

A Soviet Official Who Came To Lunch

By Joseph and Stewart Alsop

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IT IS ODD to find oneself seated at a table with the enemy. It is even odder to find that the enemy is a small, rather nervous man, with a thin face, long, honey-colored hair, a smart double-breasted gabardine suit, and a fondness for Lucky Strike cigarettes and Seagram's VO whisky. This is how the enemy looked, when the first secretary of the Soviet Embassy agreed to lunch with one of these reporters.

"People do not like to be seen with us Russians," Mr. Fedoseev remarked as the luncheon began. "This is why I was so surprised when you telephoned me." Mr. Fedoseev was not alone in his surprise. It is a Washington reporter's job to talk to diplomats—any diplomats. But no Soviet diplomat had ever before agreed to meet a "congenital murderer," as Andrei Vishinsky once described these reporters.

Yet, across the endless gulf which stretched out across the small restaurant table, the luncheon was a rather genial occasion. Mr. Fedoseev volunteered an admiration for American literature. He had even, he remarked, taught his young daughter some American literature—"Your famous poem, 'I shoot an arrow into the hair.'"

Everybody in Russia, he said, learned American literature, "like your great poem, Hiawatha."

As the level steadily dropped in Mr. Fedoseev's glass of Seagram's and soda (which he had firmly ordered when offered a Martini) a curious dual image of the man began to appear. On the one hand, there was a human being. Like other human beings, Mr. Fedoseev was clearly fond of his only daughter. Like other human beings, he was worried by such matters as the rent of his apartment—"terribly, terribly high."

ON THE OTHER hand, there was the official Fedoseev, the product of his system. The contact established between one human being and another was instantly broken when political matters came to the fore. The tone of the conversation remained good-humored, but the minds of the two participants were separated, not by a table top, but by half a world. Then the talk became a futile game of check and double-check:

"Who, after all, started the cold war?" Mr. Fedoseev asked complacently, as if there could be no doubt about the answer.

"You did," was the reply, "when you supplied the Greek Communist guerillas."

"No, no, you did. The Fulton speech. Even earlier."

"You're right. It was earlier, when you failed to remove your troops from Azerbaijan."

"And who has troops in foreign countries now? There are no Russian troops in Korea."

"You started the Korean war, and you know it."

Once or twice the dialogue became so obviously futile, that both participants shrugged, and dropped the subject. But Mr. Fedoseev, his superiors will be glad to know, was persistent, clever, and well prepared. He was obviously a student, not only of the minor American classics, but of the American press.

He quoted Senator McCarthy: "Your Senator McCarthy does not like us, no? But he has said that the United Nations Security Council decision on Korea was illegal—just what we have said all along."

"Your Secretary Wilson says our military arrangements are purely defensive and that you Americans need only fear our Russian ideas." Above all, he quoted Sir Winston Churchill, whose speech calling for an East-West meeting he seemed to have learned by heart: "As Churchill said, in negotiating it is necessary to consider not only the security of the West, but also the security of the East."

AT TIMES, he sounded a little like a cat attempting to reassure a nervous canary. "Why do you fear us?" he asked. "An atmosphere of fear is bad for businesslike negotiations. Our policy is a policy of peace," or again: "There is no reason between us for a war. We are the only two great powers which have never fought. Did we burn down the White House in 1812?"

The reply was obvious—"Some day you might do a damn sight worse than burn down our White House." But the luncheon ended on a good-humored note.

Probably there will be no next time. Enemies do not often or easily break bread together, and it is not much use to do so when there can be no real contact between each other. But as Mr. Fedoseev's small figure disappeared, walking rapidly and nervously toward the Soviet Embassy, it seemed a pity that this should be so. It seemed a pity that the system which Mr. Fedoseev serves, which imperils freedom and may one day imperil the very existence of the United States, should have transformed this rather nice little man into the enemy.

Russia Drops Demands On Turkey, Offers Pact

N. Y. H. T.

ANKARA, June 11 (AP)—Russia has withdrawn its demands for joint control of the Dardanelles and its claims on Turkish territory, an authoritative source reported tonight.

There was no comment by Turkish officials on the report. The semi-official Anatolian News Agency said only that the "Soviet government has made a declaration to our Ambassador at Moscow" and that "public opinion will be enlightened on this issue after the necessary reply has been made by our government."

The authoritative source said Russia has offered Turkey an arrangement for joint defense in the Black Sea. The Russian proposals were received in a note relayed today by the Turkish Embassy in Moscow, the informant said. He added that Turkish officials received the note with calmness almost amounting to indifference.

Russia in 1945 canceled its treaty of friendship with Turkey. The Russians demanded joint control of the Turkish straits and also supported claims by the Georgian and Armenian Soviet

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Republics to the Kars, Ardahan and Artvin border provinces in northeastern Turkey.

The informant here, who is close to Turkish officialdom but declined to be quoted by name, said the Turkish government will not make a hasty reply to the Soviet note but will "give the note a cool appraisal to determine its real value."

He recalled that Turkey had remained calm when Russia made its demands eight years ago and, although then without allies and surrounded by the Russians and their satellites, rejected those demands flatly.

The three provinces which Russia claimed, along with the oil-rich Batum district, were part of the old Ottoman Turkish Empire but were ceded to Russia after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-'78. The Brest-Litovsk treaty which Germany forced the new Bolshevik regime in Russia to sign near the end of World War I returned the territories, whose population was largely Moslem, to Turkey. Later, Lenin and Kemal Ataturk agreed that Batum should be Russian, while the other three areas should be Turkish.