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## Coming to America

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# 1. Coming to America

*Whether you like it or not, history is on our side.*

—Khrushchev

*Tuesday, September 15, 1959.*

The former President of the United States left the Carlyle Hotel on East Seventy Sixth Street in New York City and set out on a brisk morning walk, a puffing press corps in tow. As he quickly made his way down Madison Avenue, Harry S. Truman expounded upon the latest crisis du jour: juvenile delinquency. Not enough discipline, he said. Very soon, the impromptu, ambulatory press conference predictably turned to the news on everyone's mind—Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet Premier, later that day would be landing at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, D.C. A reporter asked if it was a good idea for President Eisenhower to invite the Soviet boss to this country. "Well, we'll have to wait and see," Truman replied noncommittally. "I invited Stalin to come but he wouldn't; he was afraid to come."

"Afraid of what?"

"He didn't want to leave his country, which was in turmoil. They were still killing people to keep him in power. My experience with Stalin was not a happy one. He broke every agreement with President Roosevelt and myself. That's what started the 'cold war.'"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Look*, September 15, 1959, 24 ("Whether you like"); *WP*, September 14, 1959, A10; August 4, 1959, A14; *NYT*, September 16, 1959, 21 ("Well, we'll have to"); Truman to Stalin, March 19, 1946; Stalin to

Truman had, as he said, invited Stalin to the United States, not once but twice. In both instances, the pathologically paranoid Stalin begged off. But when Truman's Republican successor, Dwight Eisenhower, asked Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, to visit America, the premier quickly accepted. Khrushchev's eagerness to see the United States was well-known. A political cartoon by Herbert Block in the *Washington Post* depicted Khrushchev sitting in the Kremlin—his bags packed, his hat on, a U.S.A. guidebook in hand—impatiently awaiting an invitation. For years he had hoped for the chance to come to America; during the Geneva Summit of 1955, he tried unsuccessfully to get an invitation. And when his daughter Rada and son-in-law Alexei Adzhubei—the editor-in-chief of the official government daily newspaper *Izvestia*—returned from an American visit in 1956 laden with photographs of America's scenic wonders, towering skyscrapers, and jammed California freeways, Khrushchev declared, "I've got to see it for myself."<sup>3</sup>

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At the very moment Harry Truman was speaking to the press, Nikita Khrushchev was en route to America. Early that morning— Radio Moscow proclaimed that Khrushchev had embarked on a mission of world peace—a line of Russian-built Zil limousines had sped through Moscow to the Vnukovo Airport. Amid well-wishers, children bearing bouquets of flowers, and a long line of foreign

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Truman, April 6, 1946; see also telegram (copy), Walter Bedell Smith to Jimmy Byrnes, April 5, 1946, Box 164, PSF; *Chicago American*, August 27, 1959 ("small scale politician"), clipping in Vertical File; see also Truman to Dave Fidler, January 6, 1960, Box 26, Post Presidential File, TL;

<sup>3</sup> *Newsweek*, September 21, 1959, 41 ("for myself"); see A Portrait of Khrushchev, n.d., Box 52, IS, AWF, EL.

ambassadors, Khrushchev boarded a gargantuan airplane—the Tupolev 114 turbo-prop airliner—for the eleven hour, non-stop flight to Washington.<sup>4</sup>

Since Josef Stalin’s death in 1953, Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders had begun to venture beyond the Iron Curtain, visiting Western Europe, Asia, and the Subcontinent. In 1956, Khrushchev—along with Nikolai Bulganin, with whom Khrushchev ostensibly shared power at the time—toured England, the first time a Soviet leader had visited an allied power. The British press cheekily dubbed the duo “B & K,” but the shared arrangement was doomed from the start; the colorless Bulganin was soon outmaneuvered by the irrepressible Khrushchev, who, by 1956, had seized power and was the indisputable leader of the USSR.

Sixty-five years old in 1959, Khrushchev was a bald, squat man who seethed with energy and ambition and possessed an uncanny instinct for survival—he had lived through World War II, Stalin’s capricious, murderous purges, and the vicious internecine political maneuvering following the dictator’s death. Once in power, however, Khrushchev quickly demonstrated that he meant to break from Russia’s Stalinist past. In February 1956 at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—a conference attended by Communist leaders from fifty-six countries—Khrushchev, in his keynote address, stridently denounced Stalin and the torture and executions he ordered. It was, according to Khrushchev’s best biographer “the bravest and most reckless thing he ever did,” no mean feat in a career full of bravery and recklessness. The speech stunned the attendees and, while intended to be confidential, was soon published

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<sup>4</sup> FF, 46-47; Irving R. Levine, Main Street, *U.S.S.R.* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959), 237.

throughout the world. Khrushchev's words raised hopes in the west and encouraged anti-communist dissidents behind the Iron Curtain. Yet when Hungarians rose up against the Soviet-backed regime later that year, Khrushchev sent in the implacable Red Army and thousands were killed and tens of thousands more banished. Thereafter, any hope of significant reform behind the Iron Curtain died and Hungary stood as a hideous reminder of what the Soviets were capable of. The Hungarian suppression not only dashed western hopes for *rapprochement*, it cast an unmistakable pall, three years later, over the premier's visit to America.<sup>5</sup>

In Russia itself, however, Khrushchev was less a coarse despot and more a shrewd politician. He abolished Stalin's political tribunals that had condemned thousands to death, he partially relaxed restrictions on arts and literature, and in 1958, he unveiled a Seven-Year Plan designed to raise Soviet living standards to a level comparable to those of the dynamic capitalist nations. But whether a reformer, a despot, or an eager visitor to the United States, Khrushchev remained a true believer of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and most Kremlin watchers didn't expect the trip to alter the premier's conviction of the inevitability of communism's ultimate victory.

Yet Khrushchev's preconceptions of capitalist societies in general, and America in particular, had but a tenuous relation to the realities of 1959. As American analysts of Khrushchev's personality noted, "his understanding of the West is based on Marxist clichés." A month before Khrushchev's arrival, the *New York Times Magazine* produced a digest of the dictator's statements; capitalism had "enslaved" America, a land where, he insisted, "poverty and mass

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<sup>5</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 274

unemployment reign.” Congress, he thought—devoid of “real workers,” “ordinary farmers,” and all but a few token women and blacks—was the handmaiden of dominant capital. Party distinctions mattered little, for Democratic and Republican leaders alike served “the interests of the ruling classes—the capitalists, bankers, land magnates and big business men.” Khrushchev’s visit, in some instances, disabused the premier of certain preconceptions; in other cases, however, his suspicions were duly confirmed.<sup>6</sup>

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High above the Atlantic Ocean on that fall morning in 1959, Nikita Khrushchev could reflect on his improbable ascent to the pinnacle of the communist world. His story began in an earthen hut in the impoverished Russian village of Kalinovka near the Ukrainian border in April 1894. Little in his family’s story suggested that his life would vary from that of millions of peasants who toiled in grinding poverty under the Tsarist Regime. “My grandfather was a serf,” he once said, “the property of a landlord who could sell him if he wished, or trade him for a hunting dog.” Khrushchev’s father farmed in the growing season and worked in the Donbas coal mines during Russia’s

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<sup>6</sup> *LAE*, September 18, 1959, 1; *WP*, September 14, 1959, A1, A10; *FF*, 46 (“supreme social problem”), 49; see Levine, *Main Street, U.S.S.R.*, 224; *WSJ*, July 14, 1959, 10 (“popular American assumption”); Edward Crankshaw, “Man Behind the Masks,” *Life*, December 2, 1957, 158; *WP*, September 16, 1959, A12; A Portrait of Khrushchev, n.d., Box 52, IS, AWF; Khrushchev: The Man and His Outlook (Background Paper); September 11, 1959; *NYTM*, August 16, 1959, 16, 73, 75. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 299; Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, 331-32; A Portrait of Khrushchev, n.d.; Khrushchev biographical material re Khrushchev Visit, September 4, 1959, Box 52, IS, AWF; see also Biographic Reports, September 8, 1959, Box 64, CF, WHCF, EL.

brutal winters. Young Nikita was introduced early to the rigors of Russian peasantry, herding the landlord's livestock as a boy—he later boasted that he went to work when he learned to walk. By the time he was fourteen, Nikita had joined his father in the mines, dislodging slag from boilers. It was there that young Khrushchev became intimately acquainted with the crude and dispiriting working conditions brought about by Russia's Industrial Revolution, truncated though it was: scores killed by explosions or buried alive in mine collapses, meager wages, ghastly sanitation, deadening routine, and a countryside laden with coal dust. Predictably, crime and alcoholism flourished, and Donbas became an embodiment of every evil laid at capitalism's door, a region so stereotypically oppressive that Khrushchev once remarked that Marx must have "actually been at the mines" as he formulated his doctrines. His experience convinced him that capitalists, regardless of nationality, were "all alike"—demanding arduous labor in return for a pittance. And so he became a communist.<sup>7</sup>

He might have taken a different path. Although young Nikita received little formal education, he had shown real academic potential—he had, ironically, attended a church school for a while and earned a prize, he later recalled, "because I knew the gospel by heart." His father, however, would have none of it: "After a year or two," Nikita remembered, "I had learnt to count up to thirty and my father decided that was enough of schooling. He said I would never have more than thirty rubles to count anyway." Khrushchev always regretted that he possessed "no education and not enough culture. . . . All I had was four classes in a church school and then, instead of high school, just a smattering of higher education." But looking back, he insisted that life itself had taught him well: "It thrashes and bangs and teaches

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<sup>7</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 31

you.” The Donbas mines, Khrushchev claimed, were “the working man’s Cambridge, a ‘university’ for the unfortunate people of Russia.”<sup>8</sup>

Although Khrushchev would later attempt to elide his peasant origins, he worked diligently a rising Communist official and later as premier to improve the wretchedness of life in the countryside, to narrow the chasm between rural poverty and urban affluence. Late in his career he often visited Kalinovka and saw to it that it modernized, as if he believed it to be his personal responsibility to drag Russian peasants into the twentieth century.

At twenty, Nikita escaped the mines by way of a metalworking apprenticeship and soon married Yefrosinia Pisareva, a daughter of a mine elevator operator with whom he had two children. They lived—for the time and place—a fairly comfortable life in a commodious apartment. “Years later, after the Revolution,” he candidly admitted in his memoirs, “it was painful for me to remember that as a worker under capitalism I’d had much better living conditions than my fellow workers now living under Soviet power.”<sup>9</sup>

Khrushchev might have lived out his life as a member of the Russian petit bourgeoisie, perhaps rising to factory manager or entering the professions as an engineer. But the young man stood at the intersection of war and revolution. Just as Nikita and his wife began their lives together, the Great War erupted, a conflagration that would destroy Russia’s Tsarist Regime and convince young Nikita to become a radical political leader, that would take Harry Truman off his

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<sup>8</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 43-44 (“no education”), 75;

<sup>9</sup> *NYT*, September 12, 1971, 78-79; *KRLT*, 87-88 (“Years later”); Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 18-29 (“After a year;” “the idiocy of;” “no matter how hard”), 30-41; also Khrushchev’s memoirs partly quoted on 40; Daniel Schorr, *Staying Tuned: A Life in Journalism* (New York and other cities: Washington Square Press, 2001), 113 (“Later”).

Missouri farm and sent him to Europe, that would, in time, create in Adolf Hitler such a seething hatred that he would initiate another, still more catastrophic conflagration.

After the communist revolution of 1917, Khrushchev joined the Rutenkovo Soviet and fought with the Red Guards of the Ninth Army in the Ukraine during the Russian Civil War. Although by temperament far closer to the more moderate Mensheviks, Khrushchev belatedly and reluctantly joined the ruthless Bolsheviks in 1918. Attached to the army's political department, Khrushchev recruited troops into communist units, but he persuaded them not with Marxist dogma but with the pragmatic argument that the revolution and their personal goals were intertwined.

While Khrushchev was fighting to advance the revolution, his wife died of typhus, leaving him with two small children. He soon remarried a young and troubled single mother, but the marriage was unhappy from the start and quickly fell apart—a shattering episode that was long kept a family secret. Nikita's third marriage to Nina Petrovna Kukharchu in 1924, however, lasted the rest of his life. Young, intelligent, and a committed communist, Nina ran the Khrushchev household with a firm hand and rigorously instilled high expectations in both her three children and two step-children. Nikita and Nina's son Sergei, born in 1935, recalled that although no one questioned his father's authority, the "real power in the family was exercised by Mama." The uncomplaining, smiling, stout, grandmotherly persona she exhibited during her American odyssey was authentic, but it belied her intelligence and determination.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 37-61 ("wasn't a man of;" "But real"), 70, 109, 111, 113, 156-58; *NYT*, September 26, 1959, 12; August 22, 1984, D23; Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev*, 11, 22-23.

Khrushchev's rise in the Communist Party, meanwhile, continued apace. He rose from a minor position in his mining town of Yuzovka, to party leadership in Petrovo-Marinsky, to historic Kiev, and finally to Moscow itself. By 1930 he was a party secretary, a protégé of Lazar M. Kaganovich, the Stalinist Ukrainian leader who ironically would participate in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Khrushchev decades later. By the mid-1930s, Nikita had made his way into Stalin's inner circle, a distinctly dangerous environment, given Stalin's murderous paranoia. Although Khrushchev was hardworking, ambitious, intelligent, and well-connected, there were hundreds of apparatchiks just like him who fell victim to the purges. "I remember the oppressive circumstances in Moscow during the period from 1934 to 1939," recalled Andrei Gromyko. "People would walk along the street with tense expressions on their faces. Workers and staff in institutes and enterprises were afraid to talk to each other, unless they were close friends. It was well known that every night the NKVD [the Soviet secret police] were 'taking' people, as we said then. . . . Nothing would be heard from them again." Of those who served with Khrushchev on the Communist Party Central Committee in the mid-1930s, nearly three-quarters were arrested and executed within five years. In the end, Khrushchev was one of the few left standing, a man who would eventually denounce Stalin and help bury his cult of personality.<sup>11</sup>

Khrushchev, according to one of his staffers, possessed "great natural gifts," including the ability to improvise and, when the situation

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<sup>11</sup> *NYT*, September 12, 1971, 79; Andrei Gromyko, *Memoirs* (New York and other cities: Doubleday, 1989), 365 ("I remember the"); Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, Inc., 2007); Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 73-74 ("holocaust").

called for it, to act boldly. Khrushchev as well had a gift for establishing rapport with subordinates. In the mid-1930s, while he was a member of the Central Committee and party boss of Moscow Province, Khrushchev painstakingly oversaw the construction of the capital's grand Metro subway. As the work progressed, he would descend into the tunnels with the laborers, occasionally manning a jackhammer and speaking to the workers in their own crude lingo. His peers nicknamed him "Comrade Lavatory Lover" because of his insistence that the workers be given adequate facilities. Khrushchev also oversaw the distribution of ration cards, rooted out corruption, and encouraged hungry Muscovite workers to raise more of their own food.<sup>12</sup>

Through it all, Khrushchev was a survivor. Other communist leaders thought him Stalin's "liubimchik," his pet—Stalin himself thought of Khrushchev as the "jolly Cossack" and shook with laughter as he made him dance the hopak at the dictator's Blizhnyaya dacha. With no discernable ambition, Khrushchev seemed, according to Fedor Burlatsky, "just a reliable executor of another's will." But Burlatsky, a speechwriter and intimate advisor of Khrushchev's, knew his boss was no fool. Although seemingly benign and willing to passively suffer humiliation, Khrushchev was biding his time. As one historian discerned, "Khrushchev's bright porcine eyes, chunky physique and

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<sup>12</sup> *NYT*, September 12, 1971, 77, 78 ("My grandfather was;" "all alike"), 79; Fedor Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring* (1988; translation by Daphne Skillen; London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1991), 1, 44 ("in the miner's"); *Time*, January 6, 1958, 17 ("Comrade Lavatory"); Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 90-91 ("I had to make up;" "gaps in education"), 317-18, 369.

toothy smile with its golden teeth exuded primitive coarseness and Promethean energy but camouflaged his cunning.”<sup>13</sup>

Impressed with Khrushchev’s obedience and energy, Stalin in early 1938 dispatched him to the Ukraine, where Khrushchev made his base of operations for the next eleven years.

Aside from Russia itself, Ukraine was the USSR’s most valued possession, a region whose economic and cultural vitality extended back to Kiev’s imperial ascendancy in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. But thereafter the region had been subjugated and dismembered by Russians and Hapsburgs, and Stalin ruthlessly eliminated any remaining nationalist sentiment. From his sumptuous dacha, Khrushchev cultivated the Ukrainian intellectual and scientific community and won praise for the region’s increased agricultural and industrial productivity. Yet under his watch the atrocities continued, including arrests, forced confessions, and executions.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, and inevitably, serving as he did as a lackey of Stalin, Khrushchev was complicit in the madman’s crimes—“My arms are bloody up to the elbows,” he despondently admitted in retirement. “That is the most terrible thing that lies in my soul.” Burlatsky claimed that Khrushchev played an essential role in the purges of the 1930s, and, indeed, in recently opened Russian archives, Khrushchev’s

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<sup>13</sup> Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 1, 42-43 (“If Brutus;” “jolly Cossack”); see *Time*, January 6, 1958, 17; William J. Tompson, *Khrushchev: A Political Life* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 105; see Harrison Salisbury, “Khrushchev: Shift in Soviet Path,” *NYT*, September 12, 1971, 77. See also Simon S. Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 168 (“meteoric bumpkin”), 175

<sup>14</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 114-46; see also Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 56-60

signature appears side by side with Stalin's on many of the documents condemning people to "liquidation."<sup>15</sup>

During World War II—Russia's "Great Patriotic War"—Khrushchev rose to the rank of lieutenant general, although his war record was uneven at best. He oversaw the successful defenses of key urban centers such as Stalingrad and Kursk, but he also supervised the disastrous Kharkov offensive of May 1942 that resulted in almost 300,000 casualties. If nothing else, he, like survivors of the war, was left at the end of it all with a profound abhorrence of war.

In 1945 the devastation in Russia was staggering: Twenty-seven million dead, hundreds of towns and villages destroyed, tens of thousands of factories leveled, thousands of miles of rail lines wrecked, and nearly a third of the wealth of the Soviet Union wiped out. In the Ukraine, the devastation was worse still: two million deported to German labor camps and one in six dead. Conditions scarcely improved during "peacetime," in part because of Khrushchev's renewal of collectivized agriculture and his brutal suppression of nationalist uprisings. In all, Soviet authorities executed some 200,000 countrymen after 1945 and sent twice as many into exile or prison. Yet Khrushchev weirdly intermingled such brutal methods with a sincere desire to improve the lives of the Ukrainians. He directed the region's economic reconstruction and even risked his life by challenging Stalin's orders he thought detrimental to his homeland.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Nina Khrushcheva, "The day Khrushchev buried Stalin," *Los Angeles Times* online, February 19, 2006 ("up to the elbows;" "kindly old") (February 22, 2006). Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 1, 56 ("The gloomiest")

<sup>16</sup> *U.S. News & World Report*, September 7, 1959, 62-63; Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev: A Career* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 137-47; Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 149-207; see *KR*, 165-226.

By late 1949, Khrushchev, always the survivor, was back in Moscow and back in Stalin's inner circle, albeit in a diminished capacity. Yet over the next few years, he rose in the bureaucracy if for no other reason than Stalin murdered most every official ahead of him; by the time Stalin died in 1953, only Khrushchev and the colorless Bulganin were left, both of them saved by their self-evident lack of charisma.<sup>17</sup>

Even as Stalin lay dying, few would have thought that Khrushchev would eventually succeed him. Hours before his demise, Stalin parceled out positions like a robber baron on his deathbed: Georgy Malenkov would become the head of the Soviet state; Lavrentiy Beria would command the secret police; Vyacheslav Molotov would take the foreign ministry; and Khrushchev would oversee agriculture, although he was secretly assured he would also get command of the military. Despite these bequests, plots and counterplots swirled even as mourners filled Red Square; each of the presumptive heirs conspired to eliminate their rivals.<sup>18</sup>

The new leaders, like Stalin, wholly underrated this Ukrainian “jolly Cossack.” After becoming First Secretary of the Communist Party in 1953, Khrushchev sensed his opening when Bulganin—a man who inspired confidence in no one—became Prime Minister in 1955. Slowly but inexorably, Khrushchev assumed parity then superiority and swiftly pushed Bulganin aside. After the putative co-leaders met with

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<sup>17</sup> Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (New York and other cities: Oxford University Press, 2004), 93, 94, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen* (New York: Random House, 2004), 460-66; Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 248-57, Tompson, *Khrushchev*, 120-22; Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), 459-60, 585-90; *KRGF*, 100.

U.S. officials at the Geneva Summit that summer, it quickly became apparent who was the first among equals. President Eisenhower, after Khrushchev summarily dismissed America's "Open Skies" initiative—an audacious proposal that would allow each nation to conduct aerial surveillance of the other's military capabilities—knew, as he later wrote, "who was the real boss" of the Soviet Union. In all, Khrushchev had, as Saul Bellow put it, "what it took to finish the course: the nerves, the control, the patience, the piercing ambition, the strength to kill and to endure the threat of death."<sup>19</sup>

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No matter how callously Nikita Khrushchev pursued his ambitions, he genuinely wanted to improve the lives of the Soviet people. Once having assumed power, he freed millions from the gulags, eased censorship, lifted economic restrictions, and helped create cultural contacts. Relieved Russians called it simply "The Thaw."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 94; Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 370 ("a fool"); Tompson, *Khrushchev*, 135-42; Roy Medvedev and Zhores Medvedev, *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 4; John L. Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 72-73; DDE to C.D. Jackson, September 23, 1959, *PDDE*, XX, 1670 ("who was the real boss"); Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 519-22; see also CBS Reports, "Eisenhower on the Presidency," Part II, as broadcast over CBS Television Network, Thursday, November 23, 1961, 19, (an interview of Eisenhower by Walter Cronkite), typed copy in Series I, Box 1, WJFP; Saul Bellow, "Literary Notes on Khrushchev," *It All Adds Up*, 33.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev's Russia* (Middlesex and other cities: Penguin Books, 1959), 99-139 ("The Great Thaw," "that the Communist idea").

Yet the thaw was partial at best and certainly did not signal the onset of artistic freedom, as USSR's premier poet, Boris Pasternak, soon discovered. In 1957, the publication of his novel *Doctor Zhivago* enraged Soviet officials, who tried to suppress the book, thinking it anti-Bolshevik. The story revolved around Dr. Yuri Zhivago, a fiercely independent individual struggling against collectivism in Revolutionary Russia. American authorities—believing the book to have “great propaganda value”—instructed the CIA to smuggle translated editions into Russia and distribute copies as widely as possible. The book and its suppression, they believed, was an “opportunity to make Soviet citizens wonder what is wrong with their government, when a fine literary work by the man acknowledged to be the greatest living Russian writer is not even available in his own country in his own language for his own people to read.”<sup>21</sup>

*Doctor Zhivago* quickly became an international bestseller and was eventually translated into seventeen languages. When it was awarded the 1958 Nobel Prize for Literature, Pasternak became a celebrity in the West and made the cover of *Time*. But the novel deeply embarrassed Russian officials and Pasternak was told in no uncertain terms that if he went to Stockholm to receive his prize he would not be allowed back into Russia. The cowed Pasternak refused the prize, comparing himself to “a beast in an enclosure” whose only solace was

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<sup>21</sup> *Washington Post*, April 5, 2014; CIA memos available at <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/page/world/the-cia-and-doctor-zhivago-memo-from-april-24-1958/922/> and <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/page/world/the-cia-and-doctor-zhivago-explore-the-cache-of-documents/924/> accessed April 10, 2014. The CIA's work in this regard wasn't uncommon; the agency distributed approximately 10 million copies of books and magazines behind the Iron Curtain. Peter Finn and Petra Couvee, *The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book* (New York: Pantheon, 2014).

that “I am near my grave,” and begged to be allowed to remain in his homeland. In America, Eisenhower professed to be “shocked” and saddened that such “a creative mind” was told, in essence, ““you will either write what we say or you won’t write.”” Eleanor Roosevelt, during a visit to the Soviet Union in 1958, gently lobbied Khrushchev on Pasternak’s behalf; the artist, she said, clearly loved his country and its people. At the end of it all, the affair exposed the fact that Russia had not so completely broken with the ways of Stalin; though life was better, repression continued.<sup>22</sup>

As embarrassed as the Soviets were by the Pasternak affair, they were equally proud of their achievements in space exploration. In October 1957 Russia launched the world’s first man-made satellite, *Sputnik*; a month later, *Sputnik II* followed, carrying the first living creature—a doomed dog named Laika—into space. Meanwhile, Russia continued to make significant advances in Intercontinental Ballistic Missile technology. America now confronted not only a Soviet Union armed with nuclear weapons but possessed of the capability to deliver them anywhere on the planet.

And then, just three days before Khrushchev’s arrival, the Soviets slammed *Lunik II*, an 860-pound missile, into the surface of the moon. It was the first time humans had made contact with an

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<sup>22</sup> *Time*, December 15, 1958, 80-82, 85-86, 88 (“reminds men that”). The President’s News Conference of November 5, 1958, *PPPE*, 1958, 830 (“shocked”); *KRLT*, 76-77; 77fn; Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 383-86; Service, *Modern Russia*, 365; *NYT*, February 17, 1959; ER to Khrushchev, November 5, 1958, Box 3577; see also Mikhail Menshikov to ER, November 22, 1958, Box 3595, ERP; Service, *Stalin*, 594; *Time*, April 30, 1956, 29-30; *NYT*, October 8, 1957, 10. Khrushchev didn’t get around to reading the novel until he had retired. After reading it, he said “we shouldn’t have banned it. I should have read it myself. There’s nothing anti-Soviet in it.” Taubman, 628.

extraterrestrial object, and it was yet another first for the USSR. American missile technology, meanwhile, literally could not get off the ground. In response to Sputnik launches of late 1957, America inaugurated Project Vanguard and with great publicity, attempted to put a small, six pound TV3 satellite into orbit. On December 6, 1957, the Vanguard rocket rose four feet and promptly exploded as millions watched on live television. The failure of “Kapatnik,” as it was instantly labeled by the American media, wasn’t the last; of ten subsequent Vanguard launches over the next two years, only three actually made it into orbit.<sup>23</sup>

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As Khrushchev’s visit approached, journalists and pundits cranked out endless stories on the visitor and his land, effectively debriefing the American public. Former *New York Times*’ Moscow Bureau chief William Jordan wrote in the *New York Times* Sunday magazine two days before Khrushchev’s arrival that the premier was “a man of many faces and many facets, to some a buffoon, to others a genius, yet really neither.” His talk of co-existence with the West, said Jordan, was difficult to square with his unshakeable belief in the inevitability of communism’s triumph. Jordan, moreover, predicted that nothing Khrushchev would see in the United States would shake his faith in communism. That same day, William Hearst Jr. printed an “Open Letter to Mr. K” on page one of the *Los Angeles Examiner* in which he insisted that America’s “ruling class” was not, contrary to

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<sup>23</sup> On *Lunik II*, see statement in Box 44, DDE Diary Series, AWF, EL; John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Espionage in America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999, 2000), 247-49.

Soviet belief, a clique of capitalists and their political lackeys, but the American electorate itself. Proof of capitalism's superiority could be seen in the country's material prosperity and political freedom: abundant cars, plentiful goods, affordable housing, free elections, and a free press. Hearst meant for his broadside, if nothing else, to brace his fellow Americans against the ideological wares peddled by the communist huckster. Similarly, David Lawrence's right-leaning *U. S. News & World Report* sought to strengthen America's ideological fortifications, warning its readers not to be fooled by the empty and disingenuous talk of "peaceful coexistence." Yet there was little chance that Khrushchev would seduce Americans with his brand of socialism: as the *New York Times* wrote, "Too many Americans remember Korea in 1950, East Berlin in 1953 and Budapest in 1956."<sup>24</sup>

In August, Khrushchev had told the press in Moscow that his venture to America was a mission of peace, that he was ready "to turn my pockets out to show I am harmless." But predictably, conservative publications in America were profoundly suspicious; the *U.S. News* pointedly reminded its readers of Khrushchev's role in Stalin's purges, his repression of the Hungarians, and his penchant for "stirring up trouble around the globe and threatening civilization with a nuclear World War III." Meanwhile, Philip Burnham in the Catholic *Commonweal* declared that Khrushchev's claim of peaceful competition with the West was "palpable propaganda" and that "if Khrushchev and the movement he heads are not an enemy, it would

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<sup>24</sup> See reprint and clippings in KV, RMPPM ("Open Letter"); William Jordan, "Khrushchev--The Man and the Mystery," *NYTM*, 23 ("He is a skillful"), 115, 116, 117, 118 ('stem the tide"), 119; Crankshaw, "Khrushchev: Man Behind the Masks," 148, 152 ("the visionary and"); *LAE*, September 13, 1959, 1, B. *U.S. News & World Report*, September 7, 1959, 58. *NYT*, September 15, 1959, 38 ("Too many Americans").

seem there is no enemy.” Hearst’s *Los Angeles Examiner* proclaimed that “behind the pudgy amiability and the bland words of peace is a shrewd, cunning, alert, completely dedicated Communist, full of proverbs and equally full of guile.”<sup>25</sup>

In their attempt to better understand the new premier and his temperament, American officials sought the help of psychologists. Some analysts made the same mistake that the premier’s Soviet rivals had: Khrushchev was, according to one estimate, “clowning, crude, unpredictable peasant—a man of little consequence, something of a court jester,” a “uniquely clever, deliberate and far-seeing political dealer” whose “homely, bumptious mannerisms are merely tricks out of a bag.” Others, however, were more astute, concluding that the premier neither understood nor appreciated Western-style democracy but regarded the United States with “a blend of awe and resentment.” Impetuous, but never reckless or paranoid, Khrushchev was a survivor and a populist, “a handshaking, back-slapping, grass-roots politician who could draw a good vote in any democracy and a shrewd and ruthless manipulator of power in the best totalitarian tradition.” These aspects of Khrushchev’s personality—at once serious and mercurial, bombastic and jovial—soon became familiar to Americans. Eisenhower likened Khrushchev’s behavior to that of a diabetic who didn’t adjust well to his insulin. Even Nikita’s wife admitted as much; on the plane to America, Nina Petrovna remarked that her husband was “either all the way up or all the way down.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *U.S. News & World Report*, September 7, 1959, 58 (“man of many;” “You must go”); *Time*, August 17, 1959, 18 (“to turn my pockets”); Philip Burnham, “Crisis in Hospitality,” *Commonweal*, September 18, 1959, 515 (“palpable propaganda”); *LAE*, September 16, 1959, sec. 3, p. 2 (“Behind the pudgy”).

<sup>26</sup> A Portrait of Khrushchev, n.d., Box 52, IS, AWF; Khrushchev: The

Since 1955, Khrushchev had become more familiar to the American people, having appeared more and more frequently in the American media. His first American television interview—an hour-long interview on CBS's *Face the Nation*—was broadcast in 1957. “By turns ingratiating, evasive, and stern,” Khrushchev “carried it off magnificently,” recalled CBS's Moscow correspondent Daniel Schorr decades later, skillfully deflecting questions about the invasion of Hungary and the jamming of U.S. radio broadcasts in the USSR,

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Man and His Outlook (Background Paper); September 11, 1959; Summary of Mr. Stevenson's Conversation with Soviet Leaders July-August, 1958 (briefing paper prior to Khrushchev's visit to the U.S.), Box 64, CF, WHCF; Humphrey to DDE, August 10, 1959, OF 225-E, WHCF, EL; Memorandum of Conversation between Eric Johnston and Nikita Khrushchev, November 4, 1958, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, X, Part 1, 185, 204; Carl Solberg, *Hubert Humphrey: A Biography* (St. Paul: Bourealis Books, 1984), 188-90, 194; *NYT*, December 2, 1958, 6; December 3, 1958, 1-2; December 4, 1958, 2; December 7, 1958, 26; December 9, 1958, 1, 3; December 10, 1959, 6; July 27, 1959, 1, 23, 23A;; see also Humphrey to Schlesinger, May 18, July 6, 1959; see copy of Humphrey's 24 pages of scribbled notes in AMSJP; DDE to Aksel Nielsen, June 19, 1957, *PDDE*, XVIII, 268, 268n; for Humphrey's own tale, see his autobiography, *The Education of a Public Man: My Life and Politics* (Norman Sherman, ed., Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 196-201; Rudy Abramson, *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman, 1891-1986* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 571-74; Harriman to Alsop, October 15, 1959; see also Alsop to Harriman, October 1, 1959, Box 15, J/SAP, LC; Associated Press typescript (copy) July 2 [1959]; Memorandum, E. Lewis Revey to Lewellyn Thompson(?), July 3, 1959; see also Memorandum, Nedville E. Nordness to Lewellyn Thompson(?), July 2, 1959; and related material; Charles Thayer, n.d., Conversation of Governor Harriman with Mr. Khrushchev[,] June 23, 1959 (draft); see also what is obviously a memo from Harriman to Thayer, May 6, 1960, regarding the draft; see also memorandum, Harriman to Robert McNamara, April 20, 1961, Box 427, WAHP, LC; Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeevich, September 1959 (“usually well briefed”); Khrushchev: The Man and His Outlook (Background Paper); September 11, 1959, Box 64, CF, WHCF, EL; Richard Strout, notes, July 27, 1959, Box 8, RSP; Taubman, *Khrushchev*, xx (“He's either”).

Khrushchev called for peace and improved U.S.-Soviet relations. It was a public relations triumph: “Khrushchev had,” Schorr continued, “appeared in America’s living rooms—real, robust, and unthreatening.” When the reporter told the Soviet boss that his TV appearance had made him a celebrity in the U.S., Khrushchev self-effacingly replied, “If American television depends on me to be its star, it will be bankrupt in a month.”<sup>27</sup>

For weeks, American media parsed the interview. “For a layman whose mental image of a Communist chief might be confined to impersonal headlines or the heavily-guarded figure in conventional newsreels,” wrote Jack Gould in the *New York Times*, “the hour was an absorbing revelation. The cause of communism at the moment has a slick salesman.” The editors of the *New York Times* hailed the broadcast and hoped for a reciprocal interview in which Eisenhower would appear on Soviet radio and television in a “free competition of ideas.” During a press conference three days later, the President was asked if he would request equal time on Soviet media—an idea that was in fact being bandied about within the administration. Eisenhower replied that if guarantees were given that content would be neither distorted nor censored, “somebody in this Government will be glad to accept.” But Ike’s polite comments masked his profound irritation. Two years later at Geneva, the president had proposed—and the Russians had rejected—just such a suggestion that reciprocal transmissions

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<sup>27</sup> CBS News & Public Affairs, “Face the Nation” transcript of Khrushchev interview, May 28 (1957), broadcast on CBS Television Network and CBS Radio Network, June 2, 1957, copy in Box 549, WPRP; Schorr, *Staying Tuned*, 99-103 (“He carried it off;” “America is”), 111 (“What is”). Not all were so impressed. In a State Department press conference on June 11, Dulles said he didn’t believe the American public was “fooled” by Khrushchev’s statements. *NYT*, June 12, 1957, 12.

would be broadcast into each country. As Eisenhower later complained to Bernard Baruch, too few Americans understood the contrast between a dictatorial regime's iron grip on media and a free society where private corporations could broadcast with "no responsibility to determine whether such action is to the national advantage or not."<sup>28</sup>

A few months later in the fall of 1957, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Scotty Reston landed an extended interview with Khrushchev in Moscow published in three parts in the *New York Times*. The communist boss ranged over a variety of subjects, including weapons technology, disarmament, Germany, the Middle East, and Turkey. A good Marxist, Khrushchev predicted that the state and, indeed, all means of coercion would wither away and that a brave new world of freedom, Soviet style, would eventually spread throughout the world. Khrushchev, at about the same time, told the right-wing publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst Jr. that communism would inevitably prevail over capitalism. In the meantime, Khrushchev continued, capitalist and communist regimes should strive for disarmament, trade, and peaceful competition. "Mr. Hearst, convey this to your President."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The President's Press Conference of June 5, 1957, *PPPE* 1957, 438-40 ("except in power;" italics added; "get this straight;" "not willing;" "Do you believe"); *NYT*, June 3, 1957, 1, 6 (including text of interview), 26 ("the free competition"), 51 ("For a layman"); June 4, 1957, 1, 34; June 5, 1957, 1, 11; June 6, 1957, 17 ("aggressive skepticism"); DDE to Baruch, June 11, 1957, *PDDE*, XVIII, 249-50 ("no responsibility"), 250n.

<sup>29</sup> *NYT*, October 8, 1957, 1, 10; October 9, 1957, 1, 10; October 10, 1957, 1, 9; see also October 28, 1957, 8; William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Frank Conniff, and Bob Considine, *Ask Me Anything: Our Adventures With Khrushchev* (New York and other cities: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), 37-43. Hearst, *et al.*, *Ask Me Anything*, 116-49 ("Mr. Hearst, convey"); *NYT*, May 8, 1956, 24 ("the most remarkable").

That fall, Khrushchev granted still another high-profile interview, this one with former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt during her tour of the USSR. He had “all the bearing of an Eastern European peasant,” she reported; “His fingers, his hands, his whole build is that of a peasant. He has the peasant canniness and cautiousness, but he is, on the other hand, extremely articulate.” And although she had been warned that Khrushchev was “an impossible person, vulgar, drinking, disagreeable,” Roosevelt was pleasantly surprised to find that “he was none of those things.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite his charm, few had forgotten what Khrushchev was capable of—especially in the wake of the brutal repression of the Hungarian revolt. “Who would have thought,” asked Edward Crankshaw, a British expert on Russian affairs, “that the genial, plain-speaking soul on the TV screens of America . . . had not long before put down the Hungarian revolution in blood and torture?” The “Hungarian Freedom Fighter”—armed, bleeding, and determined—was *Time*’s “Man of the Year” for 1956, an unmistakable condemnation of Soviet actions. Yet the very next year, after surviving an attempted coup by anti-reform Stalinists Molotov, Malenkov, and his old mentor Lazar Kaganovich, Khrushchev himself was *Time*’s “Man of the Year” (“Butcher of the Year would have been more appropriate,” complained one *Time* reader.) It was an object lesson for the West, a demonstration, according to the *New York Times*, of just “how rapidly Soviet troops in large numbers could be moved into a neighboring country.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> NBC, *Meet the Press* (transcript of interview with Eleanor Roosevelt, October 20, 1957; Washington: NBC, 1957), 3-4 (“an impossible;” “His fingers”), Box 3858, ERP.

<sup>31</sup> *NYT*, June 3, 1957, 26 (“how rapidly”); *Time*, January 6, 1958, 16-20; January 20, 1958, 2 (“Butcher of”); *Newsweek*, November 11, 1957, 50 (“chilling inside”), Crankshaw, “Khrushchev: Man Behind the

Indeed, Hungary loomed over Khrushchev's visit to America. Throughout his tour, thousands of Hungarian expatriates protested, unable to see any substantive difference between Stalin and his successor. The crushing of the Hungarian revolt was also a clarifying event for the few remaining far-leftists in America. As leftwing journalist I. F. Stone wrote in November 1956, Hungary destroyed any lingering illusions about the Soviets. "An era is dying," he wrote in his *Weekly*, "the era in which many of us intellectuals grew up, the era of the Russian Revolution, the era in which—for all its faults and evils—defense of that revolution was somehow the moral duty of all progressive minded men. That is over, and with it the companion notion . . . that Russia was not an imperial power."<sup>32</sup>

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Khrushchev was, in many ways, the prototypical Russian: a weird amalgam of confidence and insecurity. On the one hand, he was a supremely proud man—proud of his achievements, proud of his ideology, proud of what his country had achieved in the recent past—in particular, the successful launches of *Sputnik* and *Lunik* missions. The invitation itself was a barometer of how far the USSR had come from the time that the US refused to even recognize its existence. "Who would have guessed twenty years ago," Khrushchev enthused, "that the most powerful capitalist country in the world would invite a Communist to visit? This is incredible. Today they *have* to take us into

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Masks," 147; Service, *Stalin*, 594; Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 344-45; see Hearst, *et al.*, *Ask Me Anything*, 96-104.

<sup>32</sup> *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, November 19, 1956, 4 ("An era is dying").

account. It's our strength that led to this—they have to recognize our existence and our power.”<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, Khrushchev possessed, according to the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, “an inferiority complex that still goes very deep” and was “extremely sensitive to any imagined slight.” At root, Khrushchev, like Russian rulers stretching back centuries, yearned to be respected, to be considered a leader of the first order. Their fear of being slighted or disrespected gave rise to a ubiquitous suspicion and a penchant for overreacting to perceived slights: “We will not allow anyone to push us around or to sit on our necks,” Khrushchev declared. Thus, for example, when Khrushchev learned he was to meet Eisenhower at a place called “Camp David,” instinctively he dreaded he was being shunted off to a compound reserved for the unworthy.” Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, after meeting Khrushchev in 1958, aptly summed up these contradictory characteristics when he described Khrushchev as “insecure in a superconfident way.” As Foy Kohler perceptively remarked, “it must never be forgotten that the reverse side of Khrushchev’s arrogance is the most super-colossal inferiority complex in the world.”<sup>34</sup>

This compound of insecurity and audacity was given tangible form by the very aircraft that brought Khrushchev to the U.S.—the gargantuan Tupolev 114, the world’s largest passenger plane. Built by the Soviet state-run airline Aeroflot and unveiled in 1957, the jet-powered propeller aircraft had a wingspan of over 177 feet and could fly nonstop from Moscow to New York in just over eleven hours, a

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<sup>33</sup> William Taubman, ed., *Khrushchev on Khrushchev: An Inside Account of the Man and His Era*, by His Son, Sergei Khrushchev (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1990), 356.

<sup>34</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 420, 411, 408; Carlson, 64

record at the time. In Khrushchev's mind, the plane was the latest instance of Russian achievement—yet further proof that the Soviet Union could not only compete but surpass the West.

Yet, more accurately, the airliner could be seen as an expression of the limitations of Russian technology. Though physically impressive, the TU-114, even as it rolled down the runway for the first time, was outdated. Its counter-rotating jet-prop technology had long been abandoned by American aircraft builders. In fact, by 1958, Douglas Aircraft and Boeing had already introduced four-engine all-jet 707s and DC-8s into domestic and international service. As well, the TU-114's navigational system—the navigator sat in the nose of the plane, much like World War II-era American bombers—was outdated and inefficient and forced Soviet pilots to fly “by the seat of their pants.” “If this is Russia's ‘finest,’” wrote Fulton Lewis Jr., a columnist for King Features Syndicate, “this country doesn't have much to worry about.”<sup>35</sup>

The TU-114 also had structural issues. After a test flight in May, tiny cracks appeared in at least one of the engines and Soviet officials were alarmed enough to try to dissuade Khrushchev from flying to America in the aircraft. But when the premier asked the TU-114's designer, Andrei Tupolev, about its safety, the 70-year-old designer declared that “I'm absolutely certain you won't have any

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<sup>35</sup> See *Time*, May 4, 1959, 69; Fulton Lewis, Jr. “Mr. K Frankly Prefers to Fly in U.S. Jet,” *LAE*, September 24, 1959, sec. 3, p. 4 (“by the seat of;” “If this is”); *WP*, August 8, 1959, A4; Levine, *Main Street, U.S.S.R.*, 221-29; Hearst, *et al.*, *Ask Me Anything*, 109-13, 146; *NYT*, January 9, 1956, 10, 16, 17; *LAE*, September 3, 1959, sec. 3, p.6; *NYT*, January 10, 1956, 13; September 17, 1959, 77; *SFE*, September 18, 1959, sec. VI, p. 1; *LAE*, September 9, 1959, sec. 1, p. 5; *PSN*, September 8, 1959, 12; *LAE*, September 20, 1959, sec. 1, pt. A, p. 15; September 21, 1959, sec. 1, p. 7.

trouble.” In fact, Tupolev was so sure of the plane’s safety that he asked Khrushchev to take his son, Alyosha, with him to America. Nonetheless, a technical team accompanied Khrushchev to America, monitoring the engines throughout the flight. “They sat in front of complicated control boards and panels with a multitude of blinking green lights,” said Sergei Khrushchev, their presence causing a good deal of nervousness. “We were drawn,” he continued, “as if by magnets, to their boxes, checking to make sure that no red lights went on. We couldn’t forget those microscopic cracks.” At once strong and flawed, impressive and vaguely ridiculous, proud and passé, the plane was a window into the Russian psyche.<sup>36</sup>

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As the TU-114 prepared for landing at Andrews Air Force Base, the Soviet press corps proclaimed that “the historic moment of the meeting of the heads of two Great Powers, on which the attention of the peoples of the whole world is focused, is nearing.” As the plane descended sunny and beautiful day, the Soviet leader spotted clusters of Americans in festive summertime clothes—“like a flowerbed of different colors.” “My nerves” he recalled, “were strained with excitement.” Using the full length of the runway, the sleek airliner touched down at 12:21 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, blue smoke puffing from its huge wheels. Awed by the plane’s sheer size, the waiting

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<sup>36</sup> *KRLT*, 39, 372-73 (“I’m absolutely;” “giving explanations”); Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev*, 328-29; *NYT*, November 5, 1957, 25. Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev*, 328

crowd gasped audibly. Nikita Khrushchev's journey into America had begun.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *CT*, October 12, 1959, 32; *WP*, June 16, 1959, B1; August 8, 1959, A4; *KRLT*, 375-76 ('like a flowerbed'); *FF*, 51 ("The historic moment"), 52; *LAE*, September 16, 1959, sec. 1, p. 2.