

# Agnew Probation Ends

Today He's a Global Man of Mystery

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One night this summer, a tall, distinguished-looking man got up from a bar stool in the Hilton Hotel in Athens to answer a telephone page. If he hadn't done so, a bystander says, Spiro T. Agnew, former Vice President of the United States, probably would have remained there unnoticed and alone.

That scene indicates how much life has changed for Agnew since he resigned from office in disgrace exactly three years ago today. After pleading no contest to tax evasion charges stemming from accusations that he accepted cash kickbacks as governor of Maryland and Baltimore County ex-

ecutive, Agnew was fined and placed on a period of unsupervised probation, which ends today.

He no longer travels to world capitals surrounded by clusters of attendants, to be greeted with ceremony by presidents and kings. Now he usually travels alone, Ted Agnew, businessman, trying to open the same doors for different reasons.

The success of his global business ventures is hard to gauge, mainly because Agnew has consistently turned aside questions about his business dealings and prefers to remain a man of mystery.

Some glimpses do emerge however, revealing a man who has been at

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## Spiro Agnew: Vocal in Print, Veiled in Overseas Deals

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times lonely, bitter and depressed about the tax evasion conviction that forced him from office. Agnew's goal now is to be what he calls financially "well to do."

But he is also a man, finally, who seems unable—even somehow unwilling—to shed the aura of controversy that so often encircled him during his public life.

Difficult times beset the fallen spokesman for the "silent majority" when he first left office. He was broke, stripped of his right to practice law, rebuffed when he tried to register to vote. Only a \$200,000 loan from his friend Frank Sinatra kept him on his feet, he says now. The abrupt change in status was both painful and noticeable.

Diplomats from Kuwait for instance, tell the story of the time shortly after his resignation when Agnew arrived at their embassy in

Northwest Washington alone by cab one day to pick up a visa.

Both impressed and a little sympathetic by the American treatment of this once-important figure—and knowing how hard it was to find another cab in the out of the way neighborhood—the Kuwaitis sent their visitor home in an embassy limousine.

Similar courtesies were bestowed by other strangers in those early days. When Agnew first opened his business consulting office in the pleasant Village Green shopping mall in suburban Crofton, Md., tavern owner John Donohue used to open his basement dining room early on the evenings the former Vice President dropped in—so there was no chance he'd be harassed at the upstairs bar.

Even the State Department took special pains to smooth Agnew's way on his first trip to the Middle East as

a private citizen in May, 1974.

Embassies were cabled that he would be arriving, and when his wife Judy was suddenly taken ill, another cable was sent to help him cancel appointments and arrange quick transportation back to the States.

Since then, the State Department has made no special effort to keep track of Agnew's travels, desk officers say.

Gradually, things got better for Agnew. Money came in when he formed a business relationship with an Indiana promoter. He opened a consulting business and began circling the globe, and he became associated with Tong-sun Park, a Korean known for his Washington parties and his shadowy international business deals.

Agnew, now 57, also got a healthy advance on his novel, "The Canfield Decision," assumed control of a newsletter, and is planning to write his memoirs. During much of the time he stayed out of the news, but the combination of the novel and the newsletter again made Agnew the subject of heated controversy.

He has been charged with being anti-Semitic, pictured by critics as a money-hungry opportunist hoping to cash in on sycophantic bows to the Arab position in the Middle East.

One recent editorial cartoon even pictured him as a "soldier of fortune," wearing flowing Arab robes and counting greenbacks.

The controversy began with the publication of "The Canfield Decision." The novel was thick with references to Israeli cabals and Jewish influence in the United States. The dispute escalated this summer when the first issue of the newsletter, *Memorenda*, published under his name featured an attack on Israeli policy toward Palestine.

Agnew has denied the charges and many friends and former aides say they never saw any evidence of anti-Semitism while he was in office. A few noted in recent interviews that he often expressed admiration for Israel while he was Vice President. And they wonder what has changed his opinion.

Agnew declined to be interviewed by *The Washington Post* about the recent controversy surrounding his anti-Israeli statements.

"The Canfield Decision" was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for six weeks this spring and has sold about 70,000 copies in hard cover.

After a stirring, pro-Israel speech by the novel's tragic hero, Porter Canfield, to an Arizona audience, Agnew writes: "The applause was courteous but hardly thunderous. After all, less than 15 per cent of the crowd was Jewish. Down at the press table, where less than 15 per cent were not Jewish, the reaction was ecstatic."

On publicity tours after the book

was published, Agnew expanded on his anti-Israeli statements and was roundly denounced by Jewish groups across the nation as a result. A few have opened investigative files on the man.

This furor had hardly died down when the newsletter followed—prominently displaying an unsigned article attacking Israel's position on Palestine. The cries of anti-Semitism rose again.

Agnew's takeover of the tax-exempt foundation that publishes the newslet-

ter is perhaps the most puzzling of his recent actions.

For the man who protects his privacy so much seemed to be actively searching for a way to tell the public his views on world events.

He "bought" *Education for Democracy* from a group of former Indiana University students last November with a \$5,000 donation, according to director Hugo Seiler, who prepares the newsletter from Agnew.

Seiler, who is the retired head of a television company based in Paris, said Agnew paid for the first issue of the newsletter out of his own pocket. Records filed with the secretary of state of Indiana show that Agnew reported giving \$20,000 to the foundation last year.

The first mass mailing went to 110,000 people, Seiler said. Though he declined to describe the potential audience, officials of mailing list companies in the Washington area recall queries from Seiler about ultraconservative lists.

One list inquired about was of "extreme, far-right anti-Communist activists," one direct mail specialist remembered.

"We're just trying to see if people are still in a listening mood," Seiler said in a recent phone conversation. The issue he was preparing last week, —The second—featured an article on Taiwan, he said.

Seiler states emphatically however, that no Arab funding or editorial assistance goes into preparing the newsletter.

Agnew's first business arrangement concerned the Arab world. He went to work for Indiana promoter Walter Dilbeck, who bragged to the world that he was paying Agnew \$100,000 a year to find Arab money. In any event, Agnew began hopping around the globe, attempting to trade on the contacts he had made as Vice President.

Because of his contacts in the Arab world, and the mysteries of his international business connections, questions persist about the motivations for Agnew's anti-Israeli statements and the source of his income.

Just last week, for instance, a fed-

eral judge in Baltimore near a hearing on a Miami lawyer's charge that Agnew had violated his probation by acting as an agent for Arab governments.

The judge refused to delay today's expiration of Agnew's three-year term of unsupervised probation. But he did order the Justice Department to review the allegations.

The picture of Agnew as hired gun for Arab propagandists seems too simply drawn. Even the Jewish groups who are his harshest critics admit they have no evidence that he is in the pay of The Middle Eastern governments hostile to Israel.

What little is known of his business ties, in fact, points to Greece and the Far East, as much as the oil-rich Arabs, as bases for his middleman activity.

An interesting and unexplained relationship is that between Agnew and Tongsun Park, whose ties to some congressmen, especially those involved with approving shipments of surplus American rice under "food for peace" programs, have been the subject of numerous investigations for influence peddling.

Agnew and Park were introduced to each other by Peter Malatesta, a former Agnew aide who now runs a private club in Georgetown. Park and Agnew have been seen together here and in the Far East.

Late last November, for example, Agnew checked into a \$150-a-day suite at the elegant Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong, accompanied by Park. The purpose of the visit was unclear.

Adding to the mystery is the fact that informed sources report Agnew's son, Randy, was on the payroll of Park's Pacific Development Corp. for several months last year. Randy Agnew is now reportedly living in Greece.

Agnew's Greek business ties revolved, at least at one time, around a group of companies owned by John Latsis, a figure close to the fallen military regime in Athens.

For awhile Agnew used Latsis' Washington office at 1707 H St. NW when he was in town.

Sources in Athens say that Costas Margaritis, the former commander-in-chief of the Greek Navy and a top Latsis aide, has been a frequent companion of Agnew during his frequent visits to Greece over the past two years. The former Vice President has traveled to Athens at least seven times since May, 1974.

According to one source, Agnew seemed intent on trying to interest the Latsis group in joining joint ventures with American companies in Iran.

The only definite proposal, according to a ranking Latsis aide, was for a multimillion-dollar port construction in the south of Iran. The deal fell through.

The former Vice President also worked temporarily as an agent in Iran for a major American grain exporter, Cook Industries of Memphis.

A Cook spokesman said in a recent

telephone interview that Agnew had represented the company for several months in late 1974 and early 1975. "He came to us and asked if he could represent us and we said yes," the Cook official said. "He handled only one small transaction. Then there was a mutual parting of the ways."

Agnew was in Iran again last November, at the same time Sinatra was making a benefit appearance. He refused to discuss his business with a Washington Post special correspondent then, saying, "I'm doing several things but I don't want any publicity about them. They're entirely confidential."

Agnew's dealings with promoter Dilbeck were so confidential the gregarious Midwestern entrepreneur says he never could figure out what he got in return for the \$85,000 he paid his temporary business partner.

"I thought his connections were good," Dilbeck said in a recent phone conversation from Evansville. "He never did tell me much about what he was doing. I sent him some brochures on my projects to hotels in the Middle East.

"He was going to show them around. He was supposed to find groups to refinance the properties. One guy from Kuwait came out here once to look over a resort proposal. That was it," Dilbeck said. "We never

completed one deal.

All things considered, however, Agnew said during an interview last month with WJZ-TV in Baltimore, he considers himself "reasonably comfortable" financially. He announced just last week, for instance, that he and his family plan to move to Palm Springs, Calif., where Sinatra resides, early next year.

He expects his business to develop enough, he said, so he can move into the ranks of the "well to do."

"You have to remember, Ted has always wanted to be arich man," said a former aide who still considers himself a friend. "Palm Springs doesn't surprise me at all. He'll like being part of the tinsel crowd."

Agnew started his consulting firm, Pathlite, Inc., in June, 1974, with his personal secretary, Mary Ellen Warner, and her father, Walter E. Warner, a retired military officer.

The name of the company is said to be a variation of Agnew's old Secret Service code name, "pathfinder," perhaps mixed with a touch of Richard Nixon's name, "searchlight."

In Maryland, Agnew has stayed within a close circle of friends socially. He plays golf occasionally with a neighbor at the Bay Hills Country Club near his home, and has played tennis and attended a few parties with former aides.

He still sees three of his old pals from the Maryland days, George White, J. Walter Jones and Harry Dundore Sr., sometimes at the Ocean City condominium he bought last fall.

There have been times since his exile, he told the Baltimore television interviewers last month, that he wakes up "quite depressed about it all and say to myself . . . why did this happen to me?"

Thoughts like those don't keep him from functioning, Agnew has said, but he notes that "they are still part of my life and I don't think I'll ever get over it."

His version of the events leading to his downfall will come out in the memoirs he is planning to start at the end of the year.

Agnew insists he will never run for public office again. But last month he said on television, "I do want to have some influence if I can in the molding of American opinion. It would come about by furnishing the American people with information that I consider to be routinely overlooked or suppressed by the big media."

His newsletter is the obvious vehicle for that, but some critics dismiss it as a tax dodge. Other observers of Agnew speculate he still wants to be the spokesman for the "silent majority" he left behind three years ago.

Also contributing to this story were special correspondents Mary ANNE Weaver in Athens, William Branigan in Thran and Washington Post staff correspondent Jay Mathews in Hong Kong.