

ASSASSINATIONS

Former agent links Oswald to CIA

By Herb Borock & John Markoff

BASED ON WHAT I HEARD AT Tokyo Station, I became convinced that the following scenario is true: CIA people killed Kennedy. Either it was an outright project of headquarters with the approval of McCone or it was done outside, perhaps under the direction of Dulles and Bissell. It was done in retaliation to Kennedy's reneging on a secret agreement with Dulles to support the invasion of Cuba."

The man who made this statement to the House Select Committee on Assassinations lives quietly in a California suburb today. He is a technician for a small electronics company and spends most of his time raising and caring for his family.

But on the day President Kennedy was shot, Jim Wilcott led a very different life. He was a financial officer in a "Class A" CIA station in Tokyo, Japan. Wilcott was the man who made the disbursements for CIA covert operations in Japan.

Recently he told congressional investigators that Lee Harvey Oswald was a CIA agent controlled by the Tokyo Station's Soviet Russia Branch: "At one point, soon after Ruby shot Oswald, I was talking to someone, I can't remember who for sure, and I expressed disbelief about Oswald even being a CIA project. I was told something like: 'Well, Jim, so and so drew an advance sometime in the past from you for Oswald' or 'for that project under such and such a crypto.'"

Wilcott is the first CIA agent to surface who was present, inside the agency, and in day-to-day contact with the case officers who operated in the shadowy world that linked Oswald to the Kennedy assassination. Wilcott is one of more than 1,400 people who have been interviewed by staff investigators for the House Assassinations Committee that was established in September 1976 to investigate the murders of Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. The committee has been holding public hearings this month in Washington.

Wilcott contacted the committee to tell them about "the Kennedy assassination as I knew it at the completion of my second tour at Tokyo Station as of June 1964." Committee staff investigator Harold Leap came to California in January to record Wilcott's statement on tape. The committee then decided to interview Wilcott in Washington.

Wilcott's career inside the agency spanned nine years between 1957 and 1966, when he worked in Japan, Miami and Washington, D.C., occasionally involving himself in field operations as well as working as a financial officer.

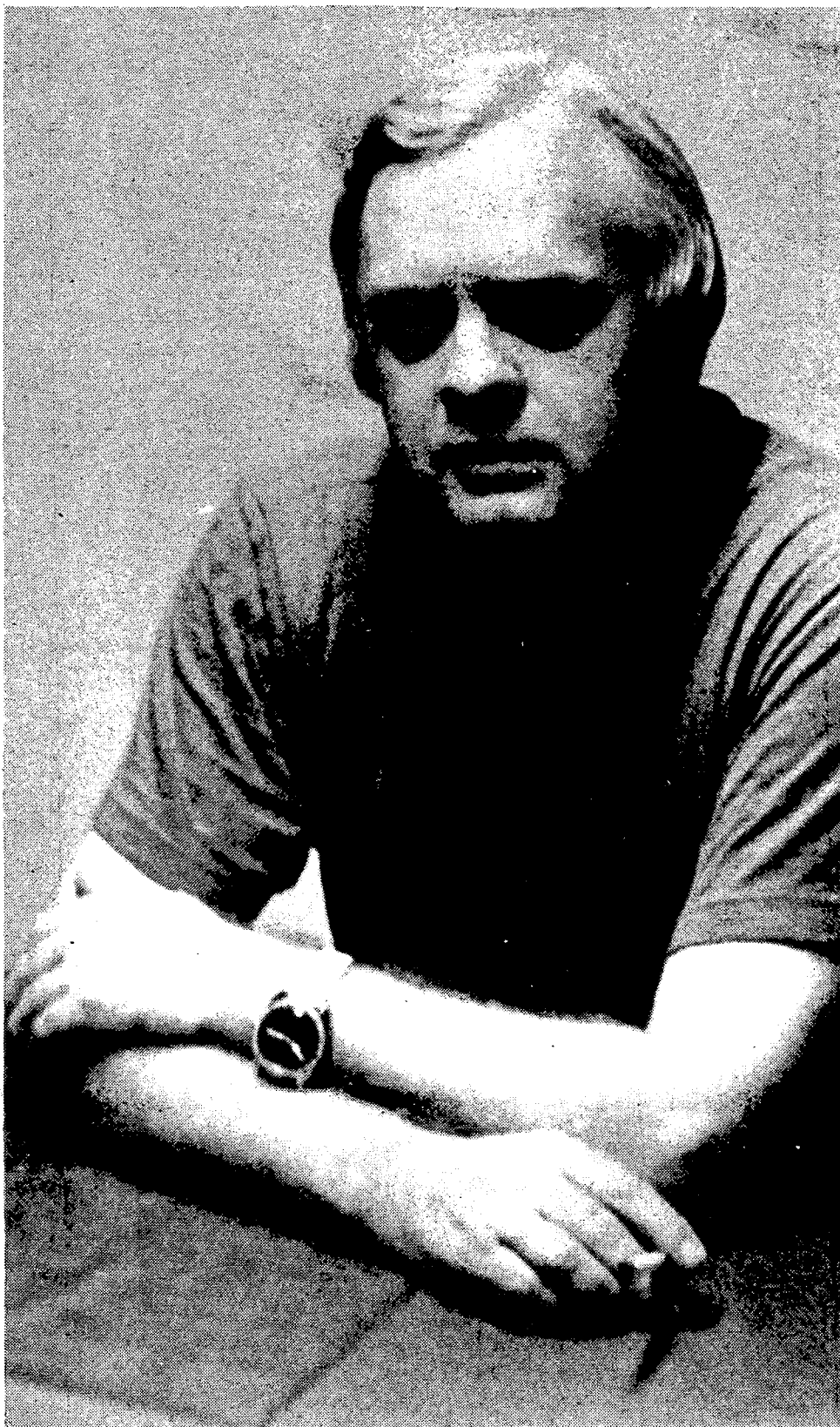
Oswald's role as double agent.

Wilcott claims it was because he was involved in the operational side of the CIA that he first learned that Oswald was an agent. To earn extra money while in Tokyo, Wilcott often worked as a duty officer in the station. While working, shortly after Kennedy was killed, he first heard discussions of CIA involvement in the assassination. He told the committee:

"The following day, Nov. 24, Sunday, I had day duty. Much talk was still going on although meetings had gone on among the branches all night. Much was said at these meetings about observing the 'need-to-know' principle. The mood had changed from the elation of the previous day to a more serious one. That was when I first heard about CIA somehow being involved. Not long before going off duty, talk about Oswald's connection with the CIA was making the rounds."

More than once, Wilcott was told about CIA employees who were "working on the Oswald project" in the late 1950s, he told the committee.

According to Wilcott, Oswald had been trained by the CIA at Atsugi Naval Air Station, the CIA's secret base for Tokyo Station's special operations. The



Jim Wilcott, stationed in Japan, knew of Oswald as a double agent for the CIA.

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station's SR [Soviet Russia] Branch had responsibility for Atsugi where Oswald was stationed with a Marine Corps unit from 1956 to 1958.

"Oswald was recruited from the military for the express purpose of becoming a double agent on assignment to the USSR, Wilcott testified. "When Oswald returned from the USSR in June of 1962, either on his way back or after he got back, he was brought back to Japan, either to Atsugi or Yokosuka for debriefing."

In 1963 Oswald established a Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans to support the Castro regime. It seemed likely to Wilcott "that the original assassination project may have been to kill Kennedy and blame it on Oswald, who would be solidly linked to Castro as a pretext for another invasion."

Bay of Pigs, a bone of contention.

The failure of the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961 was

a major point of contention between the Kennedy administration and the CIA. The invasion plan was developed by the CIA's Deputy Director Richard Bissell, and had the full backing of CIA Director Allen Dulles. Kennedy fired both men after the invasion.

Supporters of Bissell and Dulles contended that Kennedy reneged on an agreement he had reached with them shortly after his election to provide U.S. military support for the invasion. Kennedy supporters said that Dulles and Bissell misled Kennedy by giving him false reports about anti-Castro sentiment in Cuba and by changing the invasion plans "to include the creation of an incident that would call for an all-out attack by the U.S. military," Wilcott told the committee.

The dispute between Kennedy and Bissell and Dulles was reflected within the CIA itself according to Wilcott. There was a group of "Kennedy liberals" who were mostly low-ranking employees, and

a dominant and strongly anti-communist group.

Wilcott remembers CIA conservatives accusing Kennedy of "treason" and calling him a "dupe of the USSR" after he negotiated the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in September 1963. The conservatives were also upset about Kennedy's support of integration, his positions against the oil depletion allowance, and his plans for withdrawing troops from Vietnam, Wilcott recalled. "More frequent and more bitter, however was the charge that Kennedy had reneged on his secret agreement with Dulles to support the Bay of Pigs invasion," Wilcott stated before the committee.

When Wilcott heard that Kennedy had been killed he went to the Tokyo CIA Station: "It was a scene of great excitement, confusion and wild talk. The conservatives were obviously elated and there was talk of an invasion of Cuba. From the very first day, everyone talked in terms of an operation, particularly the operational people, or in popular terms—a conspiracy," Wilcott testified.

The following day Wilcott first heard talk about CIA involvement with the assassination and of Oswald's connection to the CIA. "While this kind of talk was a jolt to me, I didn't really take it seriously then," Wilcott testified. But by the time Wilcott left Tokyo seven months later he was convinced that "Ruby was paid by CIA to do away with Oswald, and Oswald was a patsy."

KGB on to Oswald.

Wilcott believes that Oswald was set up because the CIA was concerned that they could not control Oswald's actions in the future. When Oswald returned from the Soviet Union in 1962 he was debriefed by the CIA in Japan, Wilcott told us, because "they were having some kind of difficulty with Oswald. He knew that the KGB was on to him as soon as he stepped on Soviet soil. It was a stupid project from the start. There were too many compromising facets to his background that would have made him a good deep cover double agent and that therefore the Soviets were on to him right from the start. This made him very angry and this was why they had trouble."

Wilcott said, "Oswald may have been set up as a patsy because they were having this trouble. He may have threatened to blow the whole thing about the double agent role in the Soviet Union. So they did get two birds with one stone. They set him up as Kennedy's assassin and got rid of him at the same time."

According to Wilcott, the CIA had connections with the Dallas police and certain individuals and corporations in Dallas at the time Kennedy was killed in that city. He told the committee:

"There was no doubt that CIA was in 'as thick as thieves' with the Dallas Police. Several different individuals or firms in Dallas had been involved in one way or another with acting as cut-outs for arms shipments to Cuban exiles for the invasion. He also remembered "hearing about some CIA people who had somehow helped the right-wing Minutemen in Texas to get arms, originally intended for the invasion."

When Wilcott was transferred from Tokyo to Washington in 1964 he found out about other non-foreign operations. He learned that the CIA believed it had the duty "to exceed the limitations of the CIA charter, or even the Congress and the President," he told the assassinations committee. In our recent interview with him Wilcott stated, "I used to hear this talk about, well, if a communist was elected president, the CIA was prepared to deal with that."

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LABOR

Grocery clerks break the chains

By Larry Remer

AS INFLATION PUSHED PAST the double-digit mark last week, more than 70,000 Southern California food market clerks struck 15 supermarket chains demanding a contract that would keep them in step with rising prices.

The walkout, which affects 1,100 markets between the Mexican border and San Luis Obispo, came after members of nine Retail Clerks Union locals voted by a nine-to-one margin to reject a management offer that would have provided less than a 7 percent annual pay hike over three years.

Before the strike was a day old, four of the smaller supermarket chains signed an agreement with the Clerks, breaking ranks with the Food Employers Council (FEC) which had been bargaining for the industry. But at week's end, both union leaders and operators of 11 major market chains—including Safeway, Vons, and Alpha Beta—were girding for a long strike.

The last Southern California Retail Clerks strike was in 1969. It lasted 19 days.

Union leaders say that the length of the strike will depend on management's willingness to bargain in good faith.

"Right now, there's a gap as big as the Pacific Ocean," declared Chris Platten, secretary-treasurer of San Diego Local 1222.

"Our members have bills to pay and mortgages to meet," continued Platten. "We have to keep pace with inflation. Safeway seems to have no trouble doing that. Just look at their recent financial statement. Profits in the first half of 1978 were up 25 percent from \$53.1 million to \$66.5 million."

Challenge to Carter.

The walkout proffers a stiff challenge to Carter administration efforts to curb inflation by keeping union wage settlements under 7 percent. In the closing days of bargaining before the strike, management representatives repeatedly raised Carter's "hold-the-line" stance on wages in an effort to get the Clerks to accept management's offer.

Union leaders, however, repeatedly declared that worker wages, by following Carter's guidelines, would lag behind rises in the cost of living. When Ken Edwards, president of the 17,000-member Los Angeles Clerks Local, and other union leaders told membership meetings that they wanted to wait until a better contract offer was forthcoming, they were roundly cheered.

The Clerks' stance mirrors the position of AFL-CIO president George Meany, who has harshly criticized Carter wage proposals for postal workers and other labor unions. Meany, along with the rest of the AFL-CIO national leadership, is standing firmly behind the Clerks.

The strike has also captured the attention of the Carter administration. Wayne Horvitz, director of the Federal Mediation Service, appealed repeatedly to both sides to return to the bargaining table. And, after two days, Federal mediators asked for assistance from the National Joint Labor-Management Committee to solve the impasse.

In an effort to break the strike, market owners hired 20,000 scabs to work with management personnel in an effort to keep stores open. But by mid-week, most of the affected chains had announced cutbacks in hours, long lines at check-out counters, and shortages on the shelves.

The Clerks have received strong support from the Teamsters, whose drivers are honoring picket lines and are refusing to deliver food to struck markets. This sup-

port reciprocates for Retail Clerk support of a month-old Teamster strike in Northern California against supermarket chains there.

Striking retail clerks closed many of the supermarket chains in Southern California. With sales off as much as 50 percent the stores gave in to workers' demands.

Clerks Union leaders have repeatedly reiterated their determination to win parity in pay with Northern California food handlers, where wages average \$1.05 an hour higher.

The pressure to win this demand stems from the last Southern California food contract, which was negotiated in 1972 during the wage-price freeze. The Clerks have complained bitterly that they were caught unfairly in the freeze because of the timing of their contract, noting that food prices in Northern California—where the wages are higher—are not greater than in the Southland.

Moreover, the Clerks have also been seeking improved pension and health benefits and elimination of management plans to increase the number of part-time employees.

Presently, a journeyman food clerk makes \$6.92 an hour. Less than 20 percent of the clerk workforce is employed at that rate. At the bottom of the scale, more than 25 percent work as clerk helpers and get \$3.47. The average hourly rate of pay for food clerks is \$4.32.

At mid-week, management announced its intention to bypass the union and go directly to its employees with details of its last contract offer. Given the overwhelming support for a strike that the rank-



Retail clerks went on strike last week in Southern California. The strike affected 11 major market chains, including Safeway, Vons, and Alpha Beta. The chains agreed to a tentative settlement on Aug. 25.

and-file has shown, it's unlikely that there will be a settlement until the Food Employers Council sweetens the pot.

And sweeten the pot they did. On Aug. 25 the store owners agreed to most of the clerk's financial demands. The Retail

Clerks union agreed to a tentative settlement that will be put to a vote by the membership next week.

Larry Remer is a journalist in Southern California.

Incumbent re-elected, union split

By Tom Young

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION of Government Employees (AFGE), meeting in Chicago Aug. 7-11, narrowly re-elected its incumbent president while repudiating his position on civil service reform and firing his general counsel, a key aid.

The resulting standoff appears to leave the union, largest in the federal sector, with a weakened leadership and no clear strategy for the upcoming congressional debate over civil service.

AFGE President Kenneth Blaylock was involved in lengthy negotiations with the White House over the upcoming civil service bill, and had endorsed the final product. Many convention delegates, including some Blaylock supporters, complained that the plan would strip federal workers of past protections and allow increased political interference with their work. Delegates booed loudly at mention of Carter's name. In 1976 Carter was the first Presidential candidate ever endorsed by AFGE.

In the federal sector AFGE, the largest government union, competes with several independent unions, two with approximately 100,000 members each. The other federal unions have denounced AFGE's endorsement of civil service reform. AF-



Kenneth Blaylock won narrowly.

Delegates to the AFGE loudly booed Carter's name, even though he was the first candidate the union ever endorsed.

GE's local leadership has been hard pressed to explain this position to its membership, particularly since local leadership disliked this policy themselves.

The National Treasury Employees union (NTEU) made a name for itself among federal workers several years ago when it won a lawsuit gaining back pay for many of them. Now claiming 50,000 members, NTEU has launched an aggressive raiding campaign against AFGE outside its traditional Treasury-IRS jurisdiction. The Treasury Union has won an election at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and is expected to beat AFGE at the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

One might expect that unions would find federal workers increasingly receptive to their message. Pay standards are being cut and traditional protections may be cut away. The pressure to rationalize the public sector is being felt on the federal level, leading to declining working conditions.

Blaylock does not appear ready to rise to the occasion. The re-elected leadership has shown little imagination and have actually lost 25,000 members over the last two years. Their program emphasizes working responsibility with Congress and the Executive, which makes appealing to the employees of these government bodies difficult.