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Hoffa Mystery Man
Has Washington
Scratching Head

By FRED P. GRAHAM

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WASHINGTON — Rueful government officials are scratching their heads today over the exploits of William L. Taub, the mysterious "New York lawyer" who represented James R. Hoffa in his abortive effort last week to go to Hanoi to negotiate for the release of American prisoners.

Using Hoffa's name and allowing various high-ranking officials to believe that he was a lawyer, Taub took these actions: Scheduled a meeting with Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst; met with the deputy attorney general; saw Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser; persuaded the State Department to validate his passport for travel to North Vietnam; and got the North Vietnamese Trade Unions to invite Hoffa, the former president of the Teamsters International Union, to visit their country.

TAUB'S EFFORTS also took him to Sophia, Bulgaria, last spring, where, according to telegrams he showed to associates, he talked with Le Duc Tho the North Vietnam Politburo member who often acts as Hanoi's chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks, about Hoffa's desire to visit North Vietnam.

The Bubble burst last Thursday when the government, saying that a mistake had been made, canceled the validations for travel to North Vietnam that had been granted to Hoffa Taub and Harold Gibbons, a vice president of the Teamsters Union.

Today, officials were learning that Taub is not a lawyer, as they had thought; that he once claimed to be "worldwide representative" for Pope Paul VI's film interests; that he ac-

cepted a Los Angeles "Golden Globe" award as co-producer of the film "Z" — only to have the film's French producer denounce him as an "imposter," and that the real producer, Eric Schlumberger, accused Taub of trying to sell him the Metro Goldwyn Mayer building in Paris.

A check of the entertainment press revealed a history of incidents going back 20 years, in which Taub had been accused of representing himself without authority as a lawyer and agent for film and stage interests.

These included legal skirmishes a decade ago when he attempted without authorization to sell rights to Charles Chaplin's films to television networks, and a successful suit 20 years ago by Margaret Sullavan, the actress, who said he signed her to perform in a "new" play that had in fact been produced before.

In Detroit, Hoffa said he was startled to learn of the apparent misrepresentation and said he took Taub at face value after "he sought me out in April.

"I met him in Miami. He took notes, had documents, everything, Hoffa said."

Hoffa said he knew Taub only on a business basis "so you just can't tell what he's really like."

Hoffa said he had an agreement to pay Taub for his services, but declined to say if any payment had been made.

The reaction in the Justice Department today appeared to be chagrin, rather than prosecutorial ire. John Hushen, the department's public information officer, said a check was ordered on Taub in the federal Bureau of Investigation's files, but that he was "not at liberty" to tell what was discovered. He stressed that no FBI in-

vestigation of Taub had been ordered.

A CHECK TODAY with officials who met with Taub revealed that all but one thought he was a lawyer, although none could remember that he specifically claimed to be one.

Ralph Erickson, the deputy attorney general, said that when they met Taub he said he represented Mr. Hoffa, and when a lawyer is told that, he assumes he is talking with another lawyer."

Mrs. Elaine Crane, Erickson's assistant, said she cautioned Taub that Justice Department officials could talk to him only on a "lawyer to lawyer" basis. On that basis, an appointment was arranged between Attorney General Kleindienst and Taub, who said he represented Hoffa in efforts to eliminate probation conditions that prevented him from returning to office as president of the Teamsters Union. The conditions were imposed last December

when President Nixon commuted Hoffa's sentence for jury tampering.

When Kleindienst could not keep the appointment, Erickson saw Taub.

Taub and Gibbons also went to the summer White House in San Clemente several weeks ago for a meeting with Kissinger. A spokesman in Kissinger's office today said it was assumed by everyone there that Taub was a lawyer, representing Hoffa.

Gibbons, reached at his office in St. Louis, said "It was my impression he was a member of an important New York law firm," and that Taub said nothing to change that impression.

Gibbons said it was not true, as some Vietnamese sources have claimed, that no invitation had been extended to Hoffa.