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Edwin Wilson Has Ace in the Hole: Testimony

Edwin P. Wilson, the renegade CIA agent who was lured into a trap by the Justice Department, has an ace in the hole: his testimony. Consider the embarrassment he could cause by testifying about just two episodes at a public trial:

- Wilson was on the CIA's payroll, and doing the agency's bidding, all the time he was employed by one of the largest labor unions in the United States as its international representative in Europe.

- He served as an advance man for Hubert H. Humphrey in the 1964 campaign, thus playing an active role in partisan politics, while still working for the CIA.

These confessions were made by Wilson on tape before he left Libya and was ensnared by the Justice Department. I arranged for him to tape more than three hours of candid, wide-ranging reminiscences of his days as an undercover agent for the CIA and Navy intelligence. The tapes were made in Tripoli by Richard Bast, a private detective who specializes in intrigue and who served as the intermediary.

Wilson offered to take a lie-detector test as evidence that he was tell-

ing the truth. The test was being arranged by my associates Dale Van Atta and Indy Badhwar when Wilson was lured from his Libyan sanctuary, captured in the Dominican Republic and hustled off to the slammer in the United States.

For years the communist press has accused practically every American working abroad of being a CIA hireling. Most of the time the charges have been pure borscht. But in Wilson's case there was a CIA connection. His account:

Wilson "was able to wangle a job from the CIA," as he put it, after the Korean War. His first assignment was to provide security for the CIA's super-secret U2 spy plane in California. He accompanied the U2 to England, Germany and Turkey, where he served until the Soviets shot down Francis Gary Powers and the U2 project with him. Wilson then was transferred to the CIA's international organizations division.

"On this assignment, I was able to find a job on my own, without any help from the agency, with the Seafarers International Union in New York," he recalled. The union's leadership was never told he was with the CIA, as far as Wilson knows.

"Our role was to use [the union] as a vehicle to arrive overseas, where you could be effective in work against communists," he said.

As the union's international representative in Europe, Wilson was able to inform the CIA "about smug-

gling of arms and ammunition by seamen into Cuba and into South America." He could also stir trouble for European unions that "were kind of getting along with the communists," he said.

"We kind of helped foment a strike by the communists," he said, "which kind of positioned them, got them out front, and the governments took certain actions against them. It was quite effective. I thought, to lessen the influence of the communist unions in Europe."

After two years of this activity things got hot for Wilson. His wife and children were arrested by the Belgian police at one point. The Seafarers, still ignorant of his CIA status, brought him home and assigned him to AFL-CIO headquarters. "George Meany at the time wanted someone to work for him in international activities in the Far East," Wilson said. "So I made a three- or four-month tour of the Far East."

His union work in Washington opened the way for him to work Humphrey's vice-presidential campaign. He made contacts in Congress and elsewhere in Washington that were to prove invaluable.