

# The 'inheritance' that launched a rocket attack

TWO British citizens, posing as tourists, duped a Pretoria businessman, Mr Gerhard Basson, into letting his house to five ANC insurgents as a base for an attack on the Voortrekkerhoogte Military Base last August.

Bonnie Lou Muller, 27, a slightly unkempt "hippie-like" woman, and Nicholas Francis Heath, 33, a "pale and studious" type, introduced themselves to Mr Basson as Mr and Mrs Heath.

They said they were visitors who had inherited some money from Mr Heath's family and wanted to relax in and tour around, South Africa.

Mr Basson has told how the couple paid him three months' rent in advance.

But at the end of this period they disappeared without paying their R260 water and light bill and left the house in a shambles.

In the three months Mr Basson did not have an inkling that his home was harbouring five insurgents armed with a Soviet Grad P rocket launcher, handgrenades, AK47 rifles and Makarov pistols.

It was only later — when he found the carpet had been lifted and a hole sawn through the floor boards to hide their weapons — did he get an indication of what they had been doing.

Mr Basson said that when he first met the "Heaths" they were "obviously in a tight squeeze".

"They wolfed down a supper my wife prepared for them, but were well-spoken people," he said.

"They told us they had been to Zimbabwe and that Mr Heath intended recuperating from his ill-health in South Africa.

"I decided to give them a break and let the house although they said they were still waiting for money to arrive. They claimed it was inheritance money. I now suspect it came from different sources.

"About a week later they paid me R1 500 for the rent of the house.

"They signed a one-year contract on the house but disappeared in August. We only realised this in September.

"Shortly afterwards I received a letter from Britain without a sender's address. In it the woman said Mr Heath's ill-health had forced them to

return to Britain."

Mr Basson said that in addition to sawing a hole in the floor, the insurgents had been into the ceiling. He also found grease marks on the carpets.

Security Police said the involvement in the attack by Heath, Muller and three other whites represented a new phase in insurgent activities in South Africa.

Whites are not known to have been directly involved in attacks on strategic installations since the mid-1960s.

The operation began in

**Crime Reporter EMIELIA JAROSCHEK reports on the detailed planning that went into the rocket attack in August last year on the Voortrekkerhoogte Military Base — and on two unwitting accomplices of the insurgents.**

South Africa five months before the attack when, on March 20, Heath and Muller landed at Jan Smuts Airport and bought a Volkswagen registered FKW 164T.

Inquiries revealed they visited Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland in this car.

In June they moved into Mr Basson's house. And in July they began using the truck of another man whose link to the attack has been confirmed by Security Police — Dr Edward Wethli of Canada.

Wethli — a former South African — visited the Republic of Canada and left for Maputo in May last year. Two months later Heath and Muller returned to South Africa in his truck.

By this time the two other whites involved in preparing the attack — David William Hedges, 37, of Britain, and Guido Luciaan van Hecken, 30, of Belgium — had entered the Republic to buy transport to be used later by the

insurgents.

Hedges entered South Africa on June 22 and bought a Volkswagen Kombi with the registration CNW 081T and a VW Passat, registered BTN 636T.

Hedges, whose addresses were given as Queenswood Gardens in London and Tejuwarth, Devon, bought both cars in Johannesburg and registered them in his name.

On June 25 both he and Van Hecken travelled to Piet Retief in the south-eastern Transvaal, where they

stayed at the Central Hotel after signing themselves in under their own names.

The next morning they entered Swaziland through the Houdkop border post. Hedges and Van Hecken did not, as far as can be established, return to South Africa after they left on June 26.

But the cars were used by the five black ANC insurgents who frequently travelled between Swaziland and South Africa. They were also used by Heath and Muller in Swaziland.

The kombi was ultimately used in the attack, according to a driver who befriended the insurgents.

The "Mail" visited the Central Hotel and found Hedges' and Van Hecken's signatures and the registration numbers of both cars entered on June 25.

Efforts to trace Hedges revealed that the London address was deserted and the Devon address false.

And attempts to trace Van Hecken at his address in

Schilde, Belgium, established he is now in Mozambique, lecturing in language sciences at the University of Maputo.

When the "Mail" phoned Van Hecken in Maputo, he said: "I cannot agree with your facts. I have nothing to say on this matter." He then put the phone down.

Police said inquiries by them revealed Van Hecken entered South Africa first on January 17 via the Lebombo border post from Mozambique in a car with false number plates.

The "Mail" has also tried to trace Heath and Muller at the Colvestone, England, address they left with Mr Basson on renting his house, but could find no record of them at the school there.

Security Police confirmed that the five ANC men who actually carried out the attack — all black South Africans living in a military camp in Mozambique — slipped their net and escaped.

Mozambique links recurred throughout the planning and execution of the attack and nine of the 10 insurgents spent time in Maputo either before or after the attack:

- The rocket attack itself was launched by Maputo-based insurgents;
- Wethli left South Africa for Maputo in May;
- Heath and Muller travelled to Maputo and returned in Wethli's truck;
- Van Hecken is still in Maputo.

The insurgents left behind their cumbersome rocket launcher which they had already dismantled metres from where they fired the rockets.

Police believe they had problems getting it away before residents of nearby Laudium ran into the veld to investigate the sound of it firing.

25/6/81	GUIDO VAN HECKEN	I agree to the following conditions Ek aanvaar onderstaande voorwaardes	Braschaatfebaan 66	Touring
25/6/81	David W. Hedges	I agree to the following conditions Ek aanvaar onderstaande voorwaardes	2230 Schilde - BELGIE 4 West Buitenveld, Tejuwarth, Devon, U.K.	

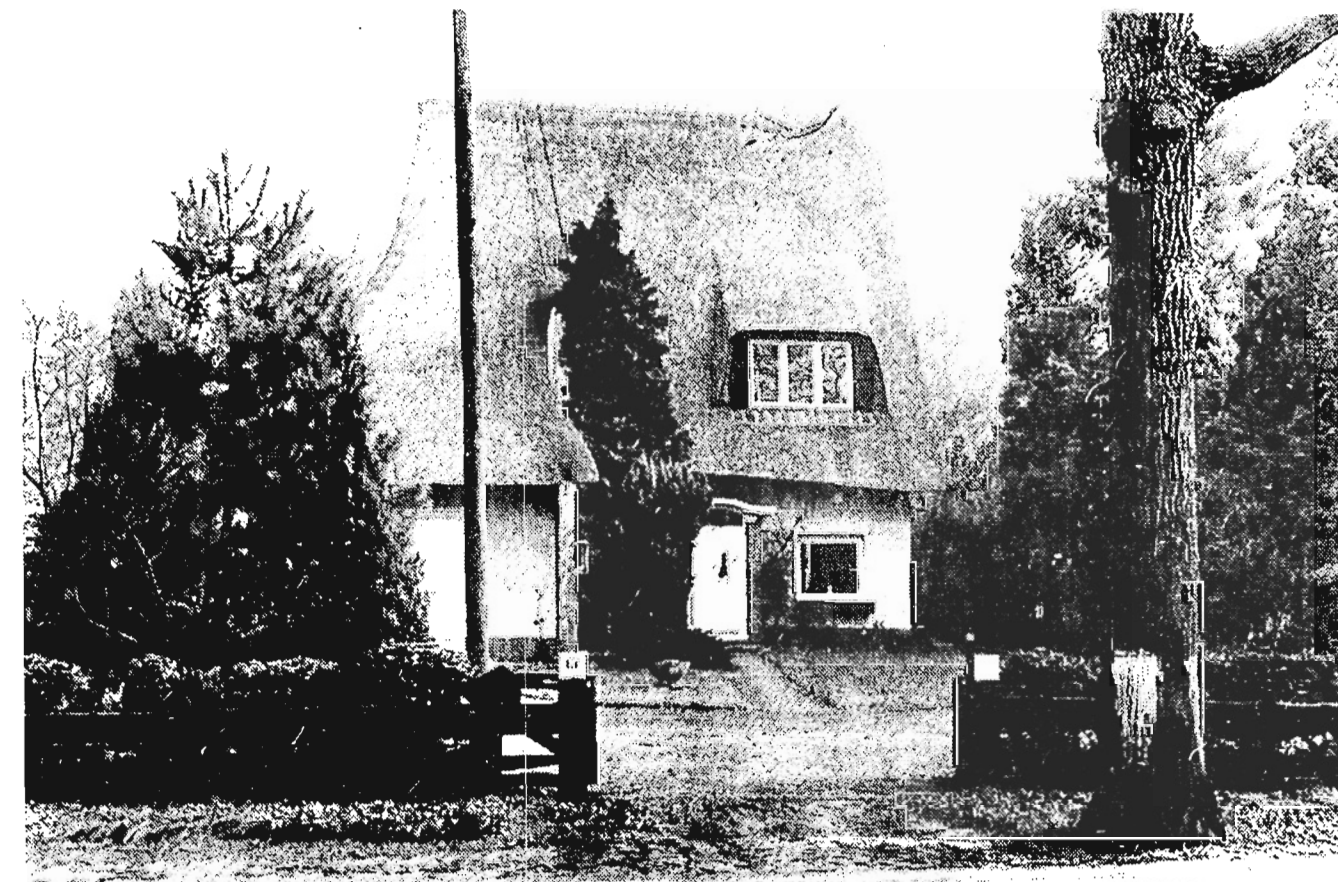
LAST STOP . . . the signatures, addresses and vehicle registrations which were given by Hedges and Van Hecken at the Central Hotel, Piet Retief, before they finally left South Africa for Swaziland.



FALSE . . . where the "Heaths" said they lived.



FALSE . . . where Hedges said he lived.



TRUE . . . the house where Van Hecken lived in Belgium.

## Killing time with karate

A PRETORIA driver has told how he met five heavily-armed ANC insurgents and spent days with them before and after they launched a rocket attack on Voortrekkerhoogte Military Base.

The driver, who asked not to be identified, said he was first approached by one of the five insurgents in June last year — two months before the attack on August 12.

And after the attack he had watched a karate film with the men, and had driven them around Pretoria to buy clothes before they left for Mozambique.

He said he had eaten with the men, watched them carry their rocket launcher to the point from which they wanted to fire their rockets and had seen them in the massive house at Mooiplaas with their two white colleagues.

His story unfolded at a secret meeting place near Pretoria. He refused to disclose his name or allow photographs.

"I knew the first man who came to me from schooldays in South Africa. He said he was now living in a camp in Mozambique, but told me he had also been to Tanzania.

"He spent a month at my home. Every day he went out but never said where he was going. He left at the end of June and pitched up again at the beginning of August.

"It was then — for the first time — that I got an idea that they wanted to attack a military base.

"He took me to a farm house (Mooiplaas) near the Erasmus Police Station where he and four other men were sleeping in a carpeted

room on sponge mattresses with this rocket launcher at their side.

"They were armed with AK47 rifles, Makarov pistols and handgrenades.

"I did not speak much to the white couple in the house. My friend and his colleagues all acted out roles to avoid suspicion.

"Two pretended to be gardeners, one a cook and another a cleaner. The other was also a 'labourer' of some sort.

"They used my vehicle at times, made food for me and then on the night of August 11 (a day before the attack) they made their first attempt to attack the base.

"Piece by piece they carried their rocket launcher along about a quarter kilometre of sand road to set it up in the veld.

"I went with them. They would have attacked but a black man came past and asked what the equipment was.

"They told him the launcher and tripod were pipes to set up a fence and he left. But this made them decide it was too risky for the attack and so they carried all the pieces back to the house again.

"The two whites were no longer there on the night of the attack. My friend and his partners stayed on in the house for four days after the attack.

"In this time I drove them around town to buy clothes and one day we even watched a karate film at Marabastad.

"My friend invited me to go back to Maputo with him but I refused," the driver said.