



Death and Burial

By MURRAY KEMPTON

Yesterday's accounts of the Americans for Democratic Action convention in Washington last weekend suggest that this organism is both healthy and incurable.

Vice President Humphrey was peddling General Ky to the Europeans and thus unable to attend the convention banquet at which he was to have presented awards to various ADA leaders deserving of the public gratitude. The list of these laureates was not published, and once again ADA may have cause to be grateful for its neglect by the commercial press. Last year, as a measure of its sensitivity to the urban crisis, it gave an award to Robert F. Wagner; this year, no doubt, David Dubinsky was anointed for the 20-odd years he has provided a mal drop for Jay Lovestone on the occasions when that delightful schemer had dived into the War College, the Institute for Strategic Studies or the CIA.

The election of John Kenneth Galbraith as president of the ADA is a heartening promise of charm and acuity in an office where they have not often been combined before; but it hardly crashes upon us as a revolutionary tocsin.

"When I hear generals, or high State Department officials," Galbraith said, "speak rather briskly of a five or ten years war, I am also willing to believe that they have not considered the political consequences.

"But, for the rest of us, there is no excuse for innocence. This disaster could, indeed, mean the death and burial of the Democratic party."

Innocence? Is Dean Rusk innocent?

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When we talk about five more years of war, we are talking about murder. We are talking about five years of a government which tells lies about five years in a nation which gets up every morning knowing that it makes its wars on women five years of thinking about people who must wonder if they would not rather be dead than under our protection five years of being torn between agony for our own soldiers and agony for the cheated and despoiled farmers

who fight them. And what is the one disaster the new president of the Americans for Democratic Action sees at the end of these events?

The death and burial of the Democratic party.

The death and burial of the Democratic party would certainly be a misfortune if it were remotely possible. Such things always are; this country was certainly the worse for the temporary interment of even the Republicans under Goldwater. But it has taken Mr. Johnson to instruct us that the defeat of the Democratic party can be anything but a disaster.

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He suffers no longer just by comparison with President Kennedy; he even suffers lamentably by comparison with President Eisenhower. It is true that President Eisenhower had almost no domestic policy; still, you would think his detractors might remember that he at least uplifted the federal courts from the degradation to which President Truman had brought them down.

In foreign policy he was altogether Mr. Johnson's better. Perhaps domestic policy is more important; perhaps we are really so callous that the comforts of liberal government offset the killing every week of 250 Americans and, by our account, ten times as many poor, shoeless foreigners. Dwight D. Eisenhower wasn't president of the United States of America when your country and mine was killing 360 Asians a week. Pacification was not his racket.

In any case, who is the ADA kidding? Mr. Johnson will be unanimously renominated by a convention which includes a number of delegates who are members of Americans for Democratic Action. The ADA will then go into the campaign unenthusiastically but abjectly supporting President Johnson.

Twenty-one years ago, they announced that they would forever be responsible anti-Communist liberals. The Vietnam war is the logical consequence of anti-Communist liberalism. The road ended there. What they think of it makes no difference; they are enlisted; and they will march when Mr. Johnson sounds the advance.