

Nixon's Vice-Presidential Choice

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Spiro Theodore Agnew AUG 24 1972

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His life and his career have been a continuous process of becoming, and being there, in the opportune place at the opportune moment. He was a chemistry major who became a lawyer, a Democrat who became a Republican, a P.T.A.

chairman who became Governor of Maryland a Greek immigrant's son who became Vice President of the United States —

Man
in the
News

and now that the process has been identified, there are many Americans who are wondering where it will ultimately lead the man whom Richard M. Nixon has again chosen to be his running-mate.

In the same role, in 1968, he attracted almost as much attention with a succession of verbal slips as with his formal defense of party and platform, and some critics frankly suggested that perhaps his nomination had been a mistake.

Yet within a year, he had become one of the most popular Republicans in the country, second only to the President, and by the 1970 elections he had become a hero to millions of his countrymen, the household word he conceded he was not when he accepted the Vice-Presidential nomination in 1968.

Speculation About '76

Now, many of those who questioned his credentials and then doubted that his blossoming popularity would last are caught up these days in endless speculation about Spiro Theodore Agnew for President in 1976.

"I'm going to keep that option open," the 52-year-old Mr. Agnew said when he arrived here Sunday for the formalities of the convention. "But then," he added, "I always keep my options open."

His comments at the Miami International Airport seemed quite in keeping with his remarkable ascension from the obscurity of Baltimore County's Zoning Commission to the second-highest office the country offers, an 11-year sequence of right times and right places that brought him finally to this convention city where he could and did rather casually declare that he has not yet decided whether he plans to run for the Presidency four years from now.

"I wouldn't say he really hasn't thought about it," his press secretary, Victor Gold, said recently in Washington. "But he's not really thinking about it, if you see what I mean."

Well-Organized Man

What he meant was that his boss is an extremely well-organized man with a well-organized mind and well-organized schedule and a well-organized staff and that, for the moment at least, he has organized himself for the 1972 campaign.

"He has a job to do, a big job, and at this point, that is what he cares most about—not about the vague possibilities of 1976," Mr. Gold added. "As the country and the party have come to expect, he wants to do that job well—and he can and he will because he regards it as important to the country and the party."

Nevertheless, the imminent task of running again with Mr. Nixon could well produce a negative curve in the Agnew graph, a possibility raised not only by journalists but by some of his staff members as well.

Most of them agree that Mr. Agnew's present stature, both among the delegates gathered here and across the country, is directly related to the role he played for the Nixon Administration during its first two years in office.

Regarded by most close friends and associates as quiet and rather reserved, he became a super sword-car-

rier for the President, a sort of hell-for-leather, one-man gangbuster who ripped into the news media, the antiwar movement, Democrats and liberal Republicans, and almost anyone else who in establishmentarian eyes was involved in or contributing to dissent. And, while so doing, he became a national figure.

Followed by Crowds

The press thronged about him. Invitations for appearances poured into his office. Overflow crowds followed him. He was written about, talked about, praised and excoriated, defended and berated—and when the 1970 elections were over, his ratings in the Gallup and Harris popularity indexes had zoomed upward.

It had been a risky proposition, but he had found and strummed a lost chord in the American psyche and he had come out of it a winner.

But whether that victory, largely one of image and popularity, can be seen as a part of the process of becoming the party's nominee and the country's President in 1976 is an entirely separate question.

However effectively his early-term activities may have been for him personally, and for the President, the 1972 campaign would appear to be a distinctively different forum. The Vice President, as he was before, is expected to be the primary spokesman for the Administration, but the message this time will be different.

A Different Tone

There may be a continuation of the antipress posture, and there may be occasional glimpses of the indignant, angry rhetoric, but the overall tone of the 1972 Republican effort will be quieter, gentler, much more restrained—a campaign befitting an incumbent President.

Whether Vice President Agnew can flourish and thrive in that environment is the question now being asked by those who watch his national influence blossom in a less peaceful milieu.

The Vice President is regarded by many of those associates as an office-seeker whose career has been such a succession of victories that there has been little reason to indulge in the more traditional disciplines.

He habitually separates himself from the party members who adore him and pay large amounts to be near him at fund-raising banquets. He prefers to remain in his hotel room, playing cards, studying his remarks for the evening, and then, moments before he is to speak, to be whisked into the room and out of it afterward.

"That's a part of his nature," Mr. Gold, his press secretary said. "It's not a fault, it's a trait."

A Change Is Noted

Reporters who have covered his activities for some time agree with Mr. Gold, but some of them now sense that Mr. Agnew's tenure as Vice President has produced at least the beginning of change.

"When he first started, back in the 1968 campaign, I was amazed by his real lack of interest in it," a network television correspondent said last month. "He was like that, too, all during the press period—but I've noticed in the last year that he actually seems to enjoy getting into a group of people."

Another friend of the Vice President, a member of Mr. Nixon's staff, said he had also observed the beginning of change. "It was as though, in the beginning, he couldn't believe it when people told him he was great or that he was doing a good job," the White House aide said.

"He simply had never thought of himself in that way and he thought it quite improbable that others would."

From the day Mr. Agnew was inaugurated, however, there have been few hints that his duties were unrewarding. He attacked his Administrative responsibilities with the energetic curiosity of a school boy.

'Most Important Element'

Assigned to make several foreign trips, he traveled enthusiastically to dozens of countries, seeing what he had not seen before, meeting a variety of political and governmental figures—and all of that had an impact on the man whose previous travel had been limited to his service as an Army company commander in Europe in World War II.

"But I think the most important element in his term has been a growing acceptance of him, not only by his public, but by the other men in power in Washington," a friend said. "He has done his homework, he has worked hard, and the people who have been in the Federal Government for years gradually recognized it and began to respect him for it."

The stature would logically be of some importance to the Vice President and out of it could come a new image of himself.

He was born in Baltimore County on Nov. 9, 1918, into a family whose financial fortunes reflected the rhythms of those days. His father, who changed his name from Anagnostopoulos, was in the restaurant business in Baltimore and became a leader in the city's Greek community.

The depression affected the family and the Vice President has frequently recalled the times he stood with his father selling vegetables. The tides changed again and his father's perseverance and financial acumen re-established the family's affluence.

Studied Chemistry

Mr. Agnew studied chemistry at Johns Hopkins University for three years, but had problems with the curriculum and transferred to evening classes in law at the University of Baltimore, working days at an insurance company.

It was there that he met Elinor Isabel Judefind, the daughter of a Baltimore chemist. They were married in May, 1942, three days after his graduation from Officers Candidate School. He served with the 10th Armored Division and when he returned from the Army he went back to school and graduated with a bachelor of laws in 1947.

He changed his registration from Democratic to Republican soon after graduation because one of the senior partners in his concern was a Republican whom he had come to respect and admire. He soon abandoned the practice of law and took a \$100-a-week job as a personnel director for a supermarket chain in Baltimore, but after serving a year in the Army again, during the Korean War, he returned to the law and settled down into the life of American suburbia.

He became an avid fan of the Baltimore Colts football team, learned to enjoy golf and tennis, acquired a taste for Ella Fitzgerald's singing and amused himself occasionally at the piano.

P.T.A. and Kiwanis

The Agnews, who are Episcopalians, have four children: Paula, 29, J. Rand, 26, Susan, 24 and Kim 16. His practice flourished and they moved into Towson, an expensive Baltimore suburb, where he became the president of the local Parent-Teachers Association and took an active role in the Kiwanis Club.

After his appointment to the Baltimore Country Board Zoning Appeals, he quickly became its chairman, only to be ousted in a coup by local Democrats in 1961. The next year he ran for County Executive and won, and four years after he became the fifth Republican Governor of Maryland.

The Governor's race was a liberal-conservative battle and the Vice President won with a coalition of liberal Democrats and Republicans and almost all of the state's black vote. He sponsored a series of civil-rights bills in the state legislature and came to be regarded as a friend of the minorities.

After the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination provoked rioting in several cities, including Baltimore, he summoned moderate black leaders from that city and chastised them for not facing up to the leaders of the riots. That was April 11, 1968.

Four months later, in Miami Beach, he nominated Richard M. Nixon for the Presidency and the next day was picked as the man to run with him.

Vice President Agnew has talked little about the Presidency himself, limiting his comments to assurances that he is capable of assuming its duties were that ever necessary.

"But the thing that has always interested him," one close friend observed, "is the next thing."