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UNITED NEIGHBORS

RUSSIA'S delegate to the United Nations Security Council, Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko, is a tall, handsome young man with gleaming black hair, a pleasant basso profundo voice and a tendency to five-o'clock shadow. He wears somber, skillfully tailored suits, and prefers shirts with French cuffs. He abhors dinner parties, enjoys an energetic game of volley ball, likes to ride through Central Park in an automobile and plays a crafty game of chess.

He speaks English with a heavy, mushy accent but sufficiently understandably to have addressed a mass meeting of American Russophiles at Madison Square Garden. He could, if he wished, use English at Council sessions, but he prefers to employ Russian and so to add another language to be translated into French and English, the official tongues of the U.N. He frequently interrupts the translator to correct interpretations of important phases in a speech.

From Gromyko's secretary, one A. Tokina, we were able to extract only a typed page of biographical material about as inspiring as an inscription on a tombstone. The Russians cling to the notion that a man whose utterances make headlines, fill columns in the newspapers almost daily and comprise the bulk of the official records of the meetings of the Security Council is strictly a private character. On Gromyko, as on the subject of Generalissimo Stalin or any other Soviet official, the Russians are decidedly reticent.

"Only a man's actions are important," they tell you; "the man himself does not matter."

The vital statistics in Comrade Tokina's handout show that Gromyko was born in the small town of Gromyki, near Gomel, on July 18, 1909, which makes him, at thirty-seven, by far the youngest of the top diplomats of the U.N. He was graduated from the Moscow Institute of Economics and after teaching the subject for two years became, early in 1939, chief of the American Division of the Kremlin's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He came to the United States later in 1939, as Counselor of the Embassy in Washington, was appointed Chargé d'Affaires in May, 1943, and served as Acting Ambassador until his formal appointment as Ambassador in August, 1943. He represented the U.S.S.R. at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference and was chairman of the Soviet delegation at the San Francisco Conference in 1945.

Comrade Tokina's handout did, however, disclose two little-known facts about the aggressive Gromyko. One was that he is a member of the Supreme Soviet and, therefore, of the top-drawer, policy-making Communist Party leadership. The other was that he has twice been decorated with the Order of Lenin, which is something like winning the Congressional Medal of Honor twice.

It is obvious from his standing in the Soviet hierarchy that he has the confidence of Generalissimo Stalin and the Kremlin crowd. It's a reasonable assumption that he could act on behalf of his government independently more often than he does. In every tight spot, however, he elects to "ask for instructions."

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This tactic isn't, of course, peculiar to Gromyko. It's a maneuver as old as diplomacy itself. But his overfrequent employment thereof hasn't helped to endear him to his colleagues.

Gromyko's rank and honors clearly indicate that Moscow is satisfied with his work as a diplomat. Yet if diplomacy, as the dictionaries insist, is "artful management in securing advantages without arousing hostility," Gromyko isn't one of its more successful practitioners. What advantages he's gained in the Council's debates have been few and the antagonism he has generated is as thick as treacle.

While it would be unfair and inaccurate to attribute to him personally the Council's failure to resolve any major problem to date, the fact remains that he blocked action on Spain, Iran and international control of the atom bomb. Solutions—not entirely to Russia's liking and possibly not even perfect ones but acceptable to the majority—might have been found had Gromyko proved himself more amenable to compromise.

None of his colleagues questions Gromyko's skill in executing the Kremlin's wishes which appear to most Council members to be to impose upon them a strictly Russian interpretation of the rules of world order contained in the U.N.'s Charter. Fear of a Western cabal against the U.S.S.R. seems to be the leitmotiv of Gromyko's acts and speeches. This was particularly evident during the debate over whether there were any Soviet troops in Iran.

"In recent times," Gromyko said, "the question of relations between the Soviet and Iran has been used by certain elements to aggravate the political atmosphere of the world. They have helped the activities of certain groups who aim at engaging in propaganda destined to foment a new war by sowing distrust and anxiety among peoples."

A few days later, having failed to prevent the Security Council from considering Iran's claims that the presence of the Soviet soldiery there constituted a threat to its sovereignty and to world peace, Gromyko walked out of the Council meeting. But not until he had accused the Western powers of "working against the international peace and security" and of misusing "freedom of discussion" and "freedom of the press for their (aggressive) purposes."

Gromyko has also managed to antagonize most of the press short of the Daily Worker to whom he is, of course, a sort of Galahad. Gromyko was renowned to reporters on Washington's diplomatic beat as a "no comment-er" on visits to the State Department and he's done little to win their friendship since.

He has improved somewhat. He occasionally smiles at a cameraman and unbends to the extent of exchanging banalities about the weather with a reporter. But on the background stuff which is the meat of a news story he's still strictly a "no comment" man. Gromyko gripes, as did the tweedy and tousled Ilya Ehrenburg, the Soviet's famous war reporter, in a recent article in Collier's, about the "abundance of misinformation" concerning Russia contained in the American press, but provides no information.

The human side of Russia's eminent curmudgeon emerges, however, despite the secrecy with which he surrounds himself. Family ties are strong among Russians and Gromyko is devoted to his brunette wife, a sixteen-year-old son, Anatole, and an eight-year-old daughter, Milya. He likes his wife's peasant cooking. At the Hotel Plaza, in New York, when the Gromykos stayed there, Madame often cooked the borsht on an electric plate in their rooms, filling hallways with cabbage odors.

The Gromykos have since moved to a large Georgian brick house on Long Island's north shore belonging to Mrs. Ogden L. Mills, widow of the former

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Gromyko

Secretary of the Treasury.

Gromyko lost a brother in the war and another was a prisoner of the Germans for years. His wife's entire family, including five sisters, disappeared during the German occupation of White Russia. He hasn't been able to find any trace of them. . . .

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