

NYTimes

JUL 23 1971

Mr. Agnew and the World

Vice President Agnew no longer can qualify as an innocent abroad. Given the office he holds, his third foreign trip is bound to affect the interests of this country in the world. Why was it that his itinerary took him almost exclusively to countries under authoritarian rule, rather than to some of the democracies along the route?

Was it really advisable for Mr. Agnew to participate in Francisco Franco's celebration of the 35th anniversary of the revolt that, with the aid of Hitler and Mussolini, crushed the Spanish Republic? Why did he feel compelled en route to draw odious contrasts between authoritarian rulers of three African states ("dedicated, enlightened, dynamic") and "most" American Negro leaders, whom he accused of "querulous complaints and constant recriminations against the rest of society?"

Mr. Agnew is certainly not a fascist and he doubtless comprehends the debits that accrue for the United States if its Vice President helps Generalissimo Franco, a relic of the fascist floodtide, observe a day that still stings the consciences of every democratic country in Europe. The Vice President must know why it is that Emperor Haile Selassie and President Mobutu do not have to worry much about "querulous complaints" from their political opponents in Ethiopia and the Congo.

If, as Mr. Agnew says, every leader he has met on his ten-nation trip is "appalled" by publication of the Pentagon papers in American newspapers, he surely knows that this owes something to the fact that most of these leaders do not tolerate a free press—and some allow no freedom of any kind.

The impact of this trip on Mr. Agnew's political fortunes at home is a matter between himself and President Nixon; how it affects the standing of the United States is a matter of concern for us all.