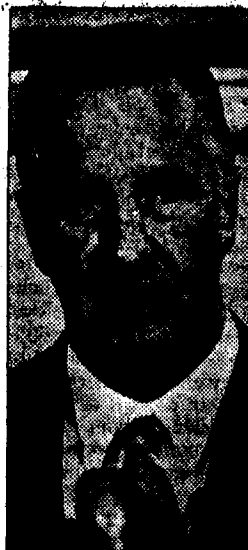
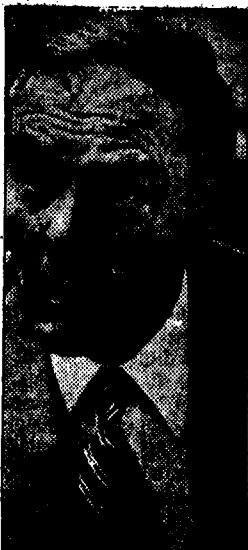


Sunday, April 20, 1980

Agnew: I Quit Because I Feared for My Life



Spiro T. Agnew



Alexander Haig

By Helen Duder

SIX AND A HALF years after he resigned the vice presidency under a heavy cloud of criminal accusations, Spiro T. Agnew claims to have left largely because he feared he might be murdered. What he took to be a veiled threat of assassination, relayed to him through Gen. Alexander Haig, former President Nixon's chief aide, is the centerpiece of Agnew's forthcoming book, "Go Quietly . . . or Else."

[When informed of Agnew's suggestion, Haig, now president of United Technologies Corp. and recuperating from heart surgery, "laughed, said it was the most preposterous thing he had ever heard of, and would not dignify it by discussing it any further," according to a United Technologies spokesman.]

Agnew's home now is in Rancho Mirage, a haven for the rich and the near-rich not far from Palm Springs, Calif. His neighbors include Frank Sinatra, a good friend, and former President Gerald Ford, who succeeded Agnew as vice president. The Agnew condominium sits on the border of a golf course, and sometimes he sees Ford drive by in a golf cart. They do not speak.

On his way abroad, Agnew paused in New York last week to talk about his book. In a suite in the Waldorf Towers, he sat toying with a gold lead pencil, a reserved man with small, spare gestures — in contrast to the drama of his prose.

The book title is not a direct quote. It is the inference Agnew says he drew on Oct. 4, 1973, after his military aide, Gen. Mike Dunn, came back from a meeting with Haig to report that he had been told that Nixon, besieged by Watergate investigators, could no longer support his vice president's fight to clear himself.

He quotes Dunn's memo of the session, reporting a Haig statement that, innocent or not, Agnew would certainly be convicted at a trial. If he allowed himself to be indicted, Haig is supposed to have said, "we are off to the races and cannot control the situation any longer — anything may be in the offing. It can and will get nasty and dirty." There was also a reminder: "The president has a lot of power — don't forget that."

Agnew writes that he took this as an "open-ended threat." He was scared. He knew from National Security Council meetings how the intelligence forces operated. "I feared for my life," he writes. "If a decision had been made to eliminate me — through an automobile accident, a fake suicide or whatever, the order would not have been traced back to the White House any more than get-Castro orders were ever traced to their source."

When it is pointed out that Haig may have been thinking of prison rather than assassination, Agnew's face hardens, and he hedges. He says that he did not write that Haig actually had threatened his life, only that Haig's remarks had "worried" him.

See AGNEW, Page D5

Helen Duder is a New York-based freelance writer.

WORLD

Nixon
Through

By Richard

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