



Sports

Since this article was published, Mikey took FIRST PLACE in the competition and will go on to the state competition in Sacramento in April.

Interview with Khrushchev's son helps teen bring history to life

10:00 PM PDT on Wednesday, March 12, 2008

By **JERRY SOIFER**
The Press-Enterprise

NORCO - Norco High sophomore Mikey Robinson acknowledged he had been brainwashed to think that because communism was bad, communists were bad people. Then he talked to Sergei Khrushchev, whose late father, Nikita, was the soviet prime minister who ordered his military to suppress the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Mikey, 16, interviewed Khrushchev in English for 30 minutes by telephone for a History Day project on the revolution that stirred worldwide attention. Mikey's 10-minute performance won the senior division in individual performance at the Corona-Norco History Day in January. He will perform for the judges at the Riverside County History Day on March 22 at Corona High School.

Khrushchev, 72, emigrated to the United States in 1991. He gained citizenship in 1999. He teaches politics and science at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University in Providence, R.I., and at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

Story continues below



Jerry Soifer / Special to The Press-Enterprise

Norco High sophomore Mikey Robinson shows off items he will use as props when he performs at the Riverside County History Day.

Mikey said he went into the interview thinking "communists were pigs (because) it's my upbringing."

To Mikey, the younger Khrushchev was nothing like the public persona of his father who pounded his shoe on a table at the United Nations and threatened to bury the United States. Sergei Khrushchev helped his father write his memoirs before he died in 1971.

"I'm surprised how humble he was," said Mikey. "I was really nervous. I was expecting something different. He was really a nice guy...He wished me luck on my project and if I had any more questions I should call him back."

Mikey said Khrushchev told him the Soviet Union intervened in Hungary because the rebels were killing people supporting the soviets, who feared the rebellion might spread to other Warsaw Pact nations.

In a telephone interview with The Press-Enterprise, Khrushchev said the Hungarian Revolution was unpleasant for everybody at the time. "My father tried to do everything to prevent killing," Khrushchev said. "You have to support your allies or you will have enemies on your borders."

Khrushchev compared the soviet actions in Hungary with the United States' intervention in Panama and Grenada. Khrushchev said the Hungarian Revolution was not a preview of the eventual downfall of communism. He said communism fell because it failed to reform itself as the tsarist regime fell because of its lack of change in 1917.

Mikey lives in Corona with his parents, Mark and Cindy. Mikey became interested in the revolution because his Chino Hills club water polo team took him to Budapest, the capital of Hungary, in 2006 and 2007. Mikey saw buildings still pockmarked by bullets fired during the revolution.

Water polo is one of Hungary's strongest sports. The 1956 Olympic Gold Medal game between Hungary and the Soviet Union became a bloodbath because of the bitter feelings left over from the revolution a month earlier. Hungary won the game, 4-0. Australian police intervened to prevent spectators from harming the soviets.

The Norco High student interviewed Hungarians who were alive at the time of the revolution. Mikey said one survivor told him in an interview in San Diego that he had to flee for his life from his native country after the revolution was quelled. He said some Hungarians thought they were going to receive help from the West based on Radio Free Europe broadcasts.

Mikey distills his interviews into a 10-minute performance. He will wear a soviet military cap and use a soviet flag as props.

Mikey said he is doing a performance rather than submitting a paper because he wants to convey the emotions of the time. "I have to tell these people's stories," he said.

Angela Dillman, Mikey's teacher in the honors world history class, said, "He really is one of those rare students who truly loves to study history. He wants to understand why things happen. He's always seeking to go beyond the surface."

Dillman said her student "truly became a historian" in doing his project.

"He was truly touched by the people he met," she said.

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