

SFChronicle
TV Interview

MAY 1 1976

Agnew Criticizes Nixon

New York

Disgraced former Vice President Spiro Agnew thinks his equally disgraced ex-boss, Richard Nixon, went to China as a means of restoring his dignity — and failed.

In a rare television interview, Agnew, now an author and foreign trade consultant, aired doubts about Nixon's handling of Vietnam, saying: "We left the battlefield at a time when we could have accomplished a victory."

He also called Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's book on the last days of the Nixon administration, "The Final Days," obscene and more a work of fiction than the novel he has just published.

Agnew, who resigned as vice president in October, 1973, after pleading no contest to one count of income tax evasion, made his comments on the Merv Griffin television show that will be broadcast on May 13. A transcript of his remarks was released yesterday.

On the program, Agnew reiterated his contempt for the press and what he terms its invasion of the private lives of politicians.

He refused to discuss the events leading up to his resignation and the charges of bribery and extortion surrounding it.

He said he is saving his version for a memoir he is planning to write. "I do owe it to the American people to write the memoir, and I have to do it, and I want to do it for myself and my family," he said.



AP Wirephoto

SPIRO AGNEW ON TV The China trip was 'wrong'

He added, "You have to bare your soul, and not only that you have to hurt some people . . . But, to tell the story as it exists, somebody has to be hurt, I suppose."

Agnew said he has had no communication with Mr. Nixon since his own resignation, and in remarks during the interview, he was often critical of the former President. At one point he said he never really knew the man.

Of Mr. Nixon's recent trip to China, Agnew said: "Why let himself be used for that purpose, for embarrassing the United States? I thought it was all wrong. But I can understand the compulsion.

"...The difficulty with Mr. Nixon ... was that he has been reeling from so many blows, he looked for something to restore his dignity, and he thought the China trip would do it, and it turned out to be a boomerang, I'm afraid."

On Vietnam, he said he thought Mr. Nixon was wrong in how he ended the Vietnam War. He said the upshot of the war was that the other side now has the greatest flexibility and freedom in doing exactly what it wants.

Of the Woodward and Bernstein book, Agnew said, "I think 'The Final Days' is more fiction than 'The Canfield Decision' (the book he wrote) and I believe also that it's a return to yellow journalism."

He also called it obscene and added, "I think the huckstering of this book is a travesty of justice that we dignify and celebrate these men."

He said Woodward and Bernstein were going to make millions out of destroying what is left of the Nixon family and added, "It is the worst thing that ever happened."

Reuters