

Editorials

Commentary

Southern Spiroization

by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Washington — No one could have been more surprised than Galo Plaza, the shrewd secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS), when Vice President-elect Spiro Agnew telephoned him to ask for a long interview on Latin American affairs.

The date was just before Agnew and Plaza made a joint Dec. 9 appearance at the New Orleans meeting of the National League of Cities. Agnew's proposal: would Plaza ride back to Washington in Agnew's plane so they could talk about Latin America?

That was the first word that Plaza or anybody else had heard that President-elect Nixon has assigned important responsibilities in Latin American policy, long a stepchild of U.S. policymakers, to his Vice President. But that is precisely what Mr. Nixon now intends.

The two-and-a-half hour airplane ride back to Washington that day was Agnew's first serious exposure ever to what is going on south of the border. The second exposure, also with Plaza, came last week when Agnew returned with more questions.

Intimates of Plaza report that the secretary-

general, a veteran Ecuadorean diplomat and politician, was impressed both with Agnew's qualities as a listener and the caliber of his questions. Also impressive to Plaza was Agnew's repeated insistence that Mr. Nixon intends to give Latin American affairs a high billing in his Administration.

Nevertheless, Latin American diplomats here are shocked by Mr. Nixon's private designation of Agnew as one of his Latin American specialists and are skeptical on two counts — whether the Vice President really will devote all that time and effort to hemispheric affairs and whether he really is capable of handling the job. This skepticism stems partly from Agnew's extraordinarily bad public relations during and since the Presidential campaign and partly from the fact that he is an utter novice in both Latin politics and U.S. foreign policy.

Agnew's only known visit south of the continental U.S.A. came just after the election when he took a vacation at Dorado Bay in Puerto Rico. Asked on arrival for his opinion about statehood for Puerto Rico, Agnew spoke right up: he was for it, he said.

This response flew in the face of the traditional attitude by mainland American politicians to keep hands off the most disruptive issue in Puerto Rico. Although newly-elected Gov. Luis Ferré favors ultimate statehood for the Caribbean island, the defeated Populares are adamantly against it. Thus, Agnew managed to alienate at least half the island — and, erroneously, put the Nixon administration on record for statehood.

But Agnew's lack of experience isn't the only reason for unease among Latin diplomats. What bothers them more profoundly is the lack of any sign of a Nixon plan for that vital arena.

No top State Department appointee, starting with Secretary of State — designate William P. Rogers, has more than a meager speaking acquaintance with Latin America. Even at this late date, there has been nothing but gossip about the identity of the new Assistant Secretary of State for Latin Affairs.

At one point early in the transition period Mr. Nixon was considered likely to name his old friend, Robert C. Hill, as an Undersecretary of State. Even though Hill was some what controversial during tours as Ambassador to Mexico, Costa Rica, and El Salvador, some Latin diplomats were ecstatic at the prospect that one top official in the State Department at least would know how many countries there are in Latin America. But Hill ruled himself out of a State Department job.

Moreover, Mr. Nixon has not yet accepted advice that he pay a courtesy call on Secretary-General Plaza. His only action so far has been a private telegram to the chairman of the Inter-American Committee of the Alliance for Progress, Dr. Carlos Sanz de Santa Maria on Nov. 7 promising to "strengthen relationships and build stronger bonds" between the U.S. and Latin America.

In view of Washington's traditional neglect of Latin America and the fact that there have been six Assistant Secretaries of State for Inter-American Affairs in the last six years, that one telegram is no more reassuring than Mr. Nixon's designation of Agnew as one of his top Latin advisers.

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Conjugation education

Somewhere in Burnett Hall's language labs, secure behind the drone of verb conjugation, lurks the classical tradition of a foreign language requirement.

And somewhere in Nebraska Hall, incased in rows of typewriters, too many journalism students are learning a trade — and not earning an education.

And somewhere is Oldfather Hall, along with the new fixtures and chairs, an upperclassman is marking time due to an unchallenging prerequisite course.

THERE ARE other flaws in the general curriculum of the University of Nebraska, all with one thing in common: the faculty, the students and the administration are failing to deal with them.

Far too many teachers have fallen into educational cliches, and far too many students have gone along — riding for the semester, and gunning for the grade. And both groups are guilty of failing to question the methods and value of the way things have always been done.

In the College of Arts and Science, for instance, there remains the vestiges of medieval education, in which all scholars studied Greek and Latin. Today, each student, no matter what his ambition and purpose, is required to take a foreign language.

THOSE 16 hours could be spent in courses which excite and seem relevant to the student. If language study is significant to the student, and if it will help him in graduate studies, then fine. But why should another A&S student, who will immediately unlearn the language after his last German final, be required to suffer through four semesters?

Another example. Too many departments offer training and not education. In the School of Journalism, grades can depend on typing speed and accuracy. In some business courses a balance sheet outweighs contemplation and expression. In Physical Education, a football course gives academic credit for cracking heads, not books.

THE FINAL example. Prerequisites and sequences, though often serving as guides in planning, can put a student in a course which impedes and bores him.

Although typing, money balancing and football playing are forms of education, they cannot be considered the type of learning that deserve academic credit at a university. And these are just excerpts from a long list of curriculum problems at the University.

There has been progress in curriculum at NU (the Negro history course and the Centennial College, for instance). But improvements for the bulk of courses, long overdue from College advisory boards, has come too little, too late.

If the University can not move ahead in this vital area with the present structure, the entire community should seek new ways in which to force improvement.



SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

Only five years ago

Editor's Note: The following is a reprint of an editorial by Frank Landis which appeared on the '63-64 Nebraskaan.

What I'd like to know is what kind of an administration do we have?

If I remember right, President Kennedy did a lot of griping about Ike's prestige and foreign policies in the 1960 election. Since that election, when the Kennedy dynasty and his theory-minded Harvard boys took over, we have crawled,

backed and stumbled into the most ridiculous posture this country has ever assumed.

The United States, the strongest country in the world, is now being mocked and intimidated by an arrogant, boastful communist dictator in Cuba.

WHY DO we put up with Fidel's ranting? Why don't we pluck this thorn from our thigh, this threat to our security? One reason the administration

gives, is that the United States would be acting as an aggressor nation. Evidently they have forgotten the Monroe Doctrine.

Perhaps JFK should take a lesson in foreign policy from the Russians. When Hungary revolted, Nikita knew how to handle the problem, and forcibly. He moved in with tanks and infantry to brutally crush the revolt. Countries of the world cried "aggressor."

And where is Hungary now?

IN THE communist camp. Needless to say, when you're boxing, you don't wear kid gloves.

What is our policy toward Cuba? Do we have a positive one, or is it just a matter of waiting for them to make the first move? Economic boycotts, and naval blockades have been brought up, but to what avail? It would seem that we are afraid of losing "friends" among our foreign neighbors.

Maybe this notion that we have to be everyone's friend is costing us more than it's worth, both in taxes and in prestige. We pour millions of dollars in foreign aid into India every year, and yet who was the first country to slap our hand when we resumed nuclear testing?

ALSO, trying to be buddies with "the great neutralist," Nehru, might possible have caused a small loss of prestige in Portugal. If I were Salazar, I would probably think twice before letting the United States renew their lease for military bases on the Azores.

While Fidel is waving a red flag at us, we are straddling a barrel afraid to move either way. Perhaps our troops belong in Cuba instead of Mississippi. Well, it's a thought anyhow.

Slipped disc ... by J. L. Schmidt

Here's a little song you can all join in with. It's very simple and I hope it's new. Make your own words up if you want to. Any old words that you think will do. Yellow, blue, what'll I do? Maybe I'll just sit here thinking Black, white, stop the fight. Does one of these colours ever bother you?

A simple little verse with a very biting message. Typical of the material contained in the new album by the group known as Traffic.

You say that you have never heard of TRAFFIC; Walk into the Crib right now and play B9 on the jukebox. That's "Feelin' Alright" by Traffic and that's their best known cut from the album.

NOW THAT you've heard the record, read on. The group is composed of Dave Mason, vocal and acoustic guitar, Steve Winwood, piano and bass guitar, Jim Capaldi, drums and Chris Wood, tenor sax. All of these men are established musicians who have combined their individual bags for the group effort known as Traffic.

Cut two of side one on the album is a short story about the Pearly Queen, a mystic Indian girl who causes the vocalist to fade out and the drummer to dominate. This is followed by Don't Be Sad, a number which is done with an almost Bee Gee vocal rendering and with the heavy organ chords reminiscent of a cathedral pipe organ.

Who Knows What Tomorrow May Bring has a nice title and a few good lyrics but that's it. Only two instruments are being played and it seems that the whole group is trying to get their lick at singing a word or two. The result is a jumbled concoction.

A SHORT little piece entitled Vagabond Virgin is next in line with its beautiful flute work and a nice bit of social commentary. This is followed by a deep, heavy voiced and guttural rendition of 40,000 Headmen. Once again the mood is changed to Cryin' to be Heard, another heavy organ piece.

Chris Wood uses the soprano sax to convey a somewhat eerie mood in No Time to Live. Wood makes the sax sound almost like a wolf cry in the plains. And speaking of plain, that's how the record ends with a song called Means to an End, a number that nothing can be said about, save that it ends an otherwise good album by a very good, but unknown group.

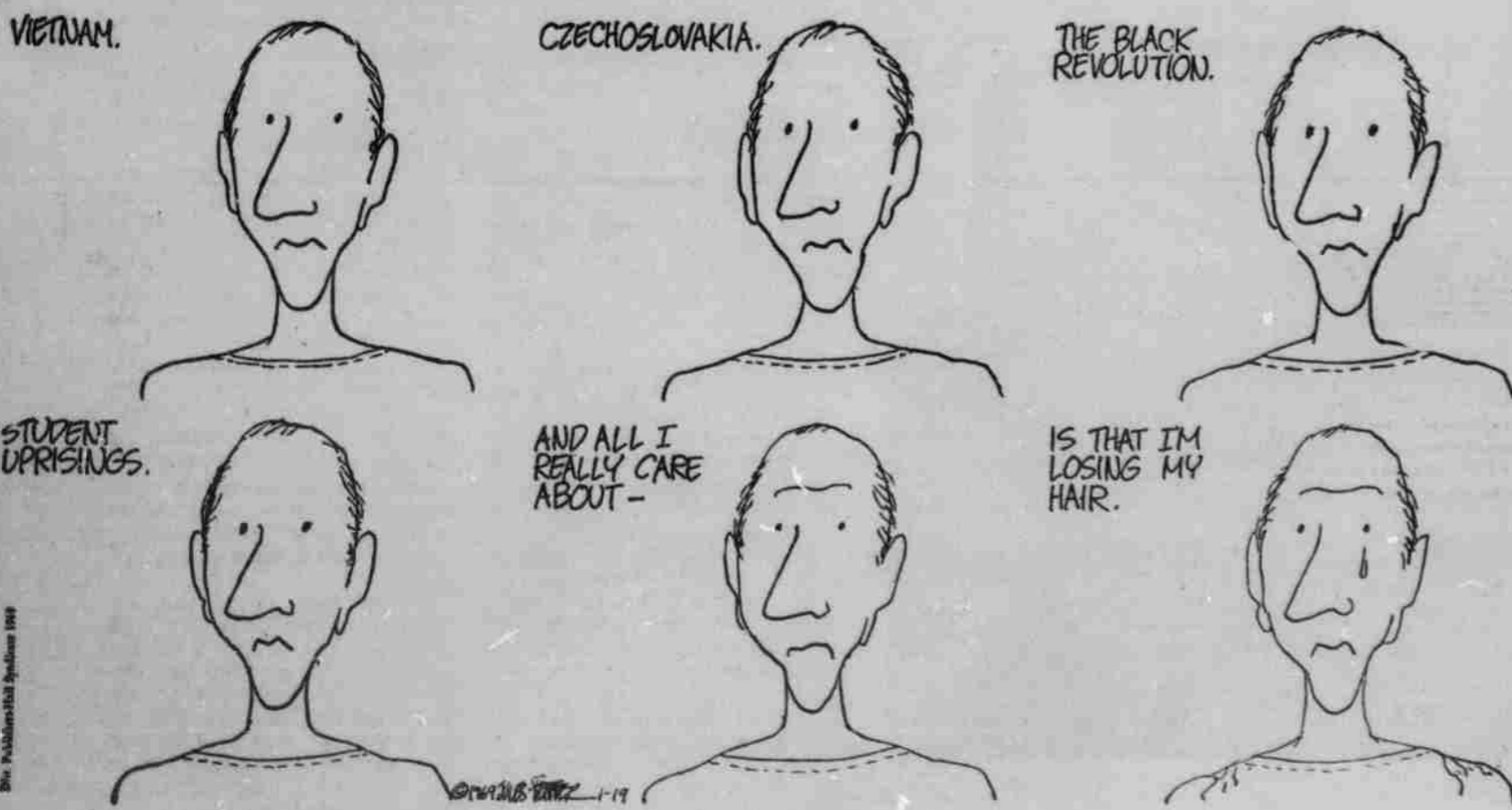
TRAFFIC is not necessarily an underground sound. Some of the cuts would fit into any modern FM stations programming and might even make it on some of the more or less teeny-bop stations. Only time will tell, but don't let this group short.

In the near future I hope to be able to cover some albums from groups in most genre of music. The obscure groups with the good sounds will be my major concern since I feel that our cultural future lies somewhere in the underground movement of today and needs all of the nurturing it can get.



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