

Humphrey Firm on War, Saddened at Liberal Split



"Of course, there'll be differences occasionally. They ought to be very private. Of course, there may be rough moments, inevitably in a free country where there's free speech and a free press. But a Vice President ought to lean over backwards, as we say, to be in tune with, and cooperating with . . . his President."

—Hubert H. Humphrey

Drawing by David Levine
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By Julius Duscha
Washington Post Staff Writer

Hubert Humphrey sat in a wing chair in his Capitol office one evening last week and talked over beer and cheese about Washington's favorite cocktail-hour conversation—the degree of his commitment to President Johnson's Vietnamese policies.

Since Humphrey's return last month from his second mission to Asia and his subsequent strident advocacy of Mr. Johnson's policies in Vietnam many of the Vice President's friends have asked themselves whether their old comrade-in-causes is a reluctant dragon breathing truculence that is out of keeping with his humanitarian character.

"No, that's not true," Humphrey said when asked whether he might have reservations about Mr. Johnson's policies. "My wife can tell you that's not true."

To Humphrey the war in Vietnam is an

extension of the struggle to contain communism that began in 1947, when as the brash young Mayor of Minneapolis with one eye on the Senate he campaigned up and down Minnesota for Harry Truman's Greek-Turkish aid program.

In Humphrey's view the war in Vietnam is also a part of the struggle for freedom and a better life that is as old as the American liberalism with which his name has become synonymous.

"What's the difference," he asked, "between an assassin in Vietnam and an assassin in Nazi Germany?"

"It just breaks my heart," Humphrey continued as a wounded look came over his face, "to see the liberal community—no,

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some of the liberal community—act the way they do.

"I resent having these people distrust the President," he added. "I've watched him time after time reject strong and militant solutions . . . We've been trying to keep this thing a matter of using measured strength.

"The Vietcong," he declared with considerable feeling in his voice, "is not an Asian chapter of the ADA . . . I think that some of our liberal friends are closing their eyes to reality."

Humphrey said he believes that the deep split among liberals over Vietnam reflects the European orientation of American liberalism and the failure among liberals to realize that "this is a question of whether or not aggression in Asia will meet the same test that the threat of aggression did in Europe."

"I think," Humphrey concluded, "that some of my liberal friends would like to spare me what they think is pain . . . but I've helped make this policy."

Some of Humphrey's friends believe that of all the debate over Vietnam swirling about him he is disturbed in retrospect only at the harshness of his "fox-in-the-chicken-coop" comment (a Humphrey cliché, incidentally) about Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's suggestion that the Vietcong be in on peace negotiations.

Possible Rivals

Humphrey seems to feel that it needlessly widened the public breach between the two possible rivals for the presidency.

Humphrey's remark was harsh because he shares the feeling that the President is reported to have expressed when he told some of his advisers with a rearward pat: "That's the sort of thing you put in your hip pocket, not on your lips."

"Liberals understand that

Liberals' Split

Humphrey has to take Johnson's position on everything," one of American liberalism's most articulate partisans said the other day, "but what bothers us is that he seems to out-Johnson Johnson."

As the strident, emotional and often effective advocate of the President's Vietnamese policies, the Vice President faces a liberal community bitterly divided over the war in Southeast Asia.

Disagreements Recalled

Not since the days of Henry Wallace's neo-Progressive Party in the late 1940s and, before that, the New Deal days of the 1930s have disagreements among the liberals been so deep.

What bothers Humphrey's friends the most about his Vietnamese stance is his hyperbole, which is as much a



GETS WORD — Here Humphrey gets the word during the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City that he has been summoned to the White House to discuss the vice presidency.



CANDIDATE—This picture was taken in Minneapolis on the day Hubert H. Humphrey was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1948.

part of his style as is his cheerfulness and his ability to talk at length and intelligently about almost any subject.

Humphrey is a political evangelist, and when he describes Gen. Ky's economic and social proposals he makes the general—who has spoken admiringly of Hitler's leadership qualities—sound like the greatest reformer since Gandhi.

"Now," wrote liberal liturgist James A. Wechsler in the New York Post last week, "the distinctions and subtleties have vanished from Humphrey's tracts.

One who watched him on TV Sunday had the dreary sense at many moments that his righteous rhetoric was almost reminiscent of Richard Nixon."

Even more bitter criticism has come from Harvard mathematician-satirist Tom Lehrer, who laments on his record, "That Was the Year That Was":

"Whatever became of Hubert? . . .

*"Once a fiery liberal spirit,
"Ah, but now when he speaks
he must clear it.*

"Second fiddle's a bad part

I know

*"When they don't even give
you a bow."*

But New York and Cambridge liberals like Wechsler and Lehrer are not wholly comparable to Prairie liberals like Humphrey or even to Washington liberals.

"Hubert Humphrey has been the model Vice President," said Joseph L. Rauh Jr., the aging but still roaring lion and with Humphrey one of the founders of American for Democratic Action, of Washington's Georgetown liberalism, in a speech to an ADA dinner last January in Boston.

"If criticism of Vice President Humphrey can be justified," Rauh went on to say, "it must lie in the fact that he appears to endorse the President's programs with even more vigor than the President does himself. A liberal Vice President seems considerably out of character campaigning for Abe Beame or defending the 'hard line' in Vietnam."

Voting for Money Bill

A leader of the House Democratic Study Group, which is made up of liberal Representatives from throughout the country, said that Humphrey's appearance before the Congressmen cost the group 20 to 30 signatures in its effort to put the President on notice that a vote for his Vietnamese money bill did not mean support for his Vietnamese policies.

"Hubert's a great salesman," said the Study Group leader. "He used humor, hard-hitting analysis, appeals to patriotism. All that with his good cheer and his optimism brought sustained

applause three or four times."

There are as many Prairie Liberals and Latter-Day Populists among the members of the Study Group as there are dogmatic, non-interventionist Norman Thomas liberals.

Humphrey's liberalism is not out of Norman Thomas. It came out of the dust of South Dakota during the 1920s when the great farm depression began and out of the 1930s when the small towns and the drug stores he knew so well collapsed, too.

Political Pragmatist

But above all the Vice President is a political pragmatist, a doer more than a thinker, a man of immense energy and ambition who learned during his 16 years in the Senate to accept compromise as a necessary fact of political life.

During the years Humphrey has been in Washington there has been a struggle among his friends for the political soul of a man in the minds of all of his advisers has always been destined for the White House.

On the one side have been men like Joe Rauh, a lawyer for civil rights, civil liberties and labor causes.

Pulling in the other direction have been men like Max M. Kampelman, a Washington attorney and a former aide to Humphrey, and James H. Rowe Jr., another Washington lawyer who was an aide to Franklin D. Roosevelt and who ran Humphrey's 1960 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Kampelman, Rowe and

other close advisers to Humphrey have maintained that he had to moderate some of his views and move into the middle of the political spectrum if he ever hoped to become President.

As the pulling and hauling over Humphrey's political soul continues he readily concedes that his success has not given him the best of all worlds.

"I sometimes think," he said as he nibbled on a piece

of cheese and prepared to go make a speech at still another banquet, "I've got the worst of all worlds. I've lost a lot of my liberal friends and I've got people with me who have always opposed me in the past."