

Few men's words and actions have ever been under such sharp scrutiny as those of President Johnson since he took office under the harrowing circumstances of his predecessor's assassination. The whole world has been watching to see how he will measure up to the exacting standards of statesmanship, and it is to his credit that he seems to have made, so far, a perfect score.

Particularly in what he has called his "peace offensive" are the signs encouraging for a continuance of the vigorous leadership given by President Kennedy. Indeed, he appears to be planning new moves in foreign policy that will carry him beyond the Kennedy formula in peacemaking negotiations.

According to the New York Times, the President has "rejected" the argument of Dean Acheson that continued and probably inconclusive contacts with Moscow would further undermine the NATO alliance. He does not intend to limit himself to the wary, unavoidably suspicious defence mentality that has normally marked the American approach to the cold war.

He is quoted as having told West German Chancellor Erhard that he would not be deterred from a search for new ideas and agreements by doubts in Bonn or elsewhere about his ability to defend Western interests. The Germans are said to have offered no argument to Mr. Johnson's plea that he be spared the customary lectures from Europe about the dangers of dealing with Communists. He understood these dangers, he said, just as he understood the contrary dangers of drift. He asked the Germans "to join the search instead of resisting it."

If these words correctly reflect the President's attitude, they imply his awareness of the fact that full military safeguards—necessary as these may be—are no defence against the dangers of a nuclear arms race. More attention, presumably, will be given at Washington to the political side of peacemaking, which has tended, in the past, to give way to purely military considerations.

Mr. Chevrier's Fate

With the resignation of Justice Minister Lionel Chevrier, writes Arthur Blakely in the Montreal Gazette, the House of Commons lost one of its ablest parliamentarians. His departure was a testimonial to the dramatic changes in the political climate in the Province of Quebec that have occurred since the late Premier Duplessis passed from the scene.

It was Mr. Chevrier's fortune, or misfortune, to have been born in Eastern Ontario, a few miles from the Quebec border. But these few miles proved to be of decisive importance. Had he been born on the Quebec side of this now-troubled frontier he would, in all probability, be well on his way to the Prime Ministership of Canada. As Mr. Pearson's Quebec lieutenant and as deputy Prime Minister, he was also Mr. Pearson's logical successor.

At an earlier stage in his career Mr. Chevrier sought election in the Montreal riding of Laurier, and was returned with a handsome majority. The voters of Laurier kept electing him right through the Diefenbaker years, when so many distinguished Quebec Liberals went down to defeat. But this achievement at no time meant as much as it seemed.

However many times Mr. Chevrier won Montreal Laurier, he could not win acceptance as Quebec's spokesman at Ottawa.

Toward the close of his Commons career he seemed to operate half-heartedly, perhaps because of an uneasy awareness of this fact. In the end he went. He had to be eased out of office because he was not able to establish himself as a Quebecois; and as long as he lingered as the senior Quebec cabinet minister, Mr. Pearson couldn't designate anyone else as his Quebec deputy.

His successor, whether Immigration Minister Guy Favreau or another, may well win the acceptance that was denied in his case. But no other politician of stature has yet emerged in the Commons who, like Mr. Chevrier and the Rt. Hon. L. St. Laurent before him, is the bilingual and bicultural Canadian on a large scale and who is at home with both languages and in both cultural environments.

His fate shows what a difference a few miles can make.

A Backlog Of Work

Prime Minister Pearson's announcement that the next session of Parliament will open on February 18 is a reminder that there is a backlog of important legislation awaiting the attention of the Commons, and that there is ample room for improvement on the past session so far as despatch of business is concerned. The members will have had a good long holiday—more than most of us could afford to take over the Christmas season—and it is hoped that they are now bent on earning their salary boost and forgetting partisanship for a while in the public interest.

Mr. Pearson has said that he has no intention of calling an early election and the experience of the last session suggests that he is in little danger of defeat on the floor of the House. His government, however, will be expected to show more responsibility in the preparation of legislation, and less of the haste that produced the blunders for which its so-called "60 days of decision" are chiefly remembered.

Among matters of importance awaiting attention are the contributory pension scheme, amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Fund, implementation of some of the measures recommended in the MacPherson Commission report on railway traffic, and redistribution of Parliamentary seats. Numerous other bills of scarcely less importance are ready for introduction.

Genghis Rides Again

The Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists have become involved in an interminable argument about Genghis Khan, the Mongolian conqueror who has been dead these past 737 years. The fact that he is still a live issue goes to show that history isn't altogether the "bunk" that old Henry Ford thought it was.

The Chinese have grown increasingly rapturous in extolling what they call Genghis' achievement in "expanding the multinational state" and spreading culture over large sections of the earth. They even find a precedent for the current friendship between Albania and China in the fact that he reached what is now Albania in his travels.

The Russians see it differently. Genghis Khan, they say, was an aggressor. They find nothing cultural in the fact that he burned and looted and killed across much of what is now Russia. His Mongolian horde, they say, was made up of criminals. The Chinese, they complain, distort history.

Fancy that, now! This last charge, coming from the Kremlin, is surely a prime example of the pot calling the kettle black.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The ease with which revolvers, pistols, rifles and even machine guns may be acquired in the United States, amazes the press of Great Britain. Based upon the assassination of President Kennedy, numerous articles have been published attempting to explain the predilection of Americans towards firearms. London hobbies, who have a tradition of not being armed, recently rejected a suggestion that they be furnished with guns as are the police in other countries.

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