

Betty Beale: Washington



The inside story of Spiro's book



Spiro Agnew

WASHINGTON — The publicized rejection by Random House of former Vice President Spiro Agnew's novel may have been the best thing that could have happened to him. In the first three days after that news broke, he had a half dozen calls from people interested in publishing any novel he might turn out.

And why not? There are still a lot of unanswered questions about Agnew's involvement in kickbacks from Maryland contractors. Particularly, one question — where is all that money? It's a question the ex-V.P. recently asked a friend. The public would be almost certain to grab a novel about a Vice President named Agnew thinking some of the answers would be woven into the fictitious plot.

And, as with all novels about Washington officials, this entire town would study every character involved to determine who the real prototypes were. It would be worth the cost of a copy to some people just to see what the fictitious Vice President thought about the fictitious President.

It's not surprising that Random House was covered with embarrassment when it became known it was their firm which had seen and rejected the sampling of his proposed book. And the employee, apparently, leaked the rejection before Agnew had even been told it was definitely out of the question.

The tipoff that it must have been an inside leak is that the leaked news story used the same description of the plot as Random House later used in its official announcement — i.e., "a future Vice President of the United States turns out to have been programmed for disaster by Chinese Communist." Although that may be a fair description of the plot, Agnew himself refers to it as a "CIA-type novel involving Afghanistan," so there must be more than one way to describe it.

Here is the true story why Ted Agnew was so sure Random House was going to publish his book: He told friends about it the night he and Mrs. Agnew came out of seclusion to toss a party for several Middle East ambassadors and GOP friends. He even knew the column about rejection was coming out the next morning but he thought it was wrong because a Random editor had been "very ecstatic" about it. So much so the man told him if R. H. didn't publish it, another firm would.

When Agnew told former aide Peter Malatesta and friend Frank Jameson about his novel, he smiled with pleasure. After being deeply dejected over his possible disbarment in Maryland, he was in such fine spirits Danny Thomas, who

flew in from the West Coast for the party, remarked on it.

Agnew was so tickled over his new-found fortune, he told Peter, "I wrote every word of it myself. Nobody ghosted it." It was perfectly apparent that he did not know that somebody higher up than his "ecstatic" editor had killed it — at least for Random House.

Our next ambassador to the U.S.S.R., Walter Stoessel is going to introduce something brand new in that country. Barring complications, he will install a paddle tennis court in back of Spaso House, our ambassadorial residence in Moscow.

He and his wife Mary Ann are such ardent players they installed their first such court behind the Iron when they occupied the American Embassy in Warsaw where "it saved said Walter. It will be virtuous in Moscow where life is ever so interesting. The day - and - night sport here, which is the most fashionable Christmas be a year-round game."

The diplomat and his wife dined at a mad. Wittig ambassador dinner at the Stoesse' went to the ever Mix de F