

Suicide of a Secret Agent

Blast at LBJ's Vietnam Policy May Imperil Television Star's Political Future

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By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

THE EMBRYONIC political career of Robert Vaughn, star of television's "The Man From U.N.C.L.E.," has sustained a self-inflicted blow of possibly fatal proportions.

As a TV secret agent, Vaughn delights audiences with surprise gimmicks. But he learned, as a result of a Democratic fund-raising speech in Indianapolis Jan. 30, that politicians even more than ordinary people don't like to be surprised. That one speech undercut a serious plan to make Vaughn the newest show business personality to enter California politics.

To prominent California party leaders, Vaughn looked like the Democratic answer to Republican actor-politicians George Murphy and Ronald Reagan. He was named chairman of voter registration and of the speaker's bureau for the Southern California Democratic Central Committee, positions normally filled by experienced politicians. There was immediate talk about running him for State office soon.

That was before Young Democratic leaders in Indianapolis happened to read in a national magazine about Vaughn's Democratic activities and invited him to address a \$25-a-plate dinner. He accepted, but nobody was prepared for what he gave the Hoosier Democratic top brass: an unbridled tongue-lashing of President Johnson and his Vietnam policy.

Most of the audience of 900 listened in stunned silence but a few walked out as Vaughn charged President Johnson with putting into action Barry Goldwater's "fearful warlike ways." He urged immediate United States withdrawal from Vietnam,

adding: "The killing has to stop. Should South Vietnam become the first freely elected Communist country in Asia, we'll have to accept it."

Closing the door after the horse had bolted, Indiana Democrats in the future will demand an advance text from out-of-state speakers. But the damage has been done.

There are, for instance, embarrassing newspaper photos of Vaughn addressing the meeting with James Nicholson seated at his side. Nicholson happens to be Democratic nominee for Congress challenging veteran Republican Rep. William Bray in a conservative district. The Vaughn-Nicholson photo could be campaign ammunition for Bray.

A footnote: Vaughn's stand on Vietnam was a surprise to California Democrats who had been planning a bright future for him. But even before his Indiana misadventure, Vaughn showed he had something to learn about politics.

When a Democratic club from Downey, Calif., asked Vaughn to speak at a meeting, his theatrical agent demanded \$200 in expenses. Disgusted, the Downey Democrats told Vaughn's agent to forget it.

Flood's Friends

REP. DANIEL J. FLOOD, the colorful and popular Democratic Congressman from Pennsylvania, is getting into deep, rightwing water in his furious campaign against the new, wholly justifiable Panama Canal treaty being negotiated by President Johnson.

Flood raised eyebrows among his Democratic colleagues with two insertions

in the Congressional Record on Jan. 13. First was an article about the Canal controversy clipped from Human Events, an extreme right wing publication. Next, Flood put in the record a vicious attack on Mr. Johnson's Canal policy written by a notorious extremist named Harold Lord Varney.

Varney's article appeared in "American Opinion," the regular publication of the John Birch Society. Over the years, Varney has been an admirer of Mussolini (who decorated him), an editor of "American Mercury" during its anti-Semitic phase and, most recently, president of the Committee on Pan-American Policy. This committee contains no less than 14 big-wigs of the Birch Society.

Wrong Man for the Job

LARRY GOODWYN, a well-known liberal writer and political worker in Texas, most definitely will not be Texas field man for the proposed "Alliance of New Politics"—a leftist coalition aimed against Congressional supporters of President Johnson's Vietnam policy.

We reported last week that a secret Chicago meeting of leftists had discussed Goodwyn as Texas staff man for the new political action group. This was entirely accurate. But nobody had bothered to ask Goodwyn to accept the job. If they had, the answer would have been "no."

Goodwyn's published writings show him at variance with many left wing leaders on two critical points: he opposes unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam and wants to exclude all totalitarians—including Communists—from liberal movements.

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