

A New Kennedy Wave Hits Moscow

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By Gary Lee
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Feb. 5—Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) arrived here this week to encounter a revival of the Kennedy family mystique in the form of a best-selling book and a popular play presenting sympathetic views about him and his brothers.

"For the first time on our stage we are showing the American president with sympathy," said Fyodor Burlatsky, author of "The Burden of Decision," a fast-paced one-act play about John and Robert Kennedy during their confrontation with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

"The Kennedy Brothers," a 470-page book published last year, says that "at a time when militarism and anti-Sovietism have been increasing in U.S. foreign policy," Edward Kennedy "has been a counterweight to the Reagan administration."

The play, which grew out of an extensive newspaper

article by Burlatsky in 1983, is a vehicle for an official Soviet reexamination of the Kennedy era and the missile crisis. "I tried to show that a breaking point happened in the course of the Cuban missile crisis," Burlatsky said in an interview, "a breaking point that was not appraised by our historians or researchers. A change came about in both Kennedy's and Khrushchev's consciousnesses. They both came to understand that nuclear war is unthinkable."

Featuring an elegant and impassioned Kennedy clan—including Jacqueline in a bar scene with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and Frank Sinatra and scenes of Pierre Salinger shuffling in and out of secret meetings with a Soviet diplomat in Washington—the play presents a new direction and a few of the foibles in Soviet theatrical portrayals of Americans.

It represents "an element of our new approach that shows the American people objectively, according to

See KENNEDY, A20, Col. 3



Kennedy and Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze talk through interpreter.
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Soviets Nurture Kennedy Mystique

KENNEDY, From A19

our understanding," said Burlatsky, a journalist and academician.

At the same time, Burlatsky admitted that much of the nuance and many of his jokes fell flat in the Soviet actors' mouths. "Our actors don't know America," he said. "And they don't know Americans."

The play, which opened here two weeks ago, depicts the former president, caught in the throes of a nuclear showdown with Moscow, in emotional, if overdramatized scenes. In one, seized by back pains, he falls to his knees, screaming for his wife's help. In another, he and Robert pray for the strength to "love thy enemy as thyself."

In the end, Kennedy—still the best-remembered and most-revered U.S. president among Soviets—is martyred for compromising with the Communists. After deep thought, Kennedy strikes a deal with the Kremlin, recognizing communist Cuba and avoiding nuclear war. In so doing, he rejects Hoover's warnings that such a move will cost him his life.

He walks away, and there is a flash of light and a loud shot.

Burlatsky said he based the play on U.S. and Soviet documents of the Cuban missile crisis and culled much of the dialogue directly from the public record. He gained firsthand insights into the crisis by his service on a Communist Party Central Committee group advising on the missile crisis at the time.

More recently, conversations with Kennedy intimates, including former White House adviser Ted Sorensen, press secretary Pierre Salinger, and

defense secretary Robert McNamara broadened his perspective.

"The Kennedy Brothers", released late last year in Moscow, is a biographical sketch of Robert, John and Edward Kennedy. It was written by Anatoly Gromyko, son of Soviet President Andrei Gromyko, and Andrei Kokoshin of the U.S.A. and Canada Institute.

It scans the political lives of the three brothers, preserving the Kennedy mystique of a near-regal American political dynasty.

Whole chapters are devoted to some of the U.S.-Soviet crises of the Kennedy administration, including the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the 1961 Berlin blockade. And the three brothers' influence on domestic American political events are treated in some detail.

But the authors leave gaps in both the foreign and domestic policy accounts. A long chapter on Edward Kennedy's 1980 presidential bid against Jimmy Carter offers such details as the amount of money he spent but glosses over the personal issues that plagued his campaign.

A thorough account of the 1961 Vienna summit between John Kennedy and Khrushchev defines Kennedy's stance on key issues, such as Laos. However, the authors mention that Khrushchev headed the Soviet delegation but do not touch on the lingering images, emerging during the talks, of the general secretary haranguing the U.S. president.

Edward Kennedy arrived in Moscow yesterday for a three-day visit at the invitation of the Supreme Soviet, or legislature. He met with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze today.