

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT KHRUSHCHEV

By GEOFFREY BOCCA

THE LACK OF STYLE in Mrs. Khrushchev's dress so appalled the distinguished London fashion designer, John Cavanagh, that he called the Soviet embassy recently and said he wanted to design some clothes for her.

"Could you give me her measurements, please?" he asked.

The embassy official promised to call him back, and duly did so. "I have relayed your question to the ambassador," the stony voice on the phone told Cavanagh. "He says he is not quite sure, but he thinks that Mrs. Khrushchev's measurements are probably the same as Mr. Khrushchev's measurements."

The Soviet ambassador's little joke is significant, for a leader's personality can be assessed by the jests his own people make about him. When Stalin was in power, the Russians were too frightened to see anything funny in him or his regime. But under Nikita Khrushchev they breathe—and joke—easier.

Why this should be so is an enigma. Khrushchev rose to prominence during Stalin's regime, and he apparently felt right at home in its atmosphere of murder, treachery, and terror. In the 1930s, Khrushchev had a leading role in the purges that sent an untold number of Russians to death before firing squads or to the living death of the Siberian prison camps. Twenty years later, he earned the bloody sobriquet, Butcher of Budapest.

Yet, there is a difference between Stalin and Khrushchev. In the cold marble slab of Stalin's personality there seemed to be no veins of human warmth or weakness. In Khrushchev, streaks of humanity are readily apparent. It may not be much of a difference, but to the long-suffering Russians even a slight change for the better seems a great relief.

The Voice of a "Cooing Bull"

In appearance, Khrushchev is short, thickset, and overweight, with a sallow complexion and very small feet. Although he laughs freely, he misses nothing that is going on around him, and his small but usually merry eyes dart over a crowded room even when he is speaking to someone. His voice has been described as like that of a "cooing bull."

Khrushchev's hands are his most unexpected feature. They are small and artistic with slender, tapering fingers—extraordinary for a man who has been a coal miner, metalworker, and shepherd. He is very vain about them and has them manicured regularly.

He wears made-to-measure shoes with false shoelaces and elastic bands that permit him to take them off and put them on without bending. This is useful when he must sit through long banquets—or when he wants to get a shoe off in a hurry to bang a desk at the U. N.

As leader of the Soviet state, Khrushchev has two homes and a large domestic staff.



Khrushchev and wife Nina pamper grandchildren Aliocha (l.) and Nikita.

Monster or jolly grandpa?
He's a little of both, besides being
a dandy, a tippler,



Irina Furtseva—one of K's favorites.



a woman fancier,
and a quack-
medicine addict

He spends most of his time at his *dacha* (country house) 30 miles from Moscow. The address, in case you wish to write him, is 20 Vorobyovskoe Chaussee, Lenin Hill, in the village of Usova. The house was built in 1956 and is a formidable, tasteless place with 40 rooms, columned terraces, and a great park. Khrushchev loves animals, and several dogs romp around the house. His favorite is a wolf dog called Arbat, which was discovered as a stray pup by one of his grandchildren.

On vacation, the Khrushchev family goes to another *dacha* at Sochi on the Black Sea coast (the Russian Riviera). They always take with them a staff that includes two maids in white Victorian uniform with starched bonnets.

Khrushchev has been married twice; the first time in 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution. He was 23, already a hard drinker, and the aggressive center-forward on the Hughesoffka soccer team, champions of the Don Basin. His bride was Galina Boutzenko, about whose background little is known.

Within three years, she gave him three children—a son and two daughters. What happened next is something of a mystery. One of the little girls died, and it is said Galina was so heartbroken she had a nervous collapse and died in the psychiatric ward of Kharkov Hospital.

In 1921, Nikita met Nina Petrovna. It was an encounter that changed the course of history because, without her, the uneducated *muzhik* never would have risen to the heights he did. Nina was an ardent Communist, but she also was educated and a lady. Her father had been a tsarist officer, and her tastes were cultivated.

Nina assumed the task of raising Nikita's two surviving children from his first marriage; and they had three more youngsters of their own.

The children of the first marriage were Leonide and Djoulia. If Leonide were alive today, he would be 45. During World War II, he was piloting a plane on a strafing sortie over Stalingrad when he was shot down and killed. Even today, Khrushchev cannot speak of him without emotion. Djoulia, a year younger than her brother, is totally unglamorous with thick black hair and glasses. She works as a scientist.

The Second Set of Children

Oldest of Nikita's and Nina's children is Rada, who is married to Aleksei Adzhubei, one of Russia's most influential journalists. The second child is Serge, who tends to be his father's favorite—probably because he is tall, rather good-looking, and somewhat wayward. Serge's wife is a Jewish girl, a fact Khrushchev makes political capital of when accused of anti-Semitism. The youngest child is Elena, who is 23, demurely pretty, and a law student at Moscow University.

Khrushchev and his wife seem genuinely devoted. He calls her Ninonka, an affectionate form of Nina. She calls him Medvod, which means "bear." But Nina has failed in one respect. Despite her 41-year educational campaign, Nikita remains lowbrow in his tastes. He listens pa-

tiently when she puts classical records on the hi-fi, but he prefers rowdy folk dances and the rousing but uncomplicated songs of the Red Army choirs.

Khrushchev's attitude toward drinking isn't very sophisticated, either. While visiting Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia in 1955, he gave a performance which won't soon be forgotten in the annals of diplomacy. Warmed by plum brandy, he tried to kiss Tito's attractive wife Jovanka. She laughingly dodged him. But Tito was unamused and suggested it was getting late. Nikita ignored the suggestion and went on drinking.

Soon he was after Madame Tito again. He serenaded her with a melancholy Russian ballad and suggested a walk in the moonlight. She politely declined. To break up the party, the jittery guests rose to go to bed. Nikita refused; he said he was going to sleep on Tito's sofa. Eventually, however, he was persuaded to retire.

When Khrushchev awoke, he must have realized what a fool he had made of himself. Since that time, he has never drunk in public. But he still tipsles at home. His favorite drink is Ukrainian cognac with a beer chaser. For his hangovers, Nina has a somewhat savage cure—a breakfast of raw sauerkraut and dill pickles.

A Weakness for Women, Too

Nikita's weakness for drink is matched by his weakness for women—despite his genuine affection for Nina.

He reportedly owed the first big advance in his political career to Rosa Kaganovitch, a sister of one of Stalin's top henchmen. This was in 1935 when Rosa was Stalin's mistress. Rosa, fascinated by Nikita's toughness, brought him to the attention of Stalin. But this did not deter Khrushchev from later purging her brother.

For years, Khrushchev's favorite woman friend was Irina Furtseva, who is now Soviet minister of culture. Once extremely fat, she melted off 20 pounds and revealed herself to be an attractive woman. She went with Khrushchev on his state visit to India, and it is understood she had her heart set on going along with him to the United States, too. Instead, he took Nina. Irina reportedly was furious. Since then, their relationship has cooled.

As befits a woman fancier, Khrushchev also is something of a dandy in his dress. He likes silk shirts, seldom wears the same set of cuff links twice, and drapes his roly-poly form in suits custom-made by Angelo Litrico, a clever little Sicilian tailor who works in Rome.

But Khrushchev, the fashion plate, is a rather recent creation. During most of his public life, he wore the absurdly padded shoulders and bell-bottomed trousers which are standard dress among Soviet officialdom. His conversion to Western style came when he suddenly shot to the top of the Communist hierarchy and began rubbing shoulders with such debonair dressers as Sir Anthony Eden and Marshal Tito. For years, Molotov and Vishinsky had been traveling the world in their shapeless Russian suits, in-

different to the giggles of Western observers. But as soon as Khrushchev realized how dowdy his clothes were, he felt ashamed, asked what could be done about them, and—on the advice of some of his more knowing diplomats—sent his measurements off to Litrico in Rome.

Khrushchev's reaction to being dressed differently from other world leaders is revealing. It bares two of his basic traits—a searching curiosity and a quivering sensitivity.

What he has seen on his trips outside the Iron Curtain has not been lost on him. He realizes the West is ahead of Russia in many ways, and he is determined first to narrow the gap, then push his own country into the lead. Whatever effect his actions may have on the world, they have made life more bearable inside Russia.

One Kind of Curtain Pushed Back

Little incidents can reveal a lot. During a visit to Moscow, I saw Khrushchev sweep out of the Kremlin in his large car with a simple security cortege, no more and no less grandly than any other chief of state. The veteran Moscow correspondent who was standing beside me commented: "Before Khrushchev, Soviet leaders traveled in cars with the curtains closed. It was a continuation of the old tsarist principle that leaders should not be seen by the masses. To me, there is great symbolic meaning in Khrushchev's simple act of opening the curtains."

To achieve his ambitious goals for his country, Khrushchev has been pushing himself to almost superhuman limits. One wonders how long he can keep it up.

In 1959, there were whispers in Moscow that Khrushchev was on the verge of a breakdown. One diplomat, on leaving a conference with him, said, "His complexion is ghastly. I never saw a man heading so surely for a heart attack."

Khrushchev himself was not unaware of the warning signs. That year, he went to Romania for a thorough checkup from Professor Anna Asland of Bucharest University. It was an odd choice—and one that suggests Khrushchev shares with Stalin an enthusiasm for longevity nostrums. Professor Asland is notorious for her "rejuvenating process," which entails dosing her patients with what she calls H-3, but which is nothing more than novocain. Western medical scientists consider her an out-and-out quack.

When patients feel benefit from such treatments, it is usually a psychological response—and Khrushchev returned to Moscow feeling better. In 1960, he went on a strict diet to lose weight and relieve arterial pressure. Since then, his health has remained reasonably steady.

But, at 68, it would take a miracle to add many more productive years to Khrushchev's life—and of course the world leader of atheistic communism doesn't believe in miracles.

Nikita Khrushchev is a man who has done great evil; he is a man to be feared. Nevertheless, I can't help but feel his death will be no cause for rejoicing in the West. His replacement could be infinitely worse.