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CIA sponsored bombings

ALEX APOSTOLIDES

You may or may not be aware of the rash of bombings that struck the southland during the closing months of 1968. We're wired into it, because dingalings hit the Freep three times with explosive devices. Fortunately, only minor damage resulted.

But there were others, and people were hurt. You can fix a door or window, but try replacing an arm or leg some time.

The police were called and did their thing, looking in all the files for "infernal devices" but nothing came out of it, and the Mad Bomber (s) remained a mystery.

One of the questions the police kept asking was "Did you find any Cuban stickers?" The answer, for us, anyway, was no. Stickers had been found after bombings at various consulates, and all indications pointed to an anti-Castro group that was running around and exercising its pique by making things explode all over Southern California.

Now some of the mystery has been cleared. Officials announced, on 1968's last day, that

CIA-supplied explosives had been used in several of the "Cuban" bombings. Explanation was that anti-Castroites had been trained by the CIA for one of those periodic sallies against the Cuban homeland. The putsch, like all its predecessors, never quite succeeded in coming off, and one assumes that the Cubans were given hearty handshakes and dismissed from whatever Project Freedom the CIA had in mind at the time. One can't refrain from psyching the following scene:

Place, a CIA office. There is a government-issue desk in the middle of the room. Seated behind it is a government-issue man in CIA civilian clothes. On the wall behind the man is a government-issue picture of ole Lyndon. It is huge and it is gray, and the eyes seem to follow you wherever you walk in the room. Two sallow men with sideburns and pencil-line mustaches stand in front of the desk. They look like stereotyped pimps, but they are government agents, recruited by the CIA to Fight the Good Fight for Cuba.

The government-issue man speaks.

"Cornillot! Garcia! Stand at ease. I don't know how to tell you this, men, but the project has been called off. We can't hope to bomb Havana flat with only three kilos of C-4 explosive."

"Oh, mierda, sir!"

"I know, I know—but that's the way the tortilla crumbles, men. Now, there are several alternatives open to you. There's the Job Corps, where you can learn a useful trade... or AID, where you can go overseas and use the lessons we've taught you here. Whatever, we're terminating you from all CIA-connected duties. Be good troopers and know that

though you're not of us any more, you're always with us. Good luck, and goodbye."

The Cubans stand a moment, jaw muscles clenched in emotion.

"Oh, and one thing more. You'll have to turn in your equipment before you go. The teargas pencils, the seersucker suits, the sniper rifles."

"What about the plastic explosives, sir?"

"What explosives? The CIA doesn't know anything about any explosives."

"But—"

"You're on your own now. We would never countenance the use of explosives as official policy. You men know that. Go on now, keep stiff upper lips and God bless."

The Cubans exit, and that seems to be the end of the matter. But it's not. Not by a damn sight.

What do you do if you're adrift in a strange and lonely land and you have all this wild plastic explosive hanging around? You blow things UP, is what you do. Only trouble with this is that almost everyone you meet in your clandestine operations is either a police officer or an FBI man. You don't know this at the time, but from the testimony given to the Grand Jury investigating the southland bombings, there were more on-duty agents involved than there were bombers.

Thirty witnesses appeared to testify at the inquiry which led to the indictment of two alleged bombers, charged with 15 counts of illegally possessing and discharging explosives.

The thing that piques our interest is that, if there was all this fuzz around, how in hell did the bombers ever get the chance to set off their bombs?

The explosives used came from the CIA, according to the testimony, and this, in turn poses a number of interesting ques-

tions. Like, why were they still running around with explosives in their possession if they were no longer employed by the CIA? When you leave any of the armed services, they make you turn in your weapons on the theory that you no longer have need for gun or bayonet, and they'd shit little chevrons if you tried to take grenades home as fond souvenirs. So where the special privilege with CIA types? "You're going home, Chingazo? Good luck, boy—and take a ki of plastique along with you for old times' sake."

Well, the two indicted men did just that, evidently, and, in uncontrollable pique, managed to do bomb damage to five southland buildings before they were done. Hit here were the Government of Mexico Tourist Dept., the Mexican National Tourist Council, the Shell Data Processing Center, Air France and Japan Airlines.

We're fairly sure they're not involved in the bombings of the Freep. We've got our own home-grown kooks for that.

We do look for the unfortunate caught-Cubans to be blamed for every bombing of major consequence of the past two years, though. It's the way the judicial mind works. What the hell, you've got two patsies, you might as well get all the mileage out of them you can.

But it doesn't work out that way in real life, and the two bombers will probably go into jail with the major questions still unanswered: if the CIA issued them the explosive, what were they doing with it if they were no longer connected with that sterling organization? And—how many other "ex" CIA men are there around, tidy packages of explosives in their survival kits, ready and waiting for the word of their Leader to go and make things go boom...