

Court Drama as Agnew Appears

Baltimore

He stood before the judge just as an ordinary person might.

He stood when he was told to, he answered the judge's questions in a low but firm voice.

"I do, your honor."

"I have been so advised, your honor."

Spiro T. Agnew was in court yesterday afternoon to plead no contest to charges of income tax evasion and it was there that his resignation as Vice President of the United States was announced.

COURTROOM

The end came in courtroom No. 3 on the fifth floor of the old Post Office building in downtown Baltimore, where Agnew made his mark early in the 1960s as county executive.

U.S. District Judge Walter E. Hoffman, of Norfolk, Va., sat at a high desk in front of three sets of purple drapes in the crowded room.

Before him, at the spectators' left, sat Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, once Agnew's colleague in the Nixon administration; Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen, the career chief of the Justice Department's criminal division, and young U.S. Attorney George Beall, chief

prosecutor in the Agnew case.

To the spectators' right sat Agnew, wearing a light blue suit, his usually carefully combed hair uncommonly a bit long and bristly in back. His attorneys, Jay Topkis of New York and Martin London of Washington, were at his side.

AGNEW

There had been few clues that something dramatic was about to happen. There had been dozens of motions and other proceedings in the case against Agnew, and most believed this was just another.

At 1:30 p.m. U.S. marshals allowed reporters into the courtroom with the stern admonition that they walk, not run, that they not leave once inside, and that "you are not to interview anybody in this room."

But there was a clue: there sat a Secret Service agent, whose normal duty is to protect the President or Vice President.

SCENE

At 2 p.m., Richardson, his face clouded, walked in, followed by Petersen and Beall. And at 2:40 p.m. Agnew walked in, appearing to have grayed considerably in the two months since he told a news conference the charges against him were



UPI Telephoto

JUDGE W. HOFFMAN He heard plea

"damned lies."

One minute later, in Washington 40 miles to the south, Agnew's letter of resignation was handed to the Secretary of State. Topkis announced this at 2:15 p.m., and a murmur of surprise swept the room.

During the proceedings, Richardson leaned forward in his characteristic manner and partially turned his face toward Agnew. Agnew did not look at him.

At 2:40 p.m., it was all over. The 12 U.S. marshals held back reporters while Agnew, a companion holding his arm, hurried from the room. Agnew murmured a word to a marshal he apparently recognized.

Richardson paused for a moment to talk to the lawyers. Then he, too, left.

United Press