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May 25, 1976

Spiro Agnew, Spiro Agnew?

In that nightly comic soap opera, Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, one of the fictional characters -- a kind of dim-witted folk singer -- ruined her career with one public pronouncement. She publicly expressed astonishment at how many Jews were in television although she added that they were so nice that it was hard to believe that "they were the people who killed our Lord."

Well, of course she was supposed to be dim-witted by script; and the audience was supposed to laugh at her, which they did. But it is not quite as funny to hear some of the same thoughts expressed by the man who was Vice-President of the United States until he got his hand caught in the till.

Agnew has been going around the country saying that Jews have too much influence in America, including the mass media -- and that is why America is partisan to Israel. It might be easy to dismiss Agnew as a non-fictional dim-wit to whom no one will pay attention, but there is more to it than that.

Actually, he is no dim-wit. His reputation and honor are beyond salvage but his bank account is not. He would love to be publicly attacked, because any notoriety would help him sell his new book. And he would especially love to be publicly attacked by the Jews because he has had significant business

connections with the Arabs since being kicked out of the White House, all of which helps to explain the nature of his remarks.

The American Jewish Committee has made a thorough statistical survey of the extent of Jewish "influence" in this country. For example, AJC found that fewer than 1 per cent of the newspapers in this country have either owners or senior management who are Jewish. And, in the top 500 corporations of the country, fewer than one-half of one per cent of the senior executive positions are filled by Jews.

It's good to know these figures but just citing them won't solve the problem. There is Murphy's First Law of Public Relations: "People who have a bias are going to believe only those statistics which fit their bias." According to the surveys, about 3 out of 10 Americans believe that "American Jews have too much business power." All of those people at some time have opened up a newspaper or watched a TV program which indicated otherwise.

That leads to Murphy's Corollary Law of Public Relations: "To just vehemently deny that you are a rascal will only serve to convince a lot of people that you really are." That is why the Agnews of the world have an advantage. And that is why the object is to promote knowledge of what Jews are, not just what they are not, (e.g.: Over 500 school teachers and 3000 students in San Francisco's public schools gained an in-depth picture of American Jewry this year as a result of a special program funded by the Jewish Welfare Federation).

But that's not quite the point, either. The operational part of the Agnew message is not that the Jews have too much influence -- but that the Jews have an agenda which is bad for America. In other words, according to Agnew: supporting Israel is bad for American; the Jews are interested in America supporting Israel; therefore, the Jews are bad for America. Once people accept that syllogism, it is easy to convince them that Jews have "too much" influence (and difficult to convince them otherwise no matter what statistics you produce). The whole nasty business starts with the question of Israel's importance to America. That is Sly Spiro's real focus, and he is no foolish soap opera character.