

# Agnew's

By STEVE GERSTEL

WASHINGTON (UPI) — With icy aloofness but perfect protocol, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew has just circled the globe on an intriguing diplomatic mission that created more questions than answers.

Why Did President Nixon send him? How were the nations he visited chosen? What were his objectives? What did he achieve?

In relative importance, how did Agnew's journey compare with Dr. Henry A. Kissinger's secret mission to Peking, Secretary of State William P. Rogers' negotiations in the Middle East, or Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird's trip to Japan and Korea?

At 32 days, the journey was the lengthiest taken by a vice president since Richard M. Nixon 18 years ago, before the advent of the jet age, made a 73-day tour of the Far East.

The State Department said it cannot estimate the cost of the trip. But his entourage ranged from 57 to more than 100, depending on the country, and included State Department aides, staff members, Secret Service agents, advance men, secretaries, and a personal photographer.

He visited Korea, Singapore, India, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia; Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Spain, Morocco, and Portugal.

Sitting in his hotel suite in Singapore, Agnew gave reporters a broad outline of his mission after a week of almost total inactivity in Korea, which left many wondering just what he was doing.

"It is a diplomatic mission without specified problem areas at its center," Agnew said. "It is an overall diplomatic mission to make world leaders that I will visit more conversant with American attitudes with respect to American foreign policy — this administration's attitudes."

Agnew conceded his visits were not related to any crisis and added that "most of these countries have no real difficulty occurring with the United States at the present time that's not being adequately handled . . ."

There was speculation, never confirmed by Agnew, that he was sent to reassure these nations of America's friendship at a time when Nixon is moving toward closer relations with Russia and China.

Although the countries span three continents and 30,000 miles, they are led, to a greater or lesser degree, by anti-Communists who could fear Nixon's new foreign policy initiatives.



**AGNEW GOLFED WHILE VISITING NAIROBI**  
With Dr. Njoroge Mungai, Kenya foreign minister.  
—(AP)

## Strange World Trip

And if diplomacy is limited — as Agnew feels — to discussions, talks and ceremonial dinners with presidents, kings, amirs, prime ministers, caudillos, or other strongmen, then his mission apparently was a success.

Well briefed in substance as well as protocol, Agnew carried out his role impeccably. Towering over his hosts at six foot two, always impeccably dressed whether in cutaway or bush jacket, not a hair out of place, adept at the easy chit-chat during picture sessions, Agnew looked like the picture-book diplomat.

If diplomacy is — as former

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and former President Lyndon B. Johnson and even Nixon felt — an ability to show a genuine interest in the cities, people and customs of other nations, then Agnew failed.

In response to that, Agnew said: "My basic mission is diplomatic and if I am to play a constructive and rewarding role, it is what I do with the leaders and not what I do in the streets or in the market place..."

If there is such a thing as golf course diplomacy, Agnew engaged in that. He played with President Park Chee Hung in Korea, with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, with Mungai in Kenya, with King Hassan II in Morocco, with top golf pros Tony Jacklin and Billy Casper, with Frank Sinatra, and with Harry Dundore, an old friend and sometime traveling companion.

Agnew was highly circumspect when asked — at the five on-the-record news conference he held during the trip — about the substance of his talks with the various chiefs of state he met. He said the conversations were highly confidential.

But there was no reluctance on Agnew's part to tell the press that every leader he met was either "appalled" or "aghast" at the publication of the Pentagon Papers.

Nor did he keep confidential the fears of some leaders that the United States was retreating from its world responsibilities and cited as evidence the refusal of Congress to fund the supersonic transport (SST) and the slowdown in the space program.

Nor did he forget the news media. In Singapore, — speaking about Vietnam — he said: "So many of our people in the national media are too ready to assist the North Vietnamese by their overemphasis on certain actions, providing the enemy with a public relations coup."

That was mild, however, compared to a news conference on the plane between Kinshasa and Madrid when Agnew denounced America's black leaders for "criticizing, carping...complaining." He suggested that they emulate Africa's black leaders.

He did not mention that the three African black leaders — Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Joseph Mobutu of the Congo — are all strongmen who brook no complaint against their governments.

Nixon's acceptance of the invitation to visit Peking also raised questions about Agnew's role — now and in the future — in the Administration.

When the announcement came, Vic Gold, Agnew's press secretary, said the vice president was always fully informed on foreign policy matters. Agnew refused to comment on the China trip.

Several days later, when a report arrived from Washington that Agnew had not been informed in advance, Gold said he could neither confirm nor deny it.

The trip refired speculation over whether Nixon would dump Agnew in 1972. Some thought that Nixon, who believes that a successful foreign policy is the key to a second term, wanted to enhance Agnew's international reputa-

tion. Others viewed the trip as being in the nature of a retirement gift.

Asked about the matter at one news conference, Agnew dismissed as "entirely fictitious" any such speculation at this time. He said Nixon "will have to make the final judgment as to whom he wants to be his running mate."

In Korea to head the U.S. delegation to Park's third-term inaugural, Agnew expected to hold substantive discussions with Park on a variety of topics, including the withdrawal of Korean troops from South Vietnam and modernization of the Korean army. Park declined on grounds that Agnew was on a ceremonial visit and, in effect, told him to enjoy himself.

Singapore was basically a logistic stop and Bombay, India, a refueling pause, although Agnew virtually promised added U.S. economic aid to help with the Pakistani refugee problem.

In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, with the Amir and King Faisal, Agnew held important

discussions on the Middle East dispute. He brought back some constructive suggestions on how the United States can play a bigger role in the area. Similar talks were held with Hassan in Morocco.

The three African nations have so few problems in relation to America that the talks were not overly long. Asked once why he was stopping in Nairobi, Agnew said he thought it would be interesting and it was. The three-day layover provided a chance for Agnew to spend a night in a game preserve, watching rhinos, cape buffalo and elephants in their habitat.

The visit to Madrid was a plus for the aging Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Agnew was the first American to participate in Spain's National Day, marking the start of the 1936 uprising that brought Franco to power.

Similarly, Portugal was delighted to have Agnew. As the last African colonial power, Portugal has been somewhat ostracized by the western democracies and denounced by the black African nations.