

# TV: A Study of Khrushchev Living in Retirement

N.B.C. Presents Vivid  
Portrait in Films

By JACK GOULD

**A**N electronic epitaph to the life and times of Nikita S. Khrushchev was put together from a variety of pictorial sources last night for a vivid portrait of the deposed Soviet Premier.

Extraordinary interest in the National Broadcasting Company network hour program was generated by the prospect of enticing historical footnotes, particularly Mr. Khrushchev's recent assessment of world figures who had won his approbation or disdain. A viewer might have been excused for anticipating a landmark Communist revelation that was going to crack the Kremlin plaster.

But, as so often happens in television, pictures rather than words had the greater impact. From the program's outset the viewer could only be stunned by how the advancing years and the Soviet political fates had drained the energy and fire from the ebullient figure who had brought the world to the nuclear edge.

In exceptional close-ups obtained in home movies, Mr. Khrushchev often appeared as a bent and spent human, his face and posture reflecting the weariness and loneliness of retirement's boredom. One who had achieved the pinnacle of controversial prominence now is the forgotten gardener of his own patch of reminiscences. N.B.C.'s documentary was a valuable illustration for state papers of the present, but the program may be longer remembered as a vignette of old age transcending dogma and language.

In the tedious patois of Kremlinology the former Premier was described by N.B.C. as an "unperson," an exile in his own country after he had been dropped from power nearly three years ago. But the program's theme was more universal than that: the absorbing story of the vulnerability of the mighty everywhere. On the screen there were fleeting reminders of the stocky Khrushchev in all

his peasant vigor. But there was also the first lapses in memory of a mind now bereft of all challenge save for endless rumination.

The heart of the documentary, entitled "Khrushchev in Exile: His Opinions and Revelations," was the pictorial and aural insight into Mr. Khrushchev's unenviable routine in his state-maintained dacha outside of Moscow.



Nikita S. Khrushchev at dinner table with Mrs. Khrushchev and their granddaughter Julia. Father, Leonid, was killed at Stalingrad. Scene is Khrushchev villa near Moscow.

Mrs. Lucy Jarvis, the N.B.C. producer who some day may convert the Taj Mahal into a color studio, discovered in Victor Louis, a celebrated Muscovite door-opener, a means of access to Mr. Khrushchev's lodgings and thoughts. Her prize was extensive movie footage, tape recordings and the type of informational data that has sure-fire appeal to the housebound TV viewer: seeing how somebody else lives.

The program showed Mr. Khrushchev's austere bedroom with its collection of mementos, a few magazines and a record player that was a gift from Gamal Abdel Nasser. The narration cited the menus of a man put on a diet because of gall bladder trouble. No hard liquors and bland porridge, beef, tea, herring and soup have lightened Mr. Khrushchev by 20 pounds.

The N.B.C. program, for which Edwin Newman did the narration, and Frank Gervasi did the script, demonstrated that Mr. Khrushchev's main physical activity is now long walks within the seven acres of his compound, treks on which he is apt to take a transistor radio or exotic camera equipment.

But "Khrushchev in Exile. His Opinions and Revelations" actually proved to be an instance of oversimplified labeling. With the aid of superb family photographs the program related Mr. Khrushchev's hard and difficult childhood, his slow rise through the Communist hierarchy, the hints of dark and devious compromises to promote his own advance-

ment, the ruthlessness of his foremanship in the construction of the Moscow subway, his agility in the Kremlin game of musical chairs, his hectic world travels and finally the heady intoxication of disciplined adulation from obedient masses in Red Square.

Mr. Khrushchev's assorted remarks about Mao Tse-tung, a "petit bourgeois," his relatively compassionate analysis of Stalin after his earlier denunciation of the despot and his comparisons of President Kennedy and President Eisenhower contributed topicality to the documentary, but some of the edge to these sequences was lost because of their release prior to the program.

By air time about the only hard news remaining was the complete detail on Mr. Khrushchev's marked disapproval of Richard M. Nixon, whom he described as "a good for nothing." Mr. Nixon declined N.B.C.'s invitation to indulge in a rebuttal.

Mr. Khrushchev's taped comments, which were presented as an off-camera supplement to his wanderings about his country place or offered against a background of pertinent newsreel clippings, were translated into English for American TV purposes. In the original Russian their syntax and saltiness reportedly held especial interest for bilingual connoisseurs of explicit phraseology and grammar. The interests of history, one would think, might dictate the preparation of an accurate transcript from raw tapes prior to any discreet laundering of helpful punctuation.

The portrait of Mr. Khrushchev before and after his formidable moment on the global stage was neither all puff nor pan but within an hour's running time, less recesses for the usual spot announcements, there was an absorbing study of one who seemed anything but an unperson.

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