

Greeks' Search for Killers Of C.I.A. Man Unfruitful

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By STEVEN V. ROBERTS DEC 25 1975

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ATHENS, Dec. 24—The Greek Government apparently made little progress today in the search for the killers of Richard S. Welch, the chief of the Central Intelligence Agency in Greece.

Mr. Welch was shot down last night in front of his home in suburban Athens after returning from a Christmas party given by Jack B. Kubisch, the American Ambassador here. Well-informed sources described the attack today as a "professional job." There were few clues to the assailants' identity.

Mr. Welch's driver reportedly told the police that the killers had addressed him in Greek before opening fire, but the driver later said he was not sure.

Prime Minister Constantine



Caramanlis interrupted his Christmas vacation on the island of Corfu and ordered an intensive investigation of the crime. The Prime Minister has been trying to dampen anti-American sentiment here, partly because Greece wants to attract American tourists and investment.

The Greek Government issued a statement that said:

"The cowardly murderers do not belong, at least spiritually, to the Greek people, whose honor and national interests they aimed to offend."

U.S. Blamed for Military Rule

Anti-American feelings here are rooted in the pervasive belief that Washington in general, and the C.I.A. in particular, helped install and support the military regime that ruled Greece for more than seven years. Many Greeks also believe the United States helped to organize the coup d'état against President Makarios of Cyprus in July 1974, and blame Washington for not stopping the Turkish invasion of Cyprus that followed.

Even some Americans who share the Greek criticism of Washington's foreign policy were bitter and angry today. Some expressed the view that Greece's tendency to blame outsiders for all its problems was not only inaccurate and unfair but helped create a climate that contributed to the murder of Mr. Welch.

In the absence of specific information about the slaying, speculation was rampant. Greek newspapers received phone calls from a group that said it was made up of rightist military officers and that it was responsible for the crime. The police seemed unimpressed, however.

Other analysts suspected leftist elements, and pointed out that newspapers here had recently received, and published, a list of C.I.A. agents in Athens with their addresses and phone numbers.

Andreas Papandreou, the Socialist leader, and several newspapers said today that the killers were probably persons trying to provoke trouble between

the United States and Greece. Others linked the crime with the assassinations of two Turkish ambassadors several months ago or with the kidnapping of oil ministers in Vienna this week.

Conflicting Accounts

The two witnesses — Mrs. Welch and the driver — apparently gave conflicting accounts. One said the killers had followed the Welch car, the other thought that an ambush had been set up at the house. They apparently agreed that three masked men had approached Mr. Welch as he got out of the car, that he was shot with a pistol and that the killers sped away in a dark-colored car.

Mr. Welch, who was 46 years old, had three children, aged 21, 20 and 17. Two were studying in Britain and the other in the United States.

The intelligence officer was officially listed as a special assistant to the ambassador, but his identity as the chief C.I.A. official here was widely known. After graduating from Harvard in 1951, he apparently joined the intelligence agency and served here during the 1950's. Mr. Welch was stationed in Cyprus from 1960 to 1964 and then spent 11 years in Latin America before returning to Greece last summer.

A witty and scholarly man, Mr. Welch was known for his familiarity with the classics and his fluency in both ancient and modern Greek. At a recent party, a woman told him that he was supposedly the second-best speaker of Greek in the American Embassy.

"Excuse me," he replied, "I am not second best, I am the best."

Ford Extends Sympathy

VAIL, Colo., Dec. 24 (Reuters) — President Ford today sent his condolences and sympathy to Mrs. Welch in Athens.

In his message, the President told her: "His dedicated service to his country and faultless contribution to United States foreign policy objectives throughout his career will never be forgotten.

"In your time of grief, you have the deep sympathy of a grateful American people and their President."

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger also sent a message of condolences to Mrs. Welch.

C.I.A. Blamed for Death

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24 — A group called The Fifth Estate issued a long statement today charging that "if anyone is to blame for Mr. Welch's death it is the C.I.A. that sent him there to spy, perhaps even to intervene, in the affairs of the Greek Government."

The Fifth Estate is a three-year-old organization of former intelligence agents and others now associated with the anti-war movement who have dedicated themselves to "exposing the criminality" of clandestine C.I.A. operators around the world.

Last winter The Fifth Estate's occasional publication, called Counterspy, identified Mr. Welch as a leading C.I.A. agent.

William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, denounced The Fifth Estate's statement today as "shocking." In an unusual declaration — the C.I.A. has traditionally refrained from naming its clandestine agents in public even after their deaths — he said:

"The so-called Counterspy of The Fifth Estate, without even an expression of human sympathy, has issued a statement which can only be called a shocking attempt to use the death of a dedicated American as fuel for its irresponsible and paranoiac attack on other Americans serving their country here and abroad."