

PARTING SHOTS

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Spiro Agnew's month-long \$1.2 million non-event

If only Spiro Agnew had made a hole in one in Singapore, or if he had beaten Korea's President Chung Hee Park 6-0, 6-0 at tennis. Then the American taxpayers who shelled out an estimated \$1.2 million for the Vice-President's ten-nation, 32,000-mile, seven-airplane, two-car, 140-person, around-the-world caravan might have considered it a pretty good Saturday afternoon success. We are a sporting nation.

But no such luck. When Agnew came back to the White House last week after 31 days on the velvet road, Kansas Senator Robert Dole, the Republican national chairman and the administration's current theologian, still had not found an answer to his earlier puzzlement about the Agnew mission. "There must be a reason for the Vice-President's trip," he said. "But I just don't know what it is."

Traveling Vice-Presidents in the past have not always been saluted at home or abroad as overwhelming successes. Nixon himself was accused of stirring up trouble wherever he went. Lyndon Johnson was denounced for being corny and Hubert Humphrey for being too windy. But for the first time in history a No. 2 man has returned to home ground with a remarkable number of "reviews" suggesting the journey was a non-event.

Agnew may even now be preparing one more rebuttal: once

again the press has done him in. That argument shouldn't be ignored. There is a little problem there. But surely such a high official of the most powerful nation in the world could find a respectable number of observers to sing his praises as a diplomat and tourist. Such accounts are scarce.

One of the Americans along the way, after some long drafts of good, red wine and after Agnew had ignored a specially arranged "testing of the young bulls" in the little Spanish village of Sotogrande, grumped: "If Agnew gets a bad press, it's his own damn fault."

When he took off on his mission, Agnew told everyone that he wasn't going to do anything substantive, just bring goodwill at a nice leisurely pace. But as reaction to the trip began to go sour, he suggested that he was being "substantive" and "delicate." What counts, he announced, is "what I do with the leaders, not what I do on the street." There is no quarreling that he seemed to hit it off well with the strong men he mingled with at the beribboned, tuxedoed affairs of state in castles and palaces.

But the idea of America sending this kind of export in these troubled times bothers a lot of folks. There are other memories:

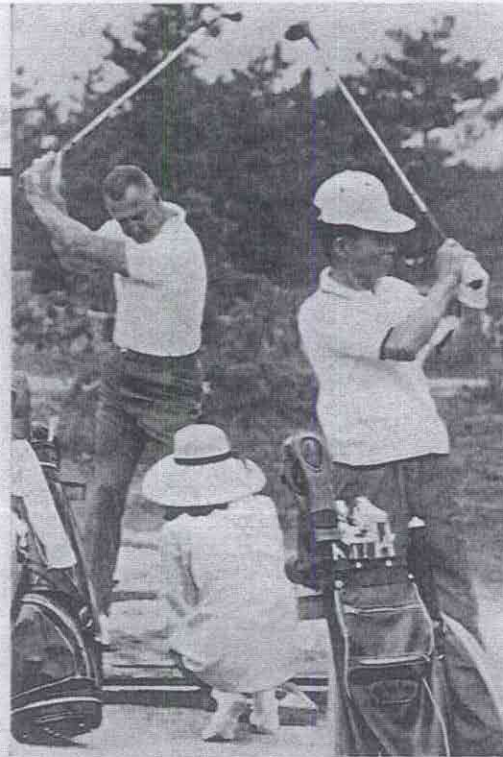
Henry Wallace learning to

speak Spanish before touring Latin America and charming the peasants with his Iowa accent; Richard Nixon hitting Moscow in 1959 and going off with Pat for a walk in the city, where he gave candy to children—and later in Latin America braving the mobs, tossing away his State Department scripts and speaking his soul; Lyndon Johnson riding a bullock cart in India and giving the rebel yell in the Taj Mahal; and Hubert Humphrey calling hogs at a Vietnam livestock research farm and wearing his baseball hat on a ride down a river in Thailand.

Like them or not, there was something genuine about that lineup. They were "ours." Off they went with their cameras and pills and unquenchable joy and fascination at being Yankees abroad—feeling like Kipling in every dirty back street, standing with mouth agape before jungle and snow-capped peaks, giving the grip to potentate and prime minister.

The present Vice-President spent six days in Seoul and never got out into the city. He ignored the ancient tile work near his retreat in Spain. He did not visit a temple, or a school, or a bazaar. He did not seem to wonder how people made their livings, or go to look at the old city in Rabat only a few miles from his Hilton Hotel. He never got a whiff of the vast poverty along his route. He was roused briefly in Kenya when he saw the wild animals and fed sugar cubes to a baboon named Gladys. But the 13 games of golf he played fired him up more.

Maybe he was under wraps, fol-



Agnew with Korean President Park

lowing a White House script. When the top-secret papers leak years from now, we may learn that instead of playing gin rummy those long hours in hotel rooms, he had jetted to Hanoi for conferences or was on the phone to Chairman Mao in China. It seems unlikely. He constantly let it be known that he still disliked the press, and he took special pains to point out how discouraged he was with America's black leaders. His state of mind spilled over. Those who traveled with him got the distinct impression he had little fondness for the vice-presidency just then. If he didn't really dislike going around the world, he certainly was indifferent about the whole adventure.

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