

## *Sergei Khrushchev, Son of Former Soviet Premier, Dies at 84*

A rocket scientist in the Soviet Union, he became a U.S. citizen long after the Cold War ended. “I’m not a defector,” he said. “I like this country.”



By **Katharine Q. Seelye**

June 24, 2020

Sergei N. Khrushchev, a former Soviet rocket scientist and the son of Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet leader during the Cold War of the 1950s and '60s, died on June 18 at his home in Cranston, R.I. He was 84.

The Rhode Island medical examiner’s office said the cause was a gunshot wound to the head, according to The Associated Press. The police said there were no signs of foul play. His wife, Valentina Golenko, had called the police to report an emergency, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Mr. Khrushchev had been a rocket scientist before he moved to Rhode Island in 1991, shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, to lecture on the Cold War at Brown University in Providence. He remained a senior fellow there.

He and his wife became naturalized United States citizens in 1999 and held dual citizenships. Mr. Khrushchev said in 2001 that his becoming an American citizen would not have displeased his father, who, in 1956, in the depths of the Cold War, famously declared to Western officials, “We will bury you!”

By the time his son became an American citizen, the Cold War was long over.

“I’m not a defector,” Sergei Khrushchev told The Providence Journal in 2001. “I’m not a traitor. I did not commit any treason. I work here and I like this country.”

Still, he said, he felt that becoming an American citizen had given him a new lease on life. “I’m feeling like a newborn,” he told The A.P. “It’s the beginning of a new life.”

As a rocket engineer and computer scientist in the Soviet Union, Mr. Khrushchev played an active role in developing guidance systems for missiles, including cruise missiles launched from submarines, from 1958 to 1968.



Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet Premier, second from left, with members of his family in the early 1960s. From left, his daughter Yelena; his son Sergei; Sergei's first wife, Galina Mikhailovna; Nikita Khrushchev's daughter Bada; his wife, Nina; and Bada's husband, Aleksei Adzhube. Novosti Press Agency

He then took up writing and lecturing. His areas of expertise included Soviet economic and political reforms, U.S.-Soviet relations from 1950 to 1964, and the history of the Soviet space program.

He also helped his father write his four-volume memoir in Russian and then translated it into English.

Nikita Khrushchev was first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964 and chairman of the Council of Ministers, or premier, from 1958 to 1964, when he was deposed and relegated to obscurity. He died in 1971 at 77.

Americans had a close-up look at the Soviet leader and his family in 1959, when he visited the United States at the invitation of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Times were tense: The Soviets had beaten the Americans into space, launching Sputnik in 1957, and American schoolchildren practiced duck-and-cover drills as the threat of nuclear annihilation hung over the planet.

The premier brought his son, then 24, with him on the trip.

“Americans who have observed and talked with him,” The New York Times observed of Sergei Khrushchev, “think he gives no sign of following in his father’s footsteps.”

Sergei Khrushchev said years later, in the interview with The Providence Journal, that during that trip his family felt as if they had landed on Mars, seeing things they had never imagined. “It was palms, cars, highways, everything,” he said. He took home movies of it all, including Times Square.

They were especially baffled by the concept of Disneyland, then four years old but already a top attraction in Southern California. When told that his family would not be allowed to visit the park out of concerns for their safety, the premier exploded in anger: “What is it? Is there an epidemic of cholera there or something? Or have gangsters taken hold of the place?”

At his office at Brown, Sergei Khrushchev kept on his wall a framed cover of Life magazine with an enduring image from that historic if somewhat carnival-like trip: his father visiting a farm in Iowa and holding an ear of corn.



Mr. Khrushchev speaking at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago in 2007. As a rocket engineer and computer scientist in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, he played an active role in developing guidance systems for missiles. M. Spencer Green/Associated Press

Sergei Nikitich Khrushchev was born on July 2, 1935, in Moscow. His mother was Nina Petrovna (Kukharchuk) Khrushcheva. (His father had six children altogether, by two wives.) Sergei held several advanced engineering degrees, including a doctorate from the Moscow

Technical University.

In addition to his work with missiles, he worked on military and research spacecraft and moon vehicles.

He was part of an exchange program at Brown University's Center for Foreign Policy Development and later became a senior fellow at Brown's Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies and a fellow at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He also taught at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

Mr. Khrushchev was a frequent lecturer throughout the United States, speaking mainly about the Cold War from the Soviet perspective.

In addition to his wife (he had an earlier marriage to Galina Mikhailovna), his survivors include a son, Sergei, as well as a granddaughter. Another son, Nikita, from a previous marriage, was a journalist who died of a stroke in 2007 at 47.

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A version of this article appears in print on June 25, 2020, Section A, Page 23 of the New York edition with the headline: Sergei N. Khrushchev, 84, Rocket Scientist and the Son of a Former Soviet Premier