

## Rolling up Rivonia: 1962–1963

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### Abstract

Liliesleaf was purchased in 1961 by the South African Communist Party and it functioned as a nerve centre for the liberation movements and key leaders of that era. The significance of Liliesleaf is that this was a place where the transition into a new form of struggle, namely armed struggle occurred, making an icon of that struggle for freedom. Liliesleaf marks a seminal shift in South Africa's liberation struggle history. On 11 July 1963 the police raided Liliesleaf. Their rolling up of Rivonia in turn culminated in the Rivonia Trial. For the apartheid government this was a coup. For the liberation movement, it represented a blow. Many theories abound as to how the police identified Liliesleaf. This paper presents new information about these complex and myriad historical events. The paper shows that the raid was the culmination of a much longer term investigation by various state agencies and not only the Security Branch of the South African Police.

**Key words:** Liliesleaf; Rivonia; Mandela; intelligence; SADF; Security Branch; direction finding; Umkhonto we Sizwe; South African Communist Party; African National Congress

### Introduction

Popular culture portrays the South African Police Security Branch experiencing a lucky break when they raided Liliesleaf farm in the then peri-urban suburb of Rivonia, Johannesburg on 11 July 1963. Security Branch (SB) is popularly perceived as a proverbial Mr Plod staffed with witless policemen, who bumbling along, finally caught up.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary literature suggests that when 14 Security Branch including Lieutenant Van Wyk and an Alsatian called Cheetah leapt from their dry cleaning van at Liliesleaf to raid the premises, they had little idea of the enormity of the haul they were about to make.

Not only did they capture senior leaders inside a thatched cottage and the main house from the African National Congress (ANC), its armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK),

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1. D.J. Smith, *Young Mandela* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010), 276.

and the South African Communist Party (SACP). The police would also seize hoards of documents, journals, letters, diaries and writings by numerous leaders, linked directly to the armed struggle. A veritable struggle library of publications from the international milieu dealing with conventional and guerrilla warfare, political, military and economic theory and practice, revolution and insurrection, sabotage and bomb-making, were found throughout the main house and outbuildings on the farm. Over 100 maps detailing sabotage targets, together with Mandela's 1962 diary and writings were hauled from inside a coal bunker.<sup>2</sup> Printing equipment, a radio transmitter and other paraphernalia linked to MK's sabotage campaign would be revealed in the outbuildings.

Operation Mayibuye, a blueprint for an armed invasion of the Republic linked to an internal insurrection would be seized; not on a table inside the thatched cottage as later claimed by the police. Rather it was located behind a hubcap on Arthur Goldreich's Citroen, driven in after the raid commenced.<sup>3</sup> This document's strategic intent was under discussion when the police burst in. Enough material was seized for the police to investigate additional underground networks and, for the apartheid state's security apparatus, to severely interrupt and interdict the liberation movement's armed struggle. The prospect of death sentences hung over the heads of the accused in the so called Palace of Justice, a Pretoria court, in what became globally known as the Rivonia Trial.

The cause of the compromise would be debated from the day of raid and into the present era. Many theories would be floated. The generally agreed on thread is that an unidentified informant or informants gave Liliesleaf away. A sell-out voluntarily co-operated with Security Branch, a Judas in the ranks, a deep throat spilling privileged knowledge, or a captured comrade, broken under tragic circumstances of interrogation, brutality and torture to give up their secret. There is no doubt that captured operatives did offer up information, for example Bruno Mtolo, Patrick Methembu and Bartholomew Hlapané.<sup>4</sup>

Glenn Frankel's work has it that,

Two weeks after the Radio Liberation broadcast, Van Wyk received a call from a fellow officer who had come across an informant with important goods to sell [...] he said he knew where to find Sisulu and half a dozen other important leaders of the Umkhonto High Command. For a large payment [...] he would take the lieutenant there.<sup>5</sup>

According to Frankel and the literature, the informant apparently did. Lt. Van Wyk then planned the raid which he sprung the following day. This he timed for 13h00 yet was delayed when ordered to get a search warrant. At that time the only person of interest at Liliesleaf was Ahmed Kathrada. By 15h00 Van Wyk had his warrant and set off from Rivonia police station, a few minutes drive away from the farm. In the interim other senior leaders had arrived at Liliesleaf, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba and Lionel Bernstein who were joined by Bob Hepple and Denis Goldberg. They were

2. University of the Witwatersrand, Historical Papers, Defence Collection, W/O C Dirker, AD 1844 Vol. 8, Box 2. Arthur Goldreich related that he was forced to accompany the police to Liliesleaf the day after the raid to witness their search. Liliesleaf archives (hereafter LL/INT), 2, Arthur Goldreich interview, 1 April 2004.
3. Arthur Goldreich, discussions with the author during 2004 and 2005 at Liliesleaf.
4. M. Dingake, *Better to Die on One's Feet* (Cape Town: South African History Online, 2015), 67–69.
5. G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999), 29.

captured, along with Arthur Goldreich who returned home later, his wife Hazel, and Hilliard Festenstein who visited Liliesleaf that night, together with African staff resident on the farm. The Goldreich children, Nicholas and Paul along with a friend of theirs were held overnight on the farm. The police couldn't believe their luck. Lt. Van Wyk telephoned his superiors from the household farm exclaiming, 'Ons het a jackpot' (We have a jackpot).<sup>6</sup>

This narrative of events does not differ much in the literature dealing with the Liliesleaf raid and associated Rivonia era. The current exhibit narrative at Liliesleaf is similar, although it suggests that foreign intelligence agencies may have played a role in locating the farm and identified its true purpose. This supposition is similar to popular culture evident in the literature that the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had a hand in Nelson Mandela's capture, 11 months before the raid. Nevertheless the literature agrees that Security Branch identified Liliesleaf through informers situated within the underground structures, the possibility that they tailed someone of interest to the farm, and maybe, as the Liliesleaf exhibit narrative suggests, received some help from foreign agencies. None of this considers the possibility of investigative work by the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the South African Police Security Branch and the newly formed Republican Intelligence Department (RID). These agencies did not require turned informers and external information from foreign intelligence agencies, although it would have assisted them. The reason being, especially in the case of the SADF, they had other technological resources, which they started developing in the 1950s and which were operationalised before the 1963 raid.

Within days of the raid media reports alleged that Walter Sisulu's Radio Freedom transmission was broadcast from Liliesleaf on 26 June 1963.<sup>7</sup> This remained popular currency from an apartheid perspective during the regime's lifespan.<sup>8</sup> Yet it is fact that the transmission occurred elsewhere in Johannesburg. MK personnel associated with this broadcast were aware that cross triangulation technology might intercept Sisulu's broadcast and locate the transmitter.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the apartheid apparatchiks stating this knew that they were spreading disinformation. Or were their statements that Sisulu's broadcast from Liliesleaf deliberate misinformation in order to conceal another deeper seated activity by themselves? One which has remained concealed along with the intelligence methods of human sources combined with technological resources that the security agencies utilised to roll up Rivonia.

Nowhere does the literature indicate that the Security Branch was investigating Liliesleaf in 1962, within a month or two after Mandela's capture. Nor does any literature reveal the role of the SADF in surveillance operations of Liliesleaf and that this resulted from Morse code transmissions made by a person/s unknown from Liliesleaf over a four month period before the raid, which the SADF detected. None of the literature outlines how this surveillance was undertaken. The Liliesleaf exhibition mentions that a local child provided

6. Arthur Goldreich, discussions with the author during 2004 and 2005 at Liliesleaf.

7. *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 July 1963.

8. L. Strydom, *Rivonia Unmasked!* (Johannesburg: Voortrekepers, 1965).

9. LL/INT 2, Denis. Goldberg interview, 2004. Cross triangulation involved having three direction-finding stations in separate locations inside the Republic. When a signal was intercepted by each of these stations it was then possible to triangulate the exact position or as close as possible to the transmitter and identify its location.

information to the police in 1962 and that mysterious activities occurred in the vicinity of the farm in the caravan park across the road entrance into the farm before the raid.

However, this article provides additional information, which is an initial opening into future lines of research for those interested in this era of South African history. The central thesis being that a Security Branch investigation of Liliesleaf commenced in 1962, shortly after Mandela's capture, and a surveillance operation by the SADF after 1 April 1963. Although no evidence has emerged that these two separate lines of enquiry ever dovetailed into a combined operation, the likelihood exists that they intersected, culminating in the raid that rolled up Rivonia.

### August 1962–June 1963

'Is Liliesleaf clean?'<sup>10</sup> An anxious question posed by awaiting trial prisoner Nelson Mandela to his legal counsel consisting of Joe Slovo and Bob Hepple. Mandela had good reason to be concerned.<sup>11</sup> After returning to South Africa from his 1962 mission into Africa and a visit to Britain, his first stopover was Liliesleaf farm. There he left his false passport, notebooks, diaries and journals and other materials detailing his activities, meetings, military training and fundraising abroad.

Mandela then drove to Natal, for discussions with Chief Albert Luthuli and MK sabotage units. On 5 August 1962, while returning to Johannesburg, Mandela was captured near Howick along with Cecil Williams his courier. Mandela claims that he successfully concealed a revolver and notebook within the upholstery of the front seat of Williams's car, before being arrested and then driven to Pietermaritzburg.<sup>12</sup>

As for the arrest various versions exist. For example, the film *Long Walk to Freedom*<sup>13</sup> has Mandela being arrested by policemen pointing rifles at him during his capture. However, according to Detective Sergeant W.A. Vorster from the Howick police station, he received orders from Major Smidt to take up a position in an unmarked car alongside the Johannesburg Road in Howick. At around 15h45, Mandela and Williams passed Vorster who then followed, with Major Smidt in another vehicle behind him.

Williams was driving. About two miles out of town Vorster overtook the Austin and flagged it down while Smidt pulled up behind it thus blocking the road. Smidt identified the two occupants, despite Mandela giving his name as David Motsamayi. Smidt arrested them on a 'charge of suspicion' and Vorster searched Mandela before he was taken to Howick police station.<sup>14</sup>

If the police found this notebook, which the hypothesis is that they did, then they could investigate his activities in South Africa after his return from Ethiopia. Although it is assumed that Mandela had not written the name Liliesleaf down in his notebook, the risk

10. LL/INT 3/LOT 4/ Notes 1, Bob Hepple interviews, 2005. See also A. Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Paarl: Zebra, 2004), 150.

11. LL/INT 3/LOT 4/ Notes 1, Bob Hepple interviews, 2005.

12. N.R. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1994), 372–373.

13. *Long Walk to Freedom*, Justin Chadwick, South Africa, 2013.

14. National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), Detective Sgt, W.A. Vorster, Statement, NAN 52/ Box 12/MS 385.28.

and materialising danger was that by using information contained therein, Security Branch could eventually hone in on Liliesleaf and roll up Rivonia with its networks. ‘Please tell them to get rid of the documents’, Mandela instructed his legal team.<sup>15</sup> His orders, as Commander in Chief of Umkonto we Sizwe, were never followed out.

The police would have searched Williams’s car, they would have literally stripped it to pieces given the profile of whom they had just captured, and found the notebook and revolver. Five days after capturing Mandela a police memorandum detailed his movements in the days leading up to this event. According to the memorandum:

On 25 July 1962 he returned to Lobatsi Bechuanaland by private aircraft [...] On approximately 28 June 1962 he returned to the RSA possessing R40,000 and an Ethiopian army uniform. On 29 July 1962, he secretly met with ANC leaders in Johannesburg. [Note that this is described as Johannesburg, not Liliesleaf, Rivonia in Johannesburg.] On 1 August 1962, he departed for Durban accompanied by Cecil Williams a white listed communist in the aforementioned car. On 2 and 3 August 1962, he met with Natal ANC leaders as well as the ‘Natal Naval Sabotage Unit’. On 4 August he had secret discussions with prominent communists and left wingers in Durban. At 4pm on 5 August he was arrested at Howick by the Security Police while accompanied by Cecil George Williams a listed communist in the aforementioned vehicle while on route to Johannesburg. On 7 August he appeared in the Magistrates Court, Pietermaritzburg and was remanded to Johannesburg. On 9 August he appeared in the Johannesburg Magistrates Court. Case remanded to 16 August 1962.<sup>16</sup>

This memorandum is of interest on a number of levels. First, Mandela was intending to return from Mbeye in Tanganyika to Lobatse, flying in an aircraft operated by Bechuanaland Air Safaris, a front company set up by the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), also known as the pipeline.<sup>17</sup> Its Managing Director, Captain Herbert Bartaune was a multiple agent – providing information to the South African Security establishment, British intelligence and possibly the CIA.<sup>18</sup>

However while meeting with Fish Keitseng in Mbeye, Keitseng advised him that Lobatse was literally crawling with Security Branch agents and informers.<sup>19</sup> Consequently the flight was re-diverted to Kanye where Mandela was intercepted by the local magistrate and a security official who then drove him to Lobatse. There they rendezvoused with Joe Modise and Jonas Matlou, Mandela’s MK collection team.<sup>20</sup> The magistrate advised Mandela that the South African Police were aware of his return and encouraged him to leave the next day.<sup>21</sup> Mandela left that night for Liliesleaf, collected by Cecil Williams, where he arrived the following day wearing an Ethiopian army uniform and where the

15. LL/INT 3/LOT 4/ Notes 1, Bob Hepple interviews, 2005.

16. NASA, Directorate of Security Legislation, Nelson Mandela File.

17. G. Benneyworth, ‘Bechuanaland’s aerial pipeline. State surveillance, repression and counter-insurgency, 1960–1965’, paper presented at the Politics of Armed Struggle in Southern Africa Conference, University of Witwatersrand, 24 November 2016.

18. National Archives of United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK), FO 371/167528, South Africa: Export of Arms to South Africa: Smuggling and Gun-running Activities, 1963.

19. F. Keitseng, ‘Fish Keitseng on Nelson Mandela in Botswana (Part 2)’, [www.facebook.com/Botswana.Government/posts/552102291539100](http://www.facebook.com/Botswana.Government/posts/552102291539100), accessed 15 November 2016.

20. Mandela, *Long Walk*, 365.

21. *Ibid.*

senior leadership of the ANC and SACP debriefed him. He left the farm soon thereafter for Durban with Williams.

Mandela's memoir and other literature establish these facts. However, the police memorandum fills in gaps not detailed in the literature. Written five days after his capture the police were certain of his movements and could date his activities. They quote the Natal Naval Sabotage Unit, a non-existent term in any of the literature dealing with the liberation struggle, a terminology used by the writer of the memorandum when commenting on his Durban meeting with a MK sabotage unit. A possibility is that the police got this information from informants, yet this seems unlikely given the transnational and personal information and that they had it all within five days of capturing Mandela. The hypothesis is that they pieced this together from his notebook, which also provided additional evidence of Mandela leaving the country illegally, a crime for which he had not yet been arrested, yet for which he was subsequently charged, convicted and sentenced.

Mandela's memoir and the literature records that the day after being captured he appeared in the Pietermaritzburg Magistrate Court. However, the police memorandum states that he did not. He was held throughout Monday and appeared on Tuesday. This left one day, namely the Monday, for Williams's car to be searched. This Mandela may have suspected, hence his concern as whether Liliesleaf was clean? As the police never referred to his notebook and firearm during further interactions with Mandela he may have subsequently deduced that they were never found.

### **1962–1963 SAP Security Branch investigation**

This discovery was held back as Security Branch initiated an operation to link potential threads from the notebook and information from other sources. Within a short period of time, weeks or a couple of months at most, Liliesleaf was the subject of their investigation. This article in no way suggests that Mandela's notebook was the *fait accompli* cause of the Rivonia rollup. Rather it was SB's investigation to identify the Johannesburg venue of his July 1962 meeting, a process which started after his capture, and one which used myriad sources, which eventually homed in on Liliesleaf.

Evidence of this investigation which was assisted by informants does exist.

At least one informant, according to his own testimony, already had the property under observation, a year before the raid and soon after Mandela's arrest. George Mellis, a 10-year-old who lived across the road from the farm with his parents who owned the Rivonia Caravan Park. He was a most unlikely snitch. When he cycled into the property or strolled down the driveway no one even paid him a second glance. So much so that the Goldreich children didn't remember his name when interviewed in 2005.

On 5 August 1963, 25 days after the police raid Mellis made a sworn statement to Sergeant Fourie who commanded the Rivonia police station.

About a year ago, one day when I was playing in the yard of the Goldreich's place, I saw a number of white and bantu males together in the thatch roof building next to the main house, these people were talking and some I saw shaking hands with each other. This seemed strange to me and I told my parents about it. On some occasions that I went there I saw a lot of cars parked in the yard and

one occasion, I took the registration numbers of all the cars parked in the Goldreich yard and handed the numbers I had written down, to the Police at Rivonia.<sup>22</sup>

Sergeant Fourie forwarded Mellis's number plate information and information to Security Branch. Presumably Mellis was being handled by his parents with police support, for he was legally then a minor. Mellis attempted to elicit further information from his Goldreich playmates whom he often joined inside the main house for lunch. Mellis seems to have been a proactive snitch. On another occasion he attempted to elicit information from Nicholas Goldreich: 'Once I asked Nicholas about the persons on the premises but Nicholas said that he was not allowed to tell me anything.'<sup>23</sup>

In his 1963 statement Mellis identified from police photographs Denis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu and Raymond Mhlaba. He stated that he observed them, 'mostly in or near the thatch roofed building next to the main house'. Mellis's reference to Goldberg is of interest in that Goldberg first visited Liliesleaf in May 1963. Therefore it is deduced that 10-year-old Mellis, handled by his parents and SB, was spying on activities at Liliesleaf throughout the period of the SB investigation, from his first report about a year before the raid, through to when Goldberg visited Liliesleaf between May and July 1963.

Sergeant Fourie took command of the Rivonia Police Station on 5 December 1961. At some point during 1962, Fourie obtained information which he described as, 'of an undisclosed nature' which he reported to Security Branch.<sup>24</sup> His source was the Mellis family which Fourie didn't name, given Mellis's legal status as a minor. He may have also received reports from other local residents.

Fourie was part of the investigation already underway in December 1962, at the same time that Arthur Goldreich was in the Soviet Union on an MK mission. When Fourie received a summons for a parking offence from the Magistrates Court in Alberton, which had to be served on Goldreich, he held it back. 'Aangesien ek bang was dat dit met die ondersoek mag inmeng het ek die lasbrief nie laat uitvoer nie maar het die agterwee gehou [Because I was afraid that it might meddle with the investigation, I did not serve the summons but held it back].'<sup>25</sup>

Fourie then instructed his white policeman that any police action against anyone at Liliesleaf had to be first cleared with him, for example the serving of a summons. In other words, no policeman was to go onto Liliesleaf for any reason without his authorisation, as by then an investigation was underway. An overzealous policeman walking into Liliesleaf may have blown what was by then a targeted security operation aimed at rolling up Rivonia. The farm was sanitised as such from any official physical interruption.

At the close of 1962, Liliesleaf was being investigated by the police, at least eight months before the police raid. However, they were not the only security agency to investigate Liliesleaf based on information obtained from non-informer sources. After April 1963, a military investigation by the SADF commenced, using technical resources, through their agency the South African Communications Security Agency (SACSA). To understand this operation, it

22. NASA, NAN 52/Box 8/Vol. MS. 385.23, George Mellis, Statement, 5 August 1963.

23. *Ibid.*

24. NASA, NAN 52/ Box 8, MS 385.23, Sgt Christiaan Fourie, Station Commander Rivonia, Statement, 23 September 1963.

25. *Ibid.*

is necessary to outline the use of electronic warfare (EW) and direction finding (DF) techniques from that era.

### **1950s electronic warfare and direction finding**

A 2010 publication by Walter Volker is the only available literature detailing how Electronic Warfare (EW) and Direction Finding (DF) recourses were developed in South Africa during the 1950s and deployed to triangulate resistance movement transmissions and broadcasts. Other literature also indicates that MI5, Britain's Security Service, used identical methods during Britain's military decolonisation struggles and that the RSA security agencies were technically abreast of international security methods including electronic warfare.

In about 1955/1956, the Radio Section of the Engineers Department of the General Post Office (GPO) were tasked to assist the South African Police to locate the source of Radio Freedom broadcasts which started transmitting on short wave (SW) wavelengths. This initiative by the banned South African Communist Party typically transmitted on Sunday evenings at 20h00 for 15 minutes, their signature tune was the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven.<sup>26</sup>

Radio Act 3 of 1952 stipulated that only the SABC were permitted to broadcast on SW and that any conviction required the police to catch the 'perpetrators in the act'.<sup>27</sup> As the SAP and the Union Defence Force (later the SADF) did not have direction finding capabilities to comply with this stipulation of the Act they turned to the GPO. Their request was handed on to the Derdepoort Radio Station based at Hartebeesfontein farm located near Pretoria. As the Derdepoort station had no direction finding equipment on hand they improvised and developed their own.

Their first attempt identified that the transmissions originated in Natal. However, to pinpoint the exact location a mobile direction finding facility would be required to be positioned closer to the transmitter. These were built and installed in GPO vans and weekend trips by Derdepoort personnel to Natal subsequently isolated the transmitter to the areas of Tongaat, Richmond and Pietermaritzburg. Volker raises the possibility that someone in Derdepoort leaked details of this operation. On one occasion a bright red GPO van was sabotaged, thereafter inconspicuous vans were used. After about nine months of effort the mobile operation was halted without success.

During early 1956, the SACP transmissions resurfaced in the Johannesburg/Pretoria area. Each transmission originated from a different location on Sunday evenings. To facilitate greater mobility the Derdepoort technicians developed man pack equipment which could be carried while walking. Three vehicle mounted DF equipment units and five-man pack units were deployed. The SAP flying squad drove the man pack operators, known as chase teams. The operation was supported the Security Branch. Included in the chase teams were technicians from Derdepoort Station.<sup>28</sup>

On Sunday 12 August 1956, they pinpointed the transmission to 363 Berea Street Muckleneuk, Pretoria. Possessing a search warrant, the police raided the house. The transmitter

26. W. Volker, *Army Signals in South Africa: The Story of the South African Corps of Signals and its Antecedents* (Pretoria: Veritas Books, 2010), 226.

27. *Ibid.*, 226–227.

28. *Ibid.*, 227.

and related equipment were seized along with a pre-recorded taped broadcast. The four accused were subsequently convicted with violating Radio Act 3 of 1952, a relatively minor offence, and sentenced to a fine of £50 or six months in jail. Their conviction was based on the fact that they were transmitting illegally and not the contents of their transmission.<sup>29</sup>

Following these events the Engineers Department acquired more sophisticated equipment to augment their direction finding methods. In 1958, the Adcock System was imported from the USA, the most advanced of its kind at the time. Located at Derdepoort, this static system included an all-round direction finding capability.<sup>30</sup>

These direction finding operations by the GPO and SAP working together was not unusual for this era. Britain's Security Service, MI5, deployed British post office technology as part of its counter-intelligence operations, both in the United Kingdom against Soviet agents and operations, and also as part of its military operations against independence movements in its colonies. In 1959, Peter Wright a scientist working for MI5 and later a former Assistant Director of MI5 went to Cyprus to assist the British army to locate the Greek Cypriot Colonel Grivas, whose few hundred guerrillas had locked in 40,000 British troops into an anti imperial struggle, spearheaded by Archbishop Makarios, whose allies included the Communist Party.<sup>31</sup>

Wright had worked with MI5 Colonial Affairs E Branch on this matter, and he linked up with Special Branch in Cyprus to undertake Operation Sunshine.<sup>32</sup> The operation involved locating Grivas through his radio transmissions, then flooding the area with troops and killing Grivas in the subsequent firefight. Suspecting that Grivas communicated with Makarios, the first leg of the technical operation involved placing a listening device on an overhead telephone cable leading to Makarios's palace. MI5 used a radio transmitter which took power from the telephone circuit to radiate the signal to the waiting receiver a mile or two away. A hole was bored into the top of the telephone pole to conceal the electronics and a concealed connection made with the cable.<sup>33</sup> Wright and his colleagues searched the streets during dawn looking for disguised aerials on buildings. Wright located a spike on the peak of a church roof, which at first sight appeared to be a lightning conductor. On closer scrutiny through his field glasses, Wright identified that the earth strip was disconnected from the spike. He had found Grivas's aerial.<sup>34</sup> However, before military action could be taken, Britain reached a political agreement with the Cypriots.

### **The role of the SADF and South African Communications Security Agency**

In 1960/1961, with the declaration of Republic the SADF established an overarching telecommunication function, the South African Communications Security Agency (SACSA).

29. *Ibid.*, 228.

30. *Ibid.*, 229.

31. P. Wright, *Spy Catcher: The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1987), 154.

32. *Ibid.*, 156.

33. *Ibid.*, 156.

34. *Ibid.*, 157.

Organisationally SACSA fell under the Directorate Telecommunications, its Director directly accountable to the State President H.F. Verwoerd. SACSA's responsibility included ensuring that communication links between all government departments were secure and uncompromised. This included all arms of the SADF, the Department of Foreign Affairs, military attaches abroad, and the security agencies with their agents and the SAP.<sup>35</sup>

SACSA played a key role in locating Liliesleaf during 1963. On 1 April 1963, Captain Martiens Botha was transferred to Defence Headquarters Pretoria to work for the Chief Telecommunications Officer. A member of this small team included Captain Mike Venter of the South African Air Force who proficient in Morse code had, as one of his duties, monitoring radio transmissions, that the authorities deemed subversive. Venter picked up suspicious Morse code messages emanating from inside the Republic, wrote these down and showed them to Botha. Venter's information was reported to Security Branch and the Republican Intelligence Department.<sup>36</sup>

This SADF agency then borrowed a direction finding vehicle from the General Post Office (D Telecommunications) and pinpointed the location to within a few blocks of their target. This would have been enabled since the Morse code transmitter burst its signals more than once from Liliesleaf. The transmitter was a hand operated Morse code key pad also known as straight key, one of which was found at Liliesleaf during the raid. Who was transmitting and to whom remains unidentified. SACSA then looked for visibly suspicious equipment such as antennas on properties in the vicinity.<sup>37</sup>

SACSA activities and that of their tactical teams was observed and remembered. Mary Russell lived in the Rivonia Caravan Park opposite the Rietfontein Road entrance into Liliesleaf. The farm was visible to her from where she resided. Robinson later shared her eye witness account to her family after the 1963 raid. In 2005 Russell's nephew, Gavin Olivier, related her account to the author. Olivier's account is included in the Liliesleaf exhibition. According to Olivier, Russell and her husband were permanent residents of the caravan park because they travelled extensively to the game reserves, and this allowed them an easy-going lifestyle.<sup>38</sup> Russell's photographs of the caravan park depict their accommodation as being a type of bungalow – visually very different from any caravans or tents.

Russell was an avid birdwatcher and through her binoculars observed the birdlife from her veranda across Rietfontein Road. Prior to the raid, Russell observed what she described as postal workers standing on ladders erected against telephone poles along Rietfontein Road. The oddity for her was that they stood for long periods of time, ostensibly working on the telephone lines. However, what caught Russell's attention, which she related this to her family, was that these workers carried binoculars. Why stand for hours on end, perched on ladders ostensibly doing repair work, yet carry binoculars? What could be so complicated with a telephone cable running to Liliesleaf farm to require this time and effort? For Russell other peculiarities included what she recalled mysterious bread delivery vans parked within the gates of the caravan park, several times a week for the entire day. Strange, she said, 'we

35. W. Volker, *Signal Units of the South African Corps of Signals and Related Services* (Pretoria: Veritas Books, 2010), 534.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. Gavin Olivier, discussions with the author, 2005 and 2006.

don't have a shop which sells bread in the caravan park'.<sup>39</sup> Yet there they were, parked opposite Liliesleaf farm's driveway.

It was only after the raid that she shared the story with her family. She told them that, 'she knew something was going on across the road'.<sup>40</sup>

Russell was not the only person who saw workmen on the poles. Paul Goldreich recalled that:

I have to say I do have memories, believe it or not, of men working on telephone cables outside the farm. I used to with Nicholas spend a lot of time walking around the top area of the farm with the dogs and I can remember making a mental note that there were men at the top by the entrance of the house. I even have a vague memory of talking to these men on occasion.<sup>41</sup>

These postal workers, drivers and occupants of innocuous vans were SACSAs specialists and may have included members of Security Branch, if by this point this operation was interagency. Using binoculars and line of sight observations they spotted the twin lightning conductors next to the main house and outbuildings on the farm, tell tale signs they would have looked for. They were also positioned to place listening transmitter devices on the wires, and/or infiltrate listening device into the property through deliveries of produce, or even informers.

In 2005, I interviewed a former salesman from the Hearing Aid Centre, which at that time had offices in the Harley Street Chambers, on the corner of Kruis and Jeppe Streets in central Johannesburg. They produced miniaturised hearing aids and long life batteries during the 1950s and during the timeline leading up to the raid, which Security Branch then converted into microphone 'bugs'. Three or four miniaturised devices fitted into a matchbox. They had a transmission range of half a kilometre to a receiving station, which could be concealed inside a vehicle. The distance from the caravan park with its mysterious vans and the Rietfontein Road telephone poles to the farm buildings put Liliesleaf well within range. In 1963 the security establishment purchased large quantities, as many as 1000 devices, which were imported from the UK. The persons who collected these microphones paid cash and insisted that the batteries last at least a month, as they explained that they would not be in a position to replace the batteries once the bugs were placed on target. When Liliesleaf was raided the salesman thought, 'So that's where all our microphones were going! Damn sure in my own mind. Bloody hell, so that's where our microphones went.'<sup>42</sup>

As for a receiving station for any bugs planted on the farm or listening transmitters inserted onto the telephone lines and poles, a caravan in the park across the road would have proved ideal. Very shortly before the raid there was a solitary caravan in the park, which could have also functioned as a forward observation post for a surveillance unit. July 1963 was a cold winter, making it unlikely that anyone would go camping in sub-zero temperatures. Yet, Denis Goldberg who came to Liliesleaf in May of that year recalled

39. Gavin Olivier, discussions with the author, 2005 and 2006.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Paul Goldreich, email to author, 11 March 2007.

42. All the information about these bugging devices was supplied by D.S., the salesperson referred to, during a discussion with the author in 2005. This person requested to never be identified.

seeing a solitary caravan, standing in the deserted park and it remained there until the raid. Its presence left Golberg feeling uneasy:

There was only one caravan there most of the time, and this area was so far out of Joburg, it was deep countryside [...] And there was this caravan park, which was bare red earth with what I remember as one caravan. A very sleepy police station around the corner. I believe they said they watched the place, this is what I am basing it on [...] it would have been the obvious thing.<sup>43</sup>

Aerial photographs, used by the Surveyor General for mapping purposes provide additional evidence of this security operation. In 1961 the cadastral maps were updated and the Rivonia area aerially re-photographed, along with swathes of Johannesburg's suburbs and peri-urban districts to produce maps in 1962. Each photographic contact sheet covered a vast area, and to the naked eye when viewing these originals nothing distinguishes a particular property from the next. The next series of aerial photographs were taken in 1964.

In 2004 I electronically scanned the photographic contact sheets from the 1961 and 1964 mapping process pertinent to Liliesleaf farm and the surrounding area of Rivonia suburb. Only one sheet, amongst a series of approximately half a dozen contact sheets dated 1961, all of which contain Liliesleaf, revealed a trace of this DF operation. (None of the 1964 photographs reflect any tampering.) Three microscopic red dots and a pencil cross (x) emerged through a high resolution electronic scan. Two red dots are positioned on a neighbouring property to Liliesleaf. One red dot marks the approximate centre of Liliesleaf farm and the pencil cross marks the single dirt driveway leading into Liliesleaf, directly across the caravan park.<sup>44</sup>

No plausible reason exists that that these microscopic marks and pencil mark (x) were made as part of the Surveyor's mapping process. Someone connected to this security operation utilised this contact sheet, made these markings, presumably copied it then returned the sheet, assuming that this microscopic tampering would remain invisible. Aerial photo reconnaissance was used extensively by the South African Airforce during the Second World War during combat operations in Africa, Madagascar and Europe. Consequently the only South African security agency in 1962 to 1963 which had the requisite technical skills to identify a target from an aerial photograph of Liliesleaf, was the SADF.

Triangulation was achieved.

## Conclusion

For most of his life Nelson Mandela was a diligent creator of records and an obsessive record keeper. Throughout his travels across Africa and to the UK in 1962 his diary reflects daily entries, and his notebooks and diaries of his military training in Ethiopia are cryptic yet extensive. In 2011 it was possible to decipher his writings and identify the exact weapons he trained with and the type of tactical and strategic discussions he had with his Ethiopian

43. LL/INT 2, Denis Goldberg interview, 2004.

44. Copy of original contact sheets, 1961–1964, as obtained from the Surveyor General, Mowbray, Cape Town South Africa, 2004.

instructors.<sup>45</sup> He was meticulous in recording notes of discussions he had with leaders across Africa and noted the amounts of monies received from them.

Even during his return trip to Johannesburg with Cecil Williams Mandela made notes in his notebook.

I went from contemplating the natural beauty to ruminating on the fact that the railway line, being so close to the highway, offered a convenient place for sabotage. I made a note of this in the small notebook I always carried with me.<sup>46</sup>

Within minutes he was captured.

Mandela claimed that, 'the police were not yet so vigilant in those days, and Sergeant Vorster did not bother searching me'.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, that he was able to then conceal his revolver and notebook within the upholstery of the front seat after he was arrested.<sup>48</sup>

Detective Sergeant W.A. Vorster who was involved in capturing Mandela records a different version of events. According to Vorster, Major Smidt commanded the police team and once Vorster's vehicle overtook and forcibly stopped Williams, who was driving, Smidt exited his vehicle wedged behind William's car, identified Mandela and Williams inside their car and informed them they were arrested on 'suspicion'.<sup>49</sup>

The White gave his name as Cecil Williams while the Bantu gave his name as David Motsamayi. I searched the Bantu while Staff Sergeant Van Rooyen searched the White man. The relevant two persons involved were taken to the Main Street police offices, where they were detained after Major Smidt had informed them of the charge on which they were being detained, of which they were suspected.<sup>50</sup>

Mandela and Vorster concur that the police identified both the occupants inside the car. This capture group knew exactly who they were looking for and came prepared with a warrant, issued in Johannesburg in 1961. Mandela was arrested under Section 2 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act No 8 of 1953.<sup>51</sup>

Mandela later claimed that they never found his revolver and notebook.<sup>52</sup> Other authors continue along this line. A 2010 publication boldly states that, 'There was no examination of the car or frisking the arrested men [...] The police, witless to the end, never bothered to search the car and those items were never found'. However, Vorster's account contradicts this unfounded and un-researched comment.<sup>53</sup>

Vorster is clear that both captives were searched after Mandela and Williams exited the car. If Mandela concealed his revolver and notebook, he did so before his vehicle stopped, which he records he didn't, otherwise Vorster and Van Rooyen would have found

45. G. Benneyworth, 'Armed and Trained: Nelson Mandela's 1962 Military Mission as Commander in Chief of Umkhonto we Sizwe', *South African Historical Journal*, 63 (2011), 78–101.

46. Mandela, *Long Walk*, 372.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, 372–373.

49. NASA, NAN 52, Box 12, MS 385.28, Detective Sergeant W.A. Vorster, Statement.

50. *Ibid.*

51. As detailed in Nelson Mandela's Warrant of Arrest in the collection of the Liliesleaf Museum.

52. Mandela, *Long Walk*, 373.

53. Smith, *Young Mandela*, 276.

them. Highly unlikely is that he later successfully concealed these items after being searched and during the drive to Pietermaritzburg, with a police Major sitting behind his shoulders. The police had captured the Black Pimpernel, their most wanted fugitive. They would have later searched Williams's car and retrieved the revolver and notebook, which according to Mandela contained numerous names and addresses that he wrote down.

Within a year Rivonia was rolled up.

Mandela's arrest led to a covert investigation by the Security Branch that lasted virtually a year. Granted, informants were used from within the movement; however, it was 10-year-old George Mellis who very shortly after Mandela's capture was reporting to the Rivonia police station on activities inside Liliesleaf farm. Not only was he relaying information about meetings and gatherings, he recorded car registration numbers, all critical information that Security Branch could use.

By December 1962 at the very latest, Liliesleaf was the subject of an investigation. This is evidenced by Sergeant Fourie who instructed his policemen to go nowhere near the farm. He himself held back issuing a summons on Arthur Goldreich for a parking offence for he was afraid that it might, 'meddle with the investigation'.<sup>54</sup>

That the property was under actual surveillance is not in doubt: however, not just by Security Branch of the South African Police. The SADF utilised technology and intelligence methods very similar to that of the British security services at that time and had developed these technologies since the 1950s. This involved the use of electronic warfare and direction finding. Successes were had against Radio Freedom as early as 1956 in Pretoria. By 1958 the most advanced American systems were imported which had an all-round direction finding capability.

In 1960/1961, the South African Communications Security Agency (SACSA) was established and this SADF agency played a key role in locating Liliesleaf during 1963. After the military identified Morse code messages emanating from inside the Republic, the agency borrowed a direction finding vehicle and pinpointed the location to within a few blocks of their target. SACSA activities were remembered by Mary Russell of the Rivonia Caravan Park. Russell observed postal workers equipped with binoculars on ladders for long periods of time against telephone poles along Rietfontein Road. Not only were they observing the property they were bugging the lines and using listening devices that were on the property. Also there were the mysterious bread delivery vans inside the caravan park, several times a week for the entire day. These doubled up as observation positions and listening stations. As did the solitary caravan in the park for three months prior to and up to the day of the raid. Other tangible evidence is the microscopic red dots and a pencil cross on a contact sheet of an aerial photograph used for map-making purposes.

When the blow came it was not as a result of a lucky break by the police acting on information from a captured yet turned informer. Nor was it only the police who were involved. Rolling up Rivonia was a targeted and concerted operation that may have towards its end, soon before the raid, become interagency. Starting in 1962 and culminating in the raid, it was an operation whereby the police relied on human source information. However, in the case of the military they played a key role using their electronic warfare and direction-finding technologies to find the farm, a role that has never been identified before.

54. NASA, NAN 52/Box 8, MS 385.23, Sgt Christiaan Fourie, Station Commander, Rivonia, Statement, 23 September 1963.