

'Farewell'



AP Wirephoto

SPIRO AGNEW BEFORE HIS SPEECH
The former vice president smiled for the cameras

Agnew on TV-- Denies Any Crime

Washington

Spiro T. Agnew told the nation last night that he had resigned the vice presidency to give President Nixon an opportunity to restore "unimpaired confidence and implicit trust" in the office.

The former vice president, his eyes moist but his bearing composed, told a nationwide television audience that he was innocent of any wrongdoing but that he accepted a conviction of income tax evasion last week to spare the nation further agony.

He hailed Mr. Nixon, de-

clared that vice president designate Gerald R. Ford was an "excellent choice," and declared his experience had not diminished his confidence that American Democracy "is working better than ever before."

Agnew charged that witnesses who have built a government case of tax fraud, bribery and extortion against him were "self-confessed bribe brokers" and the readiness to believe their accusations within the Department of Justice was "not realistic."

REFORM

He called, in a remarkable anti-climax to the personal tragedy he underwent last

week, for reforms in the political system to help the nation profit from his "nightmare come true," and concluded by saying "goodnight and farewell."

In the 19 minutes that he read from a prepared statement into the television cameras, Agnew refrained totally from the bitter and blunt criticism of the Nixon administration that he was said to have voiced privately Sunday.

ARTICLE

According to a copyrighted article in a Tennessee newspaper, the former vice president said that he had been forced to resign by pressure, as the article paraphrased it. "From the highest levels of the Nixon administration."

In Washington, that phrase is customarily translated to mean the President.

But Agnew said last night that he wanted to pay "tribute" to the President for having shown "restraint and compassion" during months of the government's investigation of the vice president.

He called published accounts of unfriendly or "vitriolic" meetings with the President "completely false."

Moreover, Agnew urged the nation to support his suc-

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cessor, Ford, and the Nixon Administration.

In the Nashville Banner article, Agnew was not quoted directly, at his request.

DENIAL

Frank Van Der Linden, the author of the article and one of the few journalists who had access to Agnew during his five years in the Nixon administration, reported that Agnew had denied ever cheating on his federal income tax returns.

According to the article, Agnew said he had been pressured into accepting conviction on the single charge of tax evasion in exchange for the dropping of all other charges — including extortion and bribery — being assembled.

He said he was told by friends that the strategy would be to allow Congress to impeach him and to remove him from office. Then there would be almost no way for him to get a fair trial because the jury would almost certainly follow the

congressional lead and convict him.

SMILE

Last night, the former vice president appeared pale and a bit edgy, but toward the end of his televised remarks he managed a smile and he said that he would draw his inspiration from the comment of James A. Garfield on the death of President Lincoln:

"Fellow citizens, God reigns, and the government in Washington still lives."

Agnew did not rebut any of the specific detailed allegations lodged against him in a summary filed by the Department of Justice with the federal judge who sentenced Agnew last week to three years of unsupervised probation and a \$10,000 fine.

But he denied them as a whole, and he said that to portray him as the "initiator and gray imminence" of a scheme to rake funds from contractors in return for favors was "enough to evoke incredulous laughter."

And he repeated his courtroom assertions that he never had "enriched myself in betrayal of my public trust."

VERDICT

He said that he accepted the verdict of guilt — but adhered to a technical plea of no contest that preserved his own denial of wrongdoing — on a single charge of income tax evasion — because the nation could not tolerate continued trauma.

His act, Agnew declared, was born of a desire to "still the raging storm."

He said that in an electronic age, "image becomes dominant, appearance supercedes reality," and thus the charges being made against him in the news media were "fatal to a man who must be ready at any moment to step into the presidency."

Thus, he said, he ended the turmoil by stepping out of office and giving the President the opportunity of selecting a successor and restoring some measure of public trust.

New York Times