

1974 PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

# THE HEROIN TRAIL

THE FIRST JOURNALISTIC  
INVESTIGATION TO  
TRACE HEROIN TRAFFIC FROM  
TURKEY TO FRANCE TO HIS  
ULTIMATE CUSTOMER —  
THE YOUNG AMERICAN ADDICT!

BY THE STAFF  
AND EDITORS OF

**Newsday**



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out of his sight, big political powers were knocking heads in SDECE. Things got very mixed up. He didn't know who was in SDECE and who was out. He wasn't sure who held the political power and who didn't. But someone along the line, his strings got cut."

Who were the Powers who might have been "knocking heads" at SDECE? That's a part of the mystery that has not been solved. But some patterns of a struggle can be sketched out between the adherents of Pompidou and those of De Gaulle: a struggle both of philosophy and practical power.

Pompidou had installed his own man, Alexandre de Marenches, a non-political administrator, as head of the agency early in 1970, shortly after becoming President. De Marenches was to reorganize SDECE, rid it of underworld and other influences, and make it responsive to Pompidou. One of his agents in this effort was to be Fournier.

On the other hand, the strong Gaullists, who included Debra, Barberot, and Barberot's mentor, African affairs secretary Jacques Foccart, could be expected to seek to maintain their influence in the agency. And since Pompidou needed the De Gaulle wing of the party in order to hold national power, any direct anti-Gaullist moves had to be made carefully.

In the fall of 1972, the French and American governments learned that two of us had read the Debra letter to Barberot.

Shortly afterward, we received a call from the U.S. Embassy in Paris, stating that earlier promises of French and American cooperation with our investigation would only be kept if we agreed to submit our manuscript to both governments in advance of publication for the correction of "erroneous information." We refused.

We returned to the U.S. in mid-December. Late in January, 1973 a French journalist with whom we had been friendly in Paris was sent to New York by his newspaper, which has close ties with the French government. On his publisher's instructions he met a stranger in a New York hotel, received a document and delivered one copy to us in Garden City without comment. Then he returned to France with the original document.

The unsigned document contained part of the "secret confession" of Claude Pastou, a low-level drug trafficker. The document said that Pastou had confessed to the BNDD that he had been the contact appointed to meet Delouette when he arrived in New York with the heroin in the spring of 1971. And, he said, he had met him.

Pastou said he had been sent from South America by Christian David, a major narcotics profiteer, and that he met Delouette at the Park Sheraton on April 4, 1971. They went to the Hotel Taft and discussed how Pastou would take delivery, Pastou said.

The next night, Pastou said, Delouette didn't show up. He became worried and returned to South America.

The document concludes with a series of summary statements in the manner of a legal brief. Among the conclusions: Since Delouette lied about not meeting any contact in New York, everything he said was untrue.

We had heard remarks previously that Pastou, who is now in American custody, had made such a statement to U.S. officials. But we had been unable to get confirmation from the Justice Department. How then did the French government get this information from the U.S.? And why, after learning that we knew about the Debra letter, did the French government, acting through unofficial channels, go to such an effort to leak an American secret to an American newspaper?

Was Delouette a "puppet on a string?" And whose strings?

Why did one of the highest-ranking ministers in France assume personal responsibility for Delouette's problems and order that the entire matter be kept secret from Delouette's own superior in the French Secret Service? And why did the French government refuse to fully cooperate with U.S. officials on the case? Is it a simple case of heroin smuggling? Or is it the reflection of a major power struggle within the French government?  
*It is a mystery.*

II

He was a World War II Resistance hero.

After the war he joined the French secret service as a captain.

He saved President Charles de Gaulle's life while on a secret mission during the terror-filled days of Algerian strife in 1961.

And for more than a decade, he was also one of France's biggest heroin smugglers. He finally went to jail last summer, six years after American authorities gave evidence to the French government about him. He reportedly is about to get out of jail this month (February, 1973) after serving only eight months of a five-year sentence.  
His name is Michael Victor Metz. He ran an operation

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that smuggled heroin valued at almost half a billion dollars into the U.S.

His story is unusual in scope, but it typifies the French government's failure to move vigorously to stop the production and movement of heroin—found ultimately for American addicts. Mertz's partner, for example, is still not in prison although he has been convicted as a heroin supplier.

Mertz's story had not been detailed before. He is one of six men in the heroin business whom Newsday has identified as having been members of the French secret service (SDECE) at one time.

The story of one of these, Roger Delouette, created a public stir in 1971. Delouette, arrested in the U.S. for smuggling in heroin, claimed he was acting under secret service orders. The charge was denied by the French, but a letter about Delouette's back pay, from Minister of State for Defense Michel Debre, has added to the mystery about the case.

Others who had both heroin and SDECE connections include:

- Ange Simonielli, now serving a prison term in France, after staying out of jail for more than four years despite official evidence of heroin involvement. He was an SDECE agent in the early 1960s, as a counter-terrorist against the right-wing Secret Army Organization (OAS) that was threatening to topple General de Gaulle.

- Christiaan David, arrested in 1972 in Brazil, and now in prison in the U.S. for smuggling heroin from Latin America. During interrogation by Brazilian police he confessed to participating in the plot to murder Mehdi Ben Barka, a Moroccan leftist lured to France under false pretenses by SDECE. David said he received \$150,000 for his role in the plot: burning the body, covering it with lime and then burying it.

- Andre Labay, now in a French jail awaiting trial for heroin smuggling. Before he was arrested, Labay also had become a confidant and business associate of the daughter of the late Haitian dictator, Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier.

- Jacques Altin, who died in the summer of 1972 after a long career as one of the top heroin financiers. Among other things, he was an assassin for SDECE. Knowing this fact, one of his superiors called him "a wonderful person, worthy of esteem, an absolutely extraordinary agent."

Mertz and Altin were old-time SDECE agents. David, Simonielli, and Labay were among those recruited from the underworld between 1959 and 1964 to serve as SDECE counter-terrorists against the OAS, which opposed De Gaulle's plans for Algerian independence. During the Algerian action,

this special section of SDECE was known as the barbeques (the bearded ones). Later, the agents got a different name.

These recruits were known as "honorable correspondents," employed by the secret agency for specific assignments. Delouette, who had no identifiable criminal background, was also an "honorable correspondent." Some of those involved in the heroin business have performed other tasks for the agency since the Algerian crisis.

The impact of the SDECE agents—and others recruited from the underworld to serve in the parallel police (SAO)—on the heroin business was explained by a former American official in France: "Former Interior Minister Roger Frey and [Secretary for Community and African Affairs] Jacques Foccart handled the anti-OAS campaign. De Gaulle said to them, 'Take care of it.' He didn't ask them how they would do it, and I don't think he knew or cared. He just wanted it done. And now a lot of favors are owed."

Both in the case of Mertz and his partner and in the case involving Simonielli, the French government stalled action against them for more than four years after receiving evidence of their heroin operations from the U.S. They continued to supply heroin to the U.S. and none of the three was actually brought to trial until after the Delouette story had broken.

French President Georges Pompidou installed Alexandre de Marenches, who had no political ties, as the head of SDECE in 1970 in an effort to end some of the agency's old connections. But the favors were hard to forget, particularly when so many who had received them remained in authority in SDECE and other parts of the Gaullist government.

The Mertz case is a classic example. Mertz, 52, was sentenced to five years in a French prison on July 5, 1971, convicted of heading a ring that smuggled about a third of a ton of pure heroin annually into the U.S. for eight years. He began serving his five-year sentence in July, 1972. But in December, his wife, who did not know that we were reporters, told us that he would be quietly released from prison in February, 1973. And she agreed to arrange a private meeting for us with Mertz in a Paris hotel room for the first week of March.

Mertz's partner in the smuggling ring, Achille Cecchini, a veteran heroin operator and a close associate of French heroin bosses Marcel Faneuil, Dominique Venturi and the late Joseph Orsini, was given the same sentence as Mertz at the same time. But he has remained free in Marseille on "medical liberty"—too "ill" to be jailed. Nonetheless, he has been

seen meeting with his underworld associates at various Marseilles locations since then.

Born in the Marseille area of France, Mertz was taken into the German Army in 1941. He deserted in 1943 and joined the French Resistance in the Limoges area. An efficient killer of Germans, he soon headed his own unit under the pseudonym of Commandant Baptiste. He was awarded the Legion of Honor and the Cross of the Voluntary Fighter by the French government, and went into French intelligence after the war. He served in Germany, Turkey and Morocco, operating under cover as a French Army captain.

In 1947, he married Pauline Scheller, the adopted daughter of a famous French actor. Mertz had become wealthy operating the Saitex, one of Paris' most famous brothels, and a string of smaller such houses throughout France. By 1949, although Mertz was still in SDECE, he and Mariel were also smuggling heroin to the U.S. from France.

The story of Mertz's involvement in the heroin business during the 1960s has been learned from a number of sources, including secret French court and police reports. Among other things, these reports reveal how Mertz and Mariel used Ceccini as their chief heroin supplier.

Ceccini, 51, was the chief lieutenant of the late Joseph Orsini. Born in Marseilles, Ceccini began his career as a longshoreman. He became a specialist on pier movements, a smuggler and a cargo thief. As he grew in stature in Marseilles he met Samih Khoury and other Lebanese who operated as middlemen on the Turkey-to-Marseilles smuggling run. And he became friendly with Francesco and Ventura, bosses of Marseilles' largest heroin syndicate.

The Mertz-Ceccini partnership worked smoothly. Ceccini supplied the heroin, from Orsini laboratories, and personalized in the U.S., from the Orsini organization. Mertz planned the smuggling routes, recruited the courier organization, and handled the finances. The profits were split equally. By early 1961, the system was in operation. On March 11, 1961, Mertz sailed on the liner Liberté for New York. In the hold of the ship was a DS 19 Citroen auto with 100 kilos (220 pounds) of heroin hidden in the paneling.

Within a month, however, Mertz temporarily suspended the heroin operation, because SDECE needed him for a special mission against the right-wing terrorists. Mertz was ordered to penetrate the OAS, pose as a sympathizer, and obtain all available information on planned OAS terror missions.

First he was sent in April, 1961, to Algiers under cover as

*Shades of LHA*

a captain in the General Reserve of Parachutist Commandos. Quickly he established himself as an OAS sympathizer. In June, he was arrested with four other commando officers in Paris for openly distributing pro-OAS leaflets. He was tried before a military tribunal on July 11, 1961, and acquitted, but he was immediately sent to an internment camp for OAS partisans. Within three days he had penetrated the OAS stratagems.

Mertz made outside contact with a Col. Fourcaud, the technical director of SDECE. He said that he had important information. The colonel called Jacques Foccart—then and now secretary for community and African affairs, and de Gaulle's director of the counter-terror against the OAS. Foccart in turn called Alexandre Sanguinetti, the top aide to Interior Minister Roger Frey. Sanguinetti was the operating director of the national police under Frey and liaison with SDECE.

Fourcaud, Foccart and Sanguinetti arranged to move Mertz out of the internment camp on the night of July 14 in a way that would not arouse suspicion. Mertz then gave Fourcaud and Foccart the bare bones of what he had learned: The OAS planned to blow up de Gaulle's car at Pont-Sur-Seine, a point it passed nearly every day. After a short period, Mertz was put back into the internment camp to get more information. He did. The OAS plotters were allowed to plant the bombs on the roadway. And de Gaulle's car, with him in it, passed by in such a way that the bombs went off harmlessly. France, sharply divided over the Free Algeria question, was shocked by the attempt on de Gaulle's life. The nation rallied around him. The plotters were arrested.

Fourcaud testified on Sept. 6, 1962, in Troyes at the closed trial of the OAS conspirators. He said that just before the explosion he and Sanguinetti discussed what could be done for Mertz. He said that through Sanguinetti, Interior Minister Frey (head of the French police) paid all the expenses to move Mertz to Canada. Mertz took his family with him, retaining his SDECE affiliations, and spent the next month in Montreal and New York reactivating the American end of the heroin syndicate.

On Oct. 11, 1961 he was back in France and on Jan. 12, 1962 another Citroen with another 100 kilos of heroin left France by boat. This time Mertz flew to New York to meet the boat when it arrived and pick up his payment. As the business grew, other people were hired to handle the shipping and to do the courting. But Mertz or his assistant, Jacques Bousquet, always went to New York to collect.

Mertz continued to make trips out of France to other countries on occasional SDECE missions. In New York he and Bousquet operated a cover business contracting out orders to American companies for the rebuilding of car and truck engines for the French military services. Meanwhile, Mertz and his wife opened up bank accounts in New York and Geneva. Most of the profits from the business were personally placed in a numbered Geneva account by Mertz.

Another partner:

At about this time the heroin syndicate charged Mertz \$60,000 in cash after the theft of a car with 100 kilos of heroin in it. The records of Mertz' Discount Bank, Geneva, account 40,8270, reflect that the \$60,000 assessment was transferred in three chunks early in 1965 from his account to the account of an unidentified Hersh Gross, supposedly a German national. Gross had numbered bank account 70,273 at the Basel, Switzerland branch of La Societe de Banque Suisse. Gross is still unidentified.

See Time, Dec. 31, 1965.

Late in 1965 in Columbus, Ga., agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics arrested a man named Herman Conder, who had just received 195 pounds of heroin in a retrocaptor shipped to him from France by a former U.S. Army major who was a close friend of Mertz. The heroin was found eventually for a Cosa Nostra organization in Miami, Fla.

The investigation quickly led to the arrests in the U.S. of Jean Nebbia, Louis Douheret and Nonce Lucaerotti, a nephew of Orsini who had escaped from a French jail and fled to the U.S. All were Ceccchini-Orsini men on the American end of the Mertz ring. Nebbia drew \$20,000 for his defense from Mertz' New York bank account. Later they made statements implicating Ceccchini and Mertz to varying degrees; they told about the car-heroin shipments. American authorities forwarded the information to France.

Acting on the American information, French police arrested Ceccchini on May 5, 1966, at the elaborately furnished villa in Quarter de la Roumaine, Saulz. In his driveway and garage were three cars, an Alfa Romeo, an MG and a Mercedes. In the house, police found ammunition and three handguns, a Remington Colt 11.43-mm., a 9 mm. Smith and Wesson and a 9-mm. Parabellum.

Ceccchini was jailed to await trial. But on Feb. 11, 1967, ten months later, he was quietly released pending a trial for which no date was set. He resumed his position as heroin supplier to the Mertz operation. At the time, Ceccchini, although a supporter of Socialist candidates in the city of Marseille, was a member of SAC and a substantial contributor to a number of UDR national candidates.

Mertz was not arrested. But his right-hand man, Bousquet, was. Ten months later he, too, was released pending a trial for which no date was set. He returned to work for Mertz. They continued to ship the heroin hidden in cars until 1968 at the rate of nearly a quarter of a ton a year. By the end of 1968, the Mertz ring had shipped more than two tons of heroin to the U.S. over an embankment street. The street value of the heroin, at 1973 prices, would be \$335,000 a year.

But on June 24, 1968, after American authorities had intercepted another courier for the ring, French police arrested Bousquet and five of his couriers. Bousquet claimed that he headed the ring. Mertz remained free. Finally, nearly 18 months later, French police arrested Mertz on Nov. 24, 1969, and put him in jail to await trial as the leader of the Bousquet group. He had six unregistered pistols in his house.

At the time of his arrest, Mertz, who was supposedly subsisting on an Army captain's salary, had the following: a combination farm-hunting lodge of 1,445 acres equipped with a number of buildings and a private plane landing strip in Lorez; a luxury apartment on Boulevard St. Germain in Paris; two apartments in the city of Metz; a valuable tract of land in Moselle; a villa in the Paris suburb of Les Yvelines; a summer house in Corsica and his own private airplane.

On June 26, 1970, Mertz was released from jail pending further developments in the case. A month later Bousquet and his co-defendants went on trial and were convicted for their part in the ring between 1965 and 1968.

The release saved Mertz's Army pension. If Mertz had been convicted before he submitted his retirement papers, he could have lost his pension. And if he had applied from jail before trial, he might have met delays in getting approval. But once the pension was granted, even later conviction would not result in its forfeiture. He applied for the pension soon after his release. His eligibility would not begin until 1974. On Dec. 7, 1970, the pension was granted—payments to begin in 1974.

Then in April, 1971, Delouette was arrested. The U.S. queried France: what was SDECE's involvement? On July 1971, the government put Mertz and Ceccchini on trial.

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were each convicted and sentenced to five years in jail. Appeals were rejected and Mertz began his sentence in July, 1972.

When we arrived in Paris, one of our sources told us that although Mertz was supposedly in jail, he had recently been seen on the streets of Paris. We called the French Department of Justice for background on where Mertz was imprisoned and the details of his sentence. A department spokesman declined to give us any information.

So we set out in October, 1972 to track down Mertz through his last-known address, an apartment at 62 Boulevard Suchet, in Paris' fashionable 16th arrondissement. There was no name listed for Mertz on the apartment register. But his name was written over the top of one of the mailboxes in the lobby. Posing as agents for a fictitious California resident who had left money to Mertz when he died, we interviewed the apartment concierge. She said that Mertz had sublet the apartment but continued to use the box to receive mail.

She referred us to an address that she had for Mertz. It was a villa in the Paris suburb of Les Yvelines. The house turned out to be well maintained but closed. Neighbors said that someone came once a month and picked up the mail, but that the Mertz family, which owned the house, had not lived there for a year. In the mailbox were several stock-transfer notices addressed to Mertz' mother-in-law. His partner and half-sister, Charles Marcel, had died in 1965.

Finally, through the real estate agent for the Boulevard Suchet apartment, we were able to make contact with Mrs. Mertz early in November. The agent said that she would have Mrs. Mertz call us. We set a time for the call, rented a room at the Paris Hilton and waited. Mrs. Mertz called. We told her a story about a fictitious will and its terms—Mertz must be alive, identifiable and a French citizen in good standing. Otherwise the money (\$7,250) would go to a dog-and-cat hospital in Pomona, Calif. She agreed to meet us in Paris a week later with identification of her husband. She said that she was living at the hunting lodge in Loiret.

On Nov. 15, we met Mrs. Mertz in a room at the Hilton. She was tall, with horn-rimmed glasses and was wearing slacks, a car coat and a kerchief over her brown hair. She appeared to be in her late 40s.

She showed us some magazine stories dealing with her husband's exploits in the Resistance. We said that we needed to

see him. In a low voice she replied: "That's not possible right now. . . . I don't know how to say this. I'm so embarrassed. . . . But my husband is in jail." We asked why he was in prison. She answered: "When he has to collect taxes he shoots target practice quite often at the lodge. As an army officer, he's entitled to one gun. But some neighbor must have complained. So the police came and arrested him. He had some soviet guns that he had brought in from Belgium without paying taxes. It was like a game with us, getting them past customs."

Her English was excellent. She explained that she was a Canadian citizen and that she visited her mother in the Montreal suburb of Westmount every second year. And she said that if her husband qualified to inherit the money from the will, she wanted the money deposited in a designated Canadian bank account to avoid paying any French inheritance taxes.

We asked her how long her husband had been in jail. She said: "For six months after he was arrested (December, 1969, to June, 1970). Then he was freed. We understood that was the end of it. No more. But last July (1972), there was some kind of mixup and the court couldn't find him at our other address. We were living out at the lodge and our lawyer had forgotten to tell the court. So he was put in jail again."

How long would he remain in jail? She counted on her fingers: "He's been in jail since this July," she said. "And he gets out in February, 1973." "Yes, this February?" Mertz sentenced to five years, apparently would be serving only eight months in prison.

She said that he was being kept in an unspecified prison just outside of Paris. We asked if prison life was difficult. "Oh no," she said. "The food isn't bad, it isn't like other prisons. Everyone there, the guards at the jail like him. I can visit him as long as I want every week. And I can bring him newspapers and magazines and packages. They are really treating him very nicely there. I think they all think it's a shame that a person like him should have to be in prison."

We told Mrs. Mertz that we would have to meet with her again at the same place the following week. We told her that we wanted photos of Mertz and documents such as army discharge papers. And we told her that since he was in prison, we would need the names of people who would attest to his good citizenship.

Mrs. Mertz said that she was able to provide the information we wanted. . . . of people who would

recommend his standing as a French citizen, she said: "That should be easy. My husband has many friends who have good positions with the government." Then she asked for our file on the will, so that she could show it to her husband. We handed it to her. Then she left.

For the next week we worried. The file had been carefully prepared. But it was fraudulent. Mertz might see through it. But Mrs. Mertz came back for the second meeting Nov. 24. She said that both she and her husband agreed that they needed the money more than any dog or cat hospital in California. She brought the information we had sought. And she brought the names of some people that she said would recommend her husband.

Among them were Col. Fourcaud, now retired, who was Mertz's former boss at SDECE, and Pierre de Letan, Chef de Mission and vice president of the Chamber of Commerce of Middle-Eastern Countries in Paris. We called them later. Mrs. de Letan said that she and her husband were close friends of the Mertz's. Col. Fourcaud also said that he knew Mertz, but added that he did not know us and said that he would prefer to discuss the whole matter in person and not over the telephone. We were unable to talk to the two others whose names she had given us.

Then we told Mrs. Mertz that we had learned that her husband was in jail not for possession of illegal weapons but for shipping heroin to the U.S. Momentarily she lost her composure; a glass of mineral water almost slipped out of her hand. "No, no," she stammered. "Not this time, that was the last time." We asked her what she meant.

"Some time ago, maybe five years or more. My husband knew this man in the United States," Mrs. Mertz said. "At the time my husband had a business getting motors removed in the United States and shipping them back here for French army trucks. This man in the United States needed money to buy some land; he wanted to open a restaurant. So my husband sent money to the man's sister to give to the man. Later the man said that that money was for the buying of narcotics." She identified the man in the U.S. as John N. Smith.

We accepted this information, but told Mrs. Mertz that it would be necessary for us to meet her husband personally. We said we would go to the jail. She replied: "That won't be necessary. He's getting out in mid-February sometime. Suppose I bring him here to meet you on the first of March?" We agreed and Mrs. Mertz left after again stating that she and her husband would want the money deposited in Canada after the meeting.

Later, we asked Paul Knapik, head of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs in Europe (Paris office), for more information on Mertz. "Mertz?" he replied. "I never heard of him." We got the same response from a spokesman for the French national police in Paris.

Achille Ceccchini never went to jail, although he was sentenced to five years. He missed his trial after entering a hospital and getting statements from two Marseilles doctors that he was too ill to be moved. Later a court-appointed doctor agreed and Ceccchini remained free.

Occasionally since then he has been seen at his Marseilles nightclub and at two other Marseilles clubs owned by his mistress. And he was recently identified while at a bar in Marseilles, talking to heroin mob boss Dominic Ventura and his aide, Bartholomy Regazzi.

We visited BNDD's Knight to ask him about Ceccchini. He sat behind a period desk in his private Paris office cleaning his gun. For the occasion he had donned his full-length leather coat.

"I've only got a minute, I have to pose for some pictures," he explained. "What do you want?"

"It's about Achille Ceccchini," we explained.

"Ceccchini, Ceccchini . . ." he mused. "Oh, yes. He's about 80 years old, an old man down in Marseilles. But I guess he's still doing something."  
Ceccchini is 51.

Arce Simonietti, a Corsican-born racketeer now serving a five-year prison term, was in the heroin business both before and after serving in SDECE. He went to prison in the middle of 1971 after avoiding it for more than a year—and only when his situation was widely publicized after the Delouente affair.

Closely allied with Marseilles' colds, Bartholomy (Alme) Guerrin and the late Joe Orsini, Simonietti was shipping heroin from France to New York via Brussels in 1958. He was one of the lesser mob chieftains who joined the SDECE action group in 1960 to counter the OAS.

Simonietti served with the SDECE "barbouzes" (bearded ones) in Algeria for one year under the direct command of Pierre Lemarchand, husband of Gen. Charles de Gaulle's wife in 1961 and 1962, he served in a special SDECE counter group in Paris. The unit specialized in extracting

confessions from persons thought to have knowledge of OAS activities.

When Lemarchand returned from Algeria, he moved to Yvonne, near Paris, and in 1963 won a seat in the National Assembly. Simonpieri, who owns a villa near Nice, bought a castle in Yvonne, and supplied money and muscle for Lemarchand's campaign. He also used the castle to dispatch heroin couriers to the U.S.

Two such couriers were Willy Charles Lambert, 42, a Frenchman, and Josette Claire Bauer, 36, a Swiss national, who were arrested at Fort Ebenklades, Fla., Aug. 31, 1967, trying to smuggle 11 kilos of heroin into the U.S. Both said in full depositions that they had been given the heroin by Simonpieri.

Said Lambert: "... I also picked up four other kilos of heroin at the country villa of Ange Simonpieri in Marsangy, near Sens in the Department of Yvonne... I certainly recognize Ange Simonpieri from the photographs which you are showing me." These statements naming Simonpieri were sent to French police officials. No action was taken.

In March, 1969, two other couriers were arrested in Switzerland as part of a group that was shipping heroin to the U.S. in cans bearing the label of a specialty rice and fish dish. They also named Simonpieri as the man who had given them the heroin. The French slowly exchanged information with the Swiss during a period of months, and on Jan. 22, 1970—almost a year later—Judge Gabriel Roussel, a French magistrate, issued a subpoena for Simonpieri.

But Simonpieri went to his other home in the Corsican mountain village of Pila Canale and sent word to Roussel that he had a bad heart and couldn't travel. Two Corsican doctors were sent to look at Simonpieri. They agreed that he couldn't be moved. One of the two physicians was Dr. Boggi, campaign manager for Jean Bozzi, who was secretary to the French National Assembly and a friend of leading heroin boss Marcel Francisci.

Roussel then asked a colleague, Judge Ceccaldi, to go to Pila Canale and question Simonpieri. In August, Roussel asked Ceccaldi for a progress report. Ceccaldi replied that Pila Canale was a very tough town and that he was waiting for what he considered a safe moment to visit. Meanwhile, Simonpieri had been seen 23 miles away, in Ajaccio, occasionally attending a soccer game or sipping a drink at the Hotel bar Royal with a group of friends.

Finally, on Sept. 8, 1970, Interior Minister Marceliin ordered Paris doctors sent to Corsica to examine Simonpieri.

They reported back that he could be moved and questioned. But then Simonpieri disappeared. Marcellin ordered mainland police to "assist" the Corsican gendarmes in finding Simonpieri. They found him in his brother-in-law's house in Ajaccio.

Marcellin then ordered the Ajaccio prosecutor to Simonpieri's house to arrest him. The prosecutor reported back that Simonpieri had a certificate stating that he was sick and could not be moved. On Marcellin's orders, Simonpieri was transferred to Misericorde Hospital in Ajaccio and examined by another mainland doctor. He said Simonpieri could be moved. But the Ajaccio prosecutor replied that he didn't want to take the responsibility for moving Simonpieri.

So, for a while, Simonpieri remained in the air-conditioned Ajaccio hospital, receiving friends, having specially prepared meals sent in. He might still be there today except for Raymond Nicolet and Roger Delouette.

Nicolet, a Swiss, and one of the most respected lawyers in Europe, was in Geneva in April, 1971, representing a client who had been arrested in connection with the Simonpieri-Spain heroin smuggling ring. At the trial, Nicolet described Simonpieri as one of the biggest narcotics traffickers in Europe. He asked why his client was on trial while Simonpieri was free.

His charge was repeated by newspapers and radio stations of other countries and finally by the French weeklies *Vogue* and *Canard Enchaîné*. Meanwhile, the Delouette charges about SDECE had been aired, and the U.S. government was pressing the French on the issue. Simonpieri was shifted from Ajaccio to the mainland and in September, 1971, tried, convicted and sentenced. He is presently serving a five-year term in a prison hospital.

Recently, Nicolet, in his Geneva law office, was asked what conclusions he drew from the fact that Simonpieri had remained free until the case was widely publicized. He answered: "It put on record the breakdown of the French police system with regard to certain persons in France."

**A SDECE GALLERY:**

**Holdup Man, Killer, Con Artist**

Three other men who worked for SDECE also were involved in different groups that smuggled heroin into the U.S. All three were recruited into SDECE during the anti-OAS



campaign. All three served in Algeria. And all three later served in the Black Africa section of SDECE.

Joseph Attia was a Jacobyean French gangster, but his SDECE ties were part of his hidden image.

Christian David enjoyed killing and he was a hired assassin for both SDECE and the underworld.

But Assize Leleux shined from guns. He was the confidence man, who moved easily through three continents.

★ Two Top Assassins Who Served France

Joseph Ibrahim Victor Marie Attia, who died at the age of 50 in the summer of 1972, was one of France's most colorful holdup men and hoodlums. He also was one of SDECE's top rated assassins. Usually, when SDECE was in need of his services, the government quietly arranged to quash some local charge that always seemed to be pending in the courts against him. The French press finally dubbed Attia "The King of the Dismissed Charge."

A truant and an amateur hover as a boy, Attia left Rennes for Paris as a teenager and soon established a reputation in the milieu as a ruseleman. He eventually became a proxenet (operator of a string of prostitutes) in Paris, graduating to holdups. After his first jail term, he was sent away to do a tour with a penal battalion of the French Foreign Legion in North Africa. During that period he met Pierre Loutriel, later to become France's Public Enemy No. 1 under the name "Pierre Le Four."

During World War II, Attia, in a patriotic gesture, held up and robbed only those French merchants who were German sympathizers. He was arrested in 1943 by the Germans and condemned to death. The sentence was commuted, and Attia wound up in the Mauthausen concentration camp. During a 1945 march from Mauthausen to another camp, Attia carried a stick comrade on his back for more than 42 miles.

The comrade was Col. Jacques Beaumont, also known as Col. Bertrand. After the war Attia and Beaumont took divergent paths, although eventually they would meet again—Beaumont went into SDECE; Attia wanted to become a boxer again, but the organizers didn't want him because he was fattened from head to foot. "We want a boxer, not a geology map," they told him. So Attia teamed with his old pal, Loutriel, and George Houssebecche to form one of France's biggest holdup mobs. Loutriel died in 1946 when he accidentally shot himself in the stomach while putting his gun back into his belt. Attia hid his secret, carrying out a

dying wish that the police not be made aware of his death.

In 1953, Attia was brought to trial for his crimes with the Loutriel mob. He was accused of 10 holdups, complicity in a homicide and illegally burying Loutriel's body. Col. Beaumont, who by now was one of SDECE's most influential officers, appeared as a character witness for Attia.

All of the charges against Attia were dropped except one—illegally burying Loutriel. He received a one-year suspended sentence, and two months later, in September 1953, he was in Morocco on a mission for SDECE, his first job for the agency, as far as we could learn. It was an unusual debut, for as soon as he got his advance money, Attia aborted the mission and went on a spree on Spain's Costa Brava.

Three years later, SDECE, which during the interim had continued using Attia, sent him to North Africa. His mission: assassinate an anti-French Moroccan, Aid El Fassi. Again Attia took the SDECE advance money and again he went to Spain. Spanish authorities recognized Attia as a known holdup man, and jailed him. But rather than languish in a Spanish jail, Attia confessed to the murder of two gun-runners in France near Mendeport l'Anuary in June, 1955. The two men had been supplying arms to the anti-French FLN nationalist movement in Algeria.

Attia was extradited to France and tried. But he was acquitted by the Assize Court of Versailles. His defense: He had murdered the two men for SDECE while working as a SDECE agent. Almost immediately after being acquitted, Attia was sent by SDECE to handle a new mission in Tunisia. But while he was there, in 1957, an aide to French Defense Minister Chahlan Delmas saw his SDECE file and demanded to know why the French secret service employed him.

The SDECE answer was given by Col. Fourcaud who was one of the agency's ranking officers. He said: "Joe Attia is a wonderful person, worthy of esteem, an absolutely extraordinary agent."

This was the same Col. Fourcaud of SDECE, who handled Michael Victor Altiz, the SDECE agent who exposed the OAS plot to kill Gen. de Gaulle in 1961.

In 1959, Attia showed up in Africa, first in Katanga and then in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, where he worked with the intelligence network of African Affairs Secretary Foccart. In the Ivory Coast he bought a banana plantation and a nightclub named "The Refuge." The club soon became a message center for the entire Foccart-SDECE Black Africa network. It was the second rendezvous that Attia had established. Sometime earlier Attia and his mistress, Carmen Ceely, had

opened the Gavroche, a bar near Montmartre. It had quickly become a meeting place for both Paris cafe society and the French underworld.

Agents of the former U.S. Federal Narcotics Bureau recognized the Gavroche as a meeting place for persons in the heroin traffic. It was here that some of the biggest heroin shipments of the early 1960s were planned; here where the partners and investors were brought together. And, according to former U.S. narcotics agents, Attia frequently put up money for a share of some of those heroin shipments.

In 1961, a Paris court convicted Attia—who was in Algeria at the time—on a series of extortions that he had committed during his extended leaves back on the mainland. The police arrested him in Oran, Algeria. But he was promptly freed on the direct orders of the French Military Government of Algeria. And during the next year he served under Pierre Lemarchand, husband of Dr. Gaultier's ward, in the terrorist section of SDECE in Algeria as part of the Foccart-directed counter-terror against the OAS.

It was here that Attia met Christian David. A petty hoodlum who had escaped from a French prison, David, now 41, had been recruited into the SDECE terrorist operation in Oran by Lemarchand.

In 1963, Attia returned to France, where he was jailed on another extortion charge. But David went into the Foccart-SDECE network. For nearly two years he traveled to various African countries on small missions, before drifting back to Paris.

Meanwhile, although Attia was supposed to be in jail, he apparently was of some use to SDECE. Late in 1963 Col. Argoud, a leader of the OAS, was kidnapped from Munich and brought to France by a squad of SDECE counter-terror operatives. Argoud swore under oath in a French court that one of his kidnappers, whom he knew by sight, was Attia, even though Attia was supposedly in jail at the time.

All of which laid the groundwork for the Ben Barka case. In 1965, French influence was strong in Morocco through the King's adviser and strongman, Gen. Oufkir. But Oufkir feared the growing influence of Mehdi Ben Barka, the opposition leader, who maintained an apartment in Geneva. Oufkir wanted Ben Barka scared or eliminated. This wish was conveyed to SDECE.

Once again, Attia was in jail. But, as later testimony at a 1966 trial of two French narcotics policemen showed, a good deal of the action was carried out by several of his lieutenants, regulars at the Gavroche. They enticed Ben Barka to

Paris, using false identification supplied by SDECE, with the story that they wanted to make a motion picture of his life. He was placed under "arrest" by the two members of the French police narcotics squad, who then turned him over to the Attia crew. While questioning him in a private home, they killed him, according to testimony at the same trial. The body was never found.

But at the trial, the name of one man who wasn't even a defendant was threaded through the testimony. The man was Lemarchand, a former French deputy and the SDECE commander in Algeria. A series of witnesses detailed how Lemarchand had arranged the kidnaping on behalf of SDECE. The witnesses said that Lemarchand had told them that the plot had "government approval."

Early in 1966, while French police were still working on the case, a young French police official named Gailbert got a phone tip that a man wanted in connection with the Ben Barka case was drinking in a neighborhood tavern. Accompanied by two other policemen he went to the Paris tavern where he found David playing cards with Belkacem Mechebe, a subprefect of the French Interior Ministry (police). When Gailbert attempted to question David, Mechebe became abusive and told him to leave David alone because David himself was a French agent.

David backed Mechebe's protest by pulling out his SAC (Security d'Action Civique) card, asserting to his membership in the parallel police. Gailbert relaxed, but he was still curious about David. He asked David to follow him to the police station and turned to leave. David picked up his rifle, pulled a gun, killed Gailbert and wounded the two other officers, French police said.

During the next month David eluded a huge French man-hunt by moving through a series of underground "safe" houses down through Lyons, south to the village of La Ciotat just outside of Marseilles. He waited there until heroin mob boss Bartholomey (Merme) Guerini could ship him to South America, where he immediately joined one of the biggest French rings transhipping French heroin from Marseilles to the U.S.

David was arrested by Brazilian authorities in 1972 in connection with a ring that had smuggled in more than 1,000 pounds of heroin in three years. David cracked under torture by Brazilian police and admitted, among many other things, his part in the Ben Barka plot. He said that he had been paid \$150,000 to buy the body in a French suburb after burning it and covering it with lime. The money, he said, was paid by

Outfit. Lemarchand was never arrested. But he was barred for three years from practicing law in Paris for his part in the case. He is now practicing again, and de Gaulle's grandson is one of the junior lawyers in his office.

Attia was released from jail in 1968 and immediately went to work for Philippe Decharre, a former French cabinet official, who was a partner in a large housing development near Paris known as He de Re.

Attia, while working for Decharre, visited a builder who was anxious to put up a building on the He de Re. Attia demanded a \$100,000 payoff for a building permit. The builder first fled, but then withdrew a criminal complaint.

In 1968, while Decharre was running for his seat as deputy, Attia handled the muscle for the campaign. One night, rival power-hangers got into a fight and one of Attia's men shot and wounded a woman in the head. The affair was hushed up, and Decharre went on to win his seat.

By 1972, Attia was doing of throat cancer. He stayed at the home of a friend, Roger Lantz, in Paris. Lantz, who had been watched by police through the entire Ben Barka investigation, but not arrested, had once put up Moroccan Gen. Oufkir's grandson in the same apartment. Attia died on July 22, 1972. On that same night both the Gavroche and Attia's apartment were burglarized. His friends wryly commented that SDECE didn't want any loose memoirs lying around after Attia died.

### The Consummate Confidence Man

Unlike Attia and David, who were professional killers, Andre Labay was a different kind of SDECE agent. He was a consummate confidence man. But he, too, was a major figure in the French-American heroin smuggling racket. And like Attia and David, he got his start in SDECE working under Lemarchand as an anti-OAS harborer in 1960.

Labay, who wasn't much on fighting, was used by Lemarchand to infiltrate the ranks of the OAS and report back on their plans and operations. In 1961, as part of the Focus-SDECE network he went first to Congo-Kinshasa, where he served as a technical adviser to Cyrille Adoula, the prime minister. Then he traveled on to the Ivory Coast and Gabon. By 1961, he was back in Paris, temporarily divorced from SDECE.

Labay quickly moved into SAC, the parallel police, and became a prominent fundraiser for the organization. Frequently seen at Don Camille's in Paris, he kept up on the latest news from inside SDECE and planned a series of get-

rich-quick schemes. His accomplice in some of these was SAC stalwart Lucien Schwarm. The two also maintained an apartment in Geneva, where, for unexplained reasons, they sheltered Bel Kassem Krim, the original leader of the Algerian FLN. Krim was later murdered, apparently for political reasons.

For a while, with Michael LeRoy, another former SDECE operative, Labay ran a small Paris hotel operating under the name International Businessmen's Club. Actually, the club served as a front for the recruitment of mercenaries for Moïse Tshombe of Katanga, who was attempting to topple the Congolese government, a development ardently desired by Focus. LeRoy, who fought in Katanga, was a close friend of Attia.

Labay's next business venture was in Belgium. For reasons that are still unclear, a French deputy from Paris, Andre Rives-Henrys, was appointed in 1967 as the president of a large Belgian insurance company named Belfort. Rives-Henrys was the former President of the National Assembly (1960-61).

On the same day that Rives-Henrys was appointed, Labay was named as general manager of the insurance company. The former SDECE agent had no background in the business. Although Rives-Henrys was a friend of Labay's, he has never given an explanation of how they happened to go into business together. A year later the company went bankrupt, declaring it was \$6,000,000 in debt.

Labay, however, always seemed to have money to spend and was a popular figure in the cafe society of both Paris and Geneva. On one occasion, a Swiss police officer questioned Labay and his friend Schwarm in connection with some business loans. He said that both men showed him tricolored French identification cards. "They both obviously had something to do with the French government," the police officer said recently. "It was some kind of police."

Sentenced in absentia in Belgium to a one-year jail term for embezzling the insurance company funds, Labay went to Haiti in 1968, where he set up a dress manufacturing plant and quickly established a strong business and social relationship with Mme. Muz Dominique, daughter of the late Haitian dictator Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier. While in Haiti, he also doubled as an agent for SDECE.

Finally back in France, he walked into the Paris office of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) on Oct. 5, 1971. He made a bizarre proposal. He said that he was an agent of SDECE. He said that he wanted U.S. help

in bringing a load of 100 kilos of heroin into the U.S.

Labay said that he would then make a second trip to the U.S., again with 100 kilos. On this second trip, he said, U.S. agents could follow him and watch the people to whom he made his delivery. Then they could follow those people through the chain and arrest everyone. BNDJ Agent Jacques Kieft told Labay to return to the office later, and called his French counterparts. The next day, French police arrested Labay with the 106 kilos in his car.

There have been many theories advanced as to why Labay walked into the BNDJ office that night. Many U.S. and French law enforcement agents feel that some of his accomplices had been caught, and he knew it was only a matter of time before they would implicate him. But another explanation came from one former U.S. narcotics agent we talked to recently. He said: "If there ever was some kind of organized SDECE connection with Labay, it was all blown when DeJouette was arrested. Everyone was on his own from then out."

III

"... Interior Minister Raymond Marcellin stressed that a large number of narcotic traffickers were recruited from among the members of SAC."—L'Aurore, Nov. 10, 1970

SAC. The Service d'Action Civique. An organization of toughs, of killers, of heroin merchants. But also the protected offspring of some of France's most powerful politicians.

Marcellin's pronouncement, then, was a rare public admission by a French official that SAC is something more than a Gaullist affinity group. That it is more than its charter proclaims: "This association has for a goal to assemble all persons, without distinction of opinion or race, who desire to support the actions of General de Gaulle."

August, 1970. Serge Constant, a Nice insurance agent in his mid-20s, is on trial for having transported two shipments of heroin to New York in suitcases. "I did not know I was carrying drugs," he declares. "I was told I was carrying secret documents pertaining to SAC that had to be taken to a safe hiding place."  
He was a member of SAC. So were several others in the

smuggling net who stood trial with him: Jean Audesio, Dominique Giordano, Marcel Galvani. Galvani was the head of SAC in the Nice region. He had been the owner of a failing insurance agency and found narcotics an alluring enterprise.

"He liked to play the tough guy and so in this way got to meet the people in the milieu," a close friend of Galvani said. "The insurance business wasn't working and he looked for people who could help him. That's how he got involved in the narcotics traffic." Luring the gullible Constant was easy. "For Constant, Galvani was a god," Galvani's friend recalled. "When Galvani asked him, 'How would you like a free trip to the United States with SAC documents?' he didn't think twice."

Two years earlier, in 1968, Galvani had been a campaign aide to Olivier Giscard d'Estaing in his successful campaign for deputy representing nearby Cannes. D'Estaing, an Independent Republican, is the brother of France's president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

Yet Galvani was "apolitical," his friend said. There are many more "apolitical" men in SAC. The attraction is forceful—special privileges and the promise of protection. For SAC members are the shock troops of the Gaullists, particularly their majority party, the Union Pour la Démocratie de la République (UDR). They are the bodyguards of Gaullist candidates, the musclemen who keep order at rallies, who organize the rallies, who tear down opposition posters, and who, occasionally, kill.

For their services there are rewards. One man who had recently resigned from a Marseilles branch of SAC led by Gerard Kappe told us: "Kappe had 60 men in his SAC and the police gave some protection. When some of the SAC men were arrested, Kappe would telephone the police commissioner and they would be released. . . . The Kappe telephone call did it."

The police, of course, deny that SAC offers protection. "SAC is not an insurance against risk," declared Marcel Merin, head of the Marseilles narcotics squad.

There are signs that the virtual immunity to prosecution once enjoyed by members of SAC may be eroding. Some sources close to the Pompidou government say the president, himself a Gaullist, and Marcellin, an Independent Republican, are quietly maneuvering to dissolve SAC. Marcellin's 1970 statement was one of the early hints. And a number of SAC heroin traffickers have been arrested in the past three years. Yet the resistance is great.