

Flyboys of the CIA

SOMETIME TODAY, weather permitting, a U.S. B-26 bomber will take off from an airstrip in the Portuguese African colony of Angola. Its mission is to destroy concentrations of black guerrillas in the Angolan bush. It is not always easy for the pilot to distinguish a guerrilla fighter from other black persons, but then this is a common problem in this type of war, and even in cases of mistaken identity the bombing seems to have a useful deterrent effect. Before nightfall, the U.S.-trained pilot will fly back to the airstrip, leaving his twin-

by David Welsh

engined machine in the care of a U.S.-trained mechanic.

There's a war on in Angola. Since March 1961, when contract laborers earning 30 cents a day revolted against Portuguese plantation owners, touching off a planned anti-colonial rebellion, there's been a war on. In reprisal the Portuguese launched a reign of terror. Africans were executed *en masse*. Entire villages were moved into areas under white control; otherwise they were bombed. The larger towns became armed encampments. Portuguese troops patrolled the streets with submachine guns, shooting Africans with or without provocation. More than 500,000 refugees, most of them diseased, starving or wounded after months of running and hiding in the forest, crossed the border into the Congo.

When Moise Tshombe took power in the Congo, the Angolan rebel movement went into temporary eclipse. The pro-European Tshombe was reluctant to permit sanctuary for attacks on his covert allies, the Portuguese. Despite him, guerrilla patrols continued to make forays into their Portuguese occupied homeland. And today, with the Congolese government of Joseph Mobutu allowing them greater freedom of movement, the Angolan revolutionaries expect to get their second wind.

Since the Angolan uprising, Africans have launched liberation movements in other Portuguese colonies: Mozambique, Cabinda and Portuguese Guinea (where nationalists control half the territory, operating their own schools and civil administration). All of them make the same absolute demand: Independence and Now. But the lessons of Kenya and Algeria have been lost on the Portuguese. Maintaining more than 80,000 troops in Africa—50,000 in Mozambique alone—in addition to civil militia and police, they are determined to remain. Their military alliance with the United States and the other NATO powers can only bolster their determination. Certainly, NATO military aid has been a major factor in Portugal's success in containing the insurgents of Angola. The large quantity of NATO weapons captured by the rebels, the napalm bomb casings marked "Property of the United States Army" found in the devastated mud-and-stick villages (and shown to western correspondents at the border) attest to that. And many of the Portuguese officers leading the reprisals are graduates of counter-guerrilla warfare schools operated by the U.S. Special Forces.

Which brings us back to the B-26 bombers, and how they got to Angola with their American-trained pilots and mechanics. It is a long story, about America's legendary anti-colonialism, and about a bizarre smuggling trial held, of all places, in Buffalo, New York. It is also about that old canard that if there's a plot afoot, the Central Intelligence Agency has got to be mixed up in it. Well, this time, like last time, it appears it was.

[A "BLACK" OPERATION]

THE DOUGLAS B-26 invader, star bomber of the Second World War, seems to be the pride of the CIA. B-26s were the principal "air cover" that was to have assured the success of the CIA-sponsored invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs—until President Kennedy called them off. Eight of the aircraft saw action anyway in support of the *gusanos*. Three years later anti-Castro Cubans again climbed into the cockpits of the CIA's favorite freedom bombers, this time in the ex-Belgian Congo, to help white mercenary footsoldiers quash a guerrilla revolt which threatened to sweep the country. The intervention of the CIA-Rhodesia-South Africa axis, with overt Belgian and American support, assured the defeat of the rebels and the survival, for a time, of the Tshombe government.

A French economist, recently returned from three months in the Congo, told Ramparts the B-26s and their white Cuban pilots are still there, "maintaining order" with the rest of the U.S. garrison. He saw the airplanes and went drinking with the pilots. The Cubans openly admit having been recruited by the CIA in Miami, with the promise of immediate United States citizenship in return for six months' fighting in the Congo. They swagger around Stanleyville and Leopoldville with United States .45 automatics strapped to their hips, and fraternize with visiting American cowboys.

That the CIA supplied the planes, pilots and mechanics, and directed the employment of B-26s in Cuba and the Congo has been reported so often that even the New York Times prints it as fact.

But what about the other theatres where the U.S. is not even quasi-officially at war, where American planes mysteriously turn up in the service of some junta with a civil war on its hands? What about the B-26s that flew in Vietnam, in the days when we were supplying "military advisors" to the Diem government, or those that are flying today in Laos, Thailand, Latin America and Portuguese Africa? Did the "CIA Air Corps" provide them, too? Was it the CIA that arranged to take them out of mothballs, recondition them, reinforce the wings to prevent them from snapping off, test the armor-plate and bomb bays, fit six or eight machine guns in the wing pods and more in the noses, install new bomb sights, radios and long-range fuel tanks? Was it the CIA that arranged to have them ferried to overseas points for use against assorted national liberation movements? If not, who did?

It has long been thought that Air America, a private company, is a front for CIA aircraft supply and maintenance operations in Asia, and that another private airline, Bird & Sons, was operating in Asia in cooperation



with the State Department and the Laotian government. Hard evidence of the CIA's "flying war stores" in Asia, however, has been lacking. But this fall, the public was let in on the African operation. "Yes," said John Richard Hawke, an Englishman, as he stood trial for munitions smuggling in Federal Court at Buffalo, "I flew B-26 bombers to Portugal for use in their African colonies, and the operation was arranged through the State Department and the CIA."

[WAR TOYS]

ONE GETS the feeling that the CIA is a playpen for perpetual adolescents. That its agents, employees and hangers-on are playing with other people's lives and other people's freedom, in the service of American and foreign empire-builders, is perhaps incidental. For this crew, the play's the thing—that and the pay of course, and a slightly misplaced sense of patriotism. These initial impressions were confirmed during the trial at Buffalo.

It was a light-hearted trial, spiced with spooky disclosures and the hilarious circumlocutions of the CIA's top lawyer. The tone was set by Edwin Marger, an impish Miami Beach attorney and counsel for pilot Hawke. Marger is a courtroom genius, a jury-charmer and goat-getter of hostile witnesses. Every government witness he turned to his client's profit, methodically building his case. Recesses he spent animating the fine points for a clutch of eager law students from the University of Buffalo.

Practically all the principals in the trial, except the

judge, are fliers. Hawke, a bearded, moustachioed, 29-year-old veteran of eight years in the RAF, has done acrobatic stunt flying. Once, during one of his B-26 flights, he noticed that one of his wheels was locked as he was preparing to land; he went into a slight bank and brought her in, miraculously, on the one remaining working wheel.

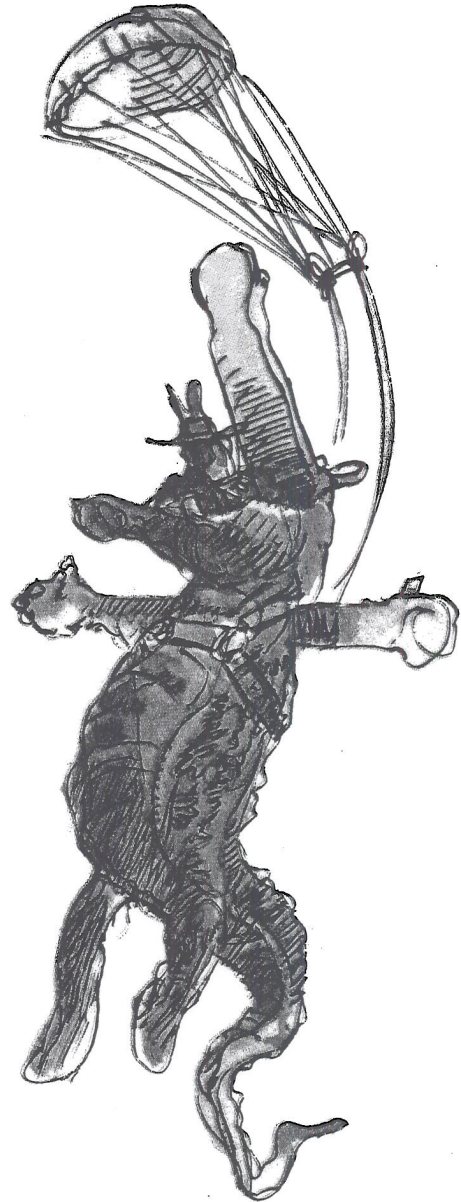
Accused of arranging the bomber deal with agents of Portugal was a debonair French count by the name of Henri Marie François de Marin de Montmarin, an aircraft broker who won the *Légion d'Honneur* as a Free French fighter pilot in World War II. The three others named in the original indictment are pilots too. Gregory Board, the dashing, sometimes CIA associate alleged to have masterminded the operation, mysteriously skipped off to Jamaica under the nose of Treasury agents who were following him. Charges were dropped against Keat Griggers, the California mechanic who gave B-26 training under a CIA-arranged contract to Portuguese pilots and mechanics, and Woodrow Wilson Roderick, a Canadian businessman accused of being a middleman.

Among the other fliers present in court were Attorney Marger, a good proportion of the witnesses, U.S. Attorney Curtin and Gerald Long, the young State Department lawyer who advised Curtin on the delicate CIA aspects of the case. Weekends everyone seemed to be rushing to the Buffalo airport to fly off in their planes, although their destinations did not appear to have an overweening importance. The judge even let Hawke ferry an airplane to Paris and back one weekend during the trial.

Hawke and de Montmarin were charged with violating the Munitions Control Act by smuggling B-26s out of the country without an export license. They were arrested by T-men in Miami in September 1965. The question immediately came to mind: If this was a CIA-approved caper (and there can be no doubt that it was, notwithstanding the holy denials of the Administration), then why was the government prosecuting its own agents?

The answer lies deep in the deceit of United States foreign policy, in our desire to set up and maintain "stable," right-wing governments in the underdeveloped world while at the same time proclaiming our belief in the self-determination of peoples. To be caught assisting Portugal, the most neanderthal of all colonial powers, in the prosecution of an imperial war would be bad for the image—and bad for investments. Moreover, it would have been most embarrassing to be caught in another lie at the United Nations. The accused pair were small fry, at most a delivery boy and a shipping agent doing a job. But if their trial did nothing else, it left the indelible impression that moralistic John Foster Dulles and his sinister brother Allen, architects of our Jekyll and Hyde foreign policy, are still very much with us.

WHEN THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL convened for its fall 1965 session, Soviet delegate Fedorenko repeated a charge he had made before: that the U.S. was supplying Portugal with planes to suppress the black rebellion in Angola and Mozambique. Ambassador Goldberg immediately denied it, citing a long-standing U.S. policy forbidding supply of armaments to Portugal, from public or private U.S. sources, "without specific assurances that they will not be used in the overseas territories."



Hungarian delegate Szilagyí was more specific than his Soviet colleague. He charged that in addition to a host of NATO armaments, seven B-26 bombers had been secretly delivered to Portugal for use in Africa, "on instructions from the competent United States authorities." Mrs. Eugenie Anderson, a U.S. delegate, conceded that the seven aircraft had in fact been delivered to Portugal, but "by



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private persons . . . without the United States authorities having the slightest knowledge of the operation." She added that the culprits (Hawke & Co.) had been indicted and would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Jaded U.N. delegates tittered sardonically at her rejoinder. They remembered Eisenhower's story about the U-2 in 1960, Stevenson's fabrication about the Bay of Pigs, and the more contemporary lies in which a simple majority of U.N. delegates believe the Johnson Administration has been caught—about Viet Cong "supply trails" in Cambodia, for example, or about Communist overtures for negotiation of the Vietnam war. Some day when the United States *does* tell the truth about an international embarrassment, no one is going to believe us.

[ERROLL FLYNN'S IN PILOT SUITS]

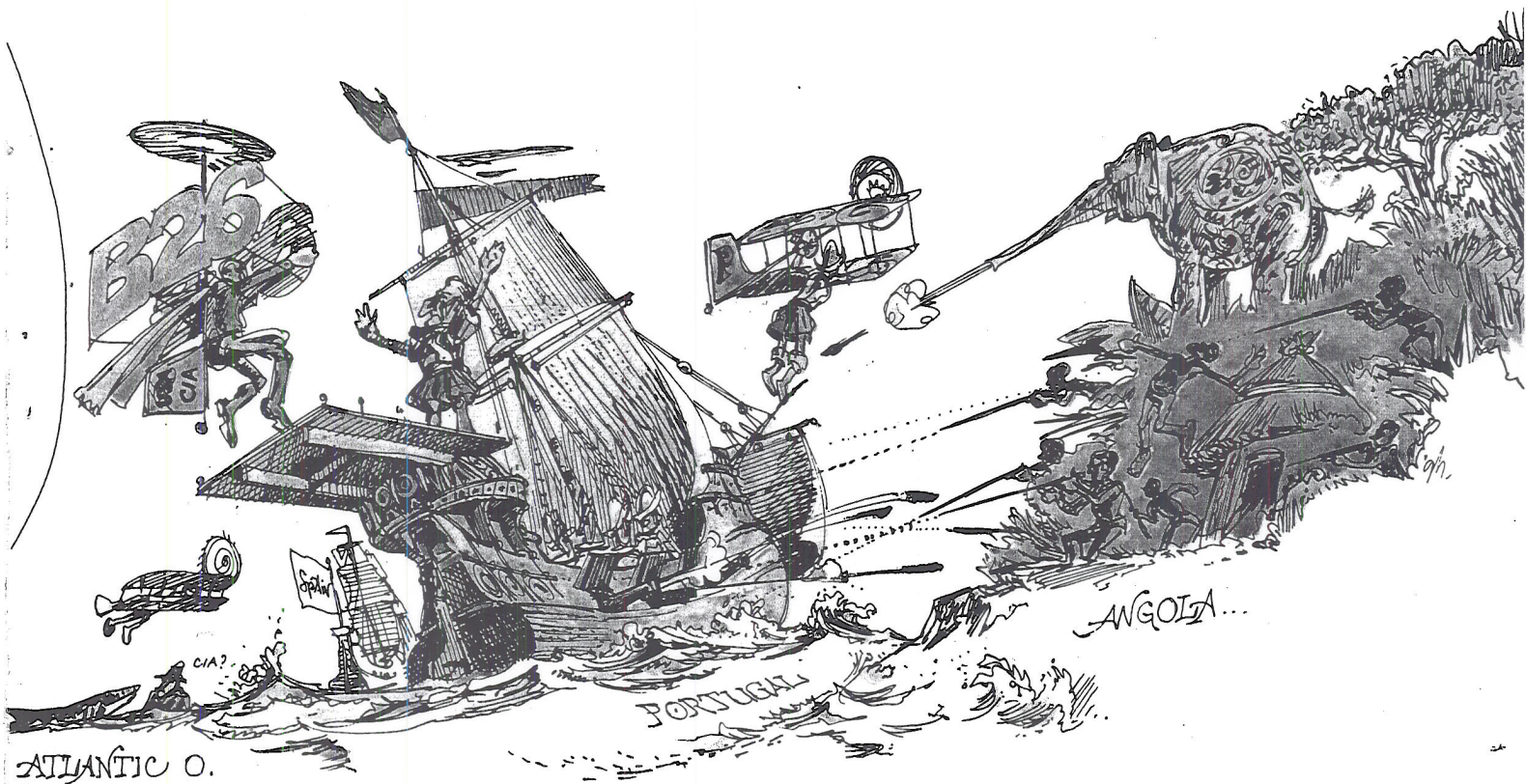
HAWKE WAS STILL in the RAF when he met Gregory Board in 1963, along with another adventurous gentleman named Martin Caidin, a friend of Board's. Hawke and Board were flying in a war film, "633 Squadron," and Caidin was on location in England checking the authenticity. Caidin, a pilot and self-made expert on space research, is the author of 59 books, 12 of which are used as textbooks by the U.S. military. His *Countdown for Tomorrow*, for example, is required reading at the War College.

Caidin is a roundish ball of energy in a pinstripe suit and G-15 pilot's shades, snappy with repartee, and the kind of guy who opens an interview with the comment,

"Let me say right off the bat; I'm a sonofabitch." He also identifies himself as a proud member of the "ABCDEF-GHI-Club—the American Boys' Club Defending Erroll Flynn's Good Habits, Inc.—And that's the only organization I belong to." (Gregory Board, tall and lean with a bushy moustache, closely resembles the late movie actor. Count de Montmarin used to attend parties with the real Erroll Flynn in the south of France and north Africa, and Attorney Marger belonged to the same cock-fighting club with Flynn in Batista's Cuba.)

Caidin, whose judgment of a man tends to hinge on how good a pilot he is, took to Hawke like Batman to Robin. They had barely met when he hired Hawke to ferry his Messerschmidt back to the States. The young Britisher had expressed an interest in emigrating to America, and Caidin agreed to sponsor him.

Caidin testified that in February of 1965, he flew into Tucson, Arizona to see Gregory Board. Board told him he had met several times with the chief of the Portuguese secret police to arrange for the sale of B-26 bombers. The planes could not be sold legally but the Portuguese were seeking the necessary consent of the State Department and the CIA. This involved "negotiations on the highest level of government" between Portugal and the United States; Salazar himself had to okay the transaction. Board told Caidin he wanted the airplanes to attract "the least amount of public attention." For that reason the planes "would be flown openly, going through customs and filing flight plans." U.S. Air Force installations would be avail-



able to assist the B-26 pilots. "This would be a sort of 'black operation,' with the government looking the other way," said Caidin. "You just don't fly this type of airplane out of the country without the complete cooperation of various government agencies . . ."

"Greg was very excited about this," Caidin said, "because if the deal went through with the B-26s, he could handle the sale of jet fighters to the Portuguese. He felt this opened the door to a multi-million dollar account later, where in regard to jet fighters he would act as a representative of the U.S. government."

On Caidin's recommendation Board engaged Hawke to pilot the B-26s. Hawke was a bit strapped for cash at the time, and besides, he loved to fly, anytime, anywhere. Board explained the operation and the tight security requirements, assuring him, however, that it was all "quite legitimate and proper." Hawke was to ferry 20 B-26 bombers to Portugal. For each flight he would receive \$3000, out of which he had to pay all expenses, including fuel, repairs and commercial air tickets back to America. (On the seven flights he completed before his arrest, Hawke averaged \$700 each after expenses.)

In May, Hawke and Board flew to Tucson, home of two companies engaged in international aircraft supply—Aero Associates, operated by Board, and Hamilton Aircraft, the property of a corpulent giant in baggy pants named Gordon B. Hamilton. Aero, using a \$694,000 letter of credit drawn on a Swiss bank, contracted to pay \$450,000 to Hamilton for supplying and reconditioning the 20 planes. Most payments were in cash. "I've had dealings with Board for seven years," said Hamilton, "and he likes to deal in cash." In addition, various European intermediaries expected to clear \$700,000 total profit on the venture.

It was understood by all concerned that this, like similar operations that had gone before it, was a CIA caper.

Even Lawrence Houston, the CIA general counsel who denied the agency's involvement in the affair, testified that the CIA "knew about" the bomber shipments from a Lisbon source as early as May 25, 1965—five days before they began—and informed the State Department, Customs and 11 other concerned agencies of the fact. Houston also said that on July 7, 1965, the CIA was "informed" that four B-26s had been delivered to Portugal for use in the African colonies; again the CIA disseminated the report to State and other agencies. One wonders how, if 13 government agencies knew about the illegal operation in advance, with a confirmatory report six weeks later, seven bombers could have been "smuggled" out of the country without the required export license.

Attorney Marger, contending that the operation had the CIA's blessing from the beginning, was unimpressed with Houston's disclaimer. He asked the witness, "As a mem-

ber of the CIA, if you were instructed by your superiors to tell other than the truth, would you do it?" Houston, a bespectacled, balding man whose dignified bearing and clipped accent ill-concealed his nervousness, was not permitted to reply. "This case involves matters of highest concern in the preservation of national security," said Federal Judge John Henderson. "Any question calculated to improperly discredit the United States and its representatives will be disallowed." The hand of the U.S. government is everywhere in this affair, and the network of private individuals and companies through which it operated, described here in but a fraction of its complexity, is nothing more than elaborate camouflage.

[WORLD WAR III FOR SALE—CASH ONLY, PLEASE]

HAMILTON'S ARIZONA HANGAR faces directly on the road. Anyone driving by could see more than a hundred B-26s with their armor plate, bomb bays and gun ports. "The largest collection of 26s in the world," claimed Hamilton, a licensed munitions exporter who does over 30 per cent of his business overseas. Three miles away is the U.S. Customs office for Tucson International Airport. Hamilton testified that throughout the period he was preparing the surplus bombers for overseas shipment, customs men, the FBI and representatives of the Federal Aviation Agency paid repeated visits to his hangar to check the progress. Yet none of these agencies did anything to prevent John Hawke from leaving the country in his seven flying fortresses.

The standard explanation about CIA bombers is that they are being converted for civilian use as "executive aircraft." Even if one could believe that Portuguese executives would be ordering *two squadrons* of bombers for business junkets, one can hardly imagine them ordering the noses rebuilt to accommodate machine guns, as were the noses on most of the planes chauffeured by Hawke. Hamilton testified that it was necessary to "demilitarize" the aircraft for export; when pressed he said this consisted entirely of disconnecting a few wires. In fact the planes were being remilitarized by Hamilton's 78 employees, under the tolerant eyes of U.S. Customs officers. Each plane, before it left the country, received a certificate of airworthiness from the FAA. Members of the Air National Guard, stationed near Hamilton's shop, were recruited to install or repair military equipment on the bombers. "We hired the Air National Guardsmen for particular tasks," said Hamilton, "like on the radios." Attorney Marger asked if they were wearing uniforms. "They may have been wearing fatigue uniforms," Hamilton replied, "but I want to make it clear that they were off duty and it had nothing to do with their military duties."

Hamilton said that from the time of Hawke's first flight,

when he conferred with customs officials about the “legality” of the shipments, he knew that the planes were destined for Angola and Mozambique via Portugal. Throughout the affair and until the trial almost a year and a half later, he testified, he continually discussed the case with representatives of the U.S. government. When Hawke and de Montmarin were under surveillance in September 1965, Hamilton was “kept apprised of it” and knew they would be arrested. “I was in close contact with the government during this period,” he said. “I had good reason to be.” It is clear that at all times during the affair, Washington knew precisely what was happening.

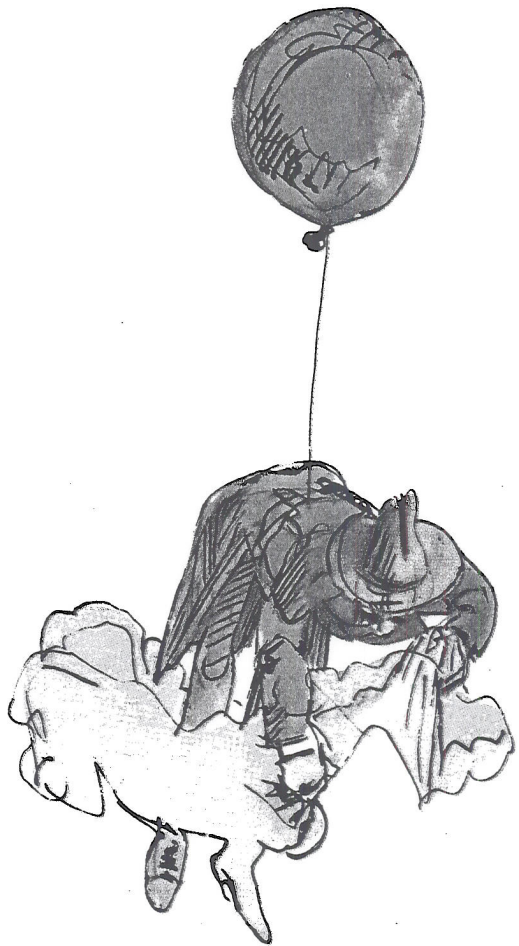
Knowing that for reasons of state the deal was off, Hamilton tried to make his own deal, after clearing it first, naturally, with the State Department. Shortly before the arrests of Hawke and de Montmarin, he personally contacted the Portuguese air attache in Washington and asked if Portugal would accept the remaining 13 B-26s under the “new conditions” laid down by the State Department. The new conditions were none other than the “long-standing U.S. policy” righteously enunciated by U.N. delegates Adlai Stevenson and Arthur Goldberg—“that use of the aircraft would be limited to Portuguese European territory.” Negotiations were broken off when the Portuguese would not agree to that condition. “They wanted to use them in Angola in their African colonies, I guess,” Hamilton said.

Hamilton was not indicted. The two Americans who were, were not prosecuted. Board was allowed to leave the country; his services as armorer to the counter-revolution were too valuable to be compromised. Charges against Keat Griggers were dropped, so he could return to his job in Portugal—training pilots and mechanics for their B-26 missions in Africa. That left the two patsies, and foreigners at that, to pay for saving America’s face. And Washington did its split-level best to convict them.

[BUZZING THE WHITE HOUSE IN MY BOMBER]

JOHAN HAWKE is a briskly self-reliant young man, made the more so by his realization that no matter what difficulties he encountered, the U.S. government, his patron, would bail him out. And right up until the time of his arrest, when the government doublecrossed him, his trust was entirely warranted.

He took off in Bomber No. 1 from Tucson in late May of 1965, landed in Rochester, New York to take on additional equipment and registered at a hotel, as he always did, using his right name and correct address. From there he flew to Torbay, Newfoundland, cleared Canadian customs with no difficulty, filed a flight plan (as he always did) and headed for Santa Maria airport in the Azores. When his radio failed him after takeoff, Canadian Air



Traffic Control sent out an Atlantic-wide alert for the missing B-26. U.S. air control authorities, who pay special attention to traffic of military aircraft and report immediately to their superiors any suspicious warplanes, were also notified. A second incident occurred on Hawke’s arrival at Santa Maria, when an airport official, ignorant of the caper, tried to impound the bomber. A quick phone call to the giant U.S. Air Force base on the Azores was all that was required to send Hawke winging on his way.

Landing at Tancos airfield near Lisbon, he was met by an assortment of high Portuguese military and secret police officials—“all of them delighted,” he said, “to see the airplane.” He also met the assistant U.S. air attache from Lisbon, a Lieutenant Colonel Mario di Silvestero, who chatted amiably with him about the flight. Tancos Field was frantic with activity. A number of B-26s were already there, being prepared for battle, with U.S. guidance, by the mechanic pupils of Keat Griggers.

Hawke returned to the States, picked up another B-26 in Tucson and began his second, many-legged journey to Portugal. On the way east, flying in messy weather, the radio and compass malfunctioned and Hawke decided to put in at Washington National Airport for repairs. As he was preparing to land, at low altitude, he unknowingly flew directly over the White House. “Imagine, in a

bomber," Hawke mused, "and the bomb doors worked—we saw to that before we left Tucson. What's more I think the President was *in* the White House at the time." The airspace over the White House is, of course, a prohibited area. Hawke had no sooner landed than he was seized by "little men in black suits" who told him the violation usually carried a \$1000 fine whatever the excuse. "But I gave them a couple of code words," said Hawke, "and suddenly I was Blue-eyed Boy Number One. They said they were sorry to have troubled me, although I should be more careful in the future, and wished me a successful continuation of my flight from Washington." The overflight was recorded in a Federal Aviation Agency Incident Report, filed July 2, 1965, detailing the presence of Hawke's B-26 over "Prohibited Area 56" (White House airspace). The report states in part: "White House called in reference to a twin-engined silver-colored aircraft in the above position and same heading." No violation has been filed against Hawke, something Martin Caidin finds incredible ". . . based on my experience as a pilot and as a writer on air safety. You know, there is a saying among pilots: 'Crash, but don't fly over the White House.' "

Hawke was stopped again by authorities before leaving the United States, in Portland, Maine, but again his "code words" worked magic. From then on, and for the next five transatlantic bomber deliveries, Hawke had no problems with U.S. authorities.

Hawke was also involved in the shipment of B-26 spare parts to Portugal. Among the spares were Norden bomb sights, machinegun accessories and Air Force B-26 technical manuals, supplied by two related Rochester concerns, Surplus World and Morris Diamond Associates. Employees of the surplus houses, Jack Bachman and his brother Jerome, testified that Board had purchased the equipment. They said they were in business to sell munitions and didn't care who purchased them "as long as their credit is good." "I'm World War III," quipped Marger, "and I'm for sale to anybody who wants to buy." The parts were loaded into a C-46, with U.S. Customs men present, and flown to Portugal by Board and Griggers.

It was while preparing a second shipment of B-26 parts that Hawke was arrested. Early in September he, Board and de Montmarin flew the C-46 up and down the east coast collecting spare parts at various cities. At each call customs agents would question them, place some phone calls and finally permit them to leave. For months everything had been cool and now, suddenly, there was this unaccustomed amount of heat. Board decided to postpone the shipment while he "communicated with the right people," and the trio went to Miami to cool their heels. Each of them was followed by T-men. Board communicated with the right people and left the country. Hawke and

de Montmarin were locked up in the Dade County jail.

Caidin testified that after Hawke's arrest, he talked with Miami customs agents, in the presence of Marger, and offered to contact Board for them. "They were not interested," he said. Caidin then contacted Col. Charles Callahan, the security officer at a Florida Air Force base to whom he regularly supplied intelligence, and filed a 25,000-word report on the case. He said Callahan told him, "Stop rocking the boat and putting on the pressure . . . another government agency is involved in the case." Caidin said he warned the CIA, where he had a regular contact, that "somebody's going to blow the lid on this." They told him that they would look into it.

[WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, BOY?]

THESE HAD BEEN many blunders in "Operation Sparrow," the government code name for the B-26 caper. Security had been repeatedly breached. A wide circle of persons were now privy to Sparrow's secrets. By mid-August, according to one Washington source, even Soviet intelligence had gotten wind of the affair. Furthermore, the fall 1965 session of the UN General Assembly was approaching, the question of Portuguese Africa was already on the agenda and Washington had good cause to be worried. The U.S. delegation knew that this time, the attacks of African nations and the Soviet bloc would be directed not only at Portugal, but at those nations supplying Portugal with arms. As the Portuguese foreign minister said last year after conferring in Washington with American officials: "The United States appears to have adopted a more realistic attitude toward Portuguese policies in the African territories."

There is no question that concern for our world image played a part in the decision to arrest Hawke and the Count. Their arrest as "private smugglers" was immediately seized upon by our U.N. delegation as evidence of American innocence in the Portuguese African wars. It is perhaps not a coincidence, either, that the trial was scheduled to open this fall (a year after the arrests) simultaneously with the convening of the General Assembly, at which the question of Portuguese Africa was again expected to figure prominently. When the Tanzanian delegate raised the B-26 question in the Security Council last October 3, Ambassador Goldberg was able to reply: "The only involvement of officials of the United States government, therefore, has been in prosecuting a malefactor acting against the laws of the country, and that prosecution is being pursued vigorously by my government." For all the government's vigor, the Buffalo jury which acquitted the "malefactors" would have found Goldberg quite difficult to believe.
