The liveliest of deadbeats

JACK ANDERSON and LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON—The private papers of Tongsun Park reveal that the Korean influence peddler's international economic empire has become a business junkyard, with creditors and taxmen fighting over the remnants while his skeleton staff bemoans the confusion.

We were the first to report on Park's shennanigans in 1974 when we found him gallavanting around the Middle East with then-Rep. Richard Hanna (D-Calif.). Hanna wasn't, we learned, the only congressman who was cozy with Park. But now the bespectacled, cherubic Park is a pariah in Washington. The Internal Revenue Service claims he owes $4.5 million in back taxes. The taxmen have filed liens against his bank accounts and have seized two of his posh houses. Park has fled the country, and was last reported ensconced in London, safe from the subpena powers of the numerous U.S. government investigations.

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In addition to his impounded property, Park has left behind the shell of his major business creation, Pacific Development, Inc. Many of its records have been masticated by shredding machines in the manner of an embattled foreign embassy. But reporters Lew Perdue and Ken Cummins have obtained documents which escaped the shredders. These private papers show the side of Tongsun Park which he tried to keep hidden for years while he wined and dined his way around the globe. The documents show Park was never one to go second class. Air France presented the gallavanting entrepreneur with a certificate when he crossed the sound barrier aboard a Concorde on Sept. 30, 1976. But the documents also show that Park had a tendency not to pay for his first-class adventures.

Park's papers indicate that the American Express company has jerked Park's credit-card privileges. Meanwhile, his Washington staff is floundering, pleading for a "definite chain of command," someone to bring order as it tries to decide which creditor to stave off next with a token payment.

Jack Anderson and Les Whitten

Agnew, Tongsun Park Team Up

A Washington odd couple, Spiro Agnew and Tongsun Park, have quietly teamed up in London.

Agnew was drummed out of the vice presidency in 1973, and Park fled from a Justice Department investigation three years later—the former for allegedly accepting bribes, the latter for allegedly paying bribes.

They have now combined their talents in pursuit of international business deals. Park's private papers contain cryptic references to joint Agnew-Park ventures in the Middle East.

We have also established that Agnew has received messages at the Korean entrepreneur's London office. On at least one occasion, Park personally accepted a telephone message for the former Vice President.

More specifically, an elusive businessman named Sami Shamoon has sent joint cables to Agnew and Park about a steel venture in Iran.

One cable, dated Nov. 25, 1975, assured the odd couple that the Iranian steel business "will grow very big since 100,000 residential flats coming up only in Teheran. With dams and other projects, steel construction is extremely and definitely vast. If you agree, we can have a joint venture together."

In a separate cable, an aide advised Tongsun Park of a Shamoon cable "addressed to both you and Governor S.A. as a most urgent and important message." It is clear from other evidence that the mysterious "Governor S.A." is Spiro Agnew, who was once governor of Maryland.

Park's private records also tell of bulk yarn deals in Iran. A travel itinerary indicates that Agnew, Park and Shamoon made at least one business trip together to New York City. And Agnew's name crops up in other Park documents.

Our attempts to get an explanation of the Agnew-Park connection from the principals were fruitless. We were told that both men were out of the country. We tried to reach Agnew through Pathlite, Inc., a Maryland firm that lists him as its president. All our questions were answered with a polite "no comment."

Park's American company, Pacific Development, Inc., had no telephone. We tried Park at a London number provided by one of our sources. The phone was answered "Eastern Navigation," but we were told Park was not there. We also traced the mysterious Sami Shamoon to London, but he has an unlisted number.

Ford Attack—Gerald R. Ford has been keeping his powder dry, but he is now preparing a broadside against the man who succeeded him in the White House.

In his first major political speech since leaving office, the former President will tell the nation on May 19 what he thinks of Jimmy Carter's policies.

Ford's opinion of his successor, according to intimates, isn't favorable. He intends to take the hide off Carter on such domestic issues as inflation, taxes and energy. As one intimate put it: "Ford's going to take off the gloves."

The former President gave the first hint of what is to come in some off-the-cuff remarks on April 16. "Mr. Carter's anti-inflation program came in like a lion. It's going out like a mouse," grumped Ford.

Ford probably will point out in his May 19 speech that he held the annual inflation rate to slightly over 5 per cent. But under Carter, there is gloomy talk of another round of "double digit" inflation.

Oil Rip-Off— The United States spends a staggering $35 billion on imported oil each year, yet there are no controls over the oil purchases. It is left to the oil companies, not the federal government, to negotiate the purchases.

This might be accepted as the American way, given our free enterprise system, except for some multimillion-dollar price manipulations. The Federal Energy Administration recently discovered that 20 major U.S. oil companies overcharged the public $336 million for oil transferred from their foreign affiliates. Gulf Oil alone ripped off the country for $79.6 million.

This has outraged Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), chairman of the powerful House Trade subcommittee. In a private letter to President Carter, Vanik has written: "In reviewing your energy proposal, which I substantially support, I find no recommendation for changing the present method of import oil procurement.

"Since the oil we import is sold by foreign governments as sovereign states, it would appear to our national advantage to deal with the oil-producing states on a government-by-government basis."

Leaving the negotiations to the oil industry, Vanik concludes, hasn't always served "the best interests of the American consumer."