

EARLY COLD WAR SUMMITS: EISENHOWER, NIXON, KENNEDY, AND

KHRUSHCHEV, 1959 AND 1961

BY

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Chapter I

Introduction

In 1959 and 1961, three historic summits took place, which temporarily eased tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The first occurred in July 1959, when Vice President Richard M. Nixon became the highest ranking U.S. official to visit the Soviet Union since 1945, when Franklin Roosevelt attended the Yalta Conference. Nixon's ten-day visit was widely publicized and called "one of the greatest adventures in modern diplomacy."¹ Less than two months after Nixon's ground-breaking visit, Nikita Khrushchev became the first Soviet premier to set foot on American soil. Khrushchev's September visit was heralded as "one of the most dramatic episodes in post-war history."² Finally, in 1961, Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy held a summit in Vienna, Austria, which was called the "re-establishment of high-level U.S.-Soviet diplomacy."³ Many historians and textbook authors claim that these summits were failures, as no agreements were reached and there were often heated exchanges among the participants. This could not be further from the truth! While historians are correct that no accords were reached during any of these summits, all three meetings gave both sides a better understanding of one another. Furthermore, these meetings decreased the chances of nuclear conflict, as all four leaders saw the other's

¹ Richard L. Wilson, "Eisnehower in the U.S.S.R.," *Look Magazine* (September 15, 1959): 26.

² "Face to Face: Khrushchev to the U.S.," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1959, 1(E).

³ James Reston, "Vienna Talks End," *New York Times*, June 5, 1961, 1(A).

country as a war-fearing nation and not a faceless enemy bent on global domination. Also, these leaders gained a new respect for one another and the people of the Soviet Union and the United States. Finally, this work looks at all three summits in the context of the early Cold War, instead of focusing individually on each summit. When you look at the three summits, you can see that some progress was made between the Soviet Union and the United States, and because of these meetings, nuclear war was less likely to occur.

In addition to their importance in international relations, all three of these meetings were tremendously interesting, as they were all very different and had very distinct personalities involved. Nixon's trip to the Soviet Union was an unofficial visit, and his main purpose was to open the American Exhibition in Moscow and travel throughout Russia. His meetings with Khrushchev were initially intended to be brief and friendly; however, they actually were much more complicated. On the other hand, Khrushchev came to the United States as an official guest, and he believed that validated his point that the Soviet Union was now an equal to the United States. Khrushchev traveled across the United States meeting high ranking officials and concluded his trip with a series of talks with Eisenhower at Camp David. Finally, Kennedy and Khrushchev met in Vienna, Austria in 1961. This was the most serious and diplomatic of all the summits, as the two leaders only met for two days of discussions, not for tours and receptions as was the case with the two previous meetings.

Besides the ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, these leaders also had unique personalities that often clashed. Nixon was astute,

serious, stern, paranoid, and vehemently opposed to communism. He never backed down from a debate and often got into heated exchanges with Khrushchev. The vice president attempted never to let the Soviet premier get the best of him during any conversation regardless of the topic. Between his personality and Khrushchev's, this made for dangerous confrontation when the two statesmen met in Moscow.

Eisenhower, on the other hand, was somewhat more reserved during his summit with Khrushchev. Eisenhower was older than the other Americans who met with Khrushchev during these summits, and his maturity showed. He upheld his beliefs and defended American positions, but he never allowed Khrushchev to "bait" him into a discussion of ideology. Furthermore, Khrushchev was less aggressive toward the older Eisenhower than either Nixon or Kennedy. This probably was the case because the Soviet premier respected Eisenhower because of his wartime record in the Second World War.

Kennedy was a young, charismatic politician who was accustomed to being able to charm people into seeing his point of view. Therefore, it was a shock for him when he could not win over Khrushchev with his charisma. Furthermore, Kennedy might have been the most vehemently opposed to communism out of the three Americans who took part in the summits. Kennedy won the election as a staunch anti-communist and some of his first remarks as president were about the Cold War. Referring to the Cold War, he stated that he was elected in "an hour of national peril" and that "each day the situation

grows more difficult.”⁴ Therefore, in 1961, when he met the Soviet leader, Kennedy wanted to show the premier that, although young, he was a tough leader who would defend the United States against communism. However, Kennedy was insecure. He was afraid that Khrushchev would see him as weak after the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

Finally, the most unpredictable man was Khrushchev. The premier came from humble beginnings and worked his way up through the communist party to the very top. While Khrushchev may not have been as intelligent as Nixon or Kennedy, he had common sense and street toughness, which together made him an effective politician. Furthermore, the Soviet leader had numerous moods that changed often. It was not uncommon for the premier to be happy one minute and very upset the next. Khrushchev was not afraid to speak his mind, and many politicians found him uncouth or barbaric because of the jokes he told or examples he used in everyday politics. Henry Cabot Lodge, who was Khrushchev’s guide during his trip to America, perhaps summed up the Soviet leader best:

Mr. Khrushchev was even more remarkable as a human being and would have made an imprint on those he met even without his mighty office. His eyes were clear and blue and could at various times be cold, kindly, or gay. He looked ebullient, as do those who sleep and eat well. His personal magnetism was immediately felt. Here was a natural politician—a man who, on entering a room full of strangers, would, after a few hours, have persuaded some, charmed and amused others, and frightened still more, so that by the end of the day he would have over 50 percent of their votes!⁵

⁴ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78.

⁵ Henry Cabot Lodge, *The Storm Has Many Eyes: A Personal Narrative* (New York, NY: Norton and Company Press), 159.

Before examining in detail the three summits that are the focus of this work, it is important to review the major developments of the Cold War before these summits. By the mid-1950s, tensions had leveled off between the United States and the Soviet Union compared to early stages of the Cold War. Only a decade prior to 1959, the world was on the verge of possible nuclear war with the increased tensions over the Berlin blockade, the victory of the Chinese People's Army and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the Korean War. However, there was hope for peaceful coexistence between the United States and the Soviet Union at the end of the Korean War with Eisenhower's election as president and Khrushchev's ascension to power. Both the United States and the Soviet Union began to realize the limits of their power, as both countries intervened in areas that they perceived to be essential to their security. The Soviets successfully quelled protests in East Germany in 1953. The Americans used the CIA to intervene in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954 in an attempt to keep pro-communist governments out of areas the United States deemed vital. Both superpowers condemned the other's actions but could do little more without initiating a global conflict.

During the mid-1950s, some agreements were reached and some progress was made between the two countries. In May 1955, both nations ended a ten-year occupation of Austria. Surprisingly, both sides agreed on a neutral Austria and "found elements of victory...that effectively denied Austria to the other's sphere...[and] demonstrated a commitment to peaceful coexistence."⁶ In 1956, the Americans and Soviets came to an agreement over the events in the Middle East during the Suez Crisis. Both powers

⁶ Thomas G. Patterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations, vol. 2, A History Since 1895*, 5th ed. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 282.

denounced the Israeli invasion of Egypt and the French and British intervention. With both the United States and the Soviet Union condemning Israeli, British, and French action, both London and Paris agreed to a cease-fire, and a potentially disastrous situation was avoided.

Unfortunately, hopes for an early détente were dashed, as tensions once again began to rise. The first issue that raised tensions was the attempted overthrow of Soviet power in Hungary. In October 1956, thousands of students, artists, and intellectuals began to protest against their communist-led government in Budapest. The protesters demanded more autonomy from the Soviet Union and a return of Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who had been removed from office the preceding year by Moscow because the Soviet leadership deemed his perceived pro-western, reform-minded views to be a threat. Before peace was achieved in the Eastern European nation, the uprising escalated into a full revolution and civil war. When the fighting was over, thousands of Hungarians lay dead on the streets of Budapest, as the Soviet Union used brutal power to crush the revolt, much more than they had used in Berlin in 1953 or that of what the United States used in Iran or Guatemala.⁷ Khrushchev believed that the revolution had to be crushed or it would “give a great boost to the Americans, English, and French.”⁸

However, the major issue that destroyed early hopes for détente was the German question. By 1958, it was clear that Germany would not be reunited and become a neutral nation. In that year, the Soviet premier announced his intent to sign a peace treaty

⁷ Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, *A Hard and Bitter Peace: A Global History of the Cold War* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 128-129.

⁸ McMahon, *The Cold War*, 62.

with East Germany. This meant that the United States and its allies would have to consult directly with the East German government concerning access rights in West Berlin. Khrushchev hoped that would lead to a reunification of Berlin even if the country remained divided, as West Berlin was a sore spot for the Soviets because the West Berlin economy was thriving and citizens of the Eastern Bloc, captives of a failing socialist system, could escape into the West if they reached West Berlin. In fact, between 1949 and 1961 “approximately 2.7 million East Germans fled to the West,” giving Berlin the nickname the “Brain Drain,” as many of the brightest people in East Germany sought to leave the communist bloc for a clearly better life in West Berlin or Western Europe.⁹ In response to Khrushchev’s threats of signing a treaty with East Germany, the United States quickly pointed to the Yalta agreements, which divided not only Germany, but also very specifically Berlin, between the Allies after the conclusion of World War II. The United States accused the Soviet Union of breaking previous agreements, while the Soviet Union accused the United States of preventing it from signing a peace treaty with East Germany. Finally, the United States warned the Soviet Union that it would defend its interests in West Berlin and West Germany by force if necessary.¹⁰

In addition to these two issues, both countries had to deal with the escalating arms and space races. For example, in August of 1957, the Soviets tested the world’s first Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). To make matters worse for the United States, the next month, the Soviets successfully launched the world’s first satellite—Sputnik I—into the earth’s orbit. Therefore, the United States stepped up its efforts in both the space

⁹ McMahon, *The Cold War*, 84.

¹⁰ Judge, *A Hard and Bitter Peace*, 141.

and the arms races. To further complicate matters, the Cold War was spreading further into Africa and Southeast Asia, as conflicts began in Algeria, the Congo, and Laos. However, there was high anticipation in Washington and in Moscow that those issues could be resolved and tensions could be eased with Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union and Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959.¹¹

¹¹ Judge, *A Hard and Bitter Peace*, 135-136.

Chapter II

The Kitchen Debate

When Vice President Richard Nixon boarded a plane for Moscow in July 22, 1959, he had not received a formal invitation from Premier Nikita Khrushchev to visit the Soviet Union to discuss East-West relations. Instead, the vice president had volunteered to go to Russia to open the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park. The exhibition was part of a larger cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, which began after a 1957 CBS interview in which Khrushchev candidly told Americans to “do away with your iron curtain.”¹² Khrushchev believed that trade and cultural exchanges were essential components to better relations between the superpowers. Khrushchev’s statements caught the Eisenhower administration by surprise, but the president and his advisors eagerly accepted the opportunity to more easily disseminate western ideas into Eastern Europe. The Americans and Soviets approved a cultural exchange agreement on January 27, 1958 which led to an entertainment, film, and student exchange, and soon an agreement was made regarding reciprocal national exhibitions that would begin in the summer of 1959 with a Soviet exhibition in New York and an American exhibition in Moscow.

Despite bitter disagreements between the Americans and the Soviets over the location and content of the exhibition in Moscow, preparations continued throughout 1959. In April, Nixon first proposed his idea to open the American exhibition to

¹² Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 151.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Although Dulles opposed “personal diplomacy with communists,” he believed the trip was a good idea as long as Eisenhower approved.¹³ When the idea was brought to Khrushchev, the premier stated that he would “welcome the vice president’s appearance despite his frequent uncomplimentary remarks about communism.”¹⁴ However, while Khrushchev believed talks with Nixon could be beneficial, he hoped for an invitation to visit the United States to meet with Eisenhower.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) gave Nixon approval to open the American exhibition and he eventually received Eisenhower’s blessing, and the vice president began extensive training. Nixon was very excited about the opportunity to visit the Soviet Union and possibly to meet with Khrushchev. He wanted to gain a better understanding of the Soviet Union and its people because “Russia was still shrouded in much of the sinister mystery of the Stalin era.”¹⁵ Nixon went to great lengths to ensure that he was ready for his trip. He studied briefing papers from the CIA, the State Department, and the White House and was instructed by Russian experts and anyone he knew of who had met Khrushchev. Nixon also sought advice from John Foster Dulles who was in the hospital dying of terminal cancer. Nixon prepared diligently for several months leading up to his trip. In his memoirs he stated, “For the trip to the Soviet Union, I undertook the most intense preparation I had ever made for a trip or meeting. I read everything I could find about the Soviet Union and its peoples.”¹⁶

¹³ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 176.

¹⁴ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 176.

¹⁵ Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap Press, 1978), 203.

¹⁶ Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 203.

Before boarding the airplane to leave for the Soviet Union, Nixon had one final meeting with Eisenhower and his advisors. The president advised Nixon to maintain a “cordial, almost light, atmosphere” to keep the complex Soviet personalities pleased while the vice president was their guest.¹⁷ Nixon assured Eisenhower that he would do his best and hoped to convey to the Soviet leader that both the American people and their leaders wanted peace and prosperity. Finally, the president urged Nixon “not to be afraid to talk substantive matters and to be positive with the Soviets in his conversations with Khrushchev.”¹⁸ The vice president left the meeting optimistic that he and the Soviet leaders would have productive discussions that would result in both sides gaining a better understanding of each other. When asked if he thought the meeting with Khrushchev could help ease the tension over Berlin, the vice president stated, “We always hope such discussions clear the air. There is always the potential that we will make some yardage.”¹⁹

Nixon left the United States on July 22, 1959 and traveled on a four engine military air transport service jet called the VC-137, which was similar to a Boeing 707. As the plane left Baltimore, over 1,500 Americans were in attendance to view the vice president’s departure. On the airplane, Nixon traveled with a large entourage, including his wife, Pat, the president’s brother, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, Vice Admiral Hyman Rickover, the Navy’s nuclear expert, a number of other government officials from the president’s office and the State Department, and over seventy reporters. In fact, the

¹⁷ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 332.

¹⁸ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 333.

¹⁹ William M. Blair, “Nixon Takes Off on Trip to Soviet Union to Open Exhibit,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1959, 1(A).

number of reporters was so large that they had to charter their own 707 to follow the vice president's plane to Moscow. One reporter later stated that Nixon "had more reporters and photographers following him than at any time in his political career."²⁰

On July 23, Deputy Premier Frol Kozlov, who was a member of the Central Committee and Politburo, greeted Nixon and his staff when they reached Moscow. Nixon described the atmosphere at the airport as "cool and controlled," as Kozlov gave a long welcoming speech.²¹ After the deputy premier had finished, Nixon spoke briefly to the crowd:

In view of the destructive power of modern weapons, we know that if there is another war there will be no victors, only losers. We have reached the point where we must either learn to live together or we will die together. I recognize that this visit will not resolve all these differences, but I assure you: Every day we spend in this country we shall work whole-heartedly to help create a climate of better understanding in which the policy differences of governments will not separate or bring into conflict our two peoples, who want and ought to be friends.²²

After Nixon finished his speech he stated in Russian, "*Druzya, da zdavstvuyet mie.*" which means "Friends, long live peace."²³ Following formal introductions, he mingled with the Russian crowd. One of his main objectives of the trip was to speak with ordinary citizens. He spoke with the Soviet people and answered questions while handing out chewing gum to children before going to the American Embassy, where he and his wife were staying in Moscow.

²⁰ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 521.

²¹ Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 206.

²² Richard Nixon, "Opening Speech," *New York Times*, July 24, 1959, 2(A).

²³ Richard Nixon, "Opening Speech," *New York Times*, July 24, 1959, 2(A).

While Nixon and his entourage were at the airport being welcomed by Kozlov, Khrushchev released a short statement to the press welcoming the “imperialists” to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Soviet leader berated the Eisenhower administration and Congress for passing the Captive Nations Resolution. Congress had recently passed the resolution, which condemned Soviet domination over Eastern Europe, and called for Americans to pray for and “study the plight of the Soviet-dominated nations.”²⁴ In his statement, Khrushchev sarcastically welcomed Nixon and his entourage to “the land of a captive people.”²⁵

Nixon prepared for his meeting with Khrushchev by exploring the American Exhibition at Moscow’s Sokolniki Park. The American’s spared no expense in creating the exhibit, hoping to impress the Soviet people. When entering the park, visitors would see a “78-foot-high, gold-anodized geodesic dome that served as the information center for the exhibition.”²⁶ Inside the dome, the Soviets were treated to large projection televisions showing American life. Furthermore, there were other exhibits that showed American technology, such as IBM computers, advances in healthcare, agriculture, and space research.

Behind the dome, there was another building that was even larger with a transparent ceiling that housed more displays of items, such as “food, clothing, toys, sporting goods, travel information, art, books, newspapers, musical instruments, stereo equipment, a model kitchen, and a television studio.”²⁷ Finally, the last part of the

²⁴ Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 205.

²⁵ Max Frankel, “Premier Taunts American Visitor,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1959, 1(A).

²⁶ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 174.

²⁷ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 175.

exhibition included cars, trucks, farming equipment, and a “Jungle Gym” that the Soviet children could play on. While Soviet citizens seemed interested in the strange new objects in the American Exhibition, Soviet leaders were not nearly as impressed, and the “capitalistic” display only added to Khrushchev’s frustration before he and Nixon even met. The Soviet leader, who also visited the exhibition before it opened, stated, “The organizers were obviously not very serious about displaying American life and culture; they were more interested in drumming up a lot of propaganda.”²⁸

Nixon awoke early on July 24 and met with the Chairman of the Presidium Kliment Voroshilov. The chairman welcomed Nixon to the Kremlin and informed him that the people of the Soviet Union were eager about the vice president’s visit “because any visit by such an official [Nixon] should bring about a rapprochement and better understanding between nations.”²⁹ The vice president thanked Voroshilov for his remarks and stated that, despite the United States’ and Soviet Union’s ideological differences, he hoped that both sides would compromise on a number of complex issues, including Berlin:

We [The United States and the Soviet Union] must recognize that there are differences and that there will be vigorous presentation of different points of view. What is important is that we must not allow these differences to bring us to the point where one side would have to fight or surrender. In other words, today, as opposed to the situation prevailing even thirty years ago, the policy of ultimatum is completely outdated.³⁰

Nixon and Voroshilov got along well during their first encounter and enjoyed each other’s company. Both men were optimistic that the Soviet Union and the United States

²⁸ Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, trans. Strobe Talbott (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974), 364.

²⁹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 334.

³⁰ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 335.

governments actually wanted the peaceful coexistence that each side claimed they desired.

After his first meeting, Nixon decided to visit the famous Danilovsky Market. The vice president stayed in the market for the most of the morning speaking to and answering questions from the large crowd which had gathered. Many Russians wanted tickets to the American exhibition but could not find any to purchase. Nixon misconstrued what the Russians meant, and he believed they lacked the money to purchase the tickets. He tried to give one citizen a one-hundred-ruble note only to find out that availability, and not cost, was the problem with the tickets. The following day, the *Pravda* and other Soviet newspapers accused Nixon “of attempting to bribe and degrade Soviet citizens by offering them money.”³¹

Unfortunately for Nixon, his morning did not get any easier. After leaving the market, he went to the Kremlin for his first meeting with Khrushchev. During their first encounter, Nixon and Khrushchev exchanged pleasant greetings and the vice president gave the premier a letter from the president. The Soviet leader mentioned a recent speech that the vice president gave which had a conciliatory message in regards to the Soviet Union. Khrushchev joked that “he had wondered whether the speech had indeed been made by Mr. Nixon, because it was so different” than what he was used to hearing from the staunch anti-communist vice president.³² The two leaders briefly discussed American-Soviet cooperation against Germany in World War II before turning to current events. After their polite initial greetings, the meetings took a negative turn, as the

³¹ Ambrose, *Nixon*, 522.

³² FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 337.

premier became enraged and ridiculed Nixon for the Captive Nations Resolution that had been passed shortly before the vice president left for Europe. Khrushchev told the vice president that the Soviet Union would never issue such a statement and that he was “bewildered” by congresses actions, as the resolution would not change anything in Europe and only cause more problems between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Khrushchev continued to harass Nixon over that issue, despite the vice president’s attempts to change the subject. Khrushchev told Nixon that the resolution “stinks like fresh horse shit, and nothing smells worse than that.”³³ The vice president, remembering from his preparation that the premier had begun his life as a pig breeder, decided not to back down and crudely replied, “I am afraid that the Chairman is mistaken. There is something that smells worse than horse shit—and that is pig shit.”³⁴ Khrushchev, clearly angered, attempted to smile and finally agreed to change the subject. Rarely have two government officials greeted each other with such distaste and profanity!

Despite the change in subject, the conversation remained heated. Nixon accused the Soviet Union of censorship and misleading their populace. Khrushchev, not backing down, responded that several of the biggest newspapers in the United States were once owned by one man, William Randolph Hearst, which in effect constitutes “capitalist censorship.”³⁵ Continuing the debate, Khrushchev berated Nixon for sympathizing with Joseph McCarthy earlier in his political career. After this statement, the premier again criticized Nixon for Congress’ Captive Nation’s Resolution. The tense discussion only

³³ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 417.

³⁴ Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 207.

³⁵ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 335.

came to an end when the Soviet leader was informed that it was time to attend the American exhibition.

After their uncouth first encounter, both men left together to go to Sokolniki Park to tour the American exhibition. The mood between Nixon and Khrushchev was more cordial, until an American engineer asked the two men if they would speak in front of the new color television cameras. Seizing the opportunity, Khrushchev asked Nixon how long the United States had existed. The premier, who was satisfied with Nixon's answer of 180 years, stated that the Soviet Union had existed for less than forty-two and would soon surpass the United States' economic level and "wave bye-bye" as it moved past.³⁶ Khrushchev then turned his attention back to the Captive Nations Resolution. He grabbed a worker and asked, "Does this man look like a slave laborer?...With men with such spirit how can we lose?"³⁷ Nixon, not wanting to be outdone, told the premier, "You must not be afraid of ideas. After all, you don't know everything."³⁸ Khrushchev responded, "If I don't know everything, you don't know anything about communism except fear of it."³⁹ By that time both men looked furious and decided to leave the television studio and continue the debate elsewhere.

After leaving the television studio, the two men entered a model kitchen filled with the latest American technology. There, the heated debate continued over insignificant items, such as a washing machine and an electronic lemon juicer. While it seemed they were arguing over trivial items, Khrushchev later asserted that they were

³⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 417.

³⁷ Ambrose, *Nixon*, 523.

³⁸ "National Affairs," *Time Magazine* (August 3, 1959): 13.

³⁹ "National Affairs," *Time Magazine* (August 3, 1959): 13.

“not debating kitchen appliances but a question of two opposing systems: capitalism and socialism.”⁴⁰ Soon the debate turned into a discussion over military strength and rockets with both politicians boasting about their military potential. Before long, Nixon was poking Khrushchev in the chest with his finger, while the Soviet leader was pointing directly in the vice president’s face. Quite a large crowd had gathered to listen to the two leaders exchange opinions and insults. When the debate finally ended, both men were smiling and seemed to have enjoyed the tense situation. In fact, as they were leaving the kitchen, Khrushchev stated to the stunned American guide, “Thank you for letting us use [your] kitchen for our argument.”⁴¹ However, not everyone thought the agitated debate was as comical as Khrushchev did. A Bonn newspaper stated that “one hesitates whether one should call a discussion of this kind childishly silly or potentially dangerous.”⁴²

The day concluded with an extravagant dinner between Nixon and Khrushchev. Nixon described the dinner as “most cordial.”⁴³ In fact, Khrushchev was in a jovial frame of mind and offered champagne toasts and caviar to his American guests. After the toast, Khrushchev and Nixon threw their champagne glasses into the fire as a symbol of friendship and peace. Both leaders retired early since the day was emotionally draining for both Khrushchev and Nixon. In a telegram to Eisenhower, Nixon remained optimistic

⁴⁰ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 366.

⁴¹ “National Affairs,” *Time Magazine* (August 3, 1959): 15.

⁴² *The New York Times*, July 26, 1959, 4(A).

⁴³ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State,” 345.

about the trip but informed Eisenhower that he had “a sharp and prolonged exchange on [the] question of the Captive Nations Resolution.”⁴⁴

The day after the “Kitchen Debate,” July 25, was relatively uneventful for Nixon compared to the previous day. The morning began badly when Nixon received word that Soviet newspaper accounts of the “Kitchen Debate” marked Khrushchev as the clear winner. While Nixon was not surprised that newspapers, such as *Pravda*, labeled the Soviet leader the victor, he was agitated that the press published the premier’s “remarks in great detail, while those of Mr. Nixon’s were considerably condensed and some of his best points eliminated.”⁴⁵ The main reason for Nixon’s agitation was that the vice president received guarantees from the Soviet leadership that there would be no censorship in the Soviet media regarding the exchanges between Khrushchev and himself.

Despite his anger over Soviet censorship, Nixon enjoyed being in Moscow. He spent most of the day meeting people, both Russian citizens and government officials. He spoke to large crowds of citizens and was even heckled several times during the day by curious citizens who asked, “Why does America oppose a solution to the Berlin question?” and “Why do you say we are a captive people?”⁴⁶ Nixon attempted to answer the questions honestly without provoking an argument with the Russians. The vice president answered all the questions he could and even praised the hecklers he encountered. Each time he was jeered by a member of the crowd he praised free speech

⁴⁴ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State,” 345.

⁴⁵ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Muscovites Heckle Nixon,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1959, 3(A).

⁴⁶ “National Affairs,” *Time Magazine* (August 3, 1959): 15.

and thanked the Russians for their questions. Later, Nixon confided to American reporters that he believed several of the hecklers were planted by Soviet officials. However, despite the tough questions, whether they were genuine or premeditated by the Soviet government, Nixon usually won over the crowds and exited to chants of “*Mir*,” which is Russian for peace.⁴⁷

Later in the afternoon, Nixon met with Anastas Mikoyan, the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Nixon had previously met with Mikoyan on several occasions and the two leaders held a mutual respect and usually had cordial discussions. Their first discussions focused on the Captive Nations Resolution. Mikoyan stated that the resolution was a mistake and “expressed his regret that this declaration, directed against the Soviet state and Soviet people, had preceded the vice president’s trip because this could spoil his stay in the USSR.”⁴⁸ Nixon attempted to explain to Mikoyan that congress had passed the resolution and that neither he nor Eisenhower had power over congress to prevent them from releasing the resolution. The vice president jokingly inquired why the resolution was deemed so offensive, since it called for Americans to pray for countries within the Warsaw Pact, and, after all, the Soviet people were atheists and did not believe in prayer. Mikoyan did not understand Nixon’s attempt at humor and explained to the vice president that the countries which the resolution were aimed at were not repressed and that the Soviet Union “is very proud of its being a champion of the liberation of oppressed peoples.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Muscovites Heckle Nixon,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1959, 3(A).

⁴⁸ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 347.

⁴⁹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 348.

After the meeting with Mikoyan, Nixon met briefly with Kozlov. The two leaders discussed disarmament and nuclear energy. Although no breakthroughs came as a result of the meetings on July 25, Nixon enjoyed spending time with both Mikoyan and Kozlov, and both Soviet leaders respected Nixon and his knowledge of foreign policy. The day ended with an extravagant dinner at the American Embassy held in honor of Khrushchev. At the banquet, Khrushchev suggested that Nixon and his wife travel to his dacha for the night instead of going to the premier's home the following morning.

Following dinner, Nixon and his entourage traveled to the Soviet leader's personal dacha outside of Moscow. Khrushchev did not join Nixon at his private retreat, so the vice president had the evening to explore Khrushchev's home away from the Kremlin. Nixon was very impressed by the premier's home. It was not what Nixon expected a leader of a communist country to have, since it was a former "Czarist summer home, [and] was almost as large as the White House. [Furthermore], it was surrounded by acres of grounds and gardens, and on one side the forest dropped down to the banks of the Moskva River."⁵⁰ The vice president used his free time to prepare for the heated debates he predicted would occur the following day when the premier arrived from Moscow.

On July 26, Khrushchev arrived early at his dacha. He and Nixon posed for pictures and then went boating on the Moskva River. During the boat ride, Khrushchev frequently stopped the boat and allowed swimmers to surround the boat. Khrushchev shook their hands and then turned to Nixon and asked, "Do these people seem to you like

⁵⁰ Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 209.

slaves of communism?”⁵¹ Fortunately, both men remained composed and enjoyed themselves on the river.

However, when they returned to the dacha for dinner, the debate continued where it had left off at the American exhibition. Discussions became heated as the topic of voting rights in Vietnam and Germany were bitterly discussed. After voting rights were adequately debated, the conversation turned to military strength. The premier boasted to Nixon that Soviet military technology had surpassed the United States and that the Soviet Union was producing better missiles and submarines. Khrushchev further extolled the advances in Soviet Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) stating that “ICBMs would be used only against the U.S, while the U.K., Germany, and even Spain could be hit with IRBMs.”⁵² The dinner and debate continued for over five hours, as neither man wanted to back down and be seen as weak. In his memoirs, Nixon stated that he could not back down at dinner because “Khrushchev would respect only those who stood up to him, who resisted him, and who believed as strongly in their own cause as he believed in his.”⁵³ Finally, the lengthy meal adjourned after Khrushchev proposed a toast to the health of Nixon and his wife.

After dinner, the men left their wives and advisors at the dacha and took a walk in the forest together with only their interpreters. Nixon spoke about the possibility of Eisenhower inviting the premier to the United States but urged him to break the stalemate over the Berlin question. The Soviet leader seemed unwilling to talk about Berlin or a

⁵¹ Roy Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, trans. Brian Pierce (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), 146.

⁵² FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 361.

⁵³ Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 212.

compromise and the discussions in the woods made little progress, so both men returned to the dacha. That was the last meeting between Nixon and Khrushchev during the vice president's trip.

Following the lengthy meeting, Nixon and the American entourage flew to Leningrad with Kozlov as their guide. Nixon and his group flew on a Soviet jet because the Soviets protested the use of an American airplane flying over Soviet territory because they feared the American plane would be outfitted with spy equipment. Nixon's reception was overwhelming, as the Russian citizens flocked to hear the vice president speak. While his reception in Moscow had been mostly positive, it was small compared to Leningrad. Thousands of Soviet citizens met the vice president with signs that read "Welcome Nixon."⁵⁴

While in Leningrad on July 27, Nixon continued to meet with Soviet citizens and toured a Soviet shipyard and answered questions from the workers. Nixon and Kozlov got along well and enjoyed each other's company. The two men toured the city and even visited a set of trick fountains inspired by Peter the Great, where the two diplomats were sprayed with water. After being sprayed several times by the fountains, Nixon told Kozlov, "That is a good way to cool off hot heads. We ought to use it more often in diplomacy."⁵⁵ The two men spent a large portion of the day at the fountains speaking with Leningrad's citizens and posing for pictures.

After the fountains, Nixon, Kozlov, and Vice Admiral Hyman G. Rickover inspected the state-of-the-art Soviet ship, the atomic icebreaker, *Lenin*. Nixon and

⁵⁴ Osgood Caruthers, "Leningrad Hails Nixon Campaign," *New York Times*, July 28, 1959, 10(A).

⁵⁵ Osgood Caruthers, "Leningrad Hails Nixon Campaign," *New York Times*, July 28, 1959, 10(A).

Rickover received full access to the ship after the vice president complained that Kozlov was given unrestricted admission to the atomic freighter, *Savannah*, when he toured the United States. Kozlov complied, and he and Nixon left Rickover to inspect the rest of the naval vessel, while the rest of the entourage visited other sites, including the Leningrad subway. The visit to Leningrad was the high point for Nixon during his trip to the Soviet Union, as he enjoyed both the city and its people.

The following day, July 28, the vice president flew to Novosibirsk, a Siberian industrial city, which was normally closed to foreigners. Thousands of Soviet citizens lined the road from the military airport to the city and cheered and applauded as the Americans passed. At the airport, Nixon gave a short speech that declared the Soviet Union and the United States should prohibit closed cities within their countries. The vice president stated, "This [Novosibirsk] is one of the closed ones [cities]. I am sure that I speak for all of you [Soviet citizens] when I say that this city and all cities here in the Soviet Union and in the United States should be opened so we could know each other better and build peace and friendship, which we all want."⁵⁶ Nixon reaffirmed the point throughout his visit to Novosibirsk that, for the two superpowers to improve their relationship, they needed to become better acquainted with one another, and a first step would be to open up all closed cities.

In Novosibirsk, Nixon toured factories that specialized in making heavy machines and hydraulic presses. Nixon met with laborers and spent most of the afternoon speaking with Soviet citizens, while his wife went to a fashion show to view

⁵⁶ Osgood Caruthers, "Nixon Bids Soviet and U.S. Lift Bars to 'Closed' Cities," *New York Times*, July 29, 1959, 1(A).

the latest Soviet clothing. That night, Nixon and his wife went to the ballet to see “Swan Lake” with local communist officials. Between acts, the Soviet people rushed to get a glimpse of Nixon and ask him questions. Although the vice president and his wife were almost knocked over several times by the eager Soviet citizens, Nixon called his reception in Novosibirsk “by far the most outstanding show of friendship and warmth I’ve seen yet in the Soviet Union.”⁵⁷ After the ballet, the vice president left the theater and was greeted by thousands of Soviet citizens, many of whom had been waiting for over three hours to get a glimpse of the American. Nixon shook hands with adults and patted children on the head while mingling with the Soviet people.

The citizens of Novosibirsk gave Nixon the friendliest reception he received while he was in the Soviet Union. Like Leningrad, Nixon greatly enjoyed his time in Siberia. He enjoyed both the communist officials and citizens he encountered and found that almost all Soviet citizens desired peace and were scared by the possibility of war. Furthermore, the citizens of Novosibirsk were intrigued by the westerners. Many citizens had never left Siberia and had only heard about Americans from books or from friends. Almost all of the people who met Nixon liked him and found him to be very charming. Overall, Nixon made a great impression on the people of Novosibirsk, and the populace also made a positive impression on the vice president.

On July 29, Nixon visited Sverdlovsk, a city of 900,000 located in the Urals. While there, he visited a power plant and encountered a large number of hecklers with political questions. Nixon had to dodge questions about American racism and military

⁵⁷ Osgood Caruthers, “Nixon Bids Soviet and U.S. Lift Bars to ‘Closed’ Cities,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1959, 3(A).

bases in Europe. The most common questions and statements were, “Why does the United States want war?” and “Do you see any type of curtain here?”⁵⁸ Nixon tried to remain calm and answered some questions while ignoring others. The vice president believed that the Soviet government had planted some of the hecklers in an attempt to provoke him into lashing out against the Soviet citizens. Nixon tried to exhibit patience with the crowd but advised his Soviet guides that, if the rude behavior persisted, “I’m going to blast the whole bunch of you publicly in a way you’ll never forget.”⁵⁹ While in Sverdlovsk, the vice president also visited tool and steel plants and was allowed to see where the Soviet Union made large turbines for dams throughout the Soviet Union. After his tour of the industrial plants, Nixon dined with Kozlov and local communist officials, but Nixon was in a horrible mood after the heckling he received earlier in the day. Nixon did not enjoy his time in Sverdlovsk and blamed the local communist officials for forcing citizens to ask sensitive questions.

On July 30, after leaving Sverdlovsk, the vice president visited the mining town of Degtyarsk located about 50 miles from Sverdlovsk. In Degtyarsk, he had lunch with more communist officials and told his hosts that “I hope that this may be one of the first steps, which will be followed by others, increasing the contacts between the leaders and people of our two countries.”⁶⁰ After lunch, the vice president visited a copper mine outside of Degtyarsk. He changed from his suit into mining clothes and descended 800 feet into the mine where he discussed East-West relations with miners. While standing in

⁵⁸ Osgood Caruthers, “Siberians Heckle Nixon in Debates,” *The New York Times*, July 30, 1959, 2(A).

⁵⁹ Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crisis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1962), 277.

⁶⁰ Osgood Caruthers, “American Visitor Stresses an Increase in Contact by People and Leaders,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1959, 1(A).

knee deep water, one miner asked the vice president why tensions were so high between the two superpowers and what could be done to prevent war. Nixon responded that, to prevent the two countries from going to war, they must reduce tensions and “increase contacts between our leaders....What must happen is that our leaders must have a chance to talk seriously in a climate where something can be done without resort[ing] to force. You can be sure that we will work for that because we don’t want war either.”⁶¹ The miners continued to ask questions and the vice president answered all of their inquiries. Nixon concluded the talk with his Russian phrase, “*mir and druzhba*,” meaning peace and friendship.⁶² Degtyarsk was the last stop on Nixon’s tour of the Soviet Union.

On July 31, Nixon returned to Moscow. He informed a Soviet paper that his five-day visit across the Soviet Union had been “a very interesting trip....My only regret is that I could not have spent at least two more weeks.”⁶³ Nixon spent the rest of the day relaxing and preparing for his last day in Moscow. When asked about his itinerary for the day, Nixon joked, “I won’t even be going to visit a market,” making fun of the incident that occurred earlier in the trip when he was accused of bribing a Soviet citizen.⁶⁴

On August 1, Nixon concluded his trip to the Soviet Union with an unprecedented thirty-minute television and radio address to the Soviet people. Nixon opened his speech with praise of the Soviet people and the beauty of their country. He also discussed the American and Soviet cooperation in World War II and expressed sympathy for the

⁶¹ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Nixon Airs Views in Mine in Urals,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1959, 2(A).

⁶² Harrison E. Salisbury, “Nixon Airs Views in Mine in Urals,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1959, 2(A).

⁶³ Osgood Caruthers, “Nixon in Moscow for Speech Today,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1959, 1(A).

⁶⁴ Osgood Caruthers, “Nixon in Moscow for Speech Today,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1959, 1(A).

millions of Soviets who suffered and died during the war. Then the vice president called for a free exchange of ideas and defended American military bases in Europe. He then asserted that the Soviet people “would continue to live in an era of fear, suspicion, and tension if Premier Khrushchev tried to promote the communization of countries outside the Soviet Union.”⁶⁵ He further stated that Khrushchev

is an articulate spokesman for the economic system in which he believes...He is one of those individuals who, whether you agree with him or disagree with him, is a born leader of men. Because he has these unique qualities and because the decisions he makes will affect not only the 200,000,000 people of the U.S.S.R. but also the two billion people on this earth, he carries a tremendous responsibility on his shoulders.⁶⁶

The reaction from Moscow was mixed. The Soviet press stated, “Nixon had good words and interesting ideas but he had distorted Soviet foreign policy.”⁶⁷ The following day, Nixon and his entourage left the Soviet Union and visited Poland for several days before returning to the United States.

Almost everyone in Washington believed that Nixon’s trip had been a great success. In a letter to the department of state, the Ambassador in the United States Embassy in Moscow wrote that the “Vice President’s visit was highly successful. He was able in his discussions with top leaders to convince them of the United States’ desire for peace while...impressing upon them our determination to resist pressure.”⁶⁸

Eisenhower also believed that the visit had been a success and was eager to hear in

⁶⁵ Osgood Caruthers, “Vice President’s Talk Scored and Praised by Moscow Radio,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959, 1(A).

⁶⁶ Osgood Caruthers, “Vice President’s Talk Scored and Praised by Moscow Radio,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959, 1(A).

⁶⁷ Osgood Caruthers, “Vice President’s Talk Scored and Praised by Moscow Radio,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959, 1(A).

⁶⁸ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Telegram from the Soviet Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State,” 380.

person what Nixon thought of the historic trip. When Nixon returned to Washington, he and Milton Eisenhower reported immediately to the president. They stated that the trip had been a success, as they had had the opportunity to get to know several key Soviet leaders and had met hundreds of Soviet citizens. While they thought the trip had been successful, they acknowledged the difficulties in working with Khrushchev. Nixon had gained a respect for the Soviet leader, but he believed Khrushchev “looks at everything with Communist glasses and believes what he says.”⁶⁹ Milton Eisenhower did not hold back his opinion when he informed his brother that Khrushchev “has a quick mind, and is good at polemics. [However], he has a primitive approach, and is ignorant of everything outside the Soviet Bloc, although he does not recognize his ignorance.”⁷⁰ The meeting concluded with Nixon informing Eisenhower “that the only long-range answer to the Russian problem is a gradual opening of the door through contacts.”⁷¹ While Nixon’s trip was not always pleasant, it was a first step in establishing these “contacts” to improve East-West relations.

Nixon’s trip did not result in any breakthroughs on major issues, but there were several positives which came from the vice president’s visit. Although Nixon and Khrushchev rarely agreed on issues and spent most of their time in heated debates, both men left the encounter with a better understanding and admiration for each other. Even though the two men argued, they respected one another as leaders. Khrushchev recalled

⁶⁹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 382.

⁷⁰ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 382.

⁷¹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 382.

that, many years later, when Nixon once again visited the Soviet Union, he tried to visit the Soviet leader. The premier wrote in his memoirs:

I very much regretted missing him. I was touched that he would take the trouble. I was especially touched in view of the fact that our relations had always been tense. On the occasions we met we rarely exchanged kind words. More often than not we bickered. But he showed a genuine human courtesy when he tried to see me...I'm very sorry I didn't have an opportunity to thank him for his consideration, to shake hands with him and his wife.⁷²

This shows that, although the two men were tough leaders who believed in their own form of government and despised the other's political beliefs, there was respect for one another.

Even more importantly than his relationship with Khrushchev, Nixon enjoyed himself while in the Soviet Union and found most of the people he met to be very likable. He found that the majority of the common citizens and workers were very polite and interesting people, and he enjoyed asking and answering questions, despite the hecklers. Getting acquainted with the Soviet people was a very important first step in attempting to improve American relations with the Soviet Union. Journalists called Nixon's visit "astonishing" and praised his efforts to ease tensions between the superpowers.⁷³ *The New York Times* also extolled Khrushchev for allowing the visit. The paper stated, "The Soviet Union of Nikita Khrushchev is permitting things that would have been unthinkable in the days of Stalin."⁷⁴ Nixon's trip to the Soviet Union was a starting point for both countries to gain a better understanding of the other, and without this trip later summits and visits might not have been conducted. A reporter for *The New York Times* summed

⁷² Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 367.

⁷³ James Reston, "Nixon's Impact Assayed," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959, 1(A).

⁷⁴ James Reston, "Nixon's Impact Assayed," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959, 1(A).

the visit up best when he stated, “This was a small incident by itself, but in the wider history of United States-Soviet relations, it was generally regarded as important. There is new confidence developing here on both sides.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ James Reston, “Nixon’s Impact Assayed,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959, 1(A).

Chapter III

The Spirit of Camp David

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's two-week visit to the United States in September 1959 was heralded by a plethora of news anchors as "Thirteen Days that Stirred the World." How was it that "communist #1," as he was labeled by other newspapers, received an invitation to the United States?⁷⁶ In the months following Vice President Richard Nixon's trip to Moscow, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union remained strained, as several key issues remained unresolved that could keep both nations away from the peaceful coexistence each claimed they wanted. The most pressing issue that separated the two superpowers was the issue of a divided Berlin. West Berlin had been a problem for Soviet Union since the end of World War II, and by 1959, Khrushchev felt the issue had to finally be settled. Other issues, such as disarmament, a divided China, and Korea, were also very sensitive topics. While no major agreements were reached during Khrushchev's trip to the United States, the trip helped ease tensions between the countries, as Khrushchev met the capitalist country face-to-face and realized that most ordinary American citizens were not much different from the Soviet populace in that they both wanted a peaceful and prosperous future.

Since Khrushchev's rise to power, he had desperately wanted the United States to view the Soviet Union as an equal. Khrushchev believed that the one way was if he were invited to visit America on an official trip. Therefore, Khrushchev had desired an

⁷⁶ Kharlamov, M. and O. Vadeyev, ed. *Face to Face with America: The Story of Nikita S. Khrushchev's Visit to the U.S.A.* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 1959, 2003), 11.

invitation to the United States to personally speak with President Dwight Eisenhower ever since his ascension to power following Stalin's death.⁷⁷ Unlike Nixon, who had volunteered to open the American exhibition in Moscow, Khrushchev had to wait for a formal invitation from the president.

That invitation finally came when Special Assistant to the President Robert Murphy suggested to Deputy Premier Frol Kozlov that Eisenhower would invite Khrushchev to the United States if the foreign ministers' meeting in Geneva showed progress. Khrushchev took that as an unambiguous invitation and accepted on July 22, 1959, the day before Nixon arrived in Moscow. The premier was elated about the opportunity to visit the United States and believed it was a signal from the president that the Soviet Union was finally an equal world power. Khrushchev stated, "I couldn't believe my eyes. We had no reason to expect such an invitation—not then, or ever for that matter. Our relations had been extremely strained. Yet here was Eisenhower inviting...the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union...on a friendly visit."⁷⁸ While Khrushchev was elated about his trip to the United States, Eisenhower was not. The meetings between the foreign ministers had not gone well, and Eisenhower was aggravated that Khrushchev interpreted his invitation as unconditional. Just days before the premier arrived, the president admitted he was still furious and "felt some annoyance because of the circumstances that brought about the visit."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 419.

⁷⁸ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 369.

⁷⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace: The White House Years, A Personal Account 1956-1961* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 432.

Like Nixon, Khrushchev prepared diligently for his historic visit to the United States. The premier, along with a number of aides and Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko, retreated to a dacha on the Black Sea to study materials prepared by the Foreign Ministry and the KGB. Writers prepared remarks for all circumstances, such as arrivals and departures. However, the preparation stalled when Gromyko was given an American itinerary for Khrushchev's visit and the schedule called for discussions to be held at Camp David. The premier and his staff were perplexed, as they had never heard of Camp David. Not even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Soviet Embassy in Washington could answer the mysterious question. In his memoirs, Khrushchev stated, "I was afraid maybe this Camp David was...a place where people who were mistrusted could be kept in quarantine."⁸⁰ Finally, the premier was informed that Camp David was similar to his own private dacha, and his fears were alleviated. That episode showed how little Soviet officials actually knew about each other and why dialogue between the countries was necessary in easing tensions!

Much consideration went into the composition of the entourage that would accompany Khrushchev on his visit to the United States. The biggest question the Soviet premier faced was whether he should include his family on the historic visit. Khrushchev recalled that the highest members of the Soviet government were vehemently against traveling with family members. In fact, Stalin once told Khrushchev that he "was very suspicious of anyone who took his wife on a trip with him."⁸¹ Furthermore, the Presidium members considered traveling with family members "unbusiness-like—and a

⁸⁰ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 372.

⁸¹ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 371.

petty-bourgeois luxury.”⁸² However, in secret, several high ranking Soviet officials believed that Khrushchev’s wife, Nina Petrovna Khrushchev, had a soothing effect on the unpredictable premier’s temper and would keep the Soviet leader as diplomatic as possible. Therefore, when Khrushchev expressed his desire for his family to accompany him on the trip, no one voiced any opposition.

Besides his family, Khrushchev wanted several Russian cultural figures to accompany the political delegation, similar to—but on a smaller scale than—the delegation Nixon brought to Moscow. The Soviet premier hand-selected everyone who traveled with the delegation, and he spent countless hours debating the pros and cons of taking each cultural figure to the United States. The premier’s most difficult choice was with Soviet author Mikhail Sholokhov, who wrote *Quiet Flows the Don*. While Sholokhov was a leading cultural figure in the Soviet Union, he was also known for being a heavy drinker. Khrushchev stated that he wanted to take the leading Soviet author but was nervous “he’d lose his wits and stumble about, perhaps inflicting physical injury on himself, and moral injury on his country.”⁸³ Khrushchev wanted everything to be perfect for his visit. He desperately wanted for the United States to recognize the Soviet Union as an equal, and his biggest fear was that someone from his delegation would embarrass him or the Soviet Union. Only after Sholokhov made two incident-free visits to other parts of Europe and promised the Soviet leader that he would control himself was he allowed to join Khrushchev’s traveling delegation.⁸⁴

⁸² Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 371.

⁸³ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 371.

⁸⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 371-372.

After deciding who would attend the historic summit, the question turned to how the Soviet delegation would travel from Moscow to Washington. Several ideas were entertained, including taking an extravagant ship, but Khrushchev decided that travel by ship would take too long. Therefore, the obvious choice was to fly, but Khrushchev and the Soviet government had to decide what aircraft would best suit their needs.

Khrushchev felt that the delegation should not take a regular passenger plane from Moscow because they would have to make several stops. Instead, the Soviet leader wanted to take the new Tupolev 114 (TU 114). Besides not having to stop for refueling, the plane was one of the largest aircraft in the world in 1959 and had received an ample amount of newspaper coverage in the West. Perhaps the greatest trait of the TU 114 for Khrushchev was that Washington did not have a ramp high enough to receive the plane, a fact that thrilled the premier. Khrushchev believed that landing in Washington in the TU 114 would send a message to America: “Look at us! See what we can do....Let them see what we can do!”⁸⁵

However, the problem with taking the TU 114 was that the plane’s long-range maiden voyage had just occurred the previous May, and upon landing small cracks had been found in the engine. While Khrushchev states in his memoirs that no one was worried about the long distance flight between Moscow and Washington, evidence suggests otherwise. Several presidium members attempted to convince the premier not to take the risky aircraft. When Khrushchev demanded that the delegation take the TU 114, no one dared voice further opposition, but certain protective measures were taken. When

⁸⁵ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 422.

the TU 114 left Moscow, several aircraft specialists were on board to consistently monitor the status of the airplane's engines. Furthermore, there was a line of Soviet tankers and fishing boats along the flight path between Iceland and New York in case the plane was forced to perform an emergency landing in the Atlantic Ocean.⁸⁶ The trip between Moscow and Washington was without incident, and, as the plane landed, Khrushchev boasted with pride on the airplane's success and stated that the Soviet Union "had come a long way when the United States wouldn't even grant us diplomatic recognition."⁸⁷

While Khrushchev and his entourage arranged to leave Russia for the United States, the Eisenhower administration and the American populace prepared for the Soviet leader's arrival. Eisenhower dreaded the meeting, as Nixon told the president that Khrushchev was a man "with a closed mind, who will not be impressed with what he sees in America."⁸⁸ To compound Eisenhower's problems, early preparations were tense as the two sides found little common ground on even the smallest issues. For example, neither side could agree on how Khrushchev should be welcomed in the United States once his plane landed. No one in the Eisenhower administration doubted that Khrushchev was in complete and total control of the Soviet Union, but his official title was somewhat of a mystery. Only after the Soviet government informed the United States that Khrushchev was visiting the United States "in the capacity of the head of state," was the situation finally settled.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 423.

⁸⁷ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 374.

⁸⁸ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower," 382.

⁸⁹ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 434.

Another tense encounter occurred when Khrushchev complained about the “capitalistic” style of dress—referring to tuxedos—that Eisenhower and his staff wanted to wear during formal dinners. Khrushchev explained that he was a member of the proletariat and was not used to such extravagances. Eisenhower finally put the issue to rest when he stated, “Khrushchev would be free to wear anything he desired, but that we Americans would follow our own customs.”⁹⁰ While these issues were minor and finally resolved, they showed how little the two sides knew about each other and how desperately the two countries needed to get to know each other before major agreements on pressing issues could be reached.

The protests of Khrushchev’s visit began before he set foot on American soil. Three days before the premier arrived, forty congressmen called for a day of mourning “for the victims of communist terror during the Soviet leader’s stay in this country.”⁹¹ In New York, a conservative magazine sold over 30,000 red and black stickers, priced at four for one dollar, that stated, “Khrushchev not welcome here.”⁹² The stickers were so popular that an additional 10,000 were printed before the premier arrived. Even elected officials in small towns protested the visit, as several politicians went even further calling for flags to be flown at half-mast while the Soviet leader was in the United States.

Furthermore, several religious groups, including the Archdiocese of Washington, called

⁹⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 434.

⁹¹ Peter Kihss, “Anti-Red Groups Hear Press Protests Against Khrushchev,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1959, 8(A).

⁹² Peter Kihss, “Anti-Red Groups Hear Press Protests Against Khrushchev,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1959, 8(A).

upon its members to pray for the souls of Khrushchev and the atheist communists visiting the United States.⁹³

After several months of tense preparation, Khrushchev arrived on September 15, 1959 at Andrews Air Force Base, which is located a few miles southeast of Washington, DC. His party consisted of over sixty people, including his wife, his children, Yulia, Rada, Sergei, Yelena, his granddaughter also named Yulia, his foreign minister, and numerous reporters. After the premier and his entourage disembarked from the plane, they were personally greeted by Eisenhower and a large crowd of Americans. After the playing of the two national anthems and a twenty-one gun salute, both leaders gave brief speeches. Eisenhower spoke first and stated:

I welcome you, [and] your family and party to the United States. I'm especially happy that Mrs. Khrushchev and other members of your family are accompanying you. On behalf of the Government and the people of America I express the hope that you and they will find your stay among us interesting and useful. I am looking forward to the talks we will have together. Although we shall be negotiating many issues affecting the interest's of other countries, I trust that a full and frank exchange of views on many subjects may contribute to better understanding, on both sides, of unresolved international questions.⁹⁴

Khrushchev responded:

Permit me at this moment, in first setting foot on American soil, to thank Mr. Eisenhower for the invitation to visit your country, and everyone present for the warm welcome accorded to us representatives of the Soviet Union....As you see our countries are not so distant from each other. I accepted the invitation of the President of the United States...with great pleasure and gratitude and I will be glad to meet and talk with your statesmen, representatives of the business world, intellectuals, workers and farmers, and to learn about the life of the industrious and enterprising American people.⁹⁵

⁹³ Kharlamov and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 33.

⁹⁴ Dwight Eisenhower, "Speeches at the Airport," *The New York Times*, September 16, 1959, 19(A).

⁹⁵ Nikita Khrushchev, "Speeches at the Airport," *The New York Times*, September 16, 1959, 19(A).

Khrushchev enjoyed the opening ceremony and stated, “I was terribly impressed. Everything was shining and glittering. We didn’t do such things in our country; we always did things in a proletarian way, which sometimes, I’m afraid, meant they were done a bit carelessly.”⁹⁶ After the ceremony at the airport, Eisenhower and Khrushchev went to the White House. On the way there, an estimated 200,000 people lined the streets in an attempt to see the two world leaders together. However, the atmosphere was not entirely positive, as thousands of citizens wore black wristbands and waved black flags in protest of the premier’s visit. One woman on the street claimed, “It seemed more like a funeral procession than a parade.”⁹⁷

After arriving at the White House, Eisenhower, Khrushchev, Secretary of State Christian Herter, and Foreign Minister Gromyko began discussing their agenda for the summit. Eisenhower suggested that they wait until they reach Camp David at the end of Khrushchev’s visit before discussing complicated issues, such as Berlin, Laos, nuclear testing, and disarmament. Khrushchev agreed and expressed his opinion that the meeting should be about building trust because “we [the Soviet Union] believe that you do not want war; and we assume that you also believe this about us.”⁹⁸ Eisenhower agreed with the premier’s statement and added that he saw “no profit in mutual suicide.”⁹⁹

Before the meeting adjourned Khrushchev gave Eisenhower a model of the Soviet rocket, Lunik II, which had just completed a trip to the moon, much to the embarrassment of the United States’ space program. Eisenhower thought the gesture was somewhat odd

⁹⁶ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 376.

⁹⁷ Dan Adams Schmidt, “Khrushchev Sees Sights from Car and Helicopter,” *The New York Times*, September 16, 1959, 1(A).

⁹⁸ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 394.

⁹⁹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 394.

and an attempt to embarrass the president, but Eisenhower graciously accepted the gift because “quite possibly [Khrushchev] was completely sincere.”¹⁰⁰ Instead of further discussing politics, the president and premier took a helicopter ride over parts of Maryland and Virginia. Eisenhower hoped to impress Khrushchev with the large number of homes and automobiles in the suburbs of Washington. Khrushchev attempted to act interested but later stated that he was “appalled by the automobiles jamming up the highway.”¹⁰¹

The president and premier concluded the historic first day of the summit with a private conversation where the only other people present were their interpreters. Eisenhower explained to Khrushchev that he had only sixteen more months as president but wanted to see a peaceful future between the two superpowers. He confided in Khrushchev that he believed the premier had “an opportunity to become the greatest political figure in history because he has a tremendous power in a complex of states with great might,” and because of this the Soviet leader could “do a great deal to secure the peace of the world.”¹⁰² Khrushchev seemed touched by the president’s honesty and thanked him for the remarks. During private meetings, Eisenhower and Khrushchev seemed to share a mutual respect for one another, and both seemed optimistic that the two sides could peacefully co-exist.

While Khrushchev was in the United States he requested an official from Eisenhower’s administration to be his guide and answer any questions the Soviet leader

¹⁰⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 435.

¹⁰¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 426.

¹⁰² FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 409.

might ask. The president selected Henry Cabot Lodge, who was head of the United States' delegation to the United Nations, to accompany Khrushchev on his tour around Washington and later across the country beginning in New York. While Lodge gratefully accepted the opportunity from the president, he knew the job would be difficult and spent weeks preparing for the premier's visit. Lodge stated, "I was stuffed full of information on every subject, which he could conceivably raise. For two weeks I was a veritable walking encyclopedia."¹⁰³ Furthermore, Lodge worried about keeping the unpredictable premier happy on his tour of the United States.

However, any uneasiness that Lodge possessed about spending time with Khrushchev began to dissipate when the two men took their first car ride around Washington together. They discussed a number of issues, including freedom of the press, the United States' political system, and the class system in the United States. Both men appeared to enjoy one another's company and had a comical exchange after viewing the Jefferson Memorial from the car. Lodge informed Khrushchev that Thomas Jefferson believed that the populace of a country possesses an entitlement to revolution when they feel that a government needs to be overthrown. Khrushchev quickly agreed with Jefferson's views and then asked Lodge why Americans criticized the Bolshevik Revolution if one of their national heroes was a proponent of revolutions. Lodge responded that he never personally criticized the Russian Revolution but added that Jefferson believed that revolutions should occur routinely. Khrushchev quickly realized

¹⁰³ Lodge, *The Storm Has Many Eye*, 158.

that constant change by the people of the Soviet Union would not be beneficial for the communists and stated, “Oh, that wouldn’t work.”¹⁰⁴

Later in the afternoon, Khrushchev made several stops, meeting with common citizens and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including John F. Kennedy. While the premier met with the committee, other congressmen denounced his visit. Congressman Gerald T. Flynn declared, “Freedom and decency are at stake in the visit of Mr. Nikita ‘the red Adolph Hitler’ Khrushchev to our beloved country. This is the first time in the history of the United States of America that a dictator, whose soul is sustained with the blood of millions of human beings, is to be given the red carpet treatment in the home of liberty....We who love freedom and democracy have a right to protest...this visit.”¹⁰⁵

After the meeting at the capital, the premier visited an agricultural research center and the Lincoln Memorial, where he removed his cap and bowed in respect to the president who had freed the slaves. Khrushchev stated, “I thought it would be a good idea if...the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, who had once been a miner, paid homage to a former American President, who had once been a woodcutter.”¹⁰⁶ After the Lincoln Memorial, the two men saw the statue dedicated to the Third Infantry Division. Khrushchev was also very impressed by this statue. He asked Lodge if the Third Division had fought the Germans. Lodge recalled that the division had fought the

¹⁰⁴ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 410.

¹⁰⁵ *Congressional Record*, “Mr. Nikita ‘the Red Hitler’ Khrushchev,” Volume 105, Part 26, September 10, to October 5, 1959 A8246.

¹⁰⁶ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 379.

Germans in World War I and World War II. The premier, awed by the statue, told Lodge, “That statue is very warlike. In our country we have nothing like that.”¹⁰⁷

During the day, the premier also faced tough questions from American journalists. At the National Press Club, reporters quizzed Khrushchev about the Hungarian uprising and his role in the great terror. He ignored some questions while attempting to stay calm, but he visibly turned red with anger. The day concluded with a dinner held in honor of Eisenhower at the Soviet Embassy.

Despite the tough questions at the National Press Club, Khrushchev seemed to enjoy his time in Washington. In his spare time, he enjoyed touring the city, and, at night, walking around portions of the city near the Soviet Embassy. Khrushchev stated, “Washington is a clean city, green and very pleasant. It’s also quiet....Washington is a rich place, but it looks like a provincial town. I liked very much both the planning and the architecture. It has good, solid buildings rather than skyscrapers.”¹⁰⁸ Besides enjoying the layout of Washington, Khrushchev and his wife seemed to get along with the Eisenhowers. While no groundbreaking agreements came from their initial visit, Khrushchev liked Eisenhower much better than Nixon and found that he got along with most people in Washington, which was not the case in other cities he visited.

On September 17, Khrushchev traveled to New York City by train. During the trip, the premier and Lodge had a very tense conversation about the military strength of the Soviet Union and the United States. Lodge remembers that they were discussing nuclear proliferation when the premier went on a tangent about the superiority of the

¹⁰⁷ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 413.

¹⁰⁸ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 379.

Soviet Union's military. He boasted that the Soviet Union possessed a far greater number of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). The premier further stated that their hydrogen bombs were superior to the United States' version. He then maintained that, with their technology, they could destroy West Germany from the Soviet Union, and then asked loudly how many bombs it would take to destroy the United Kingdom. Lodge responded by boasting about the superiority of the United States' Air Force and Navy. Khrushchev realized that he had provoked the argument and quickly attempted to change the subject by telling several jokes.¹⁰⁹

When Khrushchev arrived in New York he was unimpressed by what he saw and described it as a "huge, noisy city with an enormous number of neon signs and automobiles...[with] a humid, unpleasant climate."¹¹⁰ That afternoon, Khrushchev attended a cocktail party at Averell Harriman's townhouse. Almost thirty men were in attendance, and the majority of those businessmen had assets greater than one hundred million dollars. The premier stated that the Americans "looked like typical capitalists, right out of the posters painted during our Civil War—only they didn't have the pig snouts our artists gave them."¹¹¹ Khrushchev was hopeful that the American businessmen could be talked into economic cooperation with the Soviet Union, but the premier realized the majority of the men had no interest in trading with the Soviet Union.

Khrushchev then went back to his hotel, where the Economic Club of New York was holding a dinner in his honor. After the meal, Khrushchev gave a short speech which

¹⁰⁹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Memorandum of Conversation," 414-415.

¹¹⁰ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 381.

¹¹¹ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 382.

focused on peaceful coexistence and improved East-West relations. Tensions at the banquet were high after several people questioned the premier about how peaceful coexistence worked with Marxist ideology, which predicted the eventual victory of communism over capitalism. Khrushchev attempted to dodge the question, but he was asked repeatedly and eventually lost his temper. He yelled, "If you don't want to listen, all right....I am an old sparrow and you cannot muddle me with your cries. If there is no desire to listen to me, I can go. I did not come to the USA to beg. I represent the great Soviet State."¹¹² After that outburst, the crowd calmed and there were no further incidents at the dinner.

The following day, Khrushchev was irate about the questions that were asked at dinner. He informed Lodge that the dinner was a complete failure and that he was insulted by several questions, particularly the ones accusing the Soviet Union of jamming Western radio broadcasts. The Soviet leader then attempted to seek retribution on Lodge for what had transpired at the dinner. Khrushchev brought up a number of issues that he saw as imperfections in the United States' history. He coldly asked Lodge about McCarthyism and the Red Scares that occurred in the 1920s and 1950s. He stated that the communists who were jailed had committed no crime, but were innocent civilians expressing their political beliefs. While Lodge did not defend McCarthy or his actions, he stated that many of the communists who were jailed wanted to overthrow the United States government by any means possible, including violence. Khrushchev smiled and

¹¹² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 429.

poked Lodge in the ribs and stated, “You say you don’t like violence. Did George Washington have an election in order to win the American Revolution?”¹¹³

The Soviet leader continued his debate with Lodge by bragging about their advances in industry, medicine, military technology, and how they would soon pass the United States. Khrushchev continually mentioned the future and where the Soviet Union would be compared to the United States. He stated that both his and Lodge’s grandchildren would live in a world where there would be no capitalism. Khrushchev proudly stated, “They [Lodge’s and Khrushchev’s grandchildren] will all be [be?] Socialists.”¹¹⁴ Lodge was quick to offer his vision of the future. He informed the premier that, while the Soviet Union might not be a capitalist state, he predicted more individual freedoms for the Soviet people and a weakening of the communist bureaucracy. After this statement, Khrushchev turned to his wife and stated, “May God have pity on [Lodge]...Isn’t it a sad thing to see a nice man all stuffed up with foolish notions? Come to the Soviet Union and we will polish you up.”¹¹⁵ Both men ended the conversation irritated with the other. This was one of the few occasions where a heated debate transpired without an attempt by either side to soften their tone and make peace before the conversation ended.

Later in the afternoon, Khrushchev made several appearances. He visited the Empire State Building, spoke with New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, and traveled to Hyde Park to visit FDR’s former home. The premier’s most important stop in New

¹¹³ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 418.

¹¹⁴ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 418.

¹¹⁵ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 418.

York occurred when he addressed the United Nations. Khrushchev surprised everyone when he proposed a plan for complete nuclear disarmament over a course of five years. He stated his hope was that “armies, navies, and air forces shall cease to exist; that general staffs and war ministries shall be abolished; that military establishments shall be closed...and all atomic and hydrogen bombs will be destroyed and their production terminated.”¹¹⁶ Although he received some praise from the UN for his ground-breaking plan, the United States delegation called the plan “absurd” and “impractical” because the arrangement had no specifications for inspection or supervision.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, Eisenhower recognized Khrushchev’s plan as a willingness to discuss complicated issues, such as disarmament.

After his stops in Washington and New York, Khrushchev’s itinerary included traveling across the United States. On September 19, Khrushchev and Lodge boarded a private plane to Los Angeles for a one-day visit. On the plane, Khrushchev and Lodge bonded and began to genuinely enjoy each other’s company. In fact, Khrushchev poked fun at Lodge for his hostile speeches he presented in the UN. Khrushchev stated, “Before coming over here I read your speeches and after I read them I thought I would be scared of you, but now that I have been with you, talked with you, and seen what a nice man you are I don’t feel scared anymore.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the men cemented their bond over a glass of brandy. Both men toasted to world peace before draining the alcoholic beverage. After the glasses were empty, both Lodge and Khrushchev turned the glass up-side-down

¹¹⁶ “National Affairs” *Time Magazine* (September 28, 1959): 20.

¹¹⁷ “National Affairs” *Time Magazine* (September 28, 1959): 20.

¹¹⁸ Lodge, *The Storm Has Many Eyes*, 158-159.

over their head as a gesture of good relations between their countries. Lodge remembers that this ritual of friendship and good relations was repeated several times on Khrushchev's visit, and although drinking during the day "was hardly my usual routine, I survived rather pleasantly."¹¹⁹

However, the plane ride was not all enjoyable. Khrushchev again brought up nuclear weapons and boasted about the Soviet arsenal. Furthermore, he also brought up the Captive Nations Resolution. He stated that the United States should not worry about the "captive people" of the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary, and but only on international issues.¹²⁰ Lodge interjected that Poland and Hungary were international issues, since they are not part of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev appeared irritated and told Lodge, "Well you win a prize for geography. You at least know that Poland is different from the Soviet Union."¹²¹ The Soviet leader then continued to complain about the resolution.

After arriving in Los Angeles, the premier had lunch at the Twentieth Century Fox movie studio with the Hollywood elite. Famous stars, such as Kirk Douglas, Frank Sinatra, Gary Cooper, and Elizabeth Taylor, were in attendance. Marilyn Monroe seemed to have the greatest effect on Khrushchev, as she later recalled that "he smiled more when he was introduced to me than for anybody else."¹²² After lunch, the premier watched the filming of the movie *Can Can* and was photographed with the female dancers. The Soviet premier acted offended by the movie when he stated,

¹¹⁹ Lodge, *The Storm Has Many Eyes*, 162.

¹²⁰ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Memorandum of Conversation," 425.

¹²¹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Memorandum of Conversation," 425.

¹²² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 429.

You want to know what I think of the Can-Can? From my point of view and from the point of view of the Soviet people it is immoral. Good actors are made to do bad things for the entertainment of satiated and depraved people. In the Soviet Union we are in a habit of admiring the faces of the actors rather than their backsides.¹²³

Khrushchev continued to berate the lewdness of American cinema by calling the scantily clad women “downright indecent,” but the premier was not as offended as he let on because he later admitted, “I still have the pictures somewhere.”¹²⁴

Despite the *Can Can* incident, the lunch was a great success, and most of the Hollywood stars seemed to like Khrushchev. Maurice Chevalier stated, “Khrushchev is charming, clever and a master of polemics. I thought he was dynamite.”¹²⁵ Marilyn Monroe commented on the afternoon by stating that “it was a very interesting afternoon. I thought I detected a sign of hope and friendship, and perhaps a peaceful future. This was a memorable day in the history of cinema.”¹²⁶ Kirk Douglas perhaps best summed up the luncheon when he stated, “The closer people get the harder it is for them to fight.”¹²⁷

Despite the early success of Khrushchev’s trip to Los Angeles, the day quickly turned into a disaster. First, news was released that several famous Hollywood stars, including Ronald Reagan, refused to meet the Soviet leader. Perhaps the incident that angered Khrushchev the most was that he was denied access to Disneyland because of security concerns. The Soviet premier was irate over being denied entry and berated anyone who crossed his path. He angrily asked if the theme park “been seized by bandits

¹²³ Kharlamov and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 228.

¹²⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 386.

¹²⁵ Kharlamov and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 228.

¹²⁶ Kharlamov and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 228.

¹²⁷ Kharlamov and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 228.

who might destroy me?”¹²⁸ Hollywood stars who were still present when the premier was denied access to the amusement park found the incident humorous, but they also were saddened that the Soviet leader was so disappointed. Frank Sinatra told his friend, “Screw the cops! Tell the old broad [Khrushchev’s wife] you and I’ll take ‘em down [to Disneyland] this afternoon.”¹²⁹ Despite Sinatra’s best efforts, Khrushchev did not get to visit Disneyland during his stay in Los Angeles.

To compound an already tense day, the premier also faced a large number of protesters who opposed his visit. At one point, his car passed a protester dressed in solid black with a sign that read, “Death to Khrushchev, the butcher of Hungary.”¹³⁰ Khrushchev wondered how the woman knew which route his car would take and accused Lodge that Eisenhower had paid the woman to stand on the street and protest his visit. Lodge attempted to dismiss the premier’s accusations, but the Soviet leader continued to blame Eisenhower for the protests and negative press that he received in each city he visited.

The situation went from bad to worse at dinner, when the mayor of Los Angeles opened with a speech that the premier justifiably construed as anti-Soviet. Khrushchev launched into a tirade and stated, “I’m here as the guest of the president. I didn’t come to your city to be insulted or to listen to you denigrate our great country and our great people. If my presence is unwelcome, then my plane is always ready to take me straight back to the Soviet Union.”¹³¹ After his outburst, a silence fell over the banquet hall and

¹²⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 431.

¹²⁹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 431.

¹³⁰ Lodge, *The Storm Has Many Eyes*, 165.

¹³¹ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 388.

the dinner ended without further incident. However, Khrushchev was still furious and gathered his family and aides at his hotel room to rant about the treatment he had received, and he threatened to cancel his trip to San Francisco. Only after Lodge issued apologies and assurances that the same behavior would not be tolerated in San Francisco did Khrushchev calm down and return to his room. Despite his assurances, Lodge was worried that the premier's callous treatment would continue. He stated, "Clearly the Khrushchev visit to America was becoming a horrible failure."¹³²

Despite Lodge's assurances earlier in the evening, the situation worsened when Gromyko insisted on meeting with Lodge the night before they were scheduled to leave for San Francisco. When the meeting convened, Gromyko presented Lodge with a list of grievances that were to be reported directly to Eisenhower. In a letter to the State Department, Lodge listed the accusations as Gromyko had mentioned them in the meeting. Lodge reported that the complaints were, "(a) that we [the United States Government] were organizing provocative questions, (b) the police cordons were keeping Khrushchev from ordinary people, (c) that Pittsburg might be dropped from [the] schedule, and (d) that perhaps he should curtail the rest of the [the] trip and return to Washington."¹³³

After the list of complaints was issued, Lodge forwarded them to the president and State Department, and Gromyko and Lodge met at 1:00 A.M. to further discuss the matters Gromyko raised earlier in the evening. Lodge assured the Soviet Minister of

¹³² Lodge, *The Storm has Many Eyes*, 168.

¹³³ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Telegram from the Representative to the United Nations (Lodge) to the Department of State," 428.

Foreign Affairs that the United States government had no control over what questions people asked the premier while he was in the United States. Lodge further stated that the United States was pleased that Khrushchev wanted to interact with ordinary citizens and that Khrushchev had been the one that canceled their visit to Harlem. Lodge went on to state that the Soviet leader would have ample time to interact with common Americans if the trip continued, as they were scheduled to visit several factories and farms during future stops on their visit. Lodge concluded his response by informing Gromyko that they could cancel the trip and return to Washington if Khrushchev desired because “there have been too many banquets and they have lasted much too long and there is no reason why a man of Khrushchev’s eminence should be subject to so much annoyance.”¹³⁴ At this juncture of the conversation, both men softened their tones. Lodge told Gromyko that while he had no control over questions that Khrushchev received, he would attempt to convince Khrushchev’s future hosts that he was the guest of honor and should be treated in such a manner. Gromyko stated that he would report Lodge’s reply back to Khrushchev and hoped the trip would continue.

The following morning, Khrushchev and his party continued the trip by train to San Francisco for a two-day stay. On the train ride, Khrushchev and Lodge discussed communism and religion. Lodge informed the premier earlier in the trip that he prays for the communist leader, Khrushchev did not believe in God. The premier stated that “many of the ideals written down in the Bible were also the ideals of communism.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, Telegram from the Representative to the United Nations (Lodge) to the Department of State,” 429-430.

¹³⁵ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 435.

Lodge asked for a further explanation. Khrushchev said, “Christians believe the ideal society would be given to them by God, whereas communists thought it would be developed by man.”¹³⁶ Lodge asked if the premier meant that, “in other words, both Christians and communists were seeking utopia?”¹³⁷ Khrushchev explained that was exactly what he meant and hoped the Soviet Union would lead the rest of the world towards utopia. Although both men agreed on how utopia could be reached, they seemed to enjoy the pleasant debate.

From religion and communism, Khrushchev spoke to Lodge about Stalin and his regime in the Soviet Union. He informed Lodge that he had tried to change the way things were done in the Soviet Union since he took over power. He explained that, “in Stalin’s days, Soviet policy statements had been very cryptic and there had been no information as to the reasons or motives prompting certain policies. This veil of secrecy had caused a situation where many people, for lack of information, had started imagining things which might have not been true.”¹³⁸ Lodge enjoyed listening to the premier talk about Stalin’s regime and respected his frankness and honesty. Later, Lodge stated that Khrushchev’s visit had been “very revealing and could be very useful” in improving relations.¹³⁹ As the conversation ended, the two men arrived in San Francisco. Both men had a pleasant train ride, enjoying the other’s company and conversation.

The visit to San Francisco began on a high note, when the train made several stops near the California city. Large crowds of people filled the train stations to get a

¹³⁶ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 435.

¹³⁷ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 435.

¹³⁸ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 436.

¹³⁹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 436.

glimpse of the Soviet leader. Khrushchev did not disappoint the people and usually gave a short speech to the large crowds. Unlike Los Angeles, where he faced a large number of protestors, he was greeted with chants of “peace” and “friendship.” Everyone in the premier’s entourage took note of the friendly reception, and a Soviet journalist who was traveling with the group noted “how very different these excited, smiling people are from those who arranged the Los Angeles reception.”¹⁴⁰ Khrushchev enjoyed his celebrity status and poked fun at Lodge and the Eisenhower administration by stating, “The plain people of America like me...it is those bastards around Eisenhower that don’t.”¹⁴¹

When the Soviet leader arrived, he was greeted by Mayor George Christopher. He found that Christopher was very pleasant, unlike the stringent anti-communist mayor of Los Angeles. While there, he visited an IBM plant and a dairy, spoke at several different events, and met with several union leaders he considered “progressive.” The premier enjoyed the city and did not encounter the constant protests and heckling that he had in Los Angeles. During a train ride in the city of San Francisco, Khrushchev stepped out of his car to address the crowd and lost a pin off his jacket. The pin was the prestigious Order of Lenin and very important to Khrushchev. A person in the crowd found the pin and gave it to Lodge to return to the premier. Khrushchev later stated, “I would have been upset to have lost that medal, and there are plenty of types who might have been tempted to keep it as a souvenir. The fact that the person returned it to me made me respect these people.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Kharlamov and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 239.

¹⁴¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 431.

¹⁴² Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 390.

The only situation that occurred in San Francisco, which seemed to have a negative effect on Khrushchev, was his meeting with Walter Reuther, who was head of the auto workers' union. The meeting did not go well, as the men accused each another of exploiting workers. The premier knew Reuther was once a prominent leftist who had since condemned communism and the Soviet Union. Khrushchev was obviously disappointed in Reuther, as the premier stated that the union leader had "betrayed the class struggle."¹⁴³ Perhaps, since the Soviet leader knew Reuther's anti-communist sentiments in advance, Khrushchev did not allow this meeting to ruin his visit to the San Francisco; although, he later remembered Reuther as a "stupid idiot" and his brother an "old fool."¹⁴⁴

Overall, San Francisco made a positive impression on Khrushchev. He told Lodge as they were traveling to their hotel that "this city...has charmed me."¹⁴⁵ The Soviet leader enjoyed both the city and the politicians and most of the populace, which perhaps convinced him to forget the bad memories of New York and Los Angeles and continue the trip across the United States.

On September 22, Khrushchev traveled to Iowa for a two-day visit. The premier was greeted at the Des Moines airport by the state governor and over 20,000 people. The reception at the airport was possibly the warmest reception the premier received during his entire trip, as thousands of people cheered for the Soviet leader. However, there were several protesters at the airport who carried harsh signs which stated, "The only good

¹⁴³ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 394.

¹⁴⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 395.

¹⁴⁵ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Memorandum of Conversation," 339.

communist is a dead one,” “We butcher hogs, not people,” and “No Munich on the Potomac.”¹⁴⁶ Despite the protesters, Khrushchev enjoyed his time in Iowa. During the first day of his visit, he spoke at several events and inspected a machine factory.

The next day, the premier traveled to Coon Rapids, IA, which is located about seventy miles from Des Moines. The Soviet leader spent the day holding discussions with former presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson and at Roswell Garst’s farm inspecting hybrid corn. Khrushchev felt at ease on the farm and enjoyed talking about farming with Lodge, Stevenson, and Garst. Khrushchev enjoyed Garst’s company, as the Soviet leader had previously met the farmer when Garst and his family traveled to the Soviet Union in the early 1950s to inspect Soviet methods of farming. Stevenson also made a positive impact on Khrushchev. The premier stated, “I liked him. He seemed to have a clear understanding of the need for strengthening friendly relations between our two countries.”¹⁴⁷

The only altercation that occurred on the premier’s visit to the farm was between Garst and the paparazzi. The Iowa farmer grew tired of the photographers and reporters, and, much to Khrushchev’s amusement, kicked one photographer and threw an ear of corn at another. Khrushchev fondly recalled that Garst “exercised his rights and gave the photographer a good swift kick in the ass.”¹⁴⁸ The only mention of political issues occurred when Garst urged Khrushchev to work with Eisenhower on disarmament to

¹⁴⁶ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Russian Urges World with Plenty of Corn and No H-Bomb,” *The New York Times*, September 23, 1959, 1(A).

¹⁴⁷ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 397.

¹⁴⁸ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 399.

secure a successful future for both nations. The Soviet leader agreed with Garst and enjoyed his time in Iowa, as he sincerely bonded with his hosts.

After leaving Iowa, Khrushchev made a brief one-day visit to Pittsburgh to inspect a John Deere plant, the University of Pittsburgh, and several factories. As with Washington, San Francisco, and Iowa, Pittsburgh had a positive effect on Khrushchev. While touring the John Deere factory, he was enormously impressed by the way food was served during lunch. While the typical lunch line seemed less than amazing to Lodge, Khrushchev marveled at how well the line worked and how “democratic” lunch was at the John Deere Plant. He went on to state that lunches in Soviet factories were usually disorderly with a large number of waitresses walking back and forth during lunch.¹⁴⁹ Throughout the trip, Eisenhower and Lodge attempted to impress the Soviet leader with American architecture, art, and technology, but the premier often seemed to find the most common aspects of American life the most entertaining, such as cafeteria lines at the John Deere factory.

While touring a machine factory, Khrushchev was presented a cigar as a gift from one of the workers. The premier kindly responded by giving the worker his wrist watch, who accepted the gift and went back to work. The American journalists began to question Khrushchev about the gesture and compared it to the situation that Nixon encountered when he offered money to a Soviet citizen. The premier defended his actions and stated, “I was just repaying his kindness. There’s a difference between mutual expressions of goodwill and bribery. My gesture had nothing in common with

¹⁴⁹ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 404.

what Nixon was trying to accomplish by offering our worker money.”¹⁵⁰ Khrushchev accused the journalists of intentionally misconstruing the situation to make him and the Soviet Union look bad and to get retribution for what had happened to Nixon in the *Pravda*.

After spending the day in Pittsburgh, Khrushchev returned to Washington on September 24 to prepare for his meeting with Eisenhower. Lodge also returned to Washington to report in person to the president on what he had learned about the Soviet leader. Lodge concluded that the latter portions of the tour had been a success after having serious problems in New York and Los Angeles. After describing the trip, Lodge informed the president what he learned about Khrushchev’s personality during their week together. Lodge described the premier as a “remarkable, although very difficult man.”¹⁵¹ Lodge believed that the Soviet leader was a good listener and was open to new ideas as long as they do not directly contradict communist ideology. Lodge informed the president that “it is clear that he [Khrushchev] wants peace and thinks that Russia needs peace in order to do what he wants the nation to do.”¹⁵² Finally, Lodge expressed his hope that, even if no ground breaking accords are reached during the premier’s visit, the two countries would maintain the attitude of “let’s keep on talking,” as both country’s desired a peaceful and successful future.¹⁵³

On September 25, the two leaders flew to Camp David to begin talks on Germany and disarmament. However, Eisenhower had a cold, and discussions on important issues

¹⁵⁰ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 403.

¹⁵¹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 454.

¹⁵² FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 454.

¹⁵³ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 455.

were postponed until the following day. The two leaders concluded the day by attending an extravagant dinner and watching a Hollywood film. Eisenhower suggested that they watch a Western film because he enjoyed the horses. Khrushchev agreed on a Western and stated, "I too have a weakness for this type of film."¹⁵⁴ The two leaders got along splendidly during the film and enjoyed each other's company. While policy was not discussed, spending time together helped both men understand that they were both human beings, not a faceless communist or capitalist foe determined to destroy the other's country.

The next morning the president and the premier had breakfast in Aspen Lodge and reminisced over the American-Soviet alliance during World War II. After breakfast, the two sides agreed on a list of the most pressing issues between the United States and the Soviet Union. The issues were: "1. Berlin and Germany. 2. Disarmament, including the current nuclear test negotiations. 3. Propaganda and the lack of adequate contact and exchange of persons and ideas. 4. Ideological and other conflicts involving third countries."¹⁵⁵

While both sides quickly agreed on the problems that prevented peaceful coexistence, finding solutions to these issues proved much more difficult. Tensions began to rise as discussions turned to Berlin and the possibility of a four-power summit. Khrushchev continued to threaten the possibility of the Soviet Union signing a peace treaty with Berlin. Eisenhower stated that the United States would not oppose a Soviet treaty with East Germany as long as the situation in Berlin remained the same. The

¹⁵⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 407.

¹⁵⁵ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, "Memorandum of Conversation," 467.

president stated, “I told [Khrushchev] that he should understand without any possibility of error that our nation would never agree to the surrender of West Berlin either to the Soviets or to East Germany, and that so long as the Russian ultimatum went unrepudiated I would not even talk about attending a summit conference.”¹⁵⁶ Both leaders were tired and frustrated and decided to break for lunch. Khrushchev described the mood at lunch as somber. He stated in his memoirs, “It [lunch] was more like a funeral than a wedding feast. Well, maybe that’s going too far: it wasn’t so much like a funeral as it was like a meal served at the bedside of a critically ill patient.”¹⁵⁷

After lunch, tensions remained high as Eisenhower napped and Khrushchev impatiently walked around Camp David discussing policy with Gromyko. White House science adviser George Kistiakowsky stated, “There was a general feeling that the meeting will end in a nearly complete failure and hence may actually worsen rather than improve relations.”¹⁵⁸ After Eisenhower awoke from his nap, he invited the premier to visit his Gettysburg farm. The two men arrived by helicopter a short time later. Khrushchev enjoyed his short visit to Eisenhower’s farm. The premier joked with Eisenhower’s grandchildren and took an active interest in Black Angus cattle, which the president raised. Eisenhower offered Khrushchev one of his cows as a gift, and the premier eagerly accepted and offered to send the president a number of Russian birch trees “as an expression of gratitude and token of our meeting.”¹⁵⁹ Although foreign

¹⁵⁶ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 446.

¹⁵⁷ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 413.

¹⁵⁸ George B. Kistiakowsky, *A Scientist at the White House: The Private Diary of President Eisenhower’s Special Assistant for Science and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 92.

¹⁵⁹ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 408.

policy was not discussed during their visit to Gettysburg, the brief trip relaxed both leaders and gave them a better understanding of one another.

On September 27, the talks between Eisenhower and Khrushchev made more progress. After breakfast, Eisenhower and Khrushchev again focused their attention on Berlin. Progress was made, as Khrushchev agreed to abandon his Berlin ultimatum and not force the West out of the East German capital as long as both sides continued to work toward a permanent solution. Eisenhower agreed and pledged to attend a major summit between the four major powers and visit the Soviet Union in the near future. Both leaders felt that they had achieved success and spoke privately with their advisors before the meetings resumed at lunch.

At lunch, the feeling of cooperation and success began to disappear, as Khrushchev began to heckle the vice president, who had flown to Camp David to attend the luncheon. Eisenhower stated, “The Chairman seemed to take particular delight in hurling barbs at the vice president....I was a little astonished that Khrushchev should take advantage of a social occasion to try to make another guest feel uncomfortable, but all of us came to suspect that he might have become annoyed with his advisors, who had probably been less than enthusiastic over the Berlin decision he had communicated to me privately.”¹⁶⁰

After lunch, tensions worsened as the two powers discussed the complicated situation in China. Khrushchev did not hide his strong feelings, as he angrily asserted that there could not be two legal governments, Taiwan and Peiping (Beijing), in China.

¹⁶⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 447.

The premier stated that Beijing was the legitimate government, as Chiang Kai-Shek had been forced to flee when Mao Tse-tung and the communist revolution took over the capital city. The Soviet leader further added that the Chinese communists had nearly 650 million citizens on mainland China as compared to the 8 million that resided in Taiwan. Eisenhower informed Khrushchev that they should focus on other matters because “it was clear that our views were so divergent on this subject that there was really no point in discussing the question in detail.”¹⁶¹ The Soviet premier finally agreed but not before adding that the Soviet Union would support communist China if they were to take military action against Taiwan.

After their discussion on China, Khrushchev and Eisenhower once again focused on Germany. Khrushchev insisted that the elimination of a fixed time limit for discussions on Berlin be removed from the joint communiqué because he feared the West German leader, Konrad Adenauer, would attempt to stall discussion over Berlin to prevent West Germany from losing their portion of the city to East Germany. At that point Eisenhower was furious and stated, “This ends the whole affair, I will go neither to a summit nor to Russia.”¹⁶² Eventually the two men compromised, as Eisenhower was allowed to verbally state that there was no fixed time limit on the discussions regarding Berlin, and Khrushchev would not refute the president’s statement. Both leaders agreed to continue discussions on Berlin at the upcoming summit and Eisenhower’s visit to the Soviet Union. Definite progress had been made.

¹⁶¹ FRUS, Volume 10 Part I, “Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower,” 480.

¹⁶² Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 447.

The president and premier then drove back to Washington. Khrushchev and his family were taken to the airport where Nixon and a large crowd presided over the departure ceremony. Once again a band played both national anthems followed by a twenty-one gun salute. Khrushchev gave a brief statement declaring, "I thank you with all my heart for your kind reception and hospitality. I wish that in dealing with each other we should make more and more frequent use of that short, good American word 'okay'. Good-bye, friends."¹⁶³ Khrushchev and his entourage left the United States without incident on September 28, despite several bomb threats made against the Soviet leader's airplane.

Khrushchev's tour of the United States was hailed as "the spirit of Camp David" because the visit eased tensions between the superpowers and created high hopes around the world for détente. Khrushchev's trip did not resolve any major problems between the United States and the Soviet Union, but the premier did agree to abandon his Berlin ultimatum, and Eisenhower decided to visit the Soviet Union and attend a summit in Paris between the major world powers. Eisenhower was pleased with the results of Khrushchev's visit and believed the United States had won a victory over Berlin. He stated, "A crisis over Berlin had been averted without the surrender of any Western rights....At least it now seemed that we should have a better atmosphere in which to approach such questions as expanding exchanges of visitors and information between East and West, finding an acceptable solution to the problem of a divided Germany, and developing mutual trust through satisfactorily enforced disarmament treaties, even though

¹⁶³ Kharlamov, and Vadeyev, *Face to Face with America*, 444.

limited at first in scope.”¹⁶⁴ Khrushchev agreed that the trip had been a success. He declared, “By going we gave the Americans a chance to learn more about the Soviet Union. To those fair-minded representatives of the bourgeois press who were willing to open their eyes, we gave a chance to see that relations between our two countries had changed, regardless of whether we signed any concrete agreements.”¹⁶⁵

Unfortunately, the *détente* created from Khrushchev’s visit was short-lived, as the U-2 affair in 1960 derailed the Paris Summit, and Eisenhower’s trip to the Soviet Union was cancelled. However, there were lasting effects of the Soviet leader’s visit to America. While abroad, Khrushchev, like Nixon, encountered protests and heckling, but he was undeterred—besides a few outbursts—and continued the visit, and, for the most part, enjoyed himself. More importantly, he gained a tremendous amount of respect for the people of the United States, as he realized that, despite ideological differences between the two states, both nations were made of war-fearing people who wanted peace and prosperity. Furthermore, Khrushchev returned to the Soviet Union as a hero. The people of Russia not only respected him for being the first Soviet leader to visit America but also because he stated that he wanted peace with the United States, something that most Soviet citizens, still affected by the harsh memories of World War II, desperately wanted. Perhaps Lodge best summed up the importance of the visit when he stated, “Where would [the United States] be if Khrushchev had not been asked to come? Surely we would be worse for not having him.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 449.

¹⁶⁵ Khrushchev *Khrushchev Remembers*, 415.

¹⁶⁶ Lodge, *The Storm has Many Eyes*, 177.

Chapter IV

The Vienna Summit

The John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev summit in Vienna, Austria in June 1961 is often viewed as a failure, as both leaders left the summit without an agreement. Furthermore, both men were frustrated, as tempers soared because they could not convince one another to accept the other's ideas or positions on important issues, such as Berlin, Laos, and disarmament. The summit was especially difficult on Kennedy who felt he was bullied by the Soviet leader. However, despite the lack of agreement, the conference did, as James Reston of the *New York Times* reported, "re-establish high-level U.S.-Soviet diplomacy, which was broken off last year due to the U-2 spy plane incident."¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the two leaders gained a new respect for each other that would eventually help both men keep their composure during future crises, such as the building of the Berlin Wall and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The road to the summit was long and began with the election of 1960. Kennedy ran his 1960 presidential campaign on being tough on communism and claimed that a "missile gap" existed between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although no "missile gap" existed, President Eisenhower, felt he could not advise Kennedy that he was mistaken without exposing the years of secret U-2 missions over Russia. Although the U-2 incident had occurred in 1959, Kennedy and the American people did not know the extent of these secret missions and how much high quality intelligence had been

¹⁶⁷ James Reston, "Vienna Talks End," *New York Times*, June 5, 1961, 1(A).

collected on the Soviet arsenal. Therefore, when Kennedy took office, he believed that a “missile gap” existed, that the Soviet Union had more ICBMs than the United States.

After Kennedy took the oath of office in January 1961, he discovered that the “missile gap” did not exist; however, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union were still at an all-time high after the U-2 incident that began on May 1, 1960 and the collapse of the Paris Summit several days later. The new president and the United States faced serious situations in Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and parts of Africa. Furthermore, Kennedy had to find a way to deal and negotiate with the volatile Khrushchev. The new president had won the office in part because of his stringent views on communism and the Cold War, so he believed that he had to confront Khrushchev and the Soviet Union anywhere he believed that they encroached, so that he would not be perceived as weak. In his inaugural address he stated, “In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger....I do not shrink from this responsibility—I welcome it.”¹⁶⁸ One Cold War historian described Kennedy as a “pragmatic politico” whose foreign policy “was that of a staunch Cold Warrior who loathed communism, feared nuclear war, and was anxious to alleviate third world discontents so that Moscow could not capitalize on them. He [Kennedy] was convinced that Moscow had started the Cold War—and determined that America would finish it!”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸Edward H. Judge AND John W. Langdon, *A Had and Bitter Peace: A Global History of the Cold War* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Press),159.

¹⁶⁹ Judge, *The Cold War*,159.

For Khrushchev, the “spirit of Camp David” was destroyed by the U-2 affair that began on May 1, 1960 when Francis Gary Powers was shot down over the Soviet Union. Khrushchev was genuinely enraged by Eisenhower’s actions and was under pressure from the Soviet government to take a strong stand, as the Paris Summit opened on May 14, 1960. When Khrushchev took the floor on the opening day, he berated the United States and Eisenhower—who was not present at the conference. He withdrew his invitation for Eisenhower to visit the Soviet Union and stated that the Paris conference should be postponed until a new president was elected. As a result, the Paris Summit fell apart, and the United States and Soviet Union did not meet to discuss pressing Cold War issues.

In September 1960, the Soviet premier once again visited the United States. However, this time he was not a guest of Eisenhower or the government of the United States. He was there to address the United Nations on its fifteenth anniversary. During this trip to the United States, the premier was restricted to New York City after he received thousands of death threats. Eisenhower made an official visit to the UN for the occasion but made sure that he and the Soviet premier did not come into contact or attend the same sessions. However, Khrushchev made the most of his brief stay by meeting with Cuba’s Fidel Castro and banging his shoe on a desk in protest during Great Britain’s speech to the UN.

During the campaign of 1960, Khrushchev admitted that he and the Soviet Union “had little knowledge of John Kennedy.”¹⁷⁰ He further stated that, initially, he was

¹⁷⁰ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 488.

optimistic that Adlai Stevenson would receive his third nomination for the democrats and this time win the presidency, as “we [the Soviet Union] had confidence in his intention to improve relations between our two countries.”¹⁷¹ However, as soon as the Soviet premier learned that Stevenson had not won the democrats’ nomination, he was hopeful that Kennedy would win, as he was disappointed in the Eisenhower administration and had a less than cordial relationship with the republicans’ candidate, Richard Nixon.

With Kennedy’s narrow win over Nixon, Khrushchev and the Soviet government seemed optimistic about a better relationship with Kennedy than Eisenhower. As a gesture of good faith, Khrushchev released two American pilots whose plane was shot down in July while on a reconnaissance mission thirty miles off the coast of the Soviet Union. Kennedy was able to announce that the two American pilots were released during his first news conference after his election. Furthermore, Khrushchev sent a personal note to Kennedy after his election stating:

We are convinced that there are no insurmountable obstacles to the preservation and consolidation of peace. For the sake of this goal we are ready, for our part, to continue efforts to solve such a pressing problem as disarmament, to settle the German issue through the earliest conclusion of a peace treaty and to reach agreement on other questions, the solution of which could bring about an easing and improvement of the entire international situation. Any steps in this direction will always be met with the full understanding and support of the Soviet Government.¹⁷²

Kennedy was touched by the note and responded:

I am most appreciative of your courtesy in sending me a message of congratulations. The achievement of a just and lasting peace will remain a

¹⁷¹ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 488.

¹⁷² FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 6, “Message from Chairman Khrushchev to President-Elect Kennedy, .”

fundamental goal of this nation and its major task of its president. I am most pleased to have your good wishes.¹⁷³

Therefore, after Kennedy's election, both the president and the premier seemed optimistic they could work together to solve issues relating to the arms race, Berlin, and third world countries.

Unfortunately, the optimism for détente was short-lived. Instead of Berlin or remote Laos being the biggest issue, it came only ninety miles away from the United States, in Cuba. After Castro's successful revolution in 1959, the relationship with the United States became progressively worse, as the United States believed the island was drifting into the Soviet's camp. Kennedy, the staunch anti-communist, had no hesitation about using force to oust the Cuban revolutionary. However, his attempt, a Cuban counter-revolutionary invasion at the Bay of Pigs on April 15, 1961, was a disaster for Kennedy and his administration. Kennedy, who was nervous about the plan, cancelled several of the air strikes that would support the troops on the ground, and as a result, the Cuban counter-revolutionaries were routed by Castro's forces. To make matters worse, the Soviet cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, became the first person to orbit the earth. Overall, the month of April was a public relations nightmare for the young Kennedy administration, as the Cold War spread into the Western Hemisphere and the Soviet Union appeared to be drastically winning the space race.

One of Kennedy's first goals as President of the United States was to have a summit and meet with Khrushchev. Therefore, early in his presidency, Kennedy offered to meet the premier in Europe to discuss pressing issues. Khrushchev was close to

¹⁷³ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 6, "Message from President Elect Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, 2."

accepting before the Bay of Pigs but changed his mind and did not accept the invitation in the month of April. Instead, he waited and allowed the Kennedy administration to suffer from the political fallout of the failed operation in Cuba. Once the backlash against the United States had waned, Khrushchev accepted Kennedy's invitation on May 12, 1961. The summit was set for June 3-4 to be held in Vienna, Austria. Both leaders began planning for their first meeting with each other, since Khrushchev had not met Kennedy since his first trip to the United States.

Shortly after agreeing to the terms of the summit, Kennedy addressed both congress and the American people on May 25. In this speech, he requested "higher defense spending, including a threefold increase in funds for fallout shelters."¹⁷⁴ The main reason for the speech was to try to show Khrushchev that, even though Kennedy was young and had suffered humiliation from the Bay of Pigs fiasco, he planned to maintain his aggressive stand towards communism and the Soviet Union. Kennedy meticulously prepared for the summit by reading countless briefing books and reports on the Soviet leader. The president believed Khrushchev was a formidable opponent and confided to an advisor, "He's not dumb. He's smart....He's tough."¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, Kennedy consulted personally with Soviet experts on what to expect from the Soviet leader. He spoke at length with George Kennan, who was a State Department employee who worked in the Soviet Embassy during the Truman administration who wrote the "Long Telegram" in 1946, and is credited with creating the containment strategy used throughout the Cold War.

¹⁷⁴ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 493.

¹⁷⁵ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 493.

Kennedy also spent copious amounts of time planning with his brother, Robert, preparing to meet Khrushchev at the summit. One plan that the Kennedy brothers agreed upon was to make a stand on issues, such as Berlin and Laos, and then try to avoid those subjects, as little was likely to be accomplished. Instead, Kennedy wanted to focus on something that would benefit the United States and the Soviet Union. Therefore, he hoped that both sides could agree on some sort of plan regarding arms control and nuclear testing.¹⁷⁶

Before meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna, Kennedy planned on making a stop in Paris to visit with French President, Charles De Gaulle. However, the trip had an ominous beginning. Despite the fact that Kennedy was young and always appeared vibrant, he suffered from several ailments, including chronic back pain and Addison's disease. Before leaving for the summit, Kennedy was once again down in his back and taking a cocktail of medicine for his ailments that included "cortisone...the anesthetic procaine...and a mixture of amphetamines, vitamins, and enzymes."¹⁷⁷ Therefore, the president arrived in Paris for his meeting with De Gaulle nervous about the meeting with Khrushchev and in constant pain.

Kennedy left the United States for France on May 30. Accompanying him on the trip was his wife, Jackie, his mother, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Although Paris was his first stop, Kennedy looked forward to the trip to Austria. Originally, several locations were discussed, such as Helsinki, Geneva, and Vienna. Kennedy, for unknown

¹⁷⁶ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy 1958-1964* (New York, NY: Norton and Company Press), 107.

¹⁷⁷ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 494.

reasons, suggested Vienna, while the Soviets preferred Helsinki, as “the Finns had a better understanding of our [Soviet] policy.”¹⁷⁸ In the end, Khrushchev agreed that the conference would be held in Vienna.

While in Paris, Kennedy met with Averell Harriman, who had advised both Roosevelt and Truman on American-Soviet relations. Harriman spoke with Kennedy for a short while, telling the president,

Go to Vienna...Don't be too serious, have some fun, get to know him a little, don't let him rattle you; he'll try to rattle you and frighten you, but don't pay any attention to that. Turn him aside, gently. And don't try for too much. Remember that he's just as scared as you are...he is very aware of his peasant origins, of the contrast between Mrs. Khrushchev and Jackie....His style will be to attack and then see if he can get away with it. Laugh about it, don't get into a fight. Rise above it. Have some fun.¹⁷⁹

In his meeting with De Gaulle, Kennedy spent much of his time discussing his upcoming meeting with the Soviet premier. He confided that he was afraid that Khrushchev would not believe his resolve on issues such as Berlin, because of the Bay of Pigs fiasco. De Gaulle attempted to reassure Kennedy by giving him advice. He informed him—like everyone else had—not to discuss ideology with Khrushchev and not to be frightened or distracted by Khrushchev's off-color remarks. De Gaulle further reassured Kennedy that Khrushchev did not want war in Europe because “if he had wanted war about Berlin, he would have acted already.”¹⁸⁰ However, secretly, the French leader had his doubts about Kennedy because of the Bay of Pigs, often referring to him as

¹⁷⁸ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 492.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company Press, 2003), 402.

¹⁸⁰ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 402-403.

“the young man.” Furthermore, he stated that Kennedy was “somewhat fumbling and overeager.”¹⁸¹

Khrushchev, also prepared diligently for the summit. The Soviet premier seemed genuinely optimistic that he would like Kennedy more than Eisenhower or Nixon. However, Kennedy’s background caused Khrushchev some concern. The Soviet premier stated that the president was “a young man, very promising, very rich—a millionaire. We knew from the press that he was distinguished by his intelligence, his education, and his political skill.”¹⁸² Despite the complementary nature of these statements, Khrushchev was bothered by Kennedy’s youth and his wealth. However, the premier seemed hopeful that he could exploit Kennedy’s youth and intimidate the president.

After learning all that he could about Kennedy, Khrushchev and his advisors spent large amounts of time deciding who would accompany him to Vienna—almost as much time as they had spent on studying Kennedy. Once again, the premier did not want to bring his wife along, as the summit was a diplomatic meeting and not a vacation. However, Soviet officials insisted that he should, since Kennedy was bringing Jackie. Finally, Khrushchev stated that, after several government officials insisted that he bring along Nina Petrovna, “I gave in.”¹⁸³

Khrushchev received word that Kennedy wanted to focus mainly on disarmament and spend little time on Berlin and Laos. The premier was furious. The Soviet leader asked the American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Tommy Thompson, to an ice

¹⁸¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 494.

¹⁸² Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 488.

¹⁸³ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 493.

skating review on May 20. Khrushchev expressed his disappointment in the president's plan and informed the American Ambassador that arms control "was impossible as long as the Berlin problem lasted."¹⁸⁴ Thompson informed Khrushchev that the president would not be happy, and Khrushchev told Thompson to tell the Kennedy's to "tighten their seat belts," as he was not going to back down from his position on Berlin.¹⁸⁵

The day before Khrushchev left for Vienna, he met with the Soviet Presidium to discuss summit strategy. The foreign ministry gave Khrushchev a list of proposed topics that they believed were most important. The list stated:

(a) general and complete disarmament; (b) the improvement of the climate of international relations; (c) a German Peace Treaty, including the question of West Berlin; (d) Laos; and (e) a normalization of U.S.-Soviet relations.¹⁸⁶

The presidium also presented the premier with a list of what they thought Kennedy would try to discuss from intelligence they had gathered. The expected American conversation list contained:

- 1) To end war propaganda
- 2) A pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict
- 3) The creation of nuclear free zones in various regions of the world
- 4) Measures against nuclear proliferation
- 5) A NATO-Warsaw Pact nonaggression pact
- 6) Full removal of all foreign troops from the Germanys and moratorium on their reintroduction
- 7) Reductions in military forces in Europe, leading to the complete withdrawal of them from areas outside their national territory
- 8) Reductions in military budgets.¹⁸⁷

Khrushchev approved the presidium's recommendations, as these were almost identical to what he was planning on discussing with Kennedy. However, he informed his

¹⁸⁴ Fursenko, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 123.

¹⁸⁵ Fursenko, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 123.

¹⁸⁶ Fursenko, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 125.

¹⁸⁷ Fursenko, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 125.

colleagues that he would spend the most time at the summit on finding an answer to the German question on Soviet terms before listening to Kennedy's suggestions.

Khrushchev arrived in Vienna on June 2, a full day earlier than Kennedy. Khrushchev remembered "being well received. There were no demonstrations against us—only expressions of courtesy and respect in keeping with our rank."¹⁸⁸ Although there were few demonstrations, the crowds were sparse, as he rode in an open car to the Soviet Embassy. When Khrushchev arrived at the embassy, he was asked about Kennedy meeting with De Gaulle before he met with the Soviets. Khrushchev stated that the American meeting with the French was "poor preparation."¹⁸⁹ Later that afternoon, Khrushchev released a statement that reiterated his earlier comments but added that all the French and Americans were doing was trying to find a way to stay in Berlin. It further stated that the meeting was a "militaristic exercise and poor preparation for the meeting here [in Vienna]."¹⁹⁰

Khrushchev spent the day in Vienna preparing for his visit with Kennedy. Besides spending time with his advisors, he also met with Austrian government officials. The premier spent time with the Austrian president, the prime minister, and the foreign minister. He also mingled with Austrian citizens. However, the mood was fairly reserved, as the Soviets prepared for the upcoming summit.

Kennedy arrived early the following morning, June 3, 1961. The Austrian president met Kennedy and his entourage at the airport and, after a brief welcoming

¹⁸⁸ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 493.

¹⁸⁹ M.S. Handler, "Khrushchev is in Vienna; Aides Assail Paris Parley," *New York Times*, June 3, 1961, 1(A).

¹⁹⁰ M.S. Handler, "Khrushchev is in Vienna; Aides Assail Paris Parley," *New York Times*, June 3, 1961, 1(A).

ceremony, they left for the U.S. Embassy. Thousands of people flocked to the route where Kennedy traveled from the airport to his quarters at the U.S. Embassy. Along the roads, Austrians carried signs that read, “Give ‘em Hell, Jack,” “Lift the Iron Curtain,” and “Innocents Abroad Say Howdy.”¹⁹¹ The large crowds surprised Kennedy and Rusk and reenergized the president, who looked forward to his morning meeting with the Soviet premier and his advisors.

The two men finally met around 12:25 pm on June 3. Khrushchev and Kennedy met on the steps of the American Embassy in Vienna. Kennedy was hoping for a public relations victory when he met with the Soviet premier, and he was off to a good start. With the two men standing next to each other, Kennedy soared over the stocky Khrushchev. Furthermore, Kennedy’s youthful appearance was crowd-pleasing as onlookers cheered for the American. The two leaders went inside the embassy and sat down on a sofa for their initial introductions and a brief conversation not relating to anything political.¹⁹²

The first formal meeting between the two leaders occurred shortly thereafter. For this meeting, the president and premier moved to a more formal table with their interpreters. Kennedy started the conversation by stating:

he was concerned about how it would be possible for the two countries—allied with other countries, having different political and social systems, and competing with each other in different parts of the world—to find...ways and means of not permitting situations where the two countries would be committed to actions involving their security or endangering peace, to secure our basic objective.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 403.

¹⁹² Dallek, *Kennedy*, 404.

¹⁹³ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 172.

Khrushchev responded by stating that “the Soviet Union had endeavored for a long time to develop friendly relations with the United States and its allies. Such relations would bring about peace and would be in the interest of the two countries and the world at large.”¹⁹⁴

The first sign of tension between the two leaders occurred when Khrushchev attempted to defend communism and bash the former secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. The premier stated that “the West and the U.S. as its leader must recognize one fact: Communism exists and has won its right to develop....United States policy under Dulles excluded such possibility; Mr. Dulles had based his policy on the premise of liquidation of the Communist system.”¹⁹⁵ Kennedy quickly responded that “the Soviet Union was seeking to eliminate free systems in areas that are associated with us [the United States].”¹⁹⁶ At this point, the premier seemed a little agitated and informed Kennedy that that was not the case. However, he did say that, in social development, communism would spread across the world. Kennedy responded that communism was spreading in parts of the world because of Soviet help or intervention. The president further stated that, where communism had spread, there was a legacy of violence and strife. Khrushchev seemed to disregard Kennedy’s accusations and continued to lecture Kennedy on communism and its destiny to conquer capitalism.

The president attempted to change the subject. Kennedy then brought up one of his favorite subjects, the danger of an accidental nuclear war coming out of

¹⁹⁴ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 172.

¹⁹⁵ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 173.

¹⁹⁶ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 173.

“miscalculation.” Khrushchev, who did not believe that he would make a mistake in conducting policy, or “miscalculate,” had one of his famous temper tantrums. Kennedy remembered Khrushchev yelling:

Miscalculation! Miscalculation! Miscalculation! All I ever hear from your people and your news correspondents and your friends in Europe and every-place else is that damned word, miscalculation! You ought to take that word and bury it in cold storage and never use it again! I am sick of it!¹⁹⁷

The president seemed shocked at the premier’s outburst. Kennedy had only wanted to start a conversation about avoiding small incidents and misunderstandings that might lead to war. After a moment of silence, Kennedy and Khrushchev both seemed to regain their composure and they decided they should break for lunch. However, after Khrushchev’s eruption, it is reasonable to assume that the president made note not to use the word “miscalculation” again during the summit.

The lunch meeting between the two leaders was pleasant, as difficult issues were avoided. Khrushchev opened the conversation by discussing agricultural issues in the Soviet Union. The premier further stated how much he enjoyed his time in Iowa on Garst’s farm. After discussing farming at some length, the two leaders discussed their space programs. The premier extolled the recent accomplishment of Gagarin’s flight and discussed the possibility of sending a cosmonaut to the moon.

Kennedy also complimented Khrushchev’s medals that he wore on his jacket. Khrushchev thanked the president and stated that they were Lenin Peace Prizes given to him by the government. Kennedy smiled and jokingly responded, “I hope you get to

¹⁹⁷ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy’s Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 56.

keep them,” implying that he hoped the United States and the Soviet Union could work out peaceful solutions to all their problems.¹⁹⁸ The premier laughed at the president’s joke. At that point, Kennedy made a toast to Khrushchev’s health and complemented the Soviet leader “for his vigor and energy that he devotes to the causes in which he believes.”¹⁹⁹ Khrushchev responded by thanking Kennedy and stating that he “hoped that wisdom would be found to ensure good relations between the two countries and throughout the world.”²⁰⁰ As lunch wrapped up, Khrushchev extended an invitation to Kennedy to visit the Soviet Union. However, there was one condition: the president could not bring a model kitchen in an attempt to win over the Soviet Union, as “only Nixon could have thought of such nonsense.”²⁰¹ Khrushchev never passed on an opportunity to take a verbal swipe at Nixon. Finally, the lunch concluded with the premier stating that he and the president “had met well and that he was sure that they would part even better.”²⁰²

After lunch, the two leaders decided to take a walk in the garden surrounding the American Embassy. The jovial mood from lunch quickly dissipated, as the issues of Cuba, Berlin, Laos and disarmament came up for the first time. The premier started the heated debate by accusing the United States of intervening in places where they should not get involved. He further stated that the United States created its’ own ill will throughout the world by supporting governments that were not popular with the people. Khrushchev specifically mentioned Iran and Cuba. The premier stated that, by

¹⁹⁸ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 406.

¹⁹⁹ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 179.

²⁰⁰ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 179.

²⁰¹ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 181.

²⁰² FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 181.

supporting the Shah of Iran and Batista in Cuba, the United States had alienated the people of these countries, and those people turned toward the Soviet Union, not because of Soviet intervention, but because of failed American policy. Khrushchev said, “Castro is not a communist, but U.S. Policy can make him one.”²⁰³ Kennedy, who by that point was on the defensive, tried to justify the botched invasion of the Bay of Pigs. The president stated that the United States “attacked Cuba because it was a threat to American security.”²⁰⁴ Khrushchev responded by asking, “Can six million people really be a threat to the mighty U.S.?”²⁰⁵ Kennedy explained, “The main point is that Castro has announced his intention to act in that general area, using Cuba as a base. This would create a peril to the United States.”²⁰⁶ At that point, Kennedy should have remembered all the advice from different Soviet experts about not arguing ideology with Khrushchev; however, the new president was determined to continue the verbal jousting.

One of Kennedy’s advisors, who watched the conversation from the window, stated, “Khrushchev was carrying on a heated argument, circling around Kennedy and snapping at him like a terrier.”²⁰⁷ However, the president did his best to remain calm for the remainder of the walk. Later, another one of Kennedy’s advisors stated, “You seemed pretty calm while he was giving you a hard time out there.” The president responded, “What did you want me to do? Take off one of my shoes and hit him over the head with it?”²⁰⁸ Although there had not been any major disagreements between the two

²⁰³ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 184.

²⁰⁴ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 184.

²⁰⁵ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 184.

²⁰⁶ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 185.

²⁰⁷ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 406.

²⁰⁸ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 406.

men, Kennedy was beginning to feel frustrated, as he felt Khrushchev was getting the better of him in their debates.

After the walk concluded, the two leaders returned inside for their afternoon meetings. Khrushchev continued his assault on Kennedy by giving more examples of failed American policy. This time he focused on Asia. He stated that “Mao Tse-tung was weaker militarily than Chiang Kai-shek, but he won because his ideas won.”²⁰⁹ Khrushchev stated that the Americans were making similar mistakes presently in Southeast Asia. Kennedy rebuffed the premier’s claims and stated that the United States had several interests and pursued them throughout the world. “The first interest is that the right of free choice be ensured to all peoples and that such right be executed through elections as we understand them.”²¹⁰ The Soviet premier responded by stating that he did not understand how the United States could support a fascist government in Spain but not a government of the people in Cuba. The Soviet leader had an answer for every point Kennedy made, and the president again became frustrated.

Conversation of this nature continued for several hours. The two leaders discussed the positives of their political systems while criticizing the negatives of each others’ political beliefs. Furthermore, Kennedy and Khrushchev discussed issues ranging from colonization in Africa to Soviet and American influence in Laos. However, little was agreed upon. The meeting broke up around 7:00 P.M. with the president clearly irritated and feeling that Khrushchev had won the first day’s debates. When Kennedy returned to his room angered with the way the outspoken Khrushchev had presented

²⁰⁹ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 187.

²¹⁰ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 187.

Soviet positions, he told one of his advisors Llewellyn Thompson, “He treated me like a little boy, like a little boy.”²¹¹ Another aid later stated that Kennedy looked severely depressed. The president’s staff tried to improve his mood by telling him Khrushchev’s behavior was “par for the course” and that the “Soviets always talk tough.”²¹² Despite the efforts, Kennedy remained upset with the results of day one of the summit and pledged to be much more aggressive during formal talks the following day.

That evening, the two leaders and their families met for a formal dinner party. Similar to the situation that occurred in Washington with Eisenhower, Khrushchev refused to wear capitalist—black tie—attire and dressed in a dark business suit. When the premier arrived, photographers asked if he would shake hands with Kennedy for a picture. The Soviet leader looked at Jackie and grinned saying, “I would like to shake her hand first.”²¹³ Khrushchev attempted to tone down his aggressive nature, but it could only last so long, as he lectured Jackie Kennedy on the great increase in school teachers in Russia compared to the Tsarist government of Russia. Jackie stood up for herself and handled herself well—perhaps better than her husband—by smiling and telling the premier, “Oh, Mr. Chairman, don’t bother me with statistics.” The Soviet leader could not help but smile and seemed very impressed with the first lady. However, later Khrushchev tried to play down his fondness for Jackie, but even then one could see that the Soviet leader enjoyed her company when he stated:

She [Jackie] didn’t impress me as having that special, brilliant, beauty which can haunt me, but she was youthful, energetic, and pleasant, and I liked her very

²¹¹ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 408.

²¹² Dallek, *Kennedy*, 408.

²¹³ Drew Middleton, “First Lady Wins Khrushchev Too,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1961, 1(A).

much. She knew how to make jokes and was, as our people say, quick with her tongue. In other words, she had no trouble finding the right word to cut you short if you weren't careful with her. My own conversation with her consisted of nothing more than small talk....But even in small talk she demonstrated her intelligence.²¹⁴

Therefore, despite a difficult start to the conference, both families enjoyed each others' company during dinner and had a nice ending to day one of the summit.

Kennedy and Khrushchev met early the next morning along with the secretary of state and foreign minister. After a brief discussion of their home towns, Khrushchev once again attempted to start an ideological debate. Kennedy, not taking the bait, stated, "Look, Mr. Chairman, you are not going to make a communist out of me and I don't expect that I will make a capitalist out of you, so let's get down to business."²¹⁵

The president then went on the offensive, asking the premier why the Soviet Union had such an interest in Laos. The Soviet leader responded that the USSR was not interested in Laos, but the United States had created the Laotian situation.²¹⁶ Kennedy expressed hope that they could work out some form of solution. The American leader stated that he hoped the two men could work out a cease-fire and then work with Laos to set up a government that did not favor either the Soviet Union or the United States. However, the conversation quickly turned into a finger-pointing contest. Kennedy pointed to American intelligence which stated that the Viet Minh forces were involved. The premier responded that the Soviets could prove that Thailand was involved. By the end of the discussion concerning Laos, both leaders openly admitted that "Laos is not so

²¹⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 493.

²¹⁵ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 410.

²¹⁶ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, "Memorandum of Conversation," 206.

important as to get us as involved as we are.”²¹⁷ Despite both leaders agreeing on this point, little else on the Southeast Asian country could be decided on, as both Kennedy and Khrushchev continued to blame the other country’s actions on why there was not a sufficient cease-fire. As a result of their continuing disagreement, little was accomplished on settling the conflict in Laos.

From Laos, the discussion turned to disarmament. In the past, very little on disarmament had been agreed on, and discussions mostly centered around limiting nuclear tests. In the mid 1950s, Moscow called for an end to nuclear testing. Whether this was a genuine offer or a publicity technique is unknown, as the United States rejected the offer because Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, seemed uninterested in arms control, since Eisenhower’s “Flexible Response” plan required large numbers of nuclear weapons. In 1960, Eisenhower finally suggested a ban on above-ground tests. The Soviets agreed in principle, and the details were to be worked out during the Paris Summit in May 1960. However, when the conference fell through, hopes for disarmament and restrictions on nuclear testing were temporarily put on hold.

Kennedy opened the conversation and brought up the idea of a nuclear test ban. Khrushchev replied that “a nuclear test ban alone would not be very important to the national security of the people. The danger of war would remain, because the production of nuclear energy, rockets, and bombs would continue full blast.”²¹⁸ The president agreed with the premier that it would not solve all the nuclear issues; however, it could stop nuclear proliferation, as “it will certainly put a brake on the spread of nuclear

²¹⁷ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 207.

²¹⁸ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 213.

weapons.”²¹⁹ Khrushchev agreed that the proliferation of nuclear weapons was a concern, but he wanted to come to an agreement on both disarmament and a test ban. The premier asked Kennedy if he would agree to merge the two issues. The president responded that he could consider it, if the Soviets would make progress on an agreement about disarmament. However, the president told Khrushchev he was doubtful this would happen, since disarmament had been discussed for over three years and little had been accomplished. The real deadlock between the two leaders came as a result of on-site inspections in the United States and the Soviet Union. If disarmament was to occur, there would have to be certain safeguards set in place to make sure both sides were living up to their agreement. The United States wanted at least twenty-one annual inspections, and the Soviet Union was only prepared to offer three. Therefore, the sides were nowhere close to making an agreement. As a result of the stalemate, no progress was made on either disarmament or nuclear testing.²²⁰

After the discussion on disarmament ended, the talks focused on the German question. By 1961, the Soviet leader had given up hopes of a unified and neutral Germany. Therefore, Khrushchev accepted American influence and soldiers in West Germany. What the premier could not handle was western influence in West Berlin. Khrushchev, under pressure from “hardliners” in his own government and communist countries throughout the world, such as the Chinese, wanted him to make a stand. Therefore, the premier believed that, if the Soviet Union signed a peace treaty with East Germany, the East Germans could then force the United States and its allies out of West

²¹⁹ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 213.

²²⁰ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 52.

Berlin. Kennedy, who closely followed Eisenhower's policy on Berlin, did not want a peace treaty to be signed, as it threatened the status quo. If a Soviet treaty with East Germany was to be signed, Kennedy assured Khrushchev that American rights had to be respected in West Berlin. Kennedy repeatedly told Khrushchev the United States was in Berlin, not by force but as the result of the World War II agreement, which Stalin signed. This infuriated Khrushchev, who stated that he was

sorry that he was met with no understanding of the Soviet position. The U.S. is unwilling to normalize the situation in the most dangerous spot in the world. The USSR wants to perform an operation on this sore spot—to eliminate this thorn, this ulcer—without prejudicing the interests of any side, but rather to the satisfaction of all peoples of the world. The USSR wants to do that not by intrigue or threat but solemnly signing a peace treaty.²²¹

Khrushchev further claimed that he did not understand why the United States wants Berlin. “Does the United States wish to unleash a war from there?”²²² The president responded that having troops in Berlin offered no military advantages. Khrushchev ignored the president's response and stated that, if the “United States wanted to start a war over Berlin, there was nothing the USSR could do about it. However, it will be the U.S. to start the war, while the USSR will be defending peace.”²²³

After the premier's outburst, the meeting broke for lunch. Lunch could not have come at a better time, as Kennedy was once again feeling bullied by Khrushchev. The president later told a reporter in confidence that the discussions on Berlin were the “roughest thing in my life.”²²⁴ Kennedy placed blame for the premier's verbal victories on himself. “I think he [Khrushchev] did it because of the Bay of Pigs. I think he

²²¹ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 219.

²²² FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 213.

²²³ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 223.

²²⁴ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 495.

thought that anyone who was so young and inexperienced as to get into that mess could be taken. And anyone who got into it and didn't see it through had no guts. So he just beat the hell out of me.”²²⁵

At the lengthy lunch, the premier did most of the talking and brought up several points. First, he focused on ideology and gave a monologue about Lenin and his ideas. Next, the Soviet leader discussed new technology surrounding Soviet submarines. He praised new advances in technology and praised the Soviet fleet. Then the premier focused on ICBMs. Similar to the conversation with Eisenhower, he boasted about Soviet missile strength and stated that those missiles “are the God of War today.”²²⁶

After bragging about Soviet missile strength, he switched his focus to nuclear tests. He informed the president that he was under tremendous pressure from the Soviet government to resume tests but would not do so unless the United States restarted nuclear tests. Again, Kennedy asked the premier about a test ban, but Khrushchev replied that a test ban would only be discussed in conjunction with disarmament. From disarmament, the conversation shifted briefly to Laos, where the premier explained that both countries needed to find a suitable solution to the Laotian situation. However, the premier stated that the two sides seemed a long way from finding a solution, as Gromyko and Rusk had had several private meetings on Laos and little had been accomplished.

The final part of the lunch conversation focused on the space race. The president inquired whether the Soviet Union would like to make a cooperative effort in space exploration. The premier replied that “cooperation in outer space would be impossible as

²²⁵ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 495.

²²⁶ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 223.

long as there was no disarmament.”²²⁷ Finally, the lunch adjourned after Khrushchev gave a lengthy toast to the president thanking him for meeting personally with him since he “preferred as much as possible to have personal contacts.”²²⁸ Kennedy thanked the premier for his kind words and went up to his room before their afternoon meetings. The lunch somewhat eased Kennedy’s nerves, as there were no serious disagreements between the leaders.

After the lunch, Kennedy knew the summit was about to come to an end. The president wanted to leave Vienna with some sort of agreement. He told an advisor, “I can’t leave here without giving it one more try. I am not going to leave here until I know more.”²²⁹ However, the president did not know if Khrushchev would be any more receptive than he had been in their past talks. The American leader was nervous about going to meet Khrushchev and frankly told Rusk, “This is the nut cutter.”²³⁰

When Kennedy met the premier at the Soviet Embassy, he asked Khrushchev if they could speak in private with only their interpreters. Kennedy opened the meeting by stressing that he wanted to find some sort of common ground on the Berlin situation. He informed the Soviet leader that he knew Khrushchev would act on the best interests of his country. However, Kennedy wanted to be clear that, whatever Khrushchev and East Germany planned, American rights could not be altered in West Berlin. Furthermore, the president stated that he hoped that some middle ground could be found so there would not be a direct confrontation over West Berlin.

²²⁷ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 226.

²²⁸ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume V, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 226.

²²⁹ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 412.

²³⁰ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 412.

Khrushchev thanked the president for his frankness. However, Khrushchev stated that the Soviet Union planned on signing a peace treaty with East Germany sometime within the next year. Therefore, the United States could not have land or air access to West Berlin. Khrushchev reiterated that, if the Soviet Union's or East Germany's "land, air, or sea borders are...violated, they would be defended."²³¹ He once again asked why the United States was so interested in keeping West Berlin. When the president did not answer Khrushchev's question, the premier stated that the only reason the United States wants part of Berlin is to "humiliate the USSR and this cannot be accepted."²³² To this response, Kennedy informed Khrushchev that it was the Soviet Union who wanted to make a change that would threaten peace. The premier responded that the USSR was only signing a peace treaty. Kennedy replied that the United States would not be forced out of Berlin and, if the Soviet Union signed a treaty that threatened American rights in Europe, "it would be a cold winter."²³³ At that point, the meeting and summit adjourned with both men frustrated.

The president was especially upset over how the summit was ending, as there had been no significant progress. Khrushchev recalled that Kennedy looked disheveled. The Soviet leader stated:

I remember he [Kennedy] looked not only anxious, but deeply upset. I recall vividly the expression on his face. Looking at him, I couldn't help feeling a bit sorry and somewhat upset myself. I hadn't meant to upset him. I would have liked very much for us to part in a different mood. But there was nothing I could do to help him....As one human being toward another, I felt bad about his disappointment.²³⁴

²³¹ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, "Memorandum of Conversation," 229.

²³² FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, "Memorandum of Conversation," 229.

²³³ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, "Memorandum of Conversation," 230.

²³⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 499.

This shows that, although Khrushchev was a tough and sometimes rude politician, he enjoyed Kennedy's company and enjoyed working with him.

However, as Kennedy and Khrushchev left the Soviet Embassy, they looked like two different men. Although Khrushchev also was frustrated by the lack of substantial progress, he smiled for the cameras and joked with reporters. However, Kennedy looked deeply troubled and saddened. Both men went in separate directions towards the airport. From Vienna, Kennedy made a brief stop in Great Britain before returning to the United States, while Khrushchev left flying directly for Moscow.

When the president left Vienna for England, a reporter stated that Kennedy flew off in a "solemn, but confident mood."²³⁵ Kennedy, in many ways, was distressed by the meeting, as he felt Khrushchev had bested him in most of the debates. Furthermore, Kennedy was shocked by the premier's brutish personality and off color humor after experiencing it in person. The president's brother, Robert, stated that Kennedy was shocked "that somebody would be as harsh and definitive" as the Soviet leader.²³⁶ However, Robert believed that the president took the meeting too personally, as this was the first time he had ever held a meeting with someone with "whom he couldn't exchange ideas in a meaningful way."²³⁷

In the final analysis, Kennedy initially took the summit too personally. He expected that he could charm Khrushchev, just as he did most people with whom he had discussions. When the president felt like the meetings were not going his way, he

²³⁵ James Reston, "Vienna Talks End," *New York Times*, June 5, 1961, 1(A).

²³⁶ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 414.

²³⁷ Dallek, *Kennedy*, 414.

overreacted and became too self-conscious. Furthermore, he expected too much out of Khrushchev. Although he had studied the transcripts from earlier encounters with the premier, such as the kitchen debate, it appeared that Kennedy thought Khrushchev would act differently around him. After settling down from the shock of the summit, Kennedy stated about the meetings, “Talks were somber but useful. No advantage or concession gained or given. No major decisions taken. Views of the two leaders contrasted sharply. However, channels of communication between the governments opened more fully. Chances of a dangerous misjudgment on either side should be less now.”²³⁸ This was perhaps the most telling statement of the whole conference. Although no accords were reached, the president and premier became more acquainted with one another, and Kennedy gained a certain respect for Khrushchev, as he realized the Soviet leader was a hard-nosed politician who would not back down from his beliefs.

Khrushchev, on the other hand, left the summit less conflicted than Kennedy. The premier was disappointed that no agreement was reached on Berlin, but he suspected that would be the case. Furthermore, the Soviet leader was not upset over their verbal jousting, as this was his form of debate which he had used for years in the Soviet Union and against American leaders, such as Eisenhower and Nixon—although these two did not take it as personally as Kennedy had. Furthermore, the premier was confident that he had won the debates with Kennedy. However, this was not a shock, considering Khrushchev probably believed that he had won every argument he ever entered into

²³⁸ FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5, “Circular Telegram from the Department of State to all Diplomatic and Consular Posts,” 239.

during his time as chairman. Finally, Khrushchev called the summit “a very good beginning to improving relations.”²³⁹

Furthermore, the Soviet leader gained a respect for the young president. In his memoirs Khrushchev records how much he preferred not only dealing with, but also being around Kennedy as compared with Eisenhower or Nixon. The premier even stated, “I think that Kennedy was more intelligent than any of the presidents before him.”²⁴⁰ For Khrushchev, this was a big complement, as he usually only referred to Eisenhower and Nixon as capitalists and was much less complimentary towards them.

Following Vienna, the most dangerous year of the Cold War began. In August of 1961, the Soviets began building the Berlin Wall, as the Berlin situation came to a head. Then, a year later in the summer of 1962, the Soviets began placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, which culminated in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Many historians point to these incidents as proof that Vienna was not as successful as other summits. However, this is not true. Vienna, as New York Times reporter James Reston stated, “re-established high-level U.S.-Soviet diplomacy.”²⁴¹ Without the personal communication and the personal interaction at Vienna, both of these situations could have turned out much worse than they did. Although these crises were not avoided, nuclear conflict was and that could have been because both men had gained a new respect for one another during the high-level diplomacy in Vienna, Austria.

²³⁹ Seymour Topping, “Premier Calls Parley ‘Very Good’ Start in Closer Relations,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1961, 1(A).

²⁴⁰ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 500.

²⁴¹ James Reston, “Vienna Talks End,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1961, 1(A).

Chapter V

Conclusions

The three summits here examined in detail, were ground-breaking in the sense that there had been no significant high-level diplomacy between the United States and the Soviet Union prior to the Nixon-Khrushchev meeting in 1959. Before to the meetings in 1959, the last time a Soviet leader and a United States president had met together was during World War II. During the Second World War, Roosevelt met with Stalin at Tehran in late November 1943 to discuss wartime strategy against the Germans. Roosevelt and Stalin then met again in February of 1945 to discuss the final strategies for defeating Nazi Germany. Then in July of 1945, Harry S. Truman, who came into office following Franklin Roosevelt's death in April 1945, met with Stalin in Potsdam, Germany to discuss post-war Europe and the war against Japan. Although the atmosphere at Potsdam was tense, the leaders expected to meet with each other again; however, a subsequent meeting never occurred, as the World War II victory quickly turned into Cold War paranoia. Over the next fourteen years, diplomacy between the two countries was handled by written messages, and when the representatives of the two countries met, they did so at a lower working level instead of at the highest level of the president or premier.

The summit between Nixon and Khrushchev in July 1959 was very intriguing. Nixon had not been formally invited to the Soviet Union by Khrushchev but was going to open the American Exhibition in Moscow. However, the two leaders agreed to meet and

discuss East-West relations. The meetings were often tense, and the two leaders often squabbled over ideology. However, Nixon and Khrushchev both left the meetings with a new respect for each other. Possibly the most important development to come out of Nixon's trip to the Soviet Union was his tour throughout the Soviet Union. The vice president enjoyed Russia and found that he enjoyed being around most of the Russian citizens.

Khrushchev's visit to the United States in September 1959 was also equally fascinating. The Soviet premier thoroughly enjoyed being asked to visit the United States, as he believed this signified that the Americans saw the Soviet Union as an equal. Similar to Nixon and Khrushchev, President Eisenhower and the Soviet premier did not always get along or agree on issues. However, both leaders already respected one another for their service in World War II. After the meetings, both men also respected each other as leaders. Khrushchev, like Nixon, also enjoyed most of his travels throughout the United States and found that he liked many Americans, including his guide, the patrician Henry Cabot Lodge.

The Kennedy and Khrushchev summit in Vienna was the most tense of all the summits involving Khrushchev and an American leader. Kennedy went into the meeting feeling like the premier might see him as weak because of the Bay of Pigs. As a result, the young president had the hardest time dealing with the Soviet leader. However, after the summit, Kennedy realized that he had taken all of the Soviet leader's comments and blustering too seriously. Although no accords were reached, both leaders found they

liked and respected one another, especially Khrushchev, who found that Kennedy was much easier to work with than Eisenhower or Nixon.

All three of the summits had similarities. First, the same issues were discussed. The main points of focus in all of these meetings were Berlin, disarmament, and the ideological battles between capitalism and communism in the third world. Second, Nixon, Eisenhower, and Kennedy all had to deal with the outspoken Khrushchev. Each American leader approached Khrushchev differently. Nixon was ready to debate the Soviet leader on each point that he made and never backed down from a confrontation. Eisenhower attempted to take the “high road” and not get into ideological debates that would lead to nothing but disagreements. Kennedy, on the other hand, thought he could charm the premier with his persona. However, Kennedy was mistaken and, therefore, shocked by Khrushchev’s unanticipated behavior.

The most dangerous episodes of the Cold War occurred following the three summits of 1959 and 1961. In July 1961, Khrushchev withdrew an earlier order that would have reduced the size of the Red Army by over one million soldiers. Not to be outdone, in July 1961, Kennedy went on national television and asked congress for the authority to call up the reserves and increase military spending. Furthermore, he recommended the use of bomb shelters for American citizens in the event that the disagreement over Berlin turned into a nuclear conflict. Kennedy’s televised speech was supposed to show Khrushchev that the United States would not back down over Berlin and would go to war to protect American interests in Germany.

A month later, in August 1961, Khrushchev felt that he could no longer bluff the United States by threatening to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, and he finally put into motion the Soviets' solution to the German question: the building of the Berlin Wall. The United States, had prepared to defend their rights in West Berlin if attacked and readied themselves for another blockade, but the United States was caught off guard with the construction of the wall. The United States waited to see what the Soviets' next move would be, and when the United States realized that the wall was the Soviet solution to the German question, the Kennedy administration was relieved. In fact, the building of the wall helped ease tensions on both sides, and the German question seemed to be settled.²⁴² Khrushchev and the Soviets would have been happier if a peace treaty had been signed and the Americans were out of Berlin. However, he realized that was not possible without risking nuclear war; therefore, the wall was a suitable alternative to the Soviets.

Moreover, tension between the United States and the Soviet Union continued and peaked in the summer of 1962 with the Cuban Missile Crisis. Upon Kennedy's election, Senator William Fulbright told him, "The Castro regime is a thorn in the flesh...but not a dagger in the heart."²⁴³ However, the president did not agree. After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, Kennedy made Cuba "top priority...all else is secondary—no time, money, effort, or man power is to be spared."²⁴⁴ Kennedy also sanctioned Operation Mongoose, which were covert CIA missions to assassinate Castro and

²⁴² Judge, *A Hard and Bitter Peace*, 167-168.

²⁴³ Patterson, *American Foreign Policy*, 334.

²⁴⁴ Patterson, *American Foreign Policy*, 334.

overthrow his communist regime. However, Operation Mongoose was unsuccessful, and Castro, fearing an invasion from the United States, turned to its communist ally, the Soviet Union, for help.

In the Havana-Moscow agreement, Khrushchev agreed to begin shipping weapons to Cuba in the summer of 1962, including “surface to air missiles (SAMs), 48 medium range (SS-4) Missiles, 32 intermediate range (SS-5) missiles, 48 IL bombers, tactical nuclear weapons, and nuclear warheads.”²⁴⁵ In October 1962, the United States realized, with the help of U-2 reconnaissance planes, what had occurred 90 miles off the coast of Florida. Kennedy quickly notified the American public in a televised address and told Khrushchev to “halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless provocative threat to world peace.”²⁴⁶ Kennedy further met the Soviet Union threat with a mixture of diplomacy and a naval blockade. Khrushchev accused Kennedy of starting the crisis and called for a meeting between the two leaders. Kennedy stated that he would meet with Khrushchev, but the nuclear weapons had to be removed first. For thirteen days, the world teetered on the brink of nuclear war, as Soviet naval vessels moved closer to Cuba, Soviet submarines approached the coast of the United States, and the United States had a squadron of B-52s in the air at all times loaded with nuclear weapons.

The crisis peaked on October 27, when a United States U-2 spy plane was shot down by a Soviet surface-to-air missile while on a surveillance mission over Cuba. Many Americans, including some officials in Kennedy’s cabinet, believed that the United States had to respond militarily. Fortunately, the crisis was ended when Kennedy and

²⁴⁵ Patterson, *American Foreign Policy*, 336.

²⁴⁶ Patterson, *American Foreign Policy*, 337.

Khrushchev struck a deal. Kennedy agreed that the United States would not invade Cuba if the Soviet Union removed the missiles. Also, in a secret part of the bargain, the president agreed to remove American missiles located in Turkey. In the end, diplomacy won out and nuclear war was averted.²⁴⁷

While these conflicts were not evaded, nuclear war was avoided. While the meetings between Nixon and Khrushchev, Eisenhower and Khrushchev, and Kennedy and Khrushchev could not prevent those tense moments in the Cold War, they did help prevent nuclear disaster. In all three summits, there were tense moments, as delicate issues were discussed; however, at the end of the meetings, the leaders all gained a new respect for the other and the other's country. Furthermore, in the case of Nixon in the Soviet Union and Khrushchev in the United States, Nixon enjoyed the Soviet people and Khrushchev liked the company of most Americans that he encountered.

In conclusion, these summits decreased some of the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union and helped lead towards détente. Not all of the problems were solved, but these three meetings were a good starting place for peaceful coexistence. Henry Cabot Lodge, although talking only about the Eisenhower and Khrushchev meeting, stated, "Where would [the United States] be if Khrushchev had not been asked to come? Surely we would be worse for not having him."²⁴⁸ The same can be applied to the Nixon, Kennedy, and Khrushchev meetings as well.

²⁴⁷ Judge, *A Hard and Bitter Peace*, 172-175.

²⁴⁸ Lodge, *The Storm has Many Eyes*, 177.

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