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'Agnew Has Simply Sold Out'

By Victor Gold

WASHINGTON—There was this plaque, shaped like a mezuzah, that was given the Vice President of the United States four years ago this month. I saw him receive it warmly, with no reluctance whatever, following a speech at the Waldorf-Astoria to what he considered, at that time, an important audience. The wording:

To Vice President Spiro P. Agnew, a True Friend of Israel and the People of Israel, presented by the Religious Zionists of America, June 15, 1972.

Yes, but that was four years ago, in another world. Mr. Agnew will make no campaign speeches this year, though his personal hegira continues, with a literary resurrection after political death. I wish I could say that if my former employer forgives me that mangled metaphor I will forgive him his recent television jihad against what he now perceives as "the Zionist lobby" wielding "Jewish influence over the national impact media."

But forgiveness of that sort isn't too easy for someone who grew up in Klan country. Besides, experience tells me that Spiro is not one to go looking for forgiveness. Simply an audience. Preferably, this year, an audience that pays in a medium of appreciation more valuable than mezuzah plaques.

Less than a year preceding that speech to the Religious Zionists of America, the Vice President had re-

ceived a symbolic gift of another kind. It was personally handed him by his host in Saudi Arabia, King Faisal: a copy of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. At the time, Mr. Agnew did not seem to take that gift of anti-Jewish propaganda seriously; nor to my knowledge did he ever read it. But then, perhaps, it had some osmotic effect on his ideological consciousness.

Perhaps, though I hardly think so; despite the fact that Mr. Agnew himself, in an odd obeisance to the god of political consistency, now insists that his present attitude about the "Zionist lobby" is really nothing new; that he has always felt this way.

I have another view, however. For one thing, apart from my personal conversations during my years as a member of his staff, there is that vivid memory of the man at the podium at the Waldorf receiving that mezuzah and the brotherly embrace of the Religious Zionists of America. Funny, but he didn't look anti-Jewish.

No, the explanation for my former employer's recent rendering of variations on a theme by the Grand Kleagle, as I see it, has nothing to do with mere ideological conviction. It has to do with selling this book, and then his "memoir." In selling Spiro Agnew, high bidder take all. Until a better offer comes along, of course.

There are, you see, three basic motivations behind bigotry. The first visceral, the Klan variety, is bad; the second, ideological, the Faisal variety,

is worse; but the third, commercial, the Agnew variety, is worst of all.

Mr. Agnew has simply sold out. Again. Last time, it was his high office. This time it is his marketability as a man who once held the trust of millions of Americans. Millions, that is, of shnooks like me.

That Spiro Agnew died politically by disgracing his office was not made clear to us on Oct. 10, 1973, regardless of what he claims in his current sales pitch, through a "Jewish media" influence by any "Zionist lobby." Rather, it was Spiro Agnew himself who wrote the only "memoir" that has any meaning in his career, either as a politician or an author. Wrote it that afternoon into the Federal court record at Baltimore.

Not sad; but true. Which is why my reaction to my former employer's recent conversion to the doctrines of the Invisible Empire, or whatever they are calling it these days, is one of relief. I am, in fact, reassured, comforted by this latest proof of the apocryphal wisdom that there is indeed a special Providence that looks after fools, drunkards and the United States.

But don't misunderstand. I am not bigoted. One of my best ex-friends, in fact, was the second-generation son of a Greek immigrant.

Victor Gold, a Washington journalist, was Spiro T. Agnew's press secretary from September 1970 to January 1973.