■ **A prince of horse traders and of that special breed — 'wheeler-dealers.'**

THE TEXAN WHO TAKES OVER

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON succeeded on Friday in circumstances of tragic horror and irony to the office he has sought so long.

He took the oath to "perform the duties of the President of the United States" standing in the cabin of the aircraft that was to leave his native Texas a few minutes later with the body of the man who was his rival before he was his predecessor.

Less than three and a half hours later, the brutal glare of arc lights hit the plane as it taxied to a stop at three minutes past six Eastern Standard Time at Andrews air force base near Washington. First a stunned group of President Kennedy's aides and friends lowered the coffin in a bright yellow caterer's lift into a waiting grey naval ambulance. Then Mrs. Kennedy was helped down the steps, her pink suit still smeared with blood from her husband's wound. Only after this tragic party had gone did the waiting group of officials, Senators, diplomats and reporters, many of them openly weeping or close to tears, notice a tall man standing at a microphone.

Johnson gave a sort of shiver. He looked gauntly down at his wife for encouragement. Then he began to speak. His first words were drowned by a roar of army helicopters, whose lights were flashing red. Then somebody gave an order, and the new President could be heard. "I will do my best," he was saying, "that is all I can do. I ask for your help and God's."

Then he went straight by helicopter to the White House. There, the first officials President Johnson met were Mr. McNamara, Secretary of Defence, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security. The meeting seemed to dramatise the crushing new responsibilities that have fallen on a man

whose career, up till now has been that of a consummately skilful domestic politician with little knowledge or experience of the great questions of foreign policy and defence that are now his to decide.

Fully prepared for the job

Lyndon Johnson comes to the Presidency after as full a preparation as any man could reasonably have. He was born to politics. His father's father — who fought for the Confederacy against the Union — and his father were both members of the Texas Legislature, and another of his ancestors on the same side carried a rifle for Texas against the Mexicans.

On his mother's side his forebears were Baptist preachers and teachers, typical of the pioneering stock of modest means from which the conservative South likes to choose its leaders. "When I was born," Johnson told a visitor not long ago, "my daddy galloped over to his father's place and told him that Lyndon Baines Johnson had just discovered America. Grandpa replied that a United States Senator had just been born." But— according to Johnson, who is as fond of tales as any Texan — his mother used to urge him never to seek the Presidency: "It would break your heart if you missed," she used to say.

The Johnsons came from a highly individual part of Texas near Austin, the capital of the State; it is an island of hills starting out of the plains. It has a liberal tradition, owing much to German settlers who came out to Texas after 1848, in the middle of a State settled mainly by migrants from the conservative slave-owning South.

Johnson was born in Stonewall, Texas, on August 27, 1908, and left high school at 15, first to hitchhike to California, and then to work for two years as a common labourer in road-building gangs. It was his father who persuaded him to go to college, and he worked his way through South West Texas State Teachers College, graduating with a B.Sc. in 1930. He taught in a Houston school for nearly two years before going to Washington for the first time as secretary to a Congressman.

Less than five years later he was a Congressman himself. In what Britain would call a by-election he beat nine other candidates and won on a strongly pro-New Deal campaign which attracted the immediate notice and patronage of President Roosevelt, who happened to be on a fishing holiday in Texas. Johnson was still only 27 when he rode in triumph to Washington on F.D.R.'s special train.

But if his political rise had been quick so far, after he reached Washington it was phenomenal. From the start, though far more of a New Dealer than the majority of Southern Congressmen, he attracted the attention and friendship of older men by his gifts as a practising political realist.

After only four years in the House, in 1941, he stood for the Senate in a colourful campaign against an old pro known as "Pass-the-Biscuits-Pappy," and used for the first time the barn storming techniques which became something of a trade-mark. He lost by a mere thirteen hundred votes. Then came Pearl Harbour.

Next day, Johnson joined the Navy, and was decorated personally by General MacArthur for bravery on Navy bombing missions in the Far East. Then President Roosevelt forbade Members of Congress to fight. Johnson came back to Washington, and was Chairman of an important House Committee investigating the conduct of the war. In 1948, he ran for the Senate again. Again it was a desperately close election, but this time Johnson won by 87 votes.

But Johnson went on as though his margin had been a million. Within two years he was a member of the official Senate leadership, and in 1953, after only five years in the Senate, he became Democratic leader, the youngest man ever to lead either party there. Two years later again, in 1955, the Democrats won a majority in the Senate, and Johnson moved into the job he was to master as no one, by common consent, has ever mastered it before, as Majority Leader.

In July, 1955, when he had been in his job for less than six months, he had a heart

attack as he was sitting by the pool at his Texas ranch. His recovery was complete: long afterwards he used to carry an electro-cardiograph in his pocket which he liked to show to visitors to prove how absolute his recovery had been. But he proved it perhaps even more with the tireless energy with which he marshalled the Senate. This is a uniquely proud college of independent potentates who shy away from the Whip.

Prince of the horse traders

He was no orator, and, indeed, the Senate has no time for oratory. Johnson's gift was for lightning and complex calculations of where each man's interest lay, a minute knowledge of each man's habits and views and even his whereabouts — on several occasions he sent his messengers south and west to summon his array by police car and jet plane for some crucial vote. He was the prince of horse traders and of that special Texan breed called "wheeler-dealers."

But behind the lazy, sometimes cynical charm, behind the good fellowship and the drawled Texan jokes, there was not only a keen and subtle political brain: there was plenty of late-night staff-work and studying of bills and amendments and ballot lists. Johnson is a secret worker.

At this time a colleague said of him: "He doesn't have the best mind on the Democratic side in the Senate; he isn't the best orator, he isn't the best Parliamentarian. But he's the best combination of all these qualities." And under President Eisenhower, he was probably the most powerful man in the U.S.

It was his sheer political skill and his ability to manipulate his colleagues that won him his position. He sensed the approach of trouble. He was superb at soothing the ruffled. He passed a splendid compliment. He was a master of the few murmured words, heads together, arm in arm, in the lobby or cloakroom, that could edge a bill through better than a long speech on the floor. He preferred to get things settled before they were debated. Such gifts are also essential in the White House.

In 1960, when Johnson made his fiercely professional bid for the Presidential nomination, he was not widely known outside his native Texas and Washington. He seemed provincial. And he had even severer handicaps to overcome than that: he was a Southerner, and no man from the 11 States that seceded from the Union in the Civil War has ever been elected to the Presidency, once almost a monopoly of Virginians.

How much of a Southerner is Johnson? Or, which is the same thing in American political terms, how much of a Conservative is he?

As a Texan, and West Texan at that, there is a certain ambiguity about the tradition from which he springs, an ambiguity which Johnson has deliberately exploited. To Northern and Western audiences, he has stressed that he thinks of himself as a Westerner: in the South, he has not denied that he is the son of the South. And in 1960 at least, it seemed that he was caught in the toils of his own ambiguity.

To Southerners and conservatives, the man was suspect because of his early support for the New Deal and his votes for measures favouring Negroes and Mexican Americans. (Johnson has been a good friend to this large and under-privileged group in Texas all his political life, and the Mexicans repay him with political loyalty.) One conservative businessman in 1960 called him a "damned radical New Dealing son of a bitch."

Yet at the same time Johnson was getting one of his secretaries to draw up a minute analysis of his voting record in the vain attempt to convince Northern labour and liberals and Negroes that he had never been the "reactionary" they took him for. Had he not used all his Parliamentary skill to put through the two Civil Rights Bills of 1957 and 1960? Yet he got no credit from the liberals for it. The assumption was that Johnson was just a kind of enlightened conservative who was acting as a front for Southern resistance to Civil Rights.

Johnson's intimates have always insisted that such suspicions were unjustified, while conceding that his tem-

peramental affinity for the cunning old craftsmen of the Southern power structure in the Senate made them understandable. But, say those who have seen most of Johnson in the last three years, in any case his views on Civil Rights have moved, and moved perceptibly, to the Left.

Whatever the reason, whether because there never was a chance of persuading the party that he could win enough Northern votes to be elected, or simply because the Kennedy organization had moved too fast too soon, Johnson was beaten at the convention at Los Angeles, after a struggle marked by personal bitterness.

The story of how Johnson became President is the story of how he became Vice-President.

At the national convention in July, 1960, the huge excitement which had died after Kennedy's nomination was abruptly revived when the word went round that Johnson might be his running-mate and potential Vice-President. It was reckoned and at once brought two of the three major elements of the party-labour and the Democratic leaders from the big cities — into direct collision.

The most detailed account of what probably happened behind closed doors in the Biltmore Hotel has been essayed by Theodore H. White in his book "The Making of the President." Most people had thought the running-mate would have been either Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington or Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri. The battle for the candidacy was known to have stirred up a mutual bitterness between Kennedy and Johnson. Yet, according to White, it was in Kennedy's mind that the choice of Johnson was first tentatively born and it was Kennedy himself who telephoned the Johnson suite at the Biltmore at 8 o'clock in the morning to discuss the idea.

When the news spread, the big city leaders thought the choice a fine one for the country and for the ticket. But the labour leaders — among them Walter Reuther and Arthur Goldberg — "violently and vehemently" objected to Johnson. They believed he would alienate the critical Negro vote in the North.

Even the Southern element of the party was divided when Johnson himself consulted its leaders. One party sage put his position with Texan vividness. "I'll tell you, Lyndon," he said, "the Vice-Presidency isn't worth a pitcher of warm spit."

It is said that what finally persuaded Johnson to accept a nomination he was believed to have rejected earlier with a single rude word was his discovery that Kennedy really *wanted* him. And most people now suppose that Kennedy's choice was based on simple political arithmetic: he was convinced that a ticket with Johnson on it would swing most votes.

During this brief crisis at the national convention, most of the American reporters were sure that Johnson himself had demanded the nomination in the teeth of Kennedy's desire to have someone else. At his first press conference after his nomination, Kennedy dismissed this version as "wholly untrue." He said that when word had reached him that Johnson's nomination might be opposed on the floor of the convention he had indeed asked Johnson if he would consider another job. But when Johnson said he was prepared to go ahead in spite of the opposition, Kennedy said he "gladly agreed."

No personal closeness developed betwen the late President and his deputy. Johnson's style and his friends were utterly different from the style and people that predominated in the Kennedy Administration — less educated, more provincial, socially less smart. Away from his own field of mastery in the Senate, Johnson discovered that he had lost the instrument of his power. And the death of his friend and mentor, Sam Rayburn, the fellow Texan who had run the House with an even cooler precision than Johnson had achieved in the Senate, robbed him not only of a powerful ally but also of a wise counsellor.

Then there was the series of scandals, in none of which Johnson was implicated, but each of which touched political friends and allies of his. One high official from Texas, Jerry Holleman, had to resign after the Billie Sol Estes

scandal, Fred Korth, a protege of Johnson's who was Secretary of the Navy, had to resign after writing letters that were, to say the least, indiscreet in their promotion of Korth's private business on Pentagon stationery. And most recently, Bobby Baker, Johnson's prize pupil, resigned too, and now faces investigation of his high living and ramified private dealings.

He could have been dropped

To cap it all, the growth of conservative sentiment in Texas and all over the South meant that there was serious doubt whether Johnson could command the support of his own State in 1964 — let alone fulfill the role for which he was originally put on the ticket in 1960, namely to deliver the South. It was hardly surprising that in the last few weeks rumours have been sweeping Washington that Kennedy had decided to drop Johnson from the ticket next year — rumours which Kennedy repeatedly and publicly denied.

But if Johnson seemed farther than ever from the Presidency that was only a heartbeat away, those who know him best believe that he was consciously and systematically preparing himself to run again and win in 1968. He was concentrating on three tasks. As head of the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity for Negroes, he was earning himself respect from Negroes, and indeed sometimes moving farther out on their behalf than President Kennedy, as when he flatly said in an Independence Day speech in Philadelphia this year: "It is not our respective races that are at stake, it is our nation."

Second, as overlord of the space programme he was not only tying his name to the most ambitious and modern-minded of the Administration's programmes — one, incidentally, that he had advocated long before 1960 — he was also concerned with the distribution of massive political patronage in hundreds of millions of dollars of space contracts.

A despair to diplomats

Third, in his capacity as the President's ceremonial

representative, Mr. Johnson travelled all over the world, seeking to make up his deficiencies in experience of foreign affairs.

His deficiencies should not be exaggerated. As senior member of the Senate, he has followed all the great debates on foreign affairs since the days of the Marshall Plan. But he has followed them at some distance. He has studied defence more closely, as one of the members of the Armed Services Committee.

But in foreign affairs Mr. Johnson has been the despair of some staider American diplomats, with his habit of swinging through Europe or Asia with all the hand-grasping folksiness of a Texas politician on the stump. Still, if some of these journeys were not really necessary, at least as a result of one of them one more Pakistani camel driver visited Texas than would have done otherwise. His record on world affairs is that of a moderate. He is anti-Communist, yet no cold warrior, and without either isolationist or any other bees in his bonnet.

As Vice-President, Johnson has kept up his habit of restlessly seeking the information he needs for political decisions. But he learns by word of mouth. He has never been a great reader. He is a compulsive telephoner. Those who have worked for him tell awed stories of his marathon phone calls, sometimes lasting for hours at any time of the day or night, briefing himself in the minutest detail on the political situation when he had been out of town.

Moreover, he has had every opportunity to get to know all sides of the Presidency in the past three years. For if he seems never to have played a leading part in the great decisions — on Cuba last autumn, for example — he was always there. Several times a day he has been in the President's office. He has seen all the papers, secret or not. And he knows well enough the men who served his predecessor — and whom he must now decide whether he will keep on to serve him.

With most of these men he is temperamentally out of touch. It is not that he is known to have quarrelled with any of them, though with the Attorney-General,

Robert Kennedy, there were ancient wounds of political strife to heal, and some rather unflattering opinions have been heard from most levels in the State Department after the Vice-Presidential peregrinations. It is simply that it is hard to imagine Johnson in the chair at a policy meeting, directing the flow of thinking of the articulate, self-confident group of intellectuals that President Kennedy had forged into a machine to complement his very different personality.

Yet Johnson does not begin to have a parallel machine of advisers and experts of his own on economics, strategy, or foreign policy which he could slip into the places of the Harvard and Yale men. He has proteges and speechwriters and political henchmen of several kinds, and some of them are as able in the practice of their own kind of closed politics as the Kennedy brains trust in theirs. But there is hardly a name that is known outside the Senate diningroom where the pros gather over bean soup and elephantine jokes.

Mr. Johnson's private life, like his entourage and his whole personality, is cut in a different pattern from that of the cosmopolitan Kennedys. Mrs. Johnson, who was christened Claudia Alta Taylor, but has been called Lady Bird all her life, is shrewd as well as vivacious and handsome, a smallish, dark woman who has helped Johnson in more specific ways than the wives of most successful men.

It is she who has taken charge of his personal finances and made him a rich man, by any standards but those of his predecessor. Starting with the modest fortune of her father, an Alabama landowner who moved to Texas, and investing long-sightedly in television and radio and land, she is reported to have accumulated well over $1 million for the family. The Johnsons have two grown-up daughters — Lynda Bird and Lucy Baines Johnson. A touch of Texas-style whimsy running through the Johnson family requires that the same initials shall be shared by all. Even the family pet is called Little Beagle Johnson.

The Johnsons live in some splendour but with no pre-

tense to the cultural polish and intellectual sophistication of the Kennedy circle. They have a large house in a fashionable suburb of Washington and a luxurious ranch near Johnson City, Texas.

The new President is a complex man, hard to understand except in terms of the idiosyncratic traditions of his beloved and native Texas. He is at once homespun and folksy, and notoriously vain — the family initials, the expensively cut suits with cowboy trappings and (until recently loud shirts), the personal flag that flies over the ranch when L. B. J. is in residence, the oil paintings of himself in his office, these disclose an oddly naive vanity. He is serious, religious even, yet ribald in a hail-fellow-well-met way that is hard to picture unless you have seen a mid-American businessman praying before a lunch meeting.

Johnson is large — 6 ft. 3 in. — and lean, in the Texas tradition. He has dieted down from 16 to 14 stone. His face is seamed but strong, like a Western sheriff's. But it is also extremely mobile and has been judged the most expressive in American politics with the possible exception of Eisenhower's. When he is making a speech it works all over, like (as one observer has noted) "a piece of animated India rubber." But a Texan audience is needed to get him really going; it is only to his own people that he has felt free to bellow the national anger or bewail the anguish of the nation's problems. Before a sophisticated gathering, a Johnson speech that would be a triumph in San Antonio is apt to fall flat.

Johnson rightly dislikes reading his speeches from a prepared text. When he has to, he does it in a singularly sleep-inducing Texan drawl. On the other hand, if he improvises he risks getting carried away by the exuberance of his sentiments. Once he flew to New York to receive an honorary degree from the Jewish Albert Einstein Medical School.

Put in his own purple prose

Johnson got bored with the text and inserted one of his own purple passages. Looking down upon row af-

ter row of solemn young Semites, he told them he knew he could trust them not only to take advantage of this excellent training for themselves, but to go out into the world as he had done and carry everywhere "the message of Christianity."

Johnson is the second Chief Executive to belong to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The other was President James A. Garfield, who was shot by an assassin on July 2, 1881, and died on September 19 of that year. The Christian Church, as it is most commonly known, was founded in America early in the nineteeth century by certain dissident Presbyterian ministers. Numbering about 1,800,000 members in the United States, the Church is congregational in structure.

His manner in personal encounters of all kinds is overwhelmingly friendly. He is, as someone has said, "a backslapper, a shoulder — hugger, a knee-squeezer" and he himself confesses that he likes to be in the closest possible physical contact with a man when he talks to him. When this proximity is established, Johnson is apt to straighten his visitor's tie for him if this seems necessary — as it often has done in the Kennedy circle.

Strangers have always found him exceptionally easy to talk to. "He sticks his feet up on his desk," as one distinguished British visitor has put it, "and tacitly invites you to do the same on your side." Many people have found him straightforward and easy to like.

He is a man who invites a certain cynicism. His virtues are hidden behind his slightly raffish facade. He has a subtle intelligence and yet an utter lack of intellectuality. He will make a very American President of the United States. — *The Observer*, November 24, 1963.

What he did achieve was to bring a new sense of purpose to the American people. He woke America and got them moving in the economic sense . . . in the social field and the field of education. — HAROLD WILSON, *leader of Britain's Labor Party.*