

Post 7/15/67

Khrushchev Takes Credit For JFK Vote

NEW YORK (AP) — Nikita S. Khrushchev, ruminating on his years in power, assesses the late President John F. Kennedy as "a real statesman" but calls former Vice President Richard M. Nixon a "good for nothing—an unprincipled puppet."

The former Soviet premier claims the Kremlin helped Kennedy to victory over Nixon in the 1960 presidential election by ignoring Nixon's request that U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers be released from a Soviet prison.

In a National Broadcasting Co. television program Tuesday night, Khrushchev was also quoted as saying President Dwight D. Eisenhower was a good man but fell too easily under the influence of his aides and subordinates.

"If I were to compare the two American presidents whom I met, the comparison would obviously not be in favor of Eisenhower," said Khrushchev, speaking from his dacha or country house near Moscow.

He recounted a conversation he said he had with Kennedy in Vienna in 1961 during which he said he told the late president, "The fact that you became president was due to us. We made you president."

Khrushchev said Nixon had asked that Powers be released "and if we had done it, he would have received half a million votes just for that. Because that would have shown that Nixon could have established better contacts with the Soviet Union.

"But we guessed his plans. We decided not to give him any answer, and just to give it to you when you moved into the White House. That is the way I voted for you and our votes pulled you over the line," Khrushchev said he told Kennedy.

Actually Powers was not released until 1962. NBC said it was the captured RB47 fliers who were released upon Kennedy's entering the White House. Ekdwin Newman, the narrator, said Nixon declined comment on the story.

NBC said the tape and film for the hour-long program were obtained from private sources inside the Soviet Union.

The program Tuesday night began an hour late due to the extra-inning All-Star baseball game.