

In many more ways than this did Mr. Sharp make his mark with the Russians. He is very much their kind of person, capable of deadly seriousness but with switches to unconstrained laughter when something is genuinely funny. In Russian eyes, the Canadian External Affairs minister was a personal hit. He is neither namby-pamby nor hoity-toity, for which they respect and appreciate him. While the personality gap between Englishmen and Russians is virtually unbridgeable, Mr. Sharp, the Canadian working-class boy whose career, he once said, owed itself to his family's taste for books, was totally accessible.

News of Mr. Sharp's working-class background delighted the accompanying Soviet journalists, especially the part about the books — the Soviets being the greatest readers on earth. They also appreciated his Winnipeg upbringing, among people of Slavic origin. But whatever the causes for it, it is to Mr. Sharp's personality, and even more important, to his deft control of that personality, that much of the success of the visit must be attributed.

Kiev's eternal flame

There were moments that stirred the blood. In Kiev, Mitchell Sharp stood bare-headed in the bright, below-zero sunshine at the eternal flame of the Unknown Soldier. At a solemn, ceremonial pace, two Soviet Army troopers had borne an elaborate wreath before him down the long, tomb-lined avenue toward the soaring obelisk of the Ukrainian war memorial perched on the edge of the height overlooking the Dnieper River. On either side of the memorial, two very tall, grey-coated soldiers stood stiffly at attention, silhouetted against the cold blue sky, their fixed bayonets glinting in the fiery sun hanging low in the east. During the minute of silence, one fancied one heard the rumblings of the bloody battle for the liberation of the Ukrainian capital whose thirtieth anniversary had been marked earlier in the month.

At Leningrad's snow-bound Piskarev cemetery, where the 600,000 men, women and children who died in the 900-day siege lie buried, Mr. Sharp watched as two Canadian officials placed a wreath at the foot of a towering statue of Mother Russia. Mournful choral music came from loudspeakers situated around the cemetery, whose equal exists nowhere else on earth. In a visitor's book inside one of the cemetery's pavilions, housing photos and relics of Leningrad's bitter ordeal, Mr. Sharp wrote: "To the brave people of Leningrad who gave their lives in the de-

fence of their city Canadians pay homage." Later he told reporters the visit was "one of the most moving experiences I have ever had". "One can understand," he added, "why the people of the Soviet Union so much desire peace."

Political tact

Mr. Sharp proved just as unerring in saying the right thing when the situation called for political tact as when it called for human sympathy. His handling of the "gut issue" of the free movement of men, ideas and information between East and West was indeed skilful. At a lunch given by Leningrad's Mayor Vladimir Ivanovich Kazakov, he touched on the essence of the peace he had earlier described the Soviet Union as desiring so much, when he said: "The modern age is essentially one of interdependence and dialogue. None of us can any longer afford the enormous economic and social price of isolation, just as none of us can afford the irrational suspicions, fears and illusions that it engenders. The modern world has grown too small."

In all this, Mr. Sharp has been accused of being too easy on the Russians, of being too discreet. This is grossly unfair to the man, ignoring as it does the undoubted impact of his personality on his Russian hosts. The first step toward convincing Russians in debate is to display a readiness to agree to differ, and at this Mr. Sharp is a past master. Asked at one point whether he felt he had had enough chance to explain his views, he answered: "I did, I was listened to and I believe I had some effect." In this, Mr. Sharp can and should be taken at his word. As proof, he pointed to a phrase in the final communiqué that proclaimed the wish that the Geneva Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe "would attain the goal of strengthening peace and security and extending co-operation and contacts between people in Europe".

Here, however, a fine point of transla-

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