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NEWS

Miller Center and Russian State Archives Announce Joint Project to Release and Publish Once Secret Kremlin Records from the Khrushchev Era

Charlottesville—September 9, 2003— In partnership with the Federal Archival Service of Russia, the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs is translating, editing and publishing the international edition of the most secret materials of the Khrushchev-era. "This is the inside look at high-level Soviet thinking and planning that every US president dreamed of having in the cold war," says Timothy Naftali, editor of the International Edition and director of the Miller Center's Kremlin Decision-making Project.

The Russian Archives are publishing the Russian language edition of these materials; the Miller Center has the world-wide non-Russian language publication rights. Excerpts of these documents, translated into English with annotations, may be found on the Miller Center's website at <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>.

Closed to researchers until this summer, the Khrushchev notes and stenographic records provide an unvarnished look at Nikita Khrushchev and the Kremlin in the midst of ten of the most turbulent years of the twentieth century, 1954-1964. The records include material on the crises over the Suez Canal, Berlin, Cuba, as well as the leadership's futile efforts to stave off the split with Mao's China and to raise the standard of living of the average Soviet citizen.

Despite the rush of archival openings in the first years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Kremlin's most secret information on Khrushchev was still locked away. Fragments of this material appeared in the late 1990s. But until now, the bulk of this material was inaccessible.

The handiwork of Vladimir N. Malin, these are the best—sometimes only—available records of key debates and decisions of the Soviet leadership. Malin (1906-1982) was chief of the General Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He attended each meeting of the Politburo (called Presidium in that period) and made notes at many of them. Also included in the collection are 23 stenographic transcripts that Khrushchev ordered produced to supplement Malin's notes for the meetings he considered of special importance to his leadership. The first stenographic account is dated July 19, 1958 and details the Soviet discussion

of how to deal with a crisis over Iraq. These are the first transcripts of Kremlin meetings ever released for the Khrushchev period.

The Soviet Union that emerges from these documents is weaker and yet more aggressive than was generally understood at the time. The personality of Nikita Khrushchev is decisive in determining that the Soviet Union would not handle its problems by turning inward. Instead Khrushchev decided to mount a sustained challenge to world order and American power. Tougher and more impetuous than imagined, the Khrushchev of these secret conclaves is also impatient to demilitarize the cold war and raise the standard of living in the Soviet world. Philip Zelikow, the director of the Miller Center and an historian of the Cold War, comments, "These records take us inside a Kremlin where incredible power was held in only a few hands—fallible, forceful, and frightening."

Naftali has just completed the first narrative of the Khrushchev years that uses these documents. *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary*, written with Aleksandr Fursenko of the Russian Academy of Sciences, will be published in 2004 by W. W. Norton & Company. The companion documentary volume, with annotations, will appear in phases on the Miller Center's website, <http://millercenter.virginia.edu> before its publication in 2005.

Highlights of the material include:

- The minutes detailing Kremlin decision-making during the Cuban missile crisis.
- The inside story of Khrushchev's fixation on West Berlin and the resolution of the German question
- The surprising tale of Soviet efforts to cooperate with the United States in the Suez Crisis of 1956
- Khrushchev's tantrum before the fateful meeting with John F. Kennedy at Vienna, 1961.
- Khrushchev's efforts to resolve the Sino-Soviet split in 1962-64.
- Khrushchev's efforts to negotiate arms control agreements that would have saved the American taxpayer billions of dollars in defense expenditures had Washington assessed Soviet power correctly.
- The role of Kremlin associates, such as Anastas Mikoyan, in taming Khrushchev's darker moods and making the world a safer place.
- The role of Soviet domestic difficulties in shaping Moscow's foreign policy moves.

Sample quotations from this collection are attached. For samples of complete documents, please visit <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>. For further information about the Kremlin Decisionmaking Program, please contact: Margaret Edwards at 434-924-7889.

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Sample Quotations
Kremlin Notes and Stenographic Records
from the Russian State Archives of Contemporary History
Translated by the Miller Center Kremlin Decision-making Project,
Timothy Naftali, director and editor

KHRUSHCHEV on Soviet international strategy, January 1962:

We should increase the pressure, we must not doze off and, while growing, we should let the opponent feel this growth. But don't pour the last drop to make the cup overflow, be just like a meniscus, which, according to the laws of surface tension in liquid, is generated in order that the liquid doesn't pour out past the rim. Here's our policy: to always have a wine glass with a meniscus. Because if we don't have a meniscus, because [if] we let the enemy live peacefully [...] we must not let him, but we must not do the provoking ourselves.

KHRUSHCHEV to diplomats negotiating on Berlin, January 1962:

[D]on't be afraid to bring it to a white heat, otherwise we won't get anything, because we should have the last word.

KHRUSHCHEV on JFK, May 1961:

He is a son of a bitch

KHRUSHCHEV on JFK, January 1962:

This is a young and capable man; it is necessary to give him his due. But he can neither stand up to the American public, nor can he lead them.

KHRUSHCHEV on US leaders, January 1962:

[It is impossible] to say who is better, Eisenhower or Kennedy – [they are] the same shit..... Both represent the same class with different shades.

KHRUSHCHEV Proposing to Send Missiles to Cuba, May 1962:

This is an offensive policy.

KHRUSHCHEV after hearing that Castro would take the missiles, June 1962:

I think we can win this operation.

Before Vienna suggesting that when USSR signed the peace treaty with East Germany it would have to close down the air corridors to West Berlin:

Our position is very strong, but of course we will have to really intimidate them now. For example, if there is any flying around, we will have to bring [those] airplanes down.¹ Could they respond with a provocative act? They could. [But] if we don't bring the plane down, this would mean that we are

¹ Khrushchev is referring to Western efforts to fly directly to West Berlin after the conclusion of a Soviet-East German peace treaty, which would recognize East German control of its airspace.

capitulating....In a word, politics is politics. If we want to carry out our policy, and if we want it to be acknowledged, respected and feared, it is necessary to be firm.

KHRUSHCHEV to his diplomats when asked whether to give Jackie Kennedy a silver tea service at Vienna:

Presents can be given even before a war.

KHRUSHCHEV on the state of the Soviet system, October 1962:

Our tragedy is that we have lost the zeal that we had 40 years ago.

KHRUSHCHEV to his colleagues on not being tough enough on economic criminals, June 1961:

What liberals you've become, what is it that you are expecting – praise from the bourgeoisie when no one gets shot....The peasants have a saying: 'Get rid of the bad seeds.'... Stalin had the correct position on these issues. He went too far, but we never had any mercy on criminals. Our fight with enemies should be merciless and well directed.