznetsov-Dean conversation, the President was disposed to regard the matter as an honest misunderstanding; he felt a

fresh start should be made. It would be a tragedy of the first magnitude, he believed, if a misunderstanding were allowed to get in the way of an agreement that both countries critically needed in their own self-interest and that would represent the first great step toward controlling the nuclear horror.

The Chairman shook his head sadly.

"It is not just one conversation. As I told you, there was the talk between Wiesner and Fedorov. Also, our scientists came back from Cambridge, where they met with American scientists who said the same thing. How could there be a misunderstanding?"

With due respect, I ventured to suggest that an honest misunderstanding, under the circumstances, was possible and plausible. An American representative might urge the Soviet representative to revert to the previous Soviet position, which accepted three inspections, as the basis of an agreement. In so doing, the American representative was suggesting what he considered to be the basis for negotiations that could lead to a prompt and fruitful resolution. The Soviet representative, however, might interpret the statement not as a basis for fruitful discussion but as the specific content of a treaty. The result was an honest misunderstanding.

In any event, I said, the President was acting in absolute good faith when he said that no misunderstanding, logical or otherwise, should obstruct so important an undertaking. I had first-hand evidence to offer on this point. A number of citizens' organizations had come together to develop public support for the President's position in favor of a nuclear test ban. In discussing this matter with the President, I had shown him the texts and layouts for a series of full-page newspaper advertisements calling for a test ban. The President was deeply interested in these materials and had constructive suggestions to make. It seemed to me inconceivable that he would have encouraged this public campaign if he had publicly advocated a test ban only for propaganda purposes, as the Soviet press had charged.

I had brought one of the advertisements with me and I held it up so that the Chairman could see it. The headline read:

(In large type:)

We Can Kill  
The Russians  
360 Times Over

(Then, in smaller type:)

The Russians Can  
Kill Us Only  
160 Times Over

(Then, in very small type:)

We're Ahead,  
Aren't We?

The Chairman stared hard at this

advertisement while the text was translated for him. He lifted his hand.

"Your figures are all wrong," he said. "We're not that far behind. But, as the ad says, what difference does it make? Nuclear war is sheer madness. Now, back to our discussion: Your talk with the President has persuaded you of some things. Now let me tell you about the picture as we see it here. After Cuba, there was a real chance for both the Soviet Union and the United States to take measures together that would advance the peace by easing tensions. The one area on which I thought we were closest to agreement was nuclear testing. And so I went before the Council of Ministers and said to them:

"We can have an agreement with the United States to stop nuclear tests if we agree to three inspections. I know that three inspections are not necessary, and that the policing can be done adequately from outside our borders. But the American Congress has convinced itself that on-site inspection is necessary and the President cannot get a treaty through the Senate without it. Very well, then, let us accommodate the President."

"The Council asked me if I was certain that we could have a treaty if we agreed to three inspections and I told them yes. Finally, I persuaded them."

**W**HEN he said this, I thought of the earlier predictions by the Chinese Communists that if the Soviet Union accepted the American proposal of three inspections, the Americans would renege and ask for six, and if Khrushchev agreed to six, the Americans would renege and ask for twelve. And so on, indefinitely. The Chinese position was that the Americans were interested neither in a nuclear test ban nor in coexistence in general. According to the Chinese, Khrushchev was naïve in pursuing a policy of peaceful coexistence when the people he wanted to coexist with had no desire to coexist with him. The Chinese had quoted Marx and Lenin to support their view that war was inherent in the nature of capitalist imperialism and that the world would have to sustain a violent ordeal before capitalism could be cleared away and the triumph of world socialism be assured.

Any failure of a nuclear test ban, therefore, would have consequences far beyond the armaments crisis. It would have an effect on the struggle for power inside the Communist world, in the sense that the Chinese would exploit the test-ban failure as proof of the correctness of their total position.

Still another situation came to mind when the Chairman said it wasn't easy to get the Ministers to agree. This had to do with the U-2 episode several years

ago. At that time, the Chairman had attempted to convince the Council that the American President had nothing to do with the U-2 and that he could therefore proceed with plans to meet with him at the imminent summit conference. Then the President announced he had authorized the U-2 flight.

These, at least, were some of the speculations that raced through my mind when the Chairman spoke of the reluctance of the Council to agree readily to his recommendation to accept inspection.

"People in the United States seem to think I am a dictator who can put into practice any policy I wish," the Chairman continued. "Not so. I've got to persuade before I can govern. Anyway the Council of Ministers agreed to my urgent recommendation. Then I notified the United States I would accept three inspections. Back came the American rejection. They now wanted—not three inspections or even six. They wanted eight. And so once again I was made to look foolish. But I can tell you this: it won't happen again."

"The President had no intention of humiliating you or making you look foolish before your Council," I said. "There is a genuine question in his mind concerning the adequacy of three inspections. Each year almost one hundred earth tremors or movements of varying magnitude occurred within the vast land mass of the Soviet Union. Many of the seismograph markings caused by these movements are similar

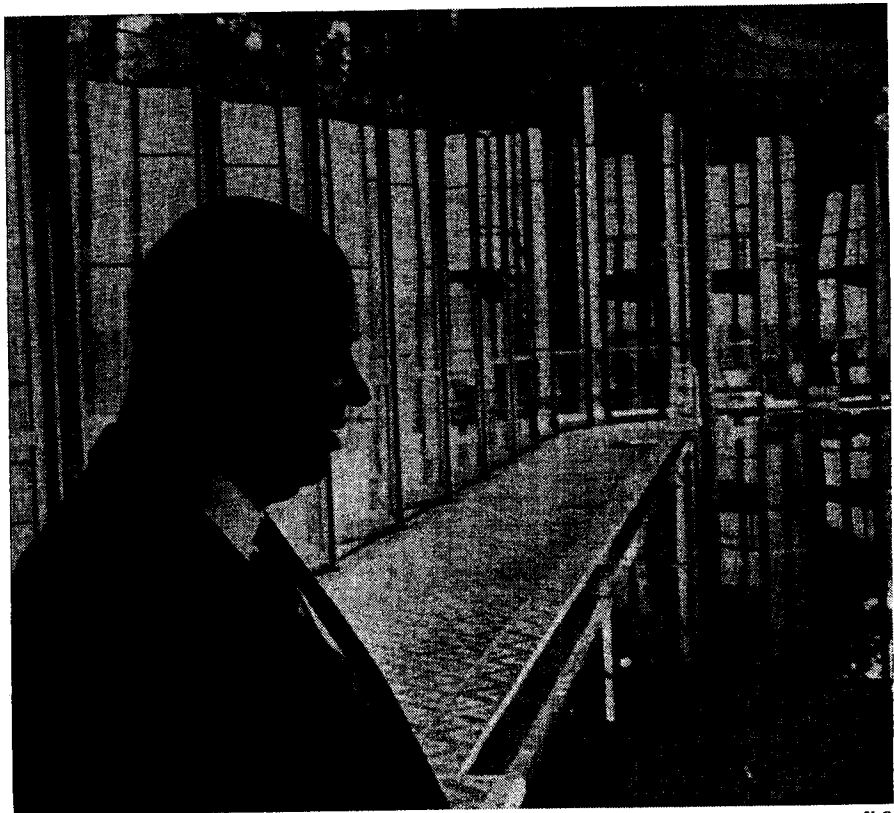
to the markings produced by underground nuclear explosion. Hence there is considerable feeling in the Senate that even eight inspections were minimal. In any event, the President would like to break the present impasse. He suggests that the negotiators at Geneva be instructed to proceed with the many questions apart from inspections that have yet to be worked out. These questions should represent no great difficulties but they have to be resolved nevertheless. The President would like to hold the question of inspections for last, and then he and you would work out this problem together."

"Not practical or possible," Mr. Khrushchev said, shaking his head. "For various reasons I cannot go to Washington and I would assume that the President right now has good reasons for not coming to Moscow. Where does this leave us?"

"It leaves you with the rest of the world in which to find a place," I suggested. "Vienna served the purpose once before. And if not Vienna, then another place. But even if no place can be found, then there are other forms of communications."

"You don't seem to understand what the situation is here," he said. "We cannot make another offer. I cannot go back to the Council. It is now up to the United States. Frankly, we feel we were misled. If we change our position at all, it will not be in the direction of making it more generous. It will be less gener-

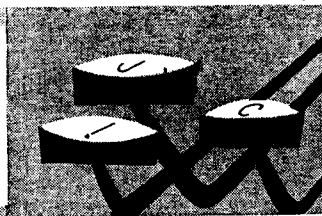
*(Continued on page 58)*



The Chairman at his swimming pool—"Someday you'll have one, too."

—N.C.

# Manner of Speaking



**Confessions of a Circuit Rider:** I am on the lecture trail and tonight's lecture is over. It is long after midnight and I must be up before six to make my airline connection to the next place. I am tired but the hotel room is too hot when I close the window and too drafty when I open it and the bed swelters around me when I try to sleep. There is, of course, nothing wrong with the room or the weather or the bed. The room, in fact, is luxurious beyond the dream of most of this world. There are people sleeping soundly on straw somewhere and finding the straw a luxury. All that is wrong with the weather, the temperature, or the bed is inside me. I am having an attack of insomnia, and insomnia distorts every thought that passes through it.

As part of that distortion, I keep thinking of the beagle-faced student who stuck to me for an hour after the talk. He had his soul out to affirm and he had decided that I was his affirmation. Something big had happened to him within the insomniac distortion of his own life in some small town that had been blown open by his visits to the library. Or not really blown open but just cracked and crazed. With every good intention he was charging me with being important.

How does one deny that charge to the hot eyes of an insomniac who insists on staying up for his dreams? What he was accusing me of was nothing I had done. He was charging me with his own mystique of importance, with his hot and, God knows, human need to find Significance. The need was in him and I had come along, booked by my agent, with advance puffs in the local papers, and with all the trimmings that prepare a small college for the appearance of a lecturer from Outside.

How could I deny his need without accusing him of having squinted all his life through a local knothole into a non-existent universe? Insomniac to insomniac. I sit up smoking and thinking of things I might have said to him.

"Son," I might have said, and do in fact try to say to him, "until now you exist only in the mercy all of us owe one another, but without having begun to imagine a language for it."

It sounds, alas, like something out of an arty novel. Or like something out of a TV script imitating something out of an arty novel. But I still see his eyes and they have to be told something,

somehow. Poor beagle. All his fervor was sniffing around in search of nothing but a master. It is discomforting to be mistaken for a half-god, even by a beagle.

"Look, beagle," I try to tell him, "I was paid well over \$1,000 for coming here tonight to give a spiel not much different from the spiel I gave in another town last night and from the one I shall give in still another town tomorrow night and so on until by the end of the week I am left with checks for several times more than the estate my father left. Somehow that suggests some measure of a man's life but I don't know what measure it is, so let it pass. The fact is I never get up on a platform except for cash, and then only when I am overpaid. I am not worth it, and the world is insane to pay these prices, but there are some of the world's insanities I am careful not to argue with. Now please go home poor and let me get to sleep rich. But for God's sake take those beagle eyes to a good book and try formulating from it something like a perception that has no dog eyes attached to it."

But that sounds wrong, too. I had spoken to the students about poetry and I had spoken as honestly as I should have spoken to any of my own classes had I still been on the faculty. I am, to be sure, a bit of a ham by now. Every good teacher is to begin with, and by now I have been riding the circuit a long time and I am good at it.

What I am good at is the art, or the craft, of sensing an audience. I could, if I wanted to, take my audience craftily, keep it laughing with just the right touch of dissembling candor, make sure the pace does not slacken, and come through high and hard at the end. All it takes is skill and by now I have that. Nor is there anything wrong with skill. Athletics aside, it takes a man to be skilful.

But not all of a man. What takes all of a man is something like a sense of honesty. At least of self-honesty. It may not be exactly that, but honesty is a name that will do for whatever it is. And there is—confess it—something about the idea of honesty that does not mix well with the idea of being easily skilful. But why? Am I about to become a beagle, too? Must every honesty be a clumsy mortal sweat? Yes, where it touches mortal issues. But there are no mortal issues involved in riding the lecture cir-

cuit. I am doing what I am good at and I am trying to make an open and honest communication of it.

Not that there is any way of being entirely honest to any audience. An audience is not a person but a collective beast. That beast must be engaged by certain formalities. There is also the fact—a fact known to everyone who has learned to sense an audience—that at times one's mind loses a connection, especially when the talk is not canned, and I loathe canned talk. So a man drops a stitch now and then. Or mixes the metaphor as I am doing now. That is the point at which the skill-man takes over, faking the chords until the theme comes back to him. The one theme I can honestly pursue, of course, is never to fake an idea. Nor will I, if I can help it. But can I always help it? I talk too much, and inevitably I find myself worrying for fear that I have faked what must not be faked. All one can do then is confess his worry to the members of his audience, apologizing to each.

And then, from his uncertainty to mine comes—sooner or later but always comes—the beagle with eyes that leak worship. Nothing, alas, warns beagle not to love uncritically. A beagle is a lifelong insomnia.

The best I can do now is to use my insomnia to teach me what to say to the next beagle. In four more days this two weeks will be over. I shall be able to sit at my desk for months in the most unimportant way, and all the world's miles from tonight's beagle and last night's and tomorrow night's. The good of exorbitant fees is that it takes only a few of them to meet the mortgage payments and to have an extra steak to toss to the wolf at the door. The damnation of it is that the wolf is so much easier to handle than that beagle. I have the wolf skinned by now, to mix another metaphor, but the beagle stays alive to terrify me.

In this churn of insomnia I could almost let myself into the romantic fraud of self-accusation. I could roll around on this bed of neuroses and relish every itch as the fabric of my twentieth-century hairshirt. But it all turns out a bit too luxurious for my taste.

I told the beagle, with such gentleness as I could master, that his eyes were wrong for any world I know how to look at. And that was all of it. Except that I came small and tired and that I shall leave sleepless and more tired. But any lie that was told was told by his own insomnia, not by mine.

In four days I shall lose him again for months to come. And, blessedly, I shall have my own bed to sleep in. But what I wish right now is that he would get his beagle eyes out of this night's insomnia and let me get one snatch of this night's sleep.

—JOHN CIARDI.

## Visit to Khrushchev

Continued from page 21

ous. When I go up to Moscow next week I expect to serve notice that we will not consider ourselves bound by three inspections. If you can go from three to eight, we can go from three to zero."

He leaned forward in his chair.

"Now there's something else you ought to know," he said. "My atomic scientists have been pressing me hard to allow them to carry on more nuclear tests. They believe that the security of our country requires that we develop new refinements in nuclear weapons. As you know, we have already successfully tested a 100-megaton bomb, but they want to follow this up with more variations. They say the United States has carried out 70 per cent more tests than the Soviet Union and that the world will understand. They want a green light to go ahead; I think I may decide to give it to them. It's time I put the security of my country first."

For a moment or two I said nothing. "Well?" he asked.

"You are looking at a depressed man," I said. "I came here for the purpose of bearing witness to the President's good faith. You have apparently placed little weight on this. Your final response is that you are probably going to resume atmospheric tests. If you do, I cannot imagine that the United States will stand still and let its lead dwindle. So we will test again, and you will test,

and we will test, and so on. This destroys any possibility that other nations can be persuaded not to test. The poisons in the air will multiply. None of this adds either to American or Russian security.

"There is something else that occurs to me at this point," I continued. "Last summer, President Kennedy was informed by a Soviet representative that missile bases were not being installed in Cuba. Perhaps it will be said that this was a misunderstanding. Under the circumstances, perhaps one misunderstanding can cancel out another."

Mr. Khrushchev looked at me severely.

"Very well," he said. "You want me to accept President Kennedy's good faith? All right, I accept President Kennedy's good faith. You want me to believe that the United States sincerely wants a treaty banning nuclear tests? All right, I believe the United States is sincere. You want me to set all misunderstandings aside and make a fresh start? All right, I agree to make a fresh start.

"Now," he said in unmistakably measured tones, "let us forget everything that happened before. Forget all conversations involving Kuznetsov, Dean, Wiesner, Fedorov, and all the others. Now everyone will act in good faith and accept the good faith of everyone else. Very well. The Soviet Union now proposes to the United States a treaty to outlaw nuclear testing—underground, overground, in water, in space, every place. And we will give you something

you don't really need. We will give you inspections inside our country to convince you we aren't really cheating. We make our offer; you accept it, and there's no more nuclear testing. Finished. If the President really wants a treaty, here it is."

"That's precisely the point," I said. "The President has come down a great deal from the original twenty-two inspections but he knows of no way he can come all the way down to three. The Senate would never accept it."

Mr. Khrushchev reached into the breast pocket of his blue suit and took out a "pull-out" watch—that is, a watch encased in a smooth metallic frame; when the two sides of this case are separated to show the time, the action also winds the springs. He toyed with the mechanism.

"We are repeating ourselves," he said. "Just so there is no mistake about it in your mind, let me say finally that I cannot and will not go back to the Council of Ministers and ask them to change our position in order to accommodate the United States again. Why am I always the one who must understand the difficulties of the other fellow? Maybe it's time for the other fellow to understand my position. But you can tell the President I accept his explanation of an honest misunderstanding and suggest that we get moving. But the next move is up to him."

The Chairman asked if there was anything else I wanted to discuss.

I said there was. In lecturing before various groups in the U.S., and in talking about the problem involved in a just and durable peace, I would constantly be confronted by people who would ask: "How can you talk about peace with the Soviet Union in view of the fact that Mr. Khrushchev has already declared war on us? He keeps saying he will bury us."

And so I asked Mr. Khrushchev how he would answer these questions.

"What I meant was, not that I will bury you, but that history will bury you," he said somewhat testily. "Don't blame me if your capitalist system is doomed. I am not going to kill you. I have no intention of murdering 200 million Americans. In fact, I will not even take part in the burial. The workers in your society will bury the system and they will be the pallbearers. Don't ask me when it is going to happen. It may not happen tomorrow or the day after. But it will happen. This is as certain as the rising sun."

I asked Mr. Khrushchev if he would be willing to consider evidence to the contrary.

"Please," he said.

I pointed out that Marx's basic proposition—that the masses of people are



—N. C.

Street scene in Leningrad, before the pictures came down.



## On the Fringe

Continued from page 25

children's book. Do please say that.

"Certain people have said about *Mary Poppins* that it means the miracle behind everyday life. I don't know what it means. There is a Zen saying: 'How marvelous. I cut wood. I carry water.' Doesn't that bear it out?"

"Why did you decide on P. L. Travers as your writing name?" I asked.

Miss Travers looked momentarily wearied, a martyr about to answer a question she has answered a thousand times before. Then she plunged in. "Well, I've already said that there are no such things as children's books. But others think there are. Children's books are looked on as a sideline of literature. A special smile. They are usually thought to be associated with women. I was determined not to have this label of sentimentality put on me so I signed by my initials, hoping people wouldn't bother to wonder if the books were written by a man, woman, or kangaroo. Now, won't you ask me something different?"

I thought. Miss Travers looked hopeful. "You do come from that nice, intelligent magazine. Do ask me something that other reviewers don't."

I shrugged. "Okay. What are you doing Saturday night?"

Miss Travers shrieked, clapped hands, hit the table. "Oh, put that in! That's different. Do put that in!"

The next moment, P. L. Travers—if it were she and not Mary Poppins herself with whom I was sharing a table—was imitating a rose. "My highest joy would be to have a rose named for me."

Her voice dropped to a shy level. "I said it nicely, not demandingly. A Pamela Travers rose. Wouldn't that be nice? Or even better, a Mary Poppins rose."

"A daisy is the child's favorite. It's so open. The daisy and the rose are the two ends of the stick. The rose is never, until the last moment, unfolded."

Her arms came up about her and somehow turned into petals. It's the folded rose, the *secret* rose . . . aaahhhh."

The secret rose, which I suspect is more P. L. Travers than even Mary Poppins, folded herself into a sensible tan raincoat. "Intimate life is the only life I can bear. I'm not interested in the passing scene because it passes."

A smile, a wave, and P. L. Travers, world-famous and happily unknown, slipped away into a grey New York day. On very pretty feet, may I add.

—HASKEL FRANKEL.

### LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

Column Two should read: 4, 13, 8, 14, 1, 3, 6, 10, 12, 15, 16, 5, 2, 9, 7, 11.

SR/November 7, 1964

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impoverished under capitalism—was manifestly untrue in the U.S. In fact, Marx's great failure was that he was unable to predict the profound changes that were to take place within the American economic structure. There was little resemblance between the capitalism Marx wrote about a century ago and the situation today. Instead of enslavement and impoverishment, the economic condition of the large masses of our people was vastly improved over what it was at the time of *Das Kapital*. We still had serious problems, of course. There was still a problem of waste—both with respect to our natural resources and our manpower; the nation was not yet making the most productive use of its Negro citizens. Even here, however, it would be a mistake to ignore important progress.

In any event, Marx had never fully anticipated the fluidity of a free society or the full significance of a considerable lack of acute class consciousness in the U.S. Americans were productive and were improving their lot.

Mr. Khrushchev replied that if Marx were alive today he would not be dismayed by these developments but would say instead that all his predictions would come true. "I repeat," he said, "I have great admiration for the American people. Mark my word, when they become a socialist society, they will have the finest socialist society in the world. They are resourceful, energetic, intelligent, imaginative. What a wonderful thing this will be for them and for the world."

I told Mr. Khrushchev the U.S. would be glad to have his good wishes but I thought it important to point out that notions of historical inevitability or determinism did not really fit American history or the American character. Peaceful coexistence, as I understood it, meant that each state could hold to its institutions and there could still be peace.

"*Harrasho*," he said. ("Just right.")

I knew I had prolonged our talk far beyond any reasonable limits. There was, however, one additional assignment I had been asked to carry out. Rex Stout, the mystery story writer and president of the Authors' League, had empowered me to represent the league in seeking some solution to the copyright tangle with the Soviet Union. For the past ten years various attempts have been made to persuade the Soviet Union to respect American copyright. The main countering argument on the Soviet side was that the Russians read many times more of our books than we did of theirs and that we were therefore proposing an unfair balance of literary trade. Another problem had to do with retroactivity. Publication of American books without authorization in the So-



—N. C.

Leningrad citizen studying theater posters—Will the cultural climate change?

viet Union had been going on a long time; how far back in time would the Soviet liability go?

I told Mr. Khrushchev that the Authors' League authorized me to propose that any copyright agreement would be free of past liability. As of January 1, 1964, say, each country would honor copyright restrictions and seek permission for any literary works originating in the other country. No retroactive payments would be required, although continued publication and distribution of books issued before January 1, 1964, would of course be covered by the new agreement.

Mr. Khrushchev shook his head.

"What kind of a deal is this?" he asked. "You get all the benefits, and what do we get? We publish maybe millions of copies of books by American authors. We read Hemingway, Faulkner, Mitchell Wilson, Jack London, Mark Twain, Sinclair Lewis, and many others. And how many of our writers do your people read? A few of the classical ones but hardly any of the contemporary ones. We are a nation of book readers. You are a nation of television watchers and comic book buyers. How can you propose a deal when you are not in a position to offer anything?"

I told the Chairman that there was increasing interest among Americans in contemporary Soviet authors, but even if this were not the case, it was hardly relevant, one way or the other. American writers were entitled to payment for the use of their words. They also had the right to decide whether their

books should be reprinted. If we could agree on this principle, then we could talk about the entirely separate matter of increasing the availability of Soviet books in the U.S.

"You may think these are separate matters but we do not. I see no chance right now for a copyright agreement," he said. "But we would be glad to talk to you about developing something approaching parity in our literary exchange. Once that is done, we can consider the copyright problem. But, as I say, your country has a long way to go before you can equal ours in the matter of book reading. You know Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Gorki, and one or two others from the old Russia, but you know very little about our living writers—and we have some good ones. And even what you know of Tolstoy is badly corrupted. When I was in the United States several years ago I saw a version of *War and Peace* in comic book form. It was made into a story of terror, wild sex, and brutality. How can you expect poor Tolstoy to rest in his grave with nonsense like that going on?"

I had no defense to offer for the offensive edition of Tolstoy and said so. But the context in which the Chairman made his remarks was incorrect. He said our people did not read books. Not true. Last year, more than 300,000,000 books were sold in the United States. This did not include the comic books or the cheapies he had spoken about. Was he familiar with the large number of serious books now being published and sold in inexpensive paperback form? Again, this

didn't excuse the cheap books but at least the situation was somewhat different from the way he had understood it.

"You are to be congratulated," said the Chairman. "Now if only you can do something about your television, you will be making some real progress. Frankly, I could hardly believe my eyes when I was in the United States, the kind of things you showed on television. If the sadism and violence you show is at all representative of the kind of life you have in America, God help you! All the killing and beatings and cheating and swearing and wife-stealing and immorality. A nation can't help being judged by the things it is interested in.

"But what is most surprising to me is that you apparently have no idea of the kind of harm this is doing to your children. They sit in front of the TV sets for hours at a time and take it all in. What kind of food is this for tender young minds? And you wonder why you have a juvenile delinquency problem. Surely your capitalists, who put on these TV programs, must have some conscience and can be persuaded not to make money out of deforming children's minds," he continued. "And if they can't, why can't your society do something about it? Capitalism isn't just an unjust economic system. It's a way of life that leads to a corruption of important values. Television is only one example."

Once again I asked the Chairman if he would be willing to consider some contrary evidence. And once again he said, "Please."

First, concerning television. I said he made it appear that there was almost

no concern in the United States about this problem. Had it not been called to his attention that the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission had attacked irresponsible programming on television? Was he unaware of the various citizens' groups that had been organized to combat harmful TV? Had he overlooked the numerous articles in the press on the subject? In any event, two important facts had to be stressed. The first was that the American people had freedom of choice. They were not confined to a government station; in many cities they had four or five or more choices. They also had freedom of choice over a wide range of programs dealing with good music, good films, information, and public affairs. They could watch debates over government policy, in which the government itself would be seriously criticized. No penalties would be attached to such criticism. Moreover, some of our large capitalist companies would sponsor important music events or high-quality programs.

Apart from all this, a major development in American television had probably escaped his attention. I referred to the fact that there were now some ninety educational television stations across the U.S. These stations were free of what he called "trash." The fact that they were called "educational" TV stations did not mean that they were used just for institutional purposes. They provided general programs of genuine merit, combining public education with high-level entertainment. The national educational organization that supplied many of the programs for these stations

was financed by a foundation that got its money through the sale of automobiles. Locally, the stations were supported on a community basis, and many capitalistic enterprises contributed to the upkeep of these local stations without commercial announcements or expectation of profit.

The Chairman said he hadn't intended to offend me or arouse me and was glad to learn about all these promising developments in the United States. And he was especially glad to know that so many people were eager to do something about the awful trash on television. He wished them all the luck in the world and said they would probably need it.

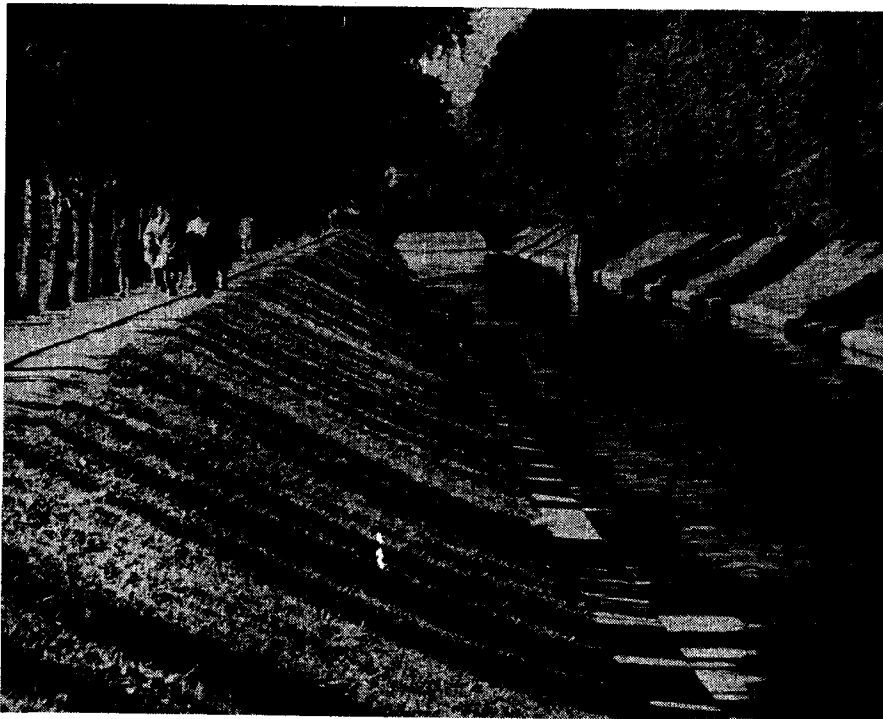
Apart from educational TV, there were other impressive indications, I said, of a healthy growth in the creative and cultural life of America. The fact that one child out of three was taking instrumental lessons in music; the fact that twice as many people attended concerts each year as attended baseball games; the fact that American colleges and universities were now undergoing the greatest expansion in their history—all these facts might indicate that the United States was not as backward or underdeveloped culturally as his earlier remarks would seem to indicate. The Americans were putting their freedom to good use.

The Chairman said he applauded these developments and could only say that if the American people had done this well despite their present system, just think of the kind of progress they would make when they turned socialist. And once again he looked at his pull-out watch.

It was late in the afternoon and the sunlight was waning. I was eager to put a final question to the Chairman. I asked him whether he was discouraged in his stated policy of peaceful relations with the United States and the West in general.

The Chairman said he wanted to believe that the terrible drift to war could be ended and that the two most powerful countries in the world could find some way to live in peace, but that the next move was up to the United States. He looked to President Kennedy, for whom he had high regard, to take the next step. Then he asked me to convey his greetings to the President and Mrs. Kennedy.

My daughters and their escort approached the terrace. We stood up to greet them. The girls had been swimming in the Chairman's pool (later, they told me that they had used Mr. Khrushchev's trunks—"they ballooned out like life preservers"). Then we all walked back to the main house. I thanked the Chairman for being so generous with his time. We got into the car and left.



Strollers in Leningrad—Could the drift to war be ended?