

Fact Vs. Fiction

NEW YORK (AP) — Former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew offered the outline of novel he is writing to Random House, but the proposed book was rejected, the president of the publishing firm said yesterday.

"It is absolutely and totally untrue that Random House will publish a novel written by . . . Agnew," Robert L. Bernstein, the president, said in a statement.

Bernstein said that the outline of the proposed novel "roughly" concerned a future vice president of the United States who turns out to have been programmed for disaster by Chinese Communists.

Bernstein said that Joseph Fox, a senior editor with the firm, was contacted by a mutual friend about Agnew's book and met with the former vice president at the Park Lane Hotel here over a week ago. Fox "was given an outline, one chapter and some character sketches of a proposed novel which Mr. Agnew said he was writing," Bernstein said.

"Fox took the material back to Random House, read it and showed it to James Silberman, vice president and editor-in-chief. The novel then was rejected because the Random House editors believed it was not

suitable for the Random House list," Bernstein said.

He said the firm had agreed prior to the meeting "to keep it confidential. We were distressed that the information had leaked."

Maxine Cheshire broke the story in her column in The Washington Post on Thursday. She quoted the publisher as saying, "The only reason to publish it would have been for its curiosity value, and that was not enough for us." She did not identify the publishing firm.

(Bernstein confirmed yesterday that Random House was the publishing firm to which Mrs. Cheshire referred and that he was the publisher she quoted in her column.

(In a formal statement, Bernstein said, "We regret the inaccuracy of the report issued today" in another Washington newspaper that Agnew's novel would be published by Random House, contradicting The Post's story.

(He said he was distressed that information about the novel and the confidential meeting with Agnew had leaked out, but added that he had been assured by Mrs. Cheshire that "the original source was not at Random House or through Random House.")