

TIME

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FOREIGN RELATIONS: To the Crossroads

In the preholiday rush around Washington, no one was busier than O. Max Gardner. He had to wind up his job as Under Secretary of the Treasury and get off to England. He had to go to the tailor's. He was glad to discover that he could still fit into the cutaway and striped pants which he had worn for his inaugural as governor of North Carolina 17 years ago. With his wife, he left in high fettle to spend Christmas at their home in Shelby, N.C. Next month he would leave for London, to become the new American

Ambassador to the old, still splendid Court of St. James's.

Washington diplomatic circles, particularly the British, turned an inquisitive eye on the man who was about to assume America's top assignment in foreign diplomacy—the successor to Thomas Pinckney, John Jay, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, James Russell Lowell, John Hay et al. Who was O. (for Oliver) Max Gardner?

Safe & Sound. He was the youngest of twelve children of a North Carolina doctor. He had worked his way through North Carolina State College, once visited England as a paid hand on a cattle boat and, with a scant \$4 in his pocket, attended a memorial service for John Hay at St. Paul's. In 1929, after a successful law career and successive steps up the political ladder, he became his state's governor. In the four years he served he got things done, fixed the roads, paid the teachers, cut expenses, passed some social legislation, improved agriculture and even handled several nasty labor wars, including the bloody rampage at Gastonia.

From there ruddy, gregarious Max Gardner had moved on Washington. Because of his cotton interests (Cleveland Cloth Mills) and various directorships, he was able to lead the life of a prosperous lawyer. An early New Dealer, he attracted the favorable attention of Franklin Roosevelt, for whom he did odd jobs such as acting as special counsel to FCC. But he fought the court-packing plan.

In 1946, for good reason, he was appointed Under Secretary of the Treasury. Other Truman appointments had provoked loud outcries. But Gardner was safe & sound, middle-of-the-

road, and commanded respect in Congress. He had helped his friend Fred Vinson (then Secretary) on the laborious backstage negotiations for the British loan. A hardheaded Ambassador like Gardner will be useful to the U.S. next July when, under the loan terms, the British must thaw out enough currency now frozen in the sterling area to give U.S. current creditors payment in dollars. For hard-pressed Britain, this will not be easy.

Phrasemaker. Big, 64-year-old Max Gardner had a sneaking regret that he would not be required to wear breeches and silk stockings at the Court of St. James's. He has well-shaped, muscular legs; in college he was a football star. Not that he cottons much to this king stuff. But he likes a good time.

He approached his new job, nevertheless, in a very serious mood. Gardner jots down in a notebook great phrases by such men as Edmund Burke and Lincoln. He also likes to make apothegms of his own. One of them: "The common law of England represents the sifted and garnered common sense of our race." Last week he declared: "I accepted this post because I believe it to be at the crossroads of both Eastern and Western philosophy and of capitalistic and collective economy."

The way to fight Communism, he believes, is to show that in a democracy the little man can become a big man. "To be an American you don't give up liberty or privilege." Just in case anyone, misunderstood him: "This is the greatest country in the world and I don't care who knows I think it."

He is not going to "patronize" the British. "Hell, we don't have to pat each other on the back all the time. If I try to sell them anything it will be the validity of basic American ideas." His ideas about his mission are firm. Years ago, in grammar school, he memorized Little Breeches, by his hero, Ambassador to Britain John Hay, the last lines of which he still likes to quote:

. . . And I think that saving a little child

And fetching him to his own,

Is a derved sight better business

Than loafing around the Throne.