

This interview is substantially a reflection of the conversation between the interviewer and interviewees, but more information was subsequently inserted into it in writing when the interviewees reviewed the interview. These additions have strengthened the interview.

A much longer interview with a lot of interesting photographs and other images is to be found in the "Internationalists" section.

MK Special Operations Unit Project

Interview with Guido Van Hecken and Nora Bogaert

6 and 7 December 2018

Cape Town

Let's start with a bit about your respective political histories before you came to Mozambique in 1978. What were your family backgrounds like? In what way, if any, did that shape your political values and views?

Nora: I grew up in a very middle-class bourgeois family. I was born in Louvain on 9 February 1952 and grew up in Antwerp in Belgium. I have two younger sisters: Anne-Marie is four years my junior and Isa is six years younger. My father was a medical doctor and my mother, a housewife. My father lived for his profession, which he saw as a vocation and not as a means of enriching himself. He was not particularly interested in involving himself in politics, but he had some values that guided him and which he defended, even at the expense of personal risks.

During the Second World War, when Belgium was occupied by the Germans, he would secretly treat Jewish people at their homes and at the hospital where the nuns, who were the nurses, would keep them hidden. He was very highly regarded by his peers, assistants, nurses and trainees with whom he worked. He could very easily have established a very profitable private practice, but he chose to work in a public hospital run by the city's public poverty commission. If patients could not pay for his services, he would treat them for free. In that sense, he was a good Christian. At the political level, he embraced the Christian Democrats' conservative vision of society.

My mother was highly educated for a woman of her generation; she belonged to one of the first generations of women able to attend university – a special course for women. Some of her fellow university colleagues later held important positions in Belgian society. But after marrying my father, she never had gainful employment, as was customary for middle class married women of her generation. She was very interested in arts, music and mainly, French literature.

My parents tried to convince me to become a lawyer, but I wanted very much to be a teacher. I was very impressed by my French teacher at secondary school, who was

an interesting person with a broad vision and an open mind. She had travelled quite a bit; in the mid-1960, before globalisation opened up the world for all and sundry, this was quite exceptional. The texts she made us read in her French class and her ways of interacting with us were very inspiring. She made me aware of the impact good teachers can have on the development of an open and critical mind and social awareness. I wanted to be like her. So, in 1970 I started studying French linguistics and literature at the University of Antwerp.

As with so many in my generation, I was very heavily influenced by the changes that took place in post-war Europe during the second half of the 1960s. I was sixteen in May 1968, when the big student revolt against the 'old forms and ideas' – to use the words of the Dutch version of the Socialist International anthem – happened in Paris. For us in Belgium, that was right next door. This was when European youth rebelled against the established order after the Second World War. While the generation of our parents remembered the American soldiers as those who helped us, Europeans, to liberate ourselves from German occupation and fascism, our generation saw them as an instrument of imperialism and capitalism.

For our parents, the American model, which they knew through the huge post-war Marshall Reconstruction plan for Western Europe, was the example to copy. For us, it meant brutal oppression of peoples rising up against colonialism and internal discrimination. We saw this happening in Palestine, South Africa, and the USA itself where segregation and apartheid were then the official policy. And the most visible example was of course the American intervention in Vietnam. So, at school, in our own society, we witnessed all this happening, and some of our younger and more progressive teachers encouraged us to form our own opinions. We really yearned, to say it this time in the words of the Internationale as you sing it here in South Africa, to contribute to 'a better world in birth'.

We were also strongly influenced by the television images of the 1966 miners' strike in Belgium in response to the closure of the coalmines, and what was happening elsewhere in the world. When we were teenagers, television was a new medium. It brought us vivid images of the Vietnam War, Chile under Allende's presidency and then the Pinochet dictatorship supported by the US and most of Western Europe. We also learned of the persistence of fascism in Spain and Portugal, and the military dictatorships in Greece and Brazil and most of Latin America. In a world dominated by the Cold War, those dictatorial regimes were tolerated by our parents' generation, who considered anti-communism more important than adhering to their own moral principles. For us, that was hypocrisy and intolerable. For our generation, revolt against the existing order coincided with the generational conflict we went through, as all teenagers do. And this may have made us even more determined to change the world.

So, before leaving secondary school in 1970, I was already very much aware of what was happening in the world around me. And when I entered the university, I discovered that – although the Catholic university in Antwerp was run by Jesuits and rather traditional – quite a few of our fellow students kept up the activism of Paris

1968. They had organised themselves in solidarity committees and action groups, to which I quickly adhered.

We campaigned not only for international solidarity with so-called Third World countries, but also for changes in our own society: solidarity with the miners' strikes, opposition to the storage of American nuclear weapons in Belgian military bases, support for more democracy and student participation in the governance of the university, and many other causes.

Then at university, I met Guido, who was one year ahead of me, and towards the end of the academic year, we got involved with each other.

Guido: I was born on 7 April 1951 in Antwerp. I am the second of four children, all of them boys. After my younger brother was born a year after me, my parents embarked on the so-called Congo Boat for the Belgian Congo. That was in early 1953. Until 1956 we lived in Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), and from 1956 to 1960 in Stanleyville (Kisangani). My father was a civil servant. He worked in a department of the ministry of finance.

My mother was a teacher. She was very independent-minded, not an explicit feminist, but she would sort of work for the emancipation of women by teaching them financial management, household budgeting and bookkeeping, that sort of thing. That was considered progressive in those days, as it allowed women to have control of their own lives and not to depend on their husbands or male partners. And she always kept her maiden name, instead of adopting my father's surname, as was then customary for married women. That was unusual for those times. Shortly before the independence of the Congo in 1960, she was elected as a member of the colonial – Whites only – city council in Stanleyville. So, she must have been at least socially active and engaged.

Those 7½ years in the Congo are one of the things that marked my life.

Shortly after Independence Day on 30 June 1960, our family was evacuated from the Congo. Like for so many Belgian colonists, it was rather a flight during a collective hysteria gripping the Belgian community in those turbulent times. While I was a student in Portugal in 1974-75, I witnessed the same sort of collective hysteria just before the independence of the Portuguese colonies. In both cases, the colonisers were victims of their own propaganda, portraying the colonised as uncivilised barbarians, whose only aim was to kill the Whites at the first opportunity.

I can vividly remember one incident shortly after Independence Day in the Congo, that shocked me profoundly and has always stayed with me. I was nine years old at the time. Shortly after Independence Day, I was walking in the street in front of our house with my youngest brother, who was then only seven months old, in his stroller. Some hundred metres down the road, an argument was taking place between a Black employee and his White employer. It came to blows. The neighbour ran into his house, emerged again with a gun, and aimed at his employee who was

fleeing in my direction. He shot and killed a Black woman who was walking about a metre from my brother and me. My mother, hearing the shots and the commotion, immediately came running out of the house and shouted that we should go inside. I was paralysed with fear.

We left shortly after independence. My mother and her four young kids – three boys aged 10, nine and eight and a baby boy of seven months – were evacuated by military plane to Usumbura (Bujumbura) in Urundi (Burundi), then still a Belgian protectorate. My father stayed behind in Kisangani, where he would try to sell our family's belongings before also returning to Belgium. In Bujumbura, we stayed, together with many other evacuees, in the buildings of a secondary school, which was empty because of the summer holidays. I remember that we slept on mattresses in a classroom. After a week or so, we were evacuated first to Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and from there straight to Brussels.

My father, who was still a government official, returned to the Congo in 1963 as part of what were later called polyvalent teams. This was a classic example of early neo-colonialism: the teams consisted of the same doctor, veterinarian, agronomist, civil engineer, accountant ... who had worked in a certain region of the Belgian Congo as colonial administrators, and who were now sent back to that same region to do the same work. The only difference was that it was now called technical cooperation and later development aid. So, my father went back to Stanleyville, while my mother and her four sons remained in Belgium.

In 1964, there was the Simba ('Lion' in Swahili) rebellion. The followers of Lumumba, who did not recognise the governments of Adoula and Tshombe in Leopoldville after Lumumba had been murdered in 1961, controlled the Eastern part of the country and established an alternative government. With the help of South African, British, Belgian and other mercenaries hired by Tshombe, the Congolese army tried to recapture the lost terrain.

On 5 August, the Simbas occupied Stanleyville, where Lumumba had lived before independence and where his support was strongest. They took the entire White population hostage, including my father. At the end of November, after the Simbas had executed an American missionary, the USA and Belgium put together a military task force of CIA operatives and Belgian commandos. And on 24 November, American planes flown by Cuban anti-Castro mercenaries carried Belgian paratroopers to Stanleyville and dropped them over the airport. While the commandos marched on the city, the Simbas brought out their hostages, lined them up in the street and shot many of them. My father remained unharmed.

For us, and especially for our mother, those were incredibly stressful months.

Anyway, I grew up as a normal teenager, not really interested in politics. Our secondary school teacher of Greek and Latin awakened our interest in the ancient cultures, and in the summer of 1969, after completing secondary school, three of my classmates and I jumped into a Volkswagen Beetle and drove to Greece. Greece

was then a military dictatorship: in April 1967, some right-wing colonels had taken power and deposed the King. When we, ignorant students, arrived there, we expected to be exposed fully to this great ancient culture about which we had learned at school. Instead, we were astonished when we saw throughout the country, down to the smallest village, this fascist symbol of the phoenix rising from its ashes and the silhouette of a soldier bearing a rifle with a fixed bayonet.

One day, in a taxi in Athens, I asked the driver what he thought about the government. To my surprise, he rolled up the car windows before answering, although it was a hot day. So, I said, 'Why did you do that, it's hot, man?' and he said, 'You fool, you should know that those are not questions you ask somebody you don't know'. I said, 'In Belgium I would ask anybody that, so why not here?' Then he started explaining what fascism and repression meant in practice. For me, that was a political wake-up experience, it made me realise that the world was not as innocent and rosy as I then still thought it was.

Later during those same summer holidays, in preparation for the university where French would be my major, I was a monitor at a summer camp near Châteauroux in France. It was a holiday camp for kids from Paris orphanages. They were very badly treated and in fact used as cheap labour. During the day, they had to maintain the ditches along the road between the village centre and the property of the organiser of these so-called holiday camps, where they were also helping with the restoration of an old water mill. It was heavy manual labour, and they did not get enough food. They were not happy, and they complained to us, their monitors, and tried to flee. That was another shocking experience that opened my eyes and made me aware that there were many problems in the world, even in our own societies.

Were your siblings progressive?

N: My youngest sister Isa followed the same path as me. She also became active in social movements. Like me, she was also active in what was called a People's University near our home – an organisation providing infrastructure, logistical facilities and technical support to all kinds of progressive social civil society initiatives. For example, the integration of migrant workers and political refugees from Chile and fascist Spain, working with minority groups in our own society, like the physically or mentally disabled, feminist organisations, and so on. My second sister was less involved in this kind of activities.

G: My eldest brother Joseph, and the one who comes right after me, Dirk, are Flemish nationalists. So was my father, and many people of my parents' and our own generation. This is because, when Belgium gained independence in 1830, the ruling class and aristocracy spoke French, while the majority of the population spoke Flemish – the collective name for the dialects of Dutch spoken in the northern part of Belgium, Flanders. There were attempts to eradicate Flemish from Belgium, and Flemish speakers were discriminated against. That situation has now changed because Flanders has become the most prosperous part of the country and its economic heart.

A semi-fascist Flemish nationalistic party, the Flemish Block, which is now called Flemish Interests, captured this justified resentment about the cultural and linguistic discrimination against the Flemish. They preach an exclusive form of nationalism, against the Walloon – French-speaking – part of the population, against immigrants and foreigners, against Islam, etc. This translates into an almost openly racist party programme. They are also committed to the independence of Flanders and the break-up of Belgium. So, they attract two kinds of voters: on the one hand, right and extreme right people, and on the other hand, people fighting for equal rights for the Dutch language and culture. As I said, two of my brothers have Flemish nationalistic feelings. For them, the cultural nationalism of the Flemish Block and more moderate liberal Flemish-nationalistic parties – who together attract a majority of votes in Flanders – is predominant, and because of that, they tend to overlook and minimise the exclusivist nationalistic – and in the case of the Flemish Block: racist and anti-foreigner – ideology of these parties.

My younger brother Dirk was a quite successful entrepreneur. He sold his business and retired in his early fifties. Because of this background, he is a free market liberal, who believes that, with hard work and determination, all individuals can crawl out of poverty and climb the social ladder.

Finally, there is my youngest brother. He is 8 ½ years my junior. Koen worked as a nurse in an intensive care unit of the university hospital in Antwerp. That is quite hard and stressful work, and he retired. His wife is a maths teacher and an author of maths manuals for secondary schools. As far as we know, they are not politically active, but their ideas are close to ours – social justice and ecological sustainability.

Beyond what you've said already, what else led to your political awareness?

N: The influence of other students and the campaigns we undertook. For instance, after the tropical cyclone which struck East Pakistan in November 1970 and which killed over half a million people, the students undertook a massive humanitarian solidarity campaign. One of the indirect effects of the cyclone was that it led to East Pakistan finally seceding from Pakistan in 1971 and declaring its independence as Bangladesh.

Because of the political unrest in the region, the projects for which the money had been collected were on hold. The money was deposited in an account of the university, waiting to be used. Our university was Catholic, Jesuit and many professors and administrators were still clerics. They had a very paternalistic attitude towards the students. So, when we, students, later indicated that we wanted to use the money for projects in Bangladesh, the university administration refused to release it and insisted that it should be used for projects run by Jesuit missionaries in Pakistan.

This sparked protests by the students, and the more active ones created a Student

Action Committee, which very soon also began to agitate around other issues, particularly the undemocratic governance of the university and broader social concerns. In the aftermath of the May 1968 uprising in France, many young people kept dreaming of a revolutionary alliance between students and workers as the vanguard of a social and cultural revolution.

G: I was then one of the leaders of the student organisation of our university, *praeses* (chair) of the Romance philology students, member of the Faculty Council and a student representative on the governance board of the university. I had been very involved in organising the solidarity action for East Pakistan. I was not a co-founder of the Student Action Committee because we were trying to persuade the university administration by entering into dialogue through the formal student organisation. But when I realised that they were not listening to us, I joined the Student Action Committee.

Those were also the days of 'Bloody Sunday' in Northern Ireland, when in 1972 the British army shot more than 20 Catholic demonstrators and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) started its armed campaign against the British presence. We, students, sympathised with IRA, and we decided to invite a representative to speak at Belgian universities. The social democratic Minister of Justice in our country, Alfons Vranckx, was then very authoritarian and in our eyes very conservative. He prohibited the tour of the universities and issued an arrest warrant for the IRA representative. For our part, we students were very determined to defy the minister, by ensuring that the IRA representative could speak at a meeting in every single university and would safely leave the country. It took a lot of clandestine organisation, safe houses, and escape routes from inside the universities and that sort of thing, but we succeeded, even with the police and the State Security Service actively trying to seize him. That, along with my first visit to Portugal, was my first experience with clandestine work. So, I was very involved in student politics, and so was Nora.

So when do the two of you meet?

N: We became a couple in March 1971. I was in my first year of university and Guido in his second year. We knew each other, and we had several classes together.

Did you do similar courses?

N: Ja, we were in the same course, Romance linguistics and literature. We were not in the same grade. Guido was one year ahead. But we both joined the Student Action Committee, which included Trotskyites, pro-Moscow Communists, Euro-communists, Maoists, anarchists, and people without any party affiliation or loyalty. It helped in our political growth. It was a good school for activism and for passionate discussions about Gramsci, democratic communism, and so on.

If I may ask at all, what drew you to each other?

G: She was beautiful. She was progressive. But I was not.

N: At first, I didn't like him at all (laughter). But after a while, he intrigued me.

G: As Nora, I was socially conscious and I was an activist. But I was irritated by people who I thought were running after dogmatic ideologies, that sort of thing. And I thought that the group to which she belonged was such a group.

So, I was annoyed that she and some of her friends belonged to that group, which I thought was kind of ideologically motivated and not motivated by practical issues affecting the students and the undemocratic governance of the university.

N: Almost all the students in our department were rather conservative and bourgeois. That little group to which I belonged was not, and eventually I realised that Guido wasn't either (laughter).

G: Nora mentioned the mine strikes. They also influenced my political awakening. At the beginning of 1966, the government decided to close the coalmines in Belgium because of too low profitability. My great-uncle Theo, my grandfather's brother, was a miner. In January 1966, Uncle Theo participated in the protests against the closure of the mines and the collective redundancies of over 10000 miners. The protests were violent, but the government's response was even more violent. They even deployed the army to suppress domestic protests. People got killed. During one of these protest marches, my great-uncle was shot in the back while fleeing police brutality.

Uncle Theo got a bullet in his spine, and he remained paralysed and bedridden for the rest of his life. He died in 1973. What did shock me was that, after having been shot by the police, he was left completely destitute. But it was only after entering university and becoming more involved in social action that I fully realised the profound injustice of this situation.

N: Another decisive factor in the development of our convictions and the course of our lives was Portugal and our involvement with the situation in that country.

G: In those days, all students majoring in Romance languages were required to choose another Romance language besides French. I chose Portuguese and Spanish. There were very few students taking Portuguese. Portugal was a very little-known country then, very poor and isolated, both in terms of geography and development, and also politically. Together with Franco's Spain, it was one of the few remaining fascist countries in Europe after the defeat of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy in 1945.

When I started studying Portuguese, there were only two students, including myself, studying the language at our university and only nine in the whole of Belgium. In 1971, at the end of my second year, I was offered a scholarship from the Portuguese ministry of education and culture for a summer course in Portugal. That first visit to Portugal really was a wake-up call for me. In '72, I went to Portugal again. After

about six weeks I had to flee the country to escape arrest by the security police, the notorious PIDE (International and State Defence Police). But in 1973, Nora and I once again went back together – I, more or less, clandestinely.

N: It was my first visit to Portugal. In '73, we went together with a group of volunteers from a Catholic NGO, called Building Companions. We were sent to an isolated group of villages in the north of Portugal where we did road maintenance, mainly manually cleaning and deepening the drainage ditches with shovels and pickaxes. Every year in the rainy season, the unpaved roads would wash away and cut off these villages from the rest of the country. At the time, Portugal, with an illiteracy rate of about 40%, was the least developed country in Europe, along with Greece and Albania. It was a particularly important experience for the two of us.

G: The 'Building Companions' (*Companheiros Construtores*) was founded after the Second World War by a Dutch archconservative and virulently anti-communist Catholic priest to provide humanitarian assistance to German Catholics and to support Roman Catholics in the communist Central- and East-European countries. Anti-communist fascist Portugal supported this kind of organisations. Manuel Rocha, the director of the Portuguese branch of the 'Building Companions' was a very special figure. He was a progressive political activist, and he was found out by the fascist police. To escape prosecution, he enrolled in the seminary and started his training for priesthood. This was because the 1940 Concordat between the Vatican and Portugal stipulated that Portuguese clerics could not be questioned by magistrates or other civil authorities, and so in practice could hardly be prosecuted by the civil courts. Rocha used the Portuguese 'Building Companions' to set up humanitarian aid projects for the people of the isolated villages in the North of Portugal, who were his parishioners.

N: In the villages where we worked, we stayed in the people's homes. There was a lot of poverty and social control by the fascist regime. There were spies everywhere, so people could not speak freely. Almost one out of every 10 Portuguese spied for the security police. For reporting anti-regime activities or comments by their neighbours, they would receive a little reward, which would help them to make ends meet. My first visit to Portugal felt very oppressive – and that strengthened my determination to fight against that sort of thing.

What happens after Portugal in 1973?

G: During the final year of my studies, in 1974, I skipped classes and returned to Portugal, even though I had been banned from entering the country in 1972. When I went there for the first time in '71, I had come into contact with people active in the clandestine resistance against fascism, including people in the armed resistance.

In 1972, during my second summer course in Portugal, I was detained by the PIDE on arrival at Lisbon airport and questioned about an article against the fascist regime that I had written with a German friend and published under a pseudonym in a Dutch newspaper. However, in the end, I was allowed to enter the country

because I had a scholarship from the ministry. Thanks to my contacts with the clandestine opposition, I received a copy of an article denouncing the fascist regime, the publication of which had been banned by the Censorship Board. All copies had been confiscated. I translated the article into Dutch for publication in Belgium. In my letters to Nora, which I wrote every day, I occasionally added a translated paragraph from that article.

I numbered my letters, keeping track of those in which I had inserted a paragraph. One day I made a phone call to Nora in Belgium, and I checked with her which letters she had received. She said, '*Numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 9 and 10*'. I immediately realised that almost all the letters in which I had inserted a paragraph of that article had been seized. So, I knew that the PIDE would come for me to find out how I had obtained that article.

I contacted the student union, and through their contacts, they arranged for me to leave the country clandestinely. Back in Belgium, I was invited to the Portuguese consulate in Antwerp. They told me that they knew about the article and that I had fled the country and that henceforth I was *persona non grata* in Portugal.

So in a way you had already begun with underground work in Portugal before you got to Mozambique?

G: That's correct.

What happens after you graduate?

G: In '74, Nora graduated. That same year, I completed all my coursework, but I had not finished my MA thesis because I had skipped classes again in order to return clandestinely to Portugal, where I was a first-hand witness of the military coup of 25 April that overthrew the fascist regime – and which became known as the Carnation Revolution. I had been informed by a representative of the clandestine Portuguese opposition in Amsterdam that something would happen in Portugal between 20 and 30 April. I clandestinely entered Portugal on 19 April and stayed for about a month.

While Nora started teaching French at a secondary school after graduating – as the first and only woman at a boys' school – I received a scholarship for a diploma course in Portuguese language and culture at the University of Coimbra. So, in September 1974 I went back to Portugal, this time officially. I studied there, while at the same time working as the representative of the Portuguese section of Building Companions and helping my friend Rocha, the communist priest, with literacy campaigns in his rural parishes.

The period immediately after the military coup was very exciting. Local residents began to organise themselves into residents' cooperatives. In the south of the country, the aristocratic owners of the large estates were expropriated and their farms were run as agricultural cooperatives by the farm workers. Industrial workers

started organising themselves in trade unions. The large Lisnave shipyards near Lisbon, where the marine ships for the colonial wars were built and maintained, were occupied by their nearly 7000 workers and self-managed. And so on...

After completing my course in Coimbra, I returned to Belgium in the summer of 1975, and graduated with my MA thesis. I started working half time at a secondary school where I taught Spanish and non-religious moral education, and Portuguese at the University of Louvain. Together with a number of activists, we founded in 1975 a 'New Portugal Committee' to support the Portuguese revolution. I was its secretary.

Between 1975 and 1977, we organised and I accompanied 13 or 14 solidarity trips to Portugal. It was quite exciting. We were only 23 and 24 years old, and we visited workers and agricultural cooperatives, neighbourhood committees, trade unions, progressive political parties, a people's clinic for which we secretly smuggled contraceptives from Belgium – both in Belgium and in Portugal abortion was then illegal and punishable.

Our greatest success was a solidarity campaign for the purchase of a tractor for an agricultural cooperative run by the farm workers on the occupied lands of a Portuguese duke. For that, we organised dozens of solidarity evenings across Belgium, where also Portugal's most famous progressive singer, José Afonso, performed. His song *Grândola, vila morena* (*Grândola, brown town*) had been the agreed signal for the military to launch the antifascist and anticolonial coup d'état of 25 April.

We married in July '76. For our honeymoon, we drove in our new Renault 4 – a wedding present from Nora's parents – to that agricultural cooperative, to help with the harvest as farmhands...



Guido Van Hecken
and Nora Bogaert,
marriage, 2 July
1976

N: My mother was shocked when she discovered (laughter). So, instead of a romantic honeymoon, we worked in a revolutionary cooperative! We helped harvesting wheat and chickpeas, manually, with scythes and sickles – dirty, dusty and backbreaking work. And at night, we assisted in guarding the cooperative, as it was close to the border of the region allocated by the government for land reform. A few kilometres from there, in Rio Maior, the organisation of reactionary landowners had its headquarters. There were some nightly incursions by them. They would try to sabotage the farm machinery and burn the crops on the fields or the harvest in the barns. So, the farm workers had organised self-defence patrols, which we would join. And we stood guard with sticks and a few antique shotguns (laughter).

So when do you get to Mozambique and why?

G: By then it was clear to us how we envisaged our future. In 1976, both of us had

become members of the Belgian Communist Party. Then, having declared myself a conscientious objector to military service – which in Belgium was compulsory until the mid-1990s – I had to choose between one of the two available alternatives: two years of community service or working in a developing country.

With my history of opposition to Portuguese fascism and colonialism, and my longing to go back to Africa, I started looking for opportunities in Portuguese speaking Africa. In June 1977, I was a Belgian delegate at the first World Conference against Apartheid, Racism and Colonialism in Southern Africa in Lisbon. There I met this Mozambican delegate, Aquino de Bragança. He turned out to be a special advisor to Samora Machel and director of the Centre for African Studies (*Centro de Estudos Africanos* - CEA) of the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo. He was an ex-Portuguese from Goa, a Portuguese colonial enclave in India until India incorporated it back into its territory in 1961. He had been a journalist of *Afrique-Asie*. After the overthrow of fascism, Aquino had played an important role in the negotiations for the independence of Mozambique.

When I met him, he acted as an informal envoy for the Mozambican leadership in their extremely delicate relation with racist Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. In those days, during the war of liberation against the racist minority regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia, there were obviously no diplomatic relations between Mozambique and Rhodesia, but Aquino would be dispatched to do the informal negotiations with the Rhodesians. You could compare it with the tentative exploratory contacts between the ANC and the apartheid regime at the end of the 1980s before they engaged in formal negotiations.

When Joe Slovo and Ruth First later moved to Mozambique, Ruth would become research director at the CEA, where she was murdered in her office in 1982. Aquino himself was killed in 1986, when the South Africans provoked President Machel's plane to crash in Mbuzini. There is now a memorial for the two of them in the garden of the CEA, with the words 'murdered for the cause of peace, science and freedom'.

So when I spoke to Aquino at the Conference, he said, 'Ja, ja, we need people like you, so give me your curriculum vitae'. I gave him a handwritten CV – but the next day he asked me, 'Where is your CV?'. Aquino was a bit disorganised, and that's an understatement, as I later discovered (laughter). I ended up writing my CV three times for him; and he apparently did indeed present it to the university – which we didn't know since we did not hear anything until the end of the year.

At the end of 1977, we went with some friends from the Communist Party to Moscow for Christmas and New Year, and when we got back to Belgium at the beginning of January, we found in our letterbox this three-line letter from the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo: 'Dear Sir, the academic year is starting on 8 March. We would appreciate it if you could be here by that time.' Full stop. No information about where I was going to lecture, nothing about what I was going to teach, nothing about what kind of contract or salary they were offering, where I was going to be housed, what the visa requirements were, nothing about whether they

had a job for Nora or whether she should come along with me, no contact phone number ... nothing, just those three lines (laughter)!

Typed on probably the only typewriter left in Mozambique (laughter) ...?

G: Exactly. So I started writing letters myself. 'What about a job for my wife?' 'How do I get to your country as there is no embassy in Western Europe?' And so on. My last letter was basically 'Do I need to bring my own toothbrush and towels (laughter)?' But I never received any answer. Meanwhile, Angola had opened an embassy in Brussels and I happened to know the ambassador, who suggested that on my way to Mozambique, I should make a stop in Angola to do some journalistic work. I had a press card from the *Red Banner*, the Belgian Communist Party's weekly.

So, I made my own arrangements and bought my own ticket. On my way to Mozambique, I made stops in London, Lisbon, Luanda and Lusaka. I had a visa for all those countries ... except for my final destination, Mozambique.

I left on 19 February, without hearing anything from the university. I also had two letters of recommendation from the Belgian and Portuguese communist parties. I arrived in Mozambique on 3 March, as planned, only to discover that, of course, since I didn't have a visa, I wasn't let in. I was left to simmer a full afternoon in the arrivals hall of Maputo Airport where there was nobody, as mine was the only plane arriving that day, and there were also no departures.

Anyway, after a few hours, the university sent a car that took me to a guesthouse for teachers in the city, where I met (British historian) David Hedges, who had arrived on that very day. We were neighbours in the guesthouse and colleagues at the university. We became friends.

What drew him there?

G: He was a historian specialising in Southern Africa, and had been expelled from Malawi for what they said were political activities – this was when Hastings Banda was president of Malawi, and academic work, and especially history, was considered kind of subversive.

Why were the Mozambicans not expecting you to arrive when you did?

G: In this first period immediately after Independence, Mozambique was so disorganised, so rudimentary. You shouldn't forget that in those days Mozambique was the most underdeveloped – the term commonly used then – country in the world with 97% illiteracy. That is what happens when you are a colony of the least developed country in Europe, where 40% of the population could not read and write either.

After independence, they would send people with fourth grade to teach in first

grade, often without any teacher training at all. The goodwill and the voluntarism were there all right, but the base was completely lacking. The Mozambican bureaucracy had been inherited from the fascist Portuguese bureaucracy, which was very heavy, because it had been made to prevent people from claiming their rights, not to help them to do so.

The university sent me to the Faculty of Arts. My first contact with Mozambican reality was when I arrived at the campus on the day of the opening of the academic year. Graça Machel, President Samora's wife, who was then Minister of Education, is making this rousing opening speech to the lecturers, the students and the workers in the university courtyard. All these speeches routinely ended with a round of revolutionary slogans *Viva FRELIMO! Viva Moçambique! Viva a revolução!* and *Abaixo* (down with) *apartheid! Abaixo John Vorster! Abaixo Ian Smith!*

Then the minister shouts *Vitória ou morte* (*Victory or death!*) – to which the standard reply is *Venceremos!* (*We will be victorious*). And in this split second between Graça Machel's cry and the answer from the crowd, I hear this wary voice behind me muttering *Vitória já temos, agora só falta a morte...* (*Victory we have already, the only thing lacking now is death!*). I look around me and see only straight faces. Only much later did I find out that the comment had been made by the old gardener of our faculty (laughter). It was so funny.

For my first class, I was taken to the faculty. I still didn't know what I was expected to teach. There I met my colleagues for the first time. They said, 'Ah, good that you are here, because your class is already waiting'. They open a door of a lecture room and shove me inside – and there are these 13 ... Chinese and North Koreans welcoming me with applause (laughter)! Not a single Mozambican (laughter)! When the clapping finishes, they look expectantly, waiting for me to start teaching.

I was completely flabbergasted – I was expecting to see black African faces, not Asians. So, they explained, 'We are here to become interpreters'. That's how I finally discovered what my job was: I was supposed to set up a translators' course – something which I had never done in my life before and for which I hadn't received any training!

Until the *Carnation Revolution* in Portugal in 1974 and the independence of its colonies, every single Portuguese-speaking country in the world was fascist – the military dictatorship in Brazil only ended in 1985. So communist countries had a problem with training Portuguese language professionals. Training translators and interpreters was then one of the few services Mozambique could offer in return for the economic and financial aid from the socialist countries and their specialist advisors in the ministries. In those 7½ years I worked at the university, I mainly trained Chinese, North Koreans, Vietnamese, East Germans, Tanzanians and a few Zimbabweans, and once also two South Africans.

Only after a few weeks in Mozambique and at the university did it also dawn on me why, before my arrival in the country, I had received no indication whatsoever of the

concrete assignment for which I had been hired. Since my candidature had been sponsored, as it were, by none other than Aquino de Bragança, confidant and advisor to the president, it was almost impossible to refuse me. Also because - as I heard later - Aquino had apparently sung left and right the praises of this 'young Belgian revolutionary' recommended by the Belgian and Portuguese communist parties. The curriculum vitae I had given Aquino in Lisbon was not very detailed, so it was probably not very clear to my future colleagues at the Faculty of Arts what to do with me. Only after my arrival did they decide that I should be in charge of setting up the new translators' training course for which they had no specialists!

The Zimbabweans almost literally demolished my language laboratory because they didn't know how to use a tape recorder and other equipment. Mozambique served as a rear base for Mugabe's ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) freedom fighters, who were then fighting for independence against the Rhodesia's racist White minority regime. Many of them were semi-illiterate rural youth, who had been wounded in combat. They had been sent to Maputo to recover. While they were resting from the war against Ian Smith, they would be sent to my language lab to do something useful. They were basically peasants coming into this sophisticated language lab.

You go to perhaps the poorest country in the world. You could have chosen a middle-income developing country to avoid the conscription. Did you not have reservations that you might not be able to manage with the scarcities in Maputo?

G: No, not at all.

You never asked about salary or other work conditions before you went to Mozambique?

G: To be honest, we never bothered to ask about that. We only discovered that when we signed our contract with the university after arriving in Maputo.

N: And we couldn't really envision how poor Mozambique really was, even after reading about it.

G: We knew that it was the poorest country in the world in the United Nations rankings. But look, the cooperative farm where we worked in Portugal and the conditions in Portugal under fascism were such that there was also dire poverty there. During fascism, the farm workers at that cooperative survived on a salary that allowed them to buy only three sardines a day for the whole family. During our honeymoon there, we also had to survive on three sardines a day - figuratively, fortunately not literally.

N: And the people at the cooperative also told us a lot about their lives and their living conditions. Therefore, I think we already had some idea of what was awaiting us. In those days, there were parts of Portugal that were just as little developed and

lacking basic amenities as Maputo in the first years after independence. In the villages of Rocha's parish, only a lucky few had electricity in their homes, and there was no running water. So I think we already had some idea of what to expect.

G: On the one hand, you romanticise – fortunately, you're only 26 years old and young enough to still do so. On the other hand, in all modesty, we did have some experience. We were not as naïve as some of the people who had gone to Mozambique before us. Friends told us that when they left for Maputo immediately after independence in 1975, they didn't take their electrical razors because they were convinced that there was no electricity in Africa... From my childhood, I knew, of course, that in the 1950s there was already electricity in Africa, at least in the cities and for the White population.

Of course, you romanticise the revolution, and you assume that because you yourself are committed and prepared to make sacrifices, every single Mozambican is equally committed and ready to do the same. That is why we never, not for a single moment, had any trepidation or hesitation about going there; on the contrary, we were very keen. That is also why we did not ask about salary or working conditions before we left.

Nora, you had a materially better-off life in Belgium. You were not required to go to Mozambique instead of serving conscription. So did you have to go?

N: I did not have to, but I wanted to know Africa, and I definitely wanted to have that experience of being able to contribute to the building of a new and more just society.

Did you have absolutely no reservations about going into a country where you might get milk, bread and meat maybe once a week and have regular power cuts?

N: No, it was an experience I very much wanted to have. And teaching for me was, and has always been, very important. I found satisfaction in the teaching I was doing in Belgium, but not in the same sense as I expected to find in Mozambique. Teaching was a very important element for me.

When did you get a job in Maputo?

N: Before I left Belgium, the university had promised me a job as a French teacher. When I arrived in Mozambique towards the end of August 1978, I discovered that I was expected to start my classes the very next day. I asked for a few days to prepare: the very least I wanted to do was find out the level of the students' competence and the relevance of the teaching materials for the language needs in the Mozambican context ... One week later I started my French language course in the Faculty of Arts.

Where did you stay?

G: We had a room in a flat in this university guesthouse for expatriate staff and for teachers coming from the interior. We had agreed amongst ourselves that Nora would continue teaching until the end of the Belgian school year – 30 June – and pack our belongings, while in the meantime I would look for a flat in Maputo and start setting us up. However, it didn't work out like that – mainly because of the bureaucracy and the absolute chaos in the housing situation in Maputo.

Basically, all houses and apartments abandoned by the Portuguese had been nationalised – reluctantly, but there was no other solution to prevent them from being snatched up by usurers and mafia figures. The housing stock was managed by a state agency that had been set up for the purpose. APIE, the State Real Estate Agency, was notorious for its chaos and inefficiency. It had been created from scratch and was staffed by semi-illiterate people without any administrative experience.

To find a place to stay, you would wander through the city and spot a house or an apartment where a Portuguese family or person was leaving. You could easily recognise these by the huge wooden crates standing in the front yard or on the sidewalk. For the Portuguese, leaving meant literally dismantling the whole apartment – they took out all the lamp bulbs, door handles, faucets ... as we say in Dutch, everything not too hot or too heavy to carry away!

The crates in front of the stripped houses in Maputo were the exact counterpart of what I had witnessed as a student in Lisbon in 1975, at the time of the independence of the colonies. The whole quayside was stacked with miles of crates of *retornados* (returnees): the contents of Maputo and Luanda were literally rotting away on the quay in Lisbon!

After finding an abandoned apartment to your liking, you would go to the APIE office, where they would – quite literally – hand you a large shoebox full of keys. 'Try these, they're the keys from that neighbourhood, one of them should fit' (laughter).

That's how I found that apartment in the city centre on Avenida Julius Nyerere. This was shortly before Nora arrived. But then came the bureaucratic part – adding the apartment to the university's housing stock, registering yourself as the tenant, and then waiting for the administration to set a – ridiculously low – rent for that flat. But as said, bureaucracy in Mozambique was very cumbersome, and on top of that, there was nothing to be found in the entire city to furnish the apartment.

N: In the end, it took us more than two months before we were able to make it minimally habitable and move in. Still, we didn't have plates, cutlery or furniture beyond the absolute minimum. We were camping rather than living there, but we didn't mind at all. For the first three months between October and the end of the academic year in December, we used the lids of cashew tins as plates because in all

of Maputo there was not a single piece of crockery to be bought. Later we borrowed some plates and cutlery from friends. And in December we drove for the first time to Swaziland (Eswatini) to get our cutlery and crockery.

When in 1979 Guido's parents came to visit us in Maputo, they asked us what they should bring along from Belgium. When we told them to fill all available space in their suitcases with toilet paper and matches, they first refused to believe us and thought we were joking...

Almost the whole time we lived in Mozambique, traveling was an adventure in itself. That was not only because of the condition of the roads, or the dangers along the road – in the early years we had the incursions of the Rhodesians, and later came the attacks of the armed bandits of Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance Movement) – but also because of the bureaucratic hurdles one had to overcome. For every trip outside Maputo and its immediate neighbourhood, you needed a *guia de marcha* – literally a 'marching order' from your ministry, in our case the University's rectorate. And to leave the country, you needed an exit visa – and then a re-entry visa to be allowed back in...

G: In those early days, the electricity supply was still reasonably okay in Maputo. It was only after the South Africans took over *Renamo* from the Rhodesians after the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, and when the war began to bite hard, that we experienced serious power cuts. When in '83/84 Renamo controlled part of the countryside outside Maputo and cut off the power supply to the city more or less at its own discretion – or so it seemed – by blowing up the pylons of the high-voltage power line, we would have about two hours of electricity a day at fixed times ...

N: ...which also meant that most of the time we would be without water in the house, because that came from collector tanks on the roof of the houses. They were filled by means of electrical pumps, as in the higher parts of the city the pressure in the central drinking water system was not enough to fill them up naturally.

Did you have a generator?

G: No, we didn't. There were none on sale in Maputo – as we said, most of the time we were there, there was hardly anything on sale. And we were on local contracts, so we didn't earn enough foreign currency to buy one in Swaziland, or later in the *Loja Franca* (foreign currency shop). And Mozambican currency was not convertible.

Foreign currency was actually a serious problem for us. We went to Mozambique completely on our own initiative, and not in the employ of some Belgian NGO that would pay our contributions to the Belgian social security system for entitlement to basic health care or unemployment benefits after our return to Belgium. So, in the beginning when we had not yet found an NGO that would accept us as volunteers and pay our contribution so that we could remain in the Belgian social security system, we were actually losing money for every month we were in Mozambique. From our meagre savings in Belgium, we were paying ourselves the minimum

contribution allowing us to stay in the Belgian social security system.

Anyway, we had made some arrangements for our electricity. For example, we parked our car at night under the porch next to the kitchen. We connected the battery to a 12-volt car lamp bulb that we had installed in the kitchen. In that way, we would have some light for dinner, to get the children ready for bed and to prepare our classes for the next day.

N: However, we would have to run the car engine from time to time in order to prevent the battery from going flat. That was another problem, since because of the petrol shortage, we were only entitled to 43 litres of petrol a month, and only from the filling station to which we were assigned – that is, if it had received supplies. So, we tried to limit the use of electricity from the car to two hours per evening. That was when the war really began to bite hard.

But the fact that we were not the only ones facing these problems, and that the people in the *caniços* (thatched houses around the 'cement city') were a hundred times harder hit than we were, was essential. It really helped us to cope with the hardship.

What about the elites, for example the ministers, did they also bear the same deprivations?

G: I suppose not. And we really hoped they were not. Some expats criticised Samora Machel for not standing in the queue like everybody else to get his loaf of bread every day. We told our friends that we would be seriously worried if we discovered the President or a minister in the bread line – we genuinely hoped that they were attending to more important things and more serious problems – and God knows that there were plenty of those!

N: In those days, the foreigners in Mozambique were a motley crew. They were all called *cooperantes* – aid workers. Some of them were extreme Maoists, imbued by the ideology of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. They mainly expected the President to stand in the queue for his daily bread and cried that he had betrayed the revolution when he exchanged his guerrilla fatigues for a military marshal uniform and when hierarchical rankings were formally introduced in the army.

Others came through the international organisations, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation) or WHO (World Health Organisation). They tended to stay as briefly as possible – they were on high international expatriate salaries, and they were used to a certain standard of living, which was not available in Mozambique in those days.

Still others came from the socialist so-called Eastern Bloc countries, which were about the only ones to have state-to-state cooperation with Mozambique in the early years after independence. They provided the bulk of the advisors in the ministries. There were Soviets, Bulgarians, Cubans – in the health sector – and mostly Germans

from what was then the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany). Some of them were as motivated as we were, but for others, Mozambique was just a job they had been assigned to do and which would give them certain privileges that they wouldn't have at home.

G: And then you had government *cooperantes* from a few western countries with which Mozambique had bilateral cooperation agreements – Italy, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Canada and a few others. Our friend, Hélène Passtoors, who was also our direct colleague at the university, belonged to that category. There were also quite a few *cooperantes* from Chile, who had fled their country after the Pinochet coup. Most of them were communists or socialists, and they were very committed. A further category were people sent by an NGO supporting the Mozambican project. Most of the people in this last category – but also many others – were motivated by an idea, a utopia if you want to call it that. They wanted to contribute to build a socialist society there and of course, they wanted to help liberate the rest of Southern Africa, Rhodesia and South Africa in the first place. And the last category, to which we – and David Hedges, for example – belonged, were those who had come on their own initiative and had a local contract with the Mozambican government.

N: In our linguistics department at the university, we were 20 lecturers, and we came from 11 different nationalities. A minority were Mozambicans, and then there were Portuguese, Dutch, French, Belgians, a Swiss, one from the USA, one from Poland, two from the USSR, two from the GDR, and one from Guinea-Conakry. Later we also had a Chilean colleague. For us, that diversity was a revelation.

Like many other institutions and services, the university had been thoroughly raided and pilfered by the departing Portuguese colonizers. Of the 1600 titles in our faculty library, only 300 had not been stolen – and only because they were perfectly useless. We were supposed to set up – invent is a better word – at short notice new courses adapted to the new revolutionary Mozambican reality, with nothing to aid or guide us. So, we would sit together for days on end, wracking our brains and trying to imagine how to set up things.

G: And that's where we discovered the relativity of our knowledge and our beliefs and how embedded in a subconscious cultural pattern they were. For all of us, coming from these very diverse backgrounds, the starting point for our brainstorming would be 'Well, I have learned my trade and my profession in a Belgian academic setting, and, in all modesty, I am relatively competent in my profession. So why should we not all take the Belgian system as a model?' And, of course, at the same time our colleagues from the ten other nationalities were thinking exactly the same thing...

N: Until, in the end, we all realised that the only way forward was for each of us to liberate ourselves from our own ingrained and inculcated mindsets and unconscious biases, to focus with an open mind on the needs of this Mozambican reality, new and unknown for all of us – and to be prepared to invent and innovate on the spot.

It was a time of experimentation, of trial and error. And that despite the fact that we were very aware that the situation was such that we could hardly afford experiments and mistakes, every mistake was ruthlessly exploited and punished by the enemy, and had a direct impact on the living conditions of the Mozambican population. But we had no choice.

G: But to get back to your original question: of course, Samora Machel was not standing in the queues and I suppose he was also getting more than the 300 grams of bread per day we were entitled to, but there were no excessive privileges in those days, also not for the elites.

N: The food rations to which we, *cooperantes internacionalistas*, were entitled were exactly the same as for the local population. So, you knew that when food was available, you would get your share of it in your assigned cooperative shop through your ration card. It was salt, sugar, rice, beans, soap, and potatoes. With luck, once in a while some poultry or cheese...that is, if the products were there, which was not always the case.

There was certainly a local elite, but I doubt that they were then living in opulence, or at least in visible opulence. As university lecturers, we came into contact with people closely related to the political leadership. Those people certainly lived in better houses, and had easier access to certain scarce goods, but even compared to a middle-class family in Western Europe, their way of life was rather frugal. Around 1982, because of the security situation and the South African attacks on Mozambique, Joe Slovo and Ruth First moved to the protected and closed-off neighbourhood of the city in Sommerschield, where almost all the ministers and high-ranking civil servants lived. There too, we saw no excessive luxury or facilities that were not available in the rest of the city.

G: The most remarkable thing about the society in which we lived then was that the situation and the difficulties were very much the same for everybody. We were also treated the same way as everyone else in the same situation, Mozambican or foreigner alike. It is there and then that we learned that poverty – of course not absolute poverty that causes you to die from hunger and deprivation – is not the worst thing. It's possible to live with that, on condition that the shortages and the efforts required are more or less the same for everybody. It only becomes difficult and unbearable when inequality becomes too great and the shortages and the required efforts always end up on the shoulders of only one part of society, and always the same part. In Mozambique, the way you were treated made you forget the colour of your skin. The only times we were very explicitly reminded of our skin colour was when we travelled to South Africa, when that was still possible for me.

N: On the Mozambican side of the border, we all stood in the same queue to get our exit visa stamped in our passport. Then you walk a few metres towards the South African custom office and, all of a sudden, someone shouts *Haai! Jy daar! Jy is wit, jy moet in die ander ry staan!* (Hey, you there, you are White, you go in that other line!) Your first reaction is, 'Sorry but I am queueing with everyone else'. Only then

do you realise that you are supposed to queue according to the colour of your skin, and that the White queue advances much faster and is treated more courteously than the non-White one. All those things suddenly remind you that you are White.

G: Look, even under those circumstances in Mozambique we were aware that we were part of a middle class – if you could call it that in Mozambique because the people in the *caniços* were much worse off than we were. We knew that, and we saw and experienced it, since in the first years after independence, we academics were supposed to leave Maputo and go to the countryside in July. Those were the *Actividades de Julho* or AJU (July activities), when university lecturers and students went to the countryside in brigades to conduct research, assist with production, or as vaccination or literacy brigades, or to participate in the rice harvest.

For my first AJU, in July 1978, I went together with Alpheus Manghezi with a CEA research brigade to Matuganhane, a remote village in Southern Mozambique on the border with South Africa. We interviewed the local population as part of a major project coordinated by Ruth First on migrant labour from southern Mozambique to the coal and gold mines in the Rand around Johannesburg. We studied the economic consequences for Mozambique and the mining families of the cessation of that labour migration after Mozambique's independence. In 1979, I went again with a CEA brigade, coordinated by Bridget O'Laughlin, to the countryside in Nampula province, to investigate the problems associated with cotton cultivation. After a couple of weeks, Ruth First also joined our research brigade.

The July activities eventually stopped when the war made it too dangerous to venture out of the city – and probably also because the city people may have turned out to be more of a burden than a help for the local population...

N: Anyway, we were privileged in comparison with the ordinary Mozambicans. In 1981 or 1982 a foreign currency shop opened, the *Loja Franca*, where you could buy certain things that were usually not available in the local shops – soap, shampoo, toilet paper, salt, cooking oil, sugar, cheese, powdered baby milk, meat and chicken, apples, beer, wine and spirits, and a few more things. And once every so many weeks, Guido or I would drive to Swaziland, either for the ANC or specifically to buy things because of the shortages in Maputo. We used to joke that our nearest supermarket was about 100 kilometres from home, in the Simunye sugar estates in Swaziland.

So you're saying yes, there were material differences between the FRELIMO leaders and other elites and the masses, but the differences were not substantial then?

G: Indeed.

And you were accepted by ordinary Mozambicans, and not made aware of your skin colour, not seen as new colonisers?

G: Yes, don't forget that there were many White and Indian members of FRELIMO – some of them ministers in the FRELIMO government, and they had also been active in the liberation struggle...

N: Such as, for example, the rector of our university, Fernando Ganhão, a White Mozambican and a member of the Central Committee of FRELIMO. He was born to Portuguese parents in Lourenço Marques, the colonial name for Maputo. When he was conscripted into the army in 1961 and sent to Angola, where the liberation war had just started, he deserted from the Portuguese colonial army and made his way to Tanzania to join a group of exiled Mozambicans, who in 1962 founded FRELIMO in Tanzania. After independence, he was appointed rector of the university, which was definitely not a gift. He led the university's transformation process in very difficult circumstances, with very few qualified Mozambican lecturers and with academic staff from all over the world, often with only a rudimentary command of Portuguese.

G: At least in the city, but also when we went to the countryside on those July activities, there was definitely some kind of appreciation, although people may not have understood exactly why we were there and what we came to do. 'Gosh, you're here and you want to help us build a better life' – that was their reaction. The brigades may not have been very efficient or effective, but people appreciated the fact that city intellectuals would take an interest in their life and try to understand and help them.

To what extent could you see socialism, even in an emerging form, in Mozambique at that time? Were ordinary Mozambicans sympathetic to socialism?

G: I would say that Mozambique in those days was a typical nationalistic country with an ambition and a determination to create a more inclusive and egalitarian society, for which they used the word socialism. Indeed, the ideals that emerged during the liberation struggle were to create an independent and sovereign society, where Mozambicans themselves would be masters of their own destiny. FRELIMO Started as a front between several nationalistic parties, which shared anticolonialism and the aspiration for independence.

When we arrived there two and a half years after Independence, FRELIMO had just held its third congress in 1977 and had transformed the movement into a political party. It defined itself as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party based on the alliance between workers and peasants. They were very attached to their independence, gained after a liberation war of more than ten years, and therefore they refused to join either of the two great power blocs – the Western capitalist world or the Soviet bloc – or China or any other power. They defined themselves as non-aligned and joined the Non-Aligned Movement.

They introduced a planned economy to keep their completely plundered and disrupted economy going and to ensure that everyone could benefit from the

product of economic activities. But they had no ideological aspirations to imitate any particular model. For instance, it had never been the intention to nationalise everything after independence, but they hardly had a choice. All the shops, even the small neighbourhood grocers, had been abandoned and dismantled, and there were hardly any experienced Mozambicans to run them. So, as they often said, they had been 'forced' to nationalise even the small grocery shops to prevent the collapse of the distribution system and to ensure that people had minimal access to basic services.

I would say that out of necessity, and perhaps because of its own nature, FRELIMO was a fairly authoritarian regime. After all, if you want genuine participatory democracy, you need people who are well informed and who know how to use the information they receive. That is extremely difficult in a country like Mozambique with almost 100% illiteracy. Those who knew how to use the information were the Rhodesians and the South Africans, and they used it to attack and sabotage us.

That is why I think that people in the countryside saw very little of this socialism. If they saw anything, it was that there was as little food now as there was before. And because of the security situation and the intention to facilitate the provision of basic services like education and health, they had been forced to leave their ancestral villages to go and live in larger groups in *aldeias comunais* (communal villages). However, because of the war, those promised services did not materialise...

Can you say a bit more about what the country was like socially, a bit more about its character, nature?

G: In the beginning, and until the war really started to hurt and even the most basic things were not there, Maputo was a quiet, peaceful and safe society. I am of course talking about the urban areas where we lived.

N: You could walk home alone through the park at night without feeling unsafe, even when the park was not lit. I did it more than once, quite naturally and without thinking. In those days, Maputo felt safer than many neighbourhoods of our home city, Antwerp.

Guido, you said you met Albie Sachs (ANC activist and post-apartheid member of the Constitutional Court)?

G: He worked at the university in the Law Faculty. I don't know when exactly he arrived in Mozambique, but he was there before I arrived. He was one of the first ANC people I met as a colleague at the university.

Albie was very pro-FRELIMO. He was and is a very enthusiastic, very convincing and very positive person – anyone who knows Albie will confirm that. He is a man who pulls you along with his enthusiasm. On 7 April 1988 – I remember the date because it happens to be my birthday – he was the victim of a bomb attack in front of his flat in Maputo, where he lost an arm and the sight in one eye. The South Africans had

sabotaged his car, and it exploded when he started it. But that terror attack did not deter him, on the contrary! A journalist from the *Guardian* characterised Albie a few months later as possessing a "remarkable ability to extract positive emotions from wounding events."

I also remember very well that on my first birthday in Mozambique, which is also National Women's Day and an official holiday, he took me with him and said: 'Well, you're new here; I'll show you what the place is like'.

We went to a rally in a neighbourhood. There he gave a mobilising pro-FRELIMO solidarity speech in Portuguese – or in something he thought was Portuguese (laughter). However, his enthusiasm was so great that everyone understood exactly what he intended to say. I remember that his speech revolved around the connection between the situation in Mozambique and that in South Africa, and how grateful the South Africans should be for the hospitality and solidarity they received from Mozambique, the great sacrifices Mozambicans made for the liberation of South Africa and the heavy price they were paying for that.

Unlike some South African comrades, for Albie, Mozambique was not just a convenient operational base close to home, from which it was easier to organise the struggle against apartheid, and which happened to become available to the ANC after the collapse of Portuguese fascism and colonialism. Like us and the many *cooperantes* who had come to Mozambique in the first place for the cause of Mozambique itself, Albie saw the Mozambican experiment of building a new society as a project with its own merits and values, which deserved our full support. For Albie, the Mozambique experiment was one from the successes and failures of which the ANC could draw many useful lessons for when apartheid disappeared and the building of a more just society began in South Africa itself. It is also why, unlike many ANC comrades, Albie ended up speaking more than decent Portuguese...

We also became friends with another South African colleague from the university, Zarina, who would later marry Mac Maharaj (ANC veteran). She taught mathematics at the university and also did work for the ANC. That was in the first months after my arrival. She brought me into contact with other South Africans such as Sue Rabkin. I remember a party at Zarina's flat where Indres Naidoo was, and where Bobby (Sunny Singh) and Mac also appeared. Bobby became a regular visitor to our home, and later, when most of the ANC leaders had left Mozambique, I worked with him for a while.

And I remember that one evening in April or May '78 Joe Slovo also came to Zarina's flat, very relaxed and enjoying his whisky. In those days Joe would occasionally appear in Maputo and then disappear again, because he was not yet living there permanently.

Around the middle of '78, Ruth First also settled permanently in Maputo. She was coordinating the CEA's major research project on Mozambican migrant labour to the mines in South Africa, and had been appointed research director of the Centre.

Ruth asked me whether I could help with translation work, both for the Centre's fieldwork and for their research reports. It was basically Ruth, and a bit later Joe when he became a permanent resident in Maputo in 1979, who brought us into direct contact with the South African struggle.



Guido Van Hecken,
Hélène Passtoors and
Joe Slovo, Maputo
early 1980s

By coincidence, Joe and Ruth's first flat in Maputo was only about 50 metres away from our own flat on Avenida Julius Nyerere. I gave her Portuguese lessons at home, and I met Joe there very regularly. Ruth and Joe, and Nora and I would also visit each other occasionally for a meal and a chat. And so we became good friends.

Trying to teach Ruth Portuguese is one of the most hopeless things I have done in my life. She was just too busy; her brain was focused on more important things. So, although she wanted to understand the dynamics of the society she lived in, she simply did not have the time to learn

Portuguese. And to be honest, Ruth had many outstanding intellectual qualities, but a flair for languages was not one of them. Although Ruth made a genuine effort, it must be said that very few ANC comrades had time for what they saw as trivialities like learning Portuguese.

Trivialities?...

G: That's, of course, a slightly provocative exaggeration. I don't want to generalise, but I think many of our ANC comrades were convinced that after the liberation of South Africa, the Mozambicans would have to learn English, not the other way round – so there was no need for them to learn Portuguese. Moreover, many of them were so busy, lived such a stressful and semi-clandestine existence, and were so caught up in the anti-apartheid struggle that they simply did not have the time or opportunity to immerse themselves in Mozambican culture. So, it's a real pity that, although official relations between Mozambique and South Africa after apartheid were good and cordial, and Mandela made it a point to make his first state visit after his inauguration as president to Mozambique, it somehow took the ANC almost 10 years to publicly thank the Mozambican people and the other Frontline States for their support and for all the suffering, hardship and sacrifices they had made to support the ANC and South Africa's struggle.

Hélène Passtoors and I were there on 14 February 2004 – now officially the Day of Friendship between the peoples of Mozambique and South Africa – when an ANC delegation led by Zuma, who was then vice-president, came to Mozambique to do just that. I still remember vividly the clapping, cheering and dancing when, in his typical charismatic style, Zuma launched into one of Mozambique's most popular revolutionary songs, *Kanimambo FRELIMO* (Thank you, FRELIMO) and led the dance during the commemoration for the victims of apartheid in the church of Xipamanine in a working-class neighbourhood in Maputo.

N: The first time we were really involved in ANC operational activities was in December 1979, when we were preparing to leave for Belgium for our first holiday and to announce to our parents that we were expecting our first baby!

G: A few days before we left, Joe came to see us. He was tense. He said that he was urgently looking for a place where a few comrades could go into hiding for a while. He thought our flat was a suitable place, because he trusted us and also because it was so close to his own house. We said 'OK, fine'. He urged us not to let anyone know that the people who were coming were staying with us. The next day, Joe brought two men to the flat, whom he introduced as Tim Jenkin and Alex Moumbaris, two of the 'Pretoria Three', as they were then called in the press. Together with Stephen Lee, they had made a spectacular escape the previous week from Pretoria Central Prison, South Africa's maximum-security prison. Jenkin and Moumbaris had clandestinely crossed the border into Mozambique and stayed with us for a while before continuing their journey.

Were they in disguise?

G: No. After they arrived in Maputo via Swaziland, they first stayed in a government residence. The ANC wanted to be able to talk to them and debrief them without FRELIMO being there. Joe had a key to our flat and he, and probably other ANC people, could come and talk to them while we were at work. They only stayed three or four days.

N: At their request, we took them to the beach at night in our car. I remember how, after all those years of confinement, they were overwhelmed by the open space and the vastness and how they danced for the sea, the moon and freedom... That was the first time we were really involved in clandestine ANC activities.

So, when did you meet Rashid?

N: I think it was in the second half of 1980, shortly after Risana was born. Joe introduced him. 'There's a comrade here who lived in Belgium for a while, and you and he seem to have common acquaintances. Would you like to meet him?' We said, yes. That comrade turned out to be Rashid.

We got to know each other quite well. Rashid liked Risana very much and loved to play with him. Because of the nature of his work and for security reasons, he didn't have many social contacts, and occasionally he would come and visit us after work to relax. We also played 'Risk', a strategic board game where you try to eliminate your opponents' armies and conquer the world. If he couldn't just win, he'd cheat – which he continues to deny to this day (laughter).

After the end of the academic year in December 1980, we had decided to go on holiday to Lesotho in the second half of January '81. We knew each other quite well by then and Rashid knew he could trust us. So he asked us to contact his parents,

who lived in Roodepoort, then an area of Johannesburg reserved for Indians.

On the way back from Lesotho, we stayed in a hotel in the centre of Johannesburg. We contacted Rashid's father by telephone. We agreed to meet the next day at the hotel, just before driving back to Maputo, so that we could give him some news of his son – but no letters or written messages, as that was considered too dangerous from a *security* point of view.

G: The following day happened to be 31 January – the day the news broke that a South African military commando had carried out a terrorist attack the night before on two ANC houses in Matola, a suburb of Maputo. We heard about the raid when I picked up an Afrikaans newspaper in the hotel lobby. I still remember the headline on the first page, *Ystervuis slaan Maputo!* (Iron fist strikes Maputo). Then we read about the raid. The Boers had killed 12 ANC comrades, and there was speculation that they had also killed Joe Slovo. While we were trying to digest all this, Rashid's father appeared at the hotel, completely upset. He had also read the news and was worried to death; he asked us if we knew anything about Rashid, but of course we couldn't tell him anything... And if it was true that the Boers had killed Joe, there was a possibility that Rashid had been killed too...

N: We drove back to Maputo as fast as we could, but we didn't get home until very late in the evening because there were military and police checks and roadblocks along the way, not only in Mozambique but also on the South African side. The car, which was full of supplies, food, and clothes for the baby, was thoroughly searched at the border and again later in Mozambique – twice we had to empty it completely and pack it up again after the inspection.

After the Matola raid, Rashid and Joe were looking for a safe place for Rashid – who had been staying with the other Special Operations cadres in Matola but happened not to be there on the night of the attack. We had started to look for another house, because our second baby was on the way and the flat would be too small. So we agreed that we would look for a house which would also have at least one extra room for Rashid.

And when we moved to a house in Rua da Alegria in September 1981, he came to live with us permanently. He stayed with us for just over three years – coming and going, of course, in function of his work. He was a member of our family and to this day we consider each other as brothers and sister.

How do you get drawn into Special Ops?

G: Through Rashid or Joe. I seem to remember that it was Joe. I had already done a few jobs for Joe in Maputo before. In June 1981, David Hedges and I were going to Johannesburg for the university. Joe took advantage of that planned mission and asked us if we'd be willing to buy two cars in South Africa and drive them to Swaziland. Around the end of June, we drove in my car from Maputo to Manzini, and the next day we flew from Matsapha airport to Johannesburg. While doing our work

for the university we also bought those two second hand cars, and at the end of our assignment for the university we drove them back to Swaziland. On the way, we stopped for the night in a hotel in Piet Retief (eMkhondo). And the next morning we crossed the border via the Houtkop border post in Sicunusa and left the cars near Manzini, as we had been instructed to do. Then we picked up our own car and drove back to Maputo. It was as simple as that. All in all, it had taken us four days in Joburg, including our work for the university.

Were you told what sort of car you should choose?

G: In general terms, yes – a sedan and a minivan, but not which specific make or model. Joe gave us enough cash. The day after we arrived in Joburg, we went to a used car dealer. The cars we chose, for no other reason than that they were in reasonable condition, immediately available, and of the type we needed, were a Volkswagen Kombi and a Volkswagen Passat. We registered them both in David's name.

But couldn't you have given them false papers, or you could have travelled on false passports? After all, you're a good forger?

G: Ja, but at the time we didn't know – and we didn't want to know – what they needed those cars for. It could just as easily have been to transport people in Maputo. There was therefore no reason not to register them in our own name. There is nothing suspicious about two Whites buying second-hand cars and taking them to Swaziland. Why use false papers for that and risk getting caught at the airport or at the border, where they obviously check the car papers and your passport. Using false documents for that purpose would complicate things unnecessarily and increase the risk of detection, not the other way around.

It is important that if you have to lie, you lie as little as possible. I am convinced that it's good security to make sure that you lie as little as possible, because you tend to get caught in your lies. It's a principle I have always applied in my clandestine work.

Lying makes you more vulnerable?

G: Exactly. Anyway, our ANC friends knew what those cars were for – we did not.

Were the chassis number and other identification details of the car not removed at the time they were used for the Voortrekkerhoogte operation?

G: That's exactly what I would have expected. I'd thought that, once the cars had been collected from the place where we left them, those who collected them would change the documents, the licence numbers and the identity numbers of the chassis and the engine. They could even have asked me to do that.

And later, after David's and my names were published in the South African press in

early 1982 in connection with the rocket attack of August 1981 against the Voortrekkerhoogte (Thaba Tshwane) military base in Pretoria, I asked Joe and Rashid why they hadn't made false papers for the cars. I remember being very angry with them and saying that I thought they had been sloppy. But they explained that the cars were intended for use inside South Africa in Operation Blackout, which consisted of a series of attacks on power stations and transmission substations with the aim of disrupting South Africa's electricity supply – and for which I also did some reconnaissance missions. They explained that it was essential that the cars were as above board as possible in case they were checked at police or military roadblocks – and that this was the reason they couldn't give them false papers or other chassis or engine numbers. It had never been the intention to use the cars in the Voortrekkerhoogte operation.

Why didn't you think that maybe the cars would be used for car bombs?

G: In those days, there was no question of car bombs, that only came later.

Apart from getting the car, do you know if David Hedges was asked to do anything else for Special Ops?

G: I have no idea. I have never asked him, and I never will.

N: Our job was to make sure we knew as little as possible, so we could also tell as little as possible in case we were arrested. We had two crucial people in the house all the time, Joe and Rashid, and sometimes three or four. Ronnie Kasrils was a regular visitor, Chris Hani came by at least once, there was Ruth who was also a kind of target, and a few others. So we had to be very careful.

Where did you leave the key for the cars?

G: According to the instructions, in the engine compartment or in one of the mudguards. I can't remember exactly.

Anyway, also around the time David and I were buying those cars, Joe came to see Nora and me. Without going into details, he told us that Rashid and he were involved in the military side of the anti-apartheid struggle – which we knew already – and that they were looking for people who were willing to do certain missions for them without attracting too much attention from the Boers. He explained that these missions involved reconnaissance of possible targets for attacks in the country, smuggling of arms and explosives and other similar activities. Since we had already done some jobs for MK at his request, he asked us if we would be willing to do so more systematically.

Somehow, they must also have known that I knew how to forge documents. If I may say so, I was a good forger.

So, one of the first things they asked you to do was to forge?

G: Yes. When I arrived in Mozambique, I couldn't drive. So I had to learn because there was no public transport in Maputo and there were no bicycles, and we lived far away from the university. So, David Hedges taught me to drive in Maputo. But then I needed a driving licence. In '79 my parents came to visit. My father had an old Zairean driving licence. That's useful, I thought. So I took his driving licence, removed his picture and replaced it with mine. I completed the embossed stamp on the photo and made sure it matched the rest of the stamp, changed the first name on the document from Joseph to Guido – and that was it. I then presented that driving licence to the Mozambican authorities, and on the basis of that forged Zairean driving licence, I received a genuine Mozambican driving licence.

I was so proud of my work that one evening, at a friend's house, I pulled out that Zairean driving licence. Indres Naidoo also happened to be there. So I said 'People, can you see anything unusual about this document?', thinking that nobody would notice anything. Indres looked at it and said, 'I think it's a forgery, but it's well done'. And he must have told Joe that I could do that sort of thing.

And so Joe asked me, 'Can you make papers in such and such a name?' He gave me some 'Bantu pass books', the so-called dompas, which all Black South Africans had to carry at all times during apartheid. If you didn't have your dompas with you and you couldn't pay the fine for that, you were imprisoned. Often, prison guards would 'rent out' their Black prisoners to work as unpaid labourers on a White farm. Ruth caused a scandal when, as a journalist, she exposed these practices.

Joe asked me to remove the owners' photos from the dompas and replace them with that of a comrade. I suppose that was to send people into the country, but I never asked.

Then I started to specialise in forging car papers. It wasn't very sophisticated. In those days, most officials in Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa would accept a photocopy of an original official document, as long as it had a notary's stamp on it attesting that it was an identical copy of the original document. This was quite easy to do, because with scissors, glue and a steady hand, you can make many changes on a document that are not visible on a photocopy. Of course, with today's technology, those things would no longer be possible.

Nora, did you assist with forging documents?

N: No.

G: She doesn't even know that our marriage certificate is a forgery (laughter). Another request was to hide materials in the attic at home - TNT (dynamite), Russian SPM limpet mines, AK-47s and other things. We said yes.

Weren't you concerned that the Mozambican or South African security might find out?

G: No, not really. We knew that Mozambique's state security wouldn't have been a big problem if they had found out, because Mozambique fully supported the ANC and its fight against apartheid. The ANC tried to hide its activities from FRELIMO for two main reasons. Firstly, so as not to put FRELIMO in a difficult diplomatic position with the South African government; relations were already strained enough. The other reason was that although there was a huge amount of sympathy and support for the ANC among the Mozambican people and its government, there was always the possibility that some people in the state apparatus or security services were agents of the apartheid regime or traitors.

And regarding the South African security services, I think one of the reasons Joe asked us to house Rashid was that we were deliberately leading a low-key social life. Because we were good friends with Ruth and Joe and we saw them regularly at their house or at ours, we tried to keep our social life relatively discreet. They had told us not to tell anyone where they lived. It was very clear how important they were to the struggle, and therefore also to the enemy.

So we really kept a low profile and as a matter of principle we limited our social contacts, with the exception of David, with whom we had dinner three or four times a week, and a very small circle of friends with whom we played cards every week, but certainly no ANC cadres. Normally we didn't invite people over at home, but we tried to meet our friends at their homes or in a restaurant or go to the beach together.

N: Most of Rashid's colleagues and the people under his command didn't know that he lived with us. He received very few visitors. Usually, it was Rashid or Joe who decided who to invite to our house. The few times we invited people ourselves, we would inform Rashid in advance and he would make sure he was not home while our friends were there.

You could have become vulnerable if any of those operatives got caught as they could have identified your house?

G: Ja, of course we realised that.

But you were prepared to take that risk?

N: Yes, but later on, after Guido's name appeared in the South African newspapers, we did move to a safer place, a house in Rua Armando Tivane a few steps away from the secure area where the presidential residence was. That house was in full view of the military sentries who guarded the entrance to the presidential compound day and night.

Before you agreed to transport arms, did the two of you discuss it or did you agree spontaneously?

N: Spontaneously.

G: Well, we both tend to know how the other thinks about things.

Such an important decision you both made on the spot, as it were?...

N: Ya, and we were both fine with it, much to the surprise of Joe, who asked us if we really didn't need more time to discuss it amongst ourselves. But how could we say no and reconcile that with our most intimate beliefs?

Well, even if you broadly share political values as a couple, it seems as if maybe you have an unusual synergy, compatibility, on what are quite complex moral and political choices to make. Are you just being politically correct for this interview or was this really how you felt? I mean, within your shared commitment to social justice and the anti-apartheid cause, didn't you have differences? How, for example, did you manage your responsibilities to your children in the difficult circumstances you were in? And why should both, rather than one, of you get involved because it could have meant that both of you could have been arrested or worse – and then the children would have been without both instead of one parent?

G: It's up to Nora to answer. She had her justifiable frustrations and I saddled her with the responsibility for the children while I was more actively engaged. To this day, there remain differences of opinion between us. Nora has to speak for herself, but I think we were convinced that we had to do what we did and that I was in a better position to do those things.

N: Yes, he was in a position to do those things. I was not, because I took on more responsibilities for the kids, and also because of my work at the university. It was a fulltime job, starting at seven in the morning and ending at six in the evening, except for the days when the department organised evening classes for adults and the working day lasted until nine in the evening.

And on Saturday mornings, we had political meetings or staff meetings for the members of the department. And then on Saturday afternoon, at least when we had petrol, we would drive through town to see if there happened to be any shops that had anything to sell - you could recognise those by the rows of people or shopping baskets standing outside. So the weekend was just Sunday.

Later, I became head of the Portuguese teacher training department, and that meant even more responsibilities and an even more intensive daily teaching load for large groups of students, and now not in French but in Portuguese, in which I was less fluent! Moreover, I had to do a lot of reading and studying after hours: teaching a language is one thing, teaching how to teach a language is quite another!... So I had to be at the university every day and I had to be at home before our domestic help Elina left, especially after the two kids were born. Risana was born in July 1980,

and Themba in February '82.

I would like to come back to your question about our responsibility as parents towards our children. It goes without saying that, when we decided to have children, we wanted our children to grow up with the love and care from their parents that all children in the world should be entitled to. We also wanted to try to raise them in such a way that they would share the values and ideals that we ourselves believe in and for which we have fought all our lives.

As we tried to explain during this conversation, we were both active and committed before we met, and long before we decided to have children. Our motivation to act as we did and to do what we did stems from our conviction about what is right and wrong in this world, not from a casual availability to devote some of our free time to a cause. And an essential part of this is that if you have a certain conviction, you should actively seek to contribute to its realisation. So just because children come into your life at a certain point, it doesn't mean that this conviction and attitude to life should suddenly change - that would be very inconsistent and contradictory to that conviction, and first and foremost in relation to the children. Because one of the reasons we wanted children is precisely to raise them so that, after we are gone or too old or too gaga to do it ourselves, they can contribute to building that better and more just world for everybody.

So, to stop being active and to stop taking certain risks because of the presence of the children would make the values and the ideals that we try to pass on to them hollow and unconvincing, because they would not be in agreement with our actions and the way we live our lives in practice.

G: We also discussed this with our friends Klaas de Jonge and Hélène Passtoors when they decided to leave Maputo to work full time for MK and Special Ops. Shortly before they left, they gave us some sealed envelopes and asked us to give them to their children in case something happened to them. And all of us knew what could happen to them.

We remember that during our conversations Hélène expressed our common conviction when she more or less said, 'If parents would stop fighting because they have children, there would be very few people left to actively oppose injustice and oppression, and dictators would have a free rein'. We are well aware that this is a choice of the parents and that it's fundamentally unjust that their young children cannot have a voice in that choice, which is forced upon them. That is indeed a contradiction. But, as Nora pointed out, the other contradiction would be for parents to preach to their children things that they do not practice themselves. That is precisely what we blamed our parents for when they tried to whitewash American support for dictatorial regimes.

So, if - and in our case there was a real chance that 'if' could become 'when' - things went wrong and we parents were no longer able to give our children the love and affection that every child is entitled to, it's understandable that the children would

feel that their parents' choice had come at the expense of the affection and attention to which they were entitled. After all, the fact that they existed had been a conscious choice of their parents, not a choice of their own. I mention this because I remember talking with Ruth First about this in relation to her and Joe's daughters when we were expecting our first baby and I stayed with her for a few days in her house in Camden Town, London, around Christmas 1979.

And if only one of us was involved with the ANC and the other stayed aside for the sake of the kids, what difference would it have made? For the Boers, clearly none, as they proved time and again by murdering civilians. They killed Ruth in 1982, they tried to kill Albie in '88 and so many others who were in no way involved in military activities.

We were both committed. We knew and know each other, and we share the same values and convictions. And we felt that this was very much a theoretical discussion. We were not prepared to live apart from each other or separated from our children, nor were we prepared to give the Boers the victory of withdrawing from what we were doing because of threats and danger. Actually, we only stopped doing that kind of work for the ANC because after the Nkomati Accord it was no longer possible to do it from Maputo.

Did Elina, your domestic help, know that you were assisting with the armed struggle, that you had hidden arms in the attic?

N: No. Of course, she knew Rashid. And she knew Joe, who was there almost every day and often ate with us. She knew they were South Africans, but she didn't know what exactly was their role, although she must have known they were from the ANC. In general, the Mozambican people supported the ANC and the fight against apartheid.

And she used to be very happy with some of the supplies that Rashid got from the ANC food distribution scheme.

Were the ANC comrades better off than the average Mozambican in Maputo?

G: In terms of food, considerably better, at least at the level of cadres such as Rashid, Joe, Bobby, Indres, Farouk (Mohammed Timol), Sue, Ronnie, and others – and I imagine that an ordinary ANC member was also better off than an ordinary Mozambican citizen was.

N: Except that at times there were no ANC supplies.

Guido, why would Rashid ask you for help with DLBs (Dead Letter Boxes) in a car? You are a linguist; you don't have an engineering or any technical background?

N: But he's also a bit of a jack-of-all-trades.

G: Yes, but I didn't do the actual physical work of installing hiding places. I am not a welder or a metalworker. In order to determine the best place to hide our stuff, Rashid and I would take a very close look at a car and study the construction drawings. We worked with a metalworker, Carimo, who I heard is now living in South Africa. He was a very discreet and reliable man and a very good craftsman. He had his own workshop and he worked alone. Rashid found him.

Carimo was one of the most reliable people we worked with. Sometimes it was Rashid and sometimes I who designed a DLB in our heads and then asked Carimo to build it into a car. Sometimes Carimo himself would come up with a suggestion. I discovered the possibilities of our own car, a Renault 4. You can take the seats out very easily, and then you are left with the bare chassis. The front seats are bolted to a hollow metal crossbar that's completely empty inside, so it's actually a large metal box welded to the chassis. If you cut out a lid in the top under the front seats, you can hide in that space four or five magnetic Soviet limpet mines – *skilpaaie* as we called them, because the shape reminds you of a turtle. Each mine is 30 centimetres long and weighs about three kilos, but there's also a smaller version.



Moreover, the rear seat is completely hollow inside, except for a few springs to prevent sagging, like a box spring mattress. If you loosen the bottom upholstery, you can hide many sticks of dynamite, pistols or grenades, or even a few AK-47s in it. A disadvantage is that the Renault 4 is a small car, which cannot carry large quantities. But

precisely because it's a small and very rudimentary car, nobody expects that you can hide so many things in it.

I discovered the possibilities of the Renault 4 after our car got damaged in a collision in 1980. It needed a new door. The concessionaires from colonial times had long since stopped and the garages were out of spare parts. So I made the rounds of all the scrapyards in town until I found a usable door. While looking at all those disassembled cars, I discovered some interesting opportunities for clandestine work, and I began to study them more systematically.

During our next European holiday in July 1981, we made a trip to Berlin, where we visited the museum Haus am Checkpoint Charlie between West and East Berlin, which still exists. This was a kind of propaganda museum showing all the tricks and ruses that the East German refugees used to clandestinely cross the border into West Germany. I picked up many useful ideas there, some of which we used in our own clandestine work to smuggle weapons into Swaziland and South Africa.

We also took a good look at Hélène and Klaas' private car, a Toyota Hi-Ace, but

decided not to do anything with it because it had hardly any suitable hiding spaces, and because they used it for their reconnaissance missions or to build DLBs in South Africa. But we did make caches in the cars that the ANC later gave them for their work, a yellow Peugeot for Hélène and a dark purplish one for Klaas. He was driving that one when he was arrested in June 1985. I heard – from Klaas himself, I think – that this car was later used for some time by the South African police to train anti-terrorist units. That's of course a nice compliment for the quality of our and Carimo's work. (laughter).

...We also equipped the car that was used to bring the Grad-P rocket launcher into the country for the Voortrekkerhoogte attack. That was a heavy light blue Ford F-250 bakkie, which was also used for other operations until it was destroyed by the Boers. We did a series of other cars, some of which were eventually discovered by the Boers. One of the things I have in common with Rashid is that we are both perfectionists. And I was strict about security, and so was Rashid.

Before we go to your role in Voortrekkerhoogte, would you explain how you sought to be very security conscious?

G: The motto was, 'what you don't know, you can't tell later'. So we refused to receive information that we didn't need to know. Joe and Rashid themselves were very security conscious and disciplined. They changed the subject or stopped talking if we happened to enter the room where they were working. We joked about the fact that Joe and Rashid would say to each other, 'Come with me outside, there's something I need to tell you' – only to say, 'Beautiful weather today, isn't it?' (laughter).

For our part, we actively tried to stay out of earshot. We also never asked who their visitors were or introduced ourselves. And there were certain things I didn't talk to anyone about, not even Nora – and vice-versa. Joe or Rashid also never told us the real names of a collaborator or a cadre, and often not their MK names either. From our side, we never asked for it either. We only knew Rashid's real name when he asked us to contact his parents in Roodepoort. On the one hand, that was a huge sign of the trust we had in each other, but on the other hand, a risk in case the Boers would catch us.

My own alias, which I used when I had to contact Rashid or other people in Swaziland or people who came from there, was Peter de Vos (Peter the Fox). Unfortunately, I had to give it up in 1983, when the United States appointed a new ambassador to Mozambique – his real name was... Peter de Vos (laughter)!

N: We wrote almost every week to our families in Belgium about our life in Mozambique. But we never mentioned our involvement with the ANC until Guido's name appeared in the South African press, except in a few letters hand-delivered by and to people we trusted. Even then we didn't mention names – except for the obvious ones like Joe's and Ruth's.

We also tried to limit unnecessary social contacts, and things like that. What I do have to admit is that despite everything, we apparently weren't too good at securing our house, because we had 13 burglaries, including once when burglars stole a Russian Makarov pistol from under Guido's pillow while he was sleeping on it (laughter)!

And you say you were very security conscious (laughter)?? I wonder what those who were merely – and not very – security conscious in the ANC went through (laughter) ...

G: No, no (laughter), those kinds of small burglaries were hard to prevent. But we were really very security conscious when it came to ANC operations...

Did any of these burglars break into the attic?

G: The attic was difficult to reach.

N: It was a hatch high up in the ceiling in the corridor next to our bedroom.

G: You needed a ladder.

You spoke earlier of security consciousness, including keeping certain things to yourself and not letting Nora know. Nora, did you do things that you kept from him? It's said in Nadja Manghezi's book (*The Maputo Connection*) that Nora, you went a few times by car to Swaziland while you, Guido, were out many nights fitting things into cars. So, Nora, what did you go to Swaziland to do?

N: Well, I didn't do many missions on my own. I went to Swaziland a few times to deliver money or messages. I also once drove a car from Manzini to Maputo for the ANC. I did that together with Hélène Passtoors. Every time I went on a mission, the pretext was that I needed products that were not available in Mozambique, such as nappies or sanitary towels, or sugar or apples.

Guido knew, of course, that I was going to Swaziland, because sometimes he was the one who would make the fake *guia de marcha* ('marching order') from the university that we needed to travel. But he didn't know the exact nature of my mission, just as I never knew what he was doing for Special Ops.

G: I didn't know you had to take a car to Maputo. You only told me afterwards that you had gone to pick it up. Most of the cars that the ANC used for operations or for use in Mozambique at that time had been stolen in South Africa. I did the paperwork for some of them – including, at one point, a very posh BMW of the latest model, stolen especially for Joe, which I drove myself from Swaziland to Maputo.

N: I remember that they also asked me a few times to take envelopes with money or messages and deliver them to someone in Swaziland.

Guido, let's come back to the first time you are asked to go to Swaziland to take stuff. What do you take to whom?

G: That was in the first half of 1981. But then I ended up bringing nothing to nobody, because on the way the car broke down, even before I got to the Swazi border. That was the blue Ford bakkie that was later used for the Voortrekkerhoogte attack. I remember Rashid and me stuffing it with weapons and explosives, and having a discussion on whether we would hide TNT rods behind the upholstery of the door panels. In the end, we decided against it because of the risk that it might explode if another car accidentally hit the side, and because, as Rashid noted, the door panels seemed too obvious a hiding place, increasing the chances of discovery if the car were searched at one of the many roadblocks in Mozambique or Swaziland.

I remember leaving Maputo around sunrise. The plan was to try and get to the Lebombo border post in Namaacha-Lomahasha before it opened at 7am so that I wouldn't have to queue, deliver the stuff at a place near Mbabane, and be back in Maputo the same day, ideally before nightfall. Driving after dark was dangerous, not only because of the poor state of the road, but also because of the armed bandits who regularly attacked and robbed cars and killed people on the road between Maputo and Namaacha.

With a bit of luck, and not too many army or police checks and not too many queues at the border, it could have been done. It meant a roundtrip of some 500 kilometres, mostly on tarmac roads, with a stretch of just over 100 kilometres in each direction between the border and Manzini, mostly on a fairly bad unpaved and rock-strewn road through the Lebombo mountains.

But just before I reached Namaacha, the engine exploded – a piston shot through the engine block and caused a hole through which all the pressure escaped. I managed to plug the hole with a bar of soap, which for some reason that I can't remember, I had in the car, and I managed to crawl at a snail's pace to Namaacha. There I found a working telephone. I contacted Rashid in Maputo and after waiting a few hours a truck came and towed me back to Maputo. And that was the rather inglorious end to my heroic first arms smuggling expedition...

That same car gave us a lot of problems later. In April or May 1981, Rashid asked me for help to hide a heavy Soviet Grad-P rocket launcher and some rockets under the chassis. Carimo had welded a metal frame under the car. The rocket launcher itself is about 2.5 metres long and weighs about 60 kilos. It is mounted on a tripod, which itself weighs 30 kilos. The idea was to mount it under the truck with two rockets in the barrel, taking the total weight to well over 150 kilos. Rashid and I would do the job and we'd parked the truck in the courtyard behind (Belgian internationalists) Anna and Marc Wuyts' house, where it couldn't be seen from the street.

I knew, of course, that the weapon was intended for some kind of major operation, but because we were working under a very strict 'need to know' principle, I didn't know that Voortrekkerhoogte was the target until after the attack had taken place. And that is how it should be. I'm convinced that the fact that the Special Operations Unit had relatively few losses despite its high-risk missions is largely to the credit of Rashid and Joe and their obsession with strict security.

Anyway, as soon as we started working, we ran into problems. We had to work lying on our backs under the car, trying to get that heavy launching tube with two rockets inside, in place with jacks. But the damn thing wouldn't fit in, the frame was too short! We tried and tried, swearing and sweating, but the thing just did not fit. We gave up.

The next night we came back with some tools, hoping to fit the stuff into the frame. We tried to extend the frame using a crowbar and pliers, but inevitably we had to use a hammer as well... and it still didn't work!

So, the next day we took the car to Carimo and had him make the necessary adjustments to the frame. In the evening – and it was now already the third night – we drove the car back to Marc, with the intention of loading all the stuff and transferring it to another place, because we were afraid that the noise of the previous nights had drawn attention to us. We loaded the rocket launcher, tripod and rockets into the boot of the van and covered everything with a tarpaulin. Rashid drove the car into the street and waited for me there. As I went inside to tell Marc and Anna that we were leaving, Rashid noticed that the street was blocked on both sides by armed men. They came to the car and Rashid gestured that I should not show myself. So I stayed inside the house, but I could hear the whole conversation.

They wanted to know what we were doing. Rashid wanted to know who they were. They identified themselves as SNASP, State Security. Rashid showed them his ANC card. They explained that the neighbours had alerted them and they wanted to see what we were carrying in our bakkie. Rashid argued with them that during FRELIMO's liberation struggle, when the movement was based in Tanzania, there had also been times when FRELIMO preferred that their Tanzanian hosts didn't know exactly what they were up to or what they were carrying.

To my surprise – one must remember that the country was at war and attacks were frequent – the SNASP people were sensitive to that argument, and probably also impressed by the big names Rashid deliberately was waving around.

In the end, the SNASP people decided to leave things as they were and let the car go. After they left, we immediately took it to the garage of a colleague from the university who lived in another part of the city. To our great relief, we finally managed to fix the launcher and the ammunition under the car at around 4 am, so that it could leave for South Africa before the weekend.

N: It might be interesting to mention that we also had links with a collective

cooperative Renault garage in Antwerp, a spinoff of the popular university we told you about. They specialised in Renault 4s, a very popular car at the time.

G: They were sympathetic to the liberation struggle in southern Africa, and they gave us some useful things like Belgian number plates, and chassis and engine identification tags from discarded vehicles. They were part of that large group of people in Belgium who abhorred apartheid. We asked them for help, but we didn't give them any details and they didn't ask any questions.

Okay, let's come back to this. When you made those trips, what did you courier?

G: Rods of TNT or *skilpaaie*, AK-47s or other ammunition and light weapons. I didn't always know exactly, because sometimes the stuff was already sealed. That was when we found out that the South Africans had acquired a kind of portable explosives detector, which you now see quite commonly in airports around the world, but it was brand new then. I remember Joe getting his hands on one of those things and bringing it to our house. While we were having dinner, Rashid and he were trying that thing out on some of the stuff we had in the attic. From then on, we made sure that we sealed the ammunition, especially the explosives, properly in aluminium foil, plastic foil and masking tape.

I didn't do that many missions. I drove to the place I was given, usually the garage of a friend near Mbabane in Swaziland. At my destination, I would either unpack the stuff myself and then leave with the car, or I left the car in the garage and came back the next day to pick it up. By then, the things had been taken out without me seeing the comrades who had done the job and without them seeing me. I estimate that between 1981 and 1984 I did some 12 to 15 missions to Swaziland.

But my main job was to install DLBs in cars, load the cars, and take care of the paperwork for the cars and sometimes also for the drivers.

How many times did you come into South Africa?

G: That was basically over in March 1982, when my name came up in the press in connection with the Voortrekkerhoogte attack. I went to South Africa maybe five or six times, mostly for reconnaissance. I think I did two or three reconnaissances of power stations or transformer stations or whatever these things are called. And I also spent almost a full week observing the security police headquarters on John Vorster Square in the centre of Johannesburg. I can't remember exactly how many reconnaissances I did, because after a mission I handed over all the information relating to that mission – notes, drawings and sketches, documents, photographs and their negatives – to Rashid, who kept them under lock and key in that huge filing cabinet in his room at our house.

Let's start with the power plants. Were you trained in any way to do the reconnaissance? How did you know what to look for?

G: Rashid told me what to do, and I had some experience of clandestine work from my Portuguese days. Basically, I had to observe which cars were driving in and out and at what times, note their registration numbers and other details, observe whether there was a security fence, how high it was, whether it was electrified, what kind of security measures there were, at what times the guards patrolled and were relieved, what the procedure was to access the power plant, and things like that. I used a normal camera to take pictures from a distance and I made sketches and notes of anything that might be relevant. Of course, I knew that the power stations I was observing could be the target of sabotage.

At the end of a day of observations, I wrote everything down in my hotel room. For my notes, I used a kind of rough code – for example, to record a car license number, I wrote each digit on a separate page, or in invisible ink by using milk, a trick I knew from my Portuguese days. It becomes visible again when you heat the paper with an iron or place it in the oven. I hid the notes, the film rolls and the sketches in the air conditioning casing, in the false ceiling if there was one, or in a sealed plastic bag in the toilet sink.

For the observation of John Vorster Square, Rashid gave me a small suitcase with a false bottom. I remember that the case was of a western brand, but Rashid told me that the double bottom had been fitted in the GDR. It was a very well-done job.

When I drove back to Mozambique, I sealed my notes, drawings and film rolls in plastic and hid them in the car's engine compartment in the windscreen fluid reservoir. After putting my notes in the reservoir, I refilled it with washer fluid, which had the double advantage of being coloured, making the package inside invisible, and keeping the windscreen sprayers functional, which was often necessary on dusty dirt roads.

On the power stations that you did reconnaissance on, do you know if the information you gave led to any operations?

G: No. It was not my job to know. I did the debriefing of my missions with Rashid or Joe, mainly with Rashid. And of course, they didn't keep me informed of the follow-up of the information I gave them. That would have been irresponsible and against the most basic rules of clandestine work. Only when the radio or the newspapers reported yet another Special Ops operation did we occasionally find out that some of our actions had been part of a particular project.

What went wrong with the DLB that you mentioned?

G: That must have been in Limpopo, I think. That was the only DLB I ever dug myself in South Africa. I had chosen a grove of bushes near a dirt road leading to a small township. I had been instructed to dig a hole there and then cover it up and camouflage it. I suppose that later someone else would come and fill the hole with whatever – weapons, explosives, documents, money... The exact location was my

own choice. Why they'd asked me and not someone else, why at that time and not earlier or later, why there and not somewhere else, these were questions we never asked – and knew we wouldn't get answers to. Those were the rules – and they were the only rules that made sense, and of course if you didn't agree, you could always refuse to carry out the mission and they would ask someone else.

I concentrated on digging the hole as quickly as possible, because it was getting dark and I wanted to be back at the hotel before nightfall. As a White person, you weren't supposed to hang around a Black township at night – that in itself was suspicious. I thought the place I'd chosen was better hidden than it actually was. I started digging and all went well. I was concentrating on my work and not watching the road nearby. Then suddenly I saw those two Black policemen on the road. They were probably just walking by on their way home, but I got scared – and the only thing I could think of to stop them getting closer and seeing what I was doing was to strip off my trousers and pants and crouch over the hole like I was shitting in it (laughter). To this day, I don't know if they ever noticed me, but luckily they just kept on walking.

I finished the job as quickly as possible. Later I reported the incident to Rashid or Joe. I don't know if they ever used that DLB. Maybe they decided not to.

So you enter the country and you do this reconnaissance, you do the DLBs and so on. Did you have any anxiety, concerns, fears?

G: Of course I had. And every time I went into the country for reconnaissance or to bring things in, I was aware that things could go wrong and that I, and we as a family, would pay a heavy price. However, as I said, the danger was not only in South Africa or Swaziland, the Boers also brought it into Mozambique itself.

I also remember another time when I was convinced that I had been discovered and would be arrested. It was when I was observing and taking photographs of a power station. I'd found a spot on a road in the hills overlooking the power station, which was in the valley below. It was really an ideal spot from where you could see the whole layout of the power station and everything that was going on there. So I parked the car on the side of the road and opened the bonnet to pretend I had engine trouble, and I started observing and taking pictures.

It was late in the afternoon when suddenly, on that deserted road, a bakkie emerges and comes my way. I only just have time to slide my camera under the car before they reach me. And indeed – the bakkie stops. There are three or four Boers in it, who ask me in Afrikaans if I have a problem and if they can help me or tow me to a garage. So I say *Nee, nee, dankie, ek het 'n klein probleempie gehad, maar ek het dit reggekry en ek gaan nou net my reis voortsit.* (No, no, thank you, I had a little problem, but I managed to solve it and I'm just about to drive on), and to prove it, I close the bonnet and get into the car. Whereupon the driver of the bakkie says: *Ha, goed, reg dan. Ek is bly om te hoor dat alles goed is. Maar wees versigtig wanneer jy wegry – daar is 'n kamera onder jou motor langs die wiel.* (Ha, well, okay then.

Glad to hear that everything is all right. But be careful when you drive away – there is a camera under your car next to the wheel) (laughter)! Then they drive off.

I was convinced that they would drive straight to the nearest police station and report that I had taken pictures from there. This was in the middle of nowhere, somewhere in the Eastern Transvaal (Mpumalanga), and I was staying in the only hotel in town, so quite easy to find. I was trying to decide what to do – try to hide and maybe arouse suspicion by not showing up at the hotel and not paying my bill, or go to the hotel and hope for the best?

I chose the latter, but I didn't sleep a wink that night, because I was convinced that those Boers had guessed what I was doing and that they had warned the police. But fortunately nothing happened – which proves another point, namely that the Boers were victims of their own propaganda and ideology. I'm sure that if I'd been Black or Coloured instead of White, they would have questioned me further or reported me to the police. But they simply could not imagine that a White person could be involved in the armed resistance against apartheid. That, of course, is another reason why we *cooperantes* were so useful to MK and Special Ops.

N: Now, you learn to be philosophical about your fears. As we said, life in Maputo was not without its dangers either, and not only for those of us involved in the struggle. Maputo is less than 100 kilometres from the South African border, and during the war, the countryside and roads were not safe places either. And the Boers had already proved that they had no qualms about attacking Maputo. Looking back, there were so many incidents – the Matola raid in January 1981 was one of the first, but many more followed. There was Ruth's murder in August '82 and the airstrike on a jam factory in Matola in May '83, followed a week later by the spectacular shooting down at noon of an unmanned South African spy drone over Maputo. In October '83, there was a bombing of the ANC office in Maputo that left five injured. And in December, another bombing of an ANC house in Xipamanine. And a whole series of other similar incidents. But it was our own choice and, fear or no fear, you have to get on with your life.

Guido, what was your role in the Voortrekkerhoogte operation and how did you get exposed?

G: As always, I had no operational role in carrying out the action. Only after the action had taken place did I learn that it was a highly symbolic, but also effective action against the Voortrekkerhoogte military base, on the outskirts of the capital Pretoria and thus in the heart of the apartheid state. But the things I did, like fixing the Grad-P under that truck, I did without knowing exactly what operation they were for. Of course, I did know that everything I did was for a Special Ops project, that is, an armed military project, probably against a very symbolic target of the apartheid regime and with a high visibility. However, I never knew the details of any project that Joe and Rashid were preparing, or how the things I was doing fitted into any particular project.

N: It would have been foolish and irresponsible of Joe and Rashid to tell us that, and it would have been equally irresponsible of us to ask questions. Our whole engagement was based on shared values and trust. We shared the values that the ANC stood for, we agreed with the project they had for a non-racial and egalitarian society in South Africa. We experienced, even in our daily lives, the criminal nature of the apartheid regime and the havoc it wreaked throughout the region and the way it sabotaged the development of Mozambique, which we were eager to support and for which we had come to Mozambique.

We agreed with the ANC's vision of the role of armed struggle as a last resort in resistance to violent oppression, and to the ruthlessness and cruelty of apartheid. And we knew the ANC's determination and their great care to avoid human casualties in the use of armed resistance. Because of this, and MK's record to date, we were confident that the sabotage projects we were helping with were within the letter and spirit of these principles.

But how do you get exposed?

G: That happened about four weeks after the birth of Themba, our second son, who was born a year and a half after his brother Risana, so it must have been the first week of March 1982. Rashid asked me to drive to Nelspruit (Mbombela) and deliver papers to someone there. He also asked me to buy a camera. The road was good, all tarmac and there were hardly any checkpoints, so I finished quite early. I was trying to decide whether to stay in South Africa for the night and drive back to Maputo the next morning - but then I would have to put up with all those racist Boers coming to drink in the hotel bar all evening – or try to drive back to Maputo the same evening – but then I would have to cross the border before it closed for the night at 6 pm, and drive for another stretch in the dark with the risk of being attacked by the Renamo armed bandits.

It was not an obvious choice. But anyway, I wanted to be with my wife, with our little Risana and with that new little baby of ours, Themba. So I decided to drive back. I crossed the border just before it closed, and around eight o'clock I arrive safely home in Maputo. The moment I step inside, the telephone rings. Nora answers it.

N: There are quite a few people in our living room, including Joe and Rashid. I answer the phone and hear a female voice, but cannot understand a word except that she asks, in English, to speak to Guido van Hecken.

G: I take over the handset and she says 'My name is Emielia Jaroschek, I am a journalist for the *Rand Daily Mail* in South Africa and I would like you to confirm a few things about your involvement in the Voortrekkerhoogte attack'. I say, 'I don't know what you're talking about', make a long, loud 'brrrrrrrr' sound into the phone, as if there's a disturbance on the line, and hang up. Then I turn to Joe: 'Damn Joe, what's going on here? They're asking me about Voortrekkerhoogte!'

A few days later, the story was frontpage news in all the South African newspapers. But the moment I hung up the phone I realised what would have happened if I had decided to stay that night in Nelspruit – as soon as the information about me became public, the police would have started searching for me and all the border posts would have been informed. My situation would undoubtedly have been terrible. If they had arrested me, I would probably not have been able to see my wife and kids for many years! I really got the shock of my life. Joe and Rashid too. How on earth could that information have come out?

And so swiftly?...

G: Indeed. Afterwards I heard that this crime reporter Emielia was at that time the lover of the commander of the security police, Lieutenant General Johan Coetzee. When they came up with the names of David and me, he must have given her a scoop, and at the same time they were instructing their own services to look out for us. The Belgian ambassador in Maputo summoned me after the South Africans had informally asked Belgium for my extradition.

That they had done so was also confirmed by Johan Coetzee in a radio interview with Radio Umtata, the capital of the then Bantustan Transkei. In that radio interview he admitted that extradition would not be possible, 'but I think that other channels can be utilized to bring the White people involved back into the country', he said. From then on, we started receiving security alerts from ANC security and started considering moving to a safer place.

During the next few years, we got those security alerts every now and then. Farouk, who worked for ANC security, would come and warn us every now and then: 'There is an alert; we have information that there is a chance that the Boers will attack tonight. Pack your things, I have arranged with (such-and-such) that you can stay there for the next few nights'.

N: And there we went! With the children. That was a terrible period for us. While preparing for this interview, I came across a letter dated 28 May 1983, in which we describe the situation to our families in a light-hearted tone, so as not to frighten them unnecessarily:

'If we have to combine our responsibilities at the university with our role of a gypsy family on the dole, which we sometimes fulfil against our will but dutifully, then you can understand that we are sometimes too tired to sleep. "Gypsy family on the dole" is a game which consists of the following: after every major ANC attack in South Africa – or when information comes in from certain sources that South African action against Maputo is to be expected – you continue to live in your house as normal during the day, and after dinner and the children's bath – in any case after dark – you bundle as discreetly as possible in your car: the children, their cots, feeding bottles, nappies, porridge, toys and everything else, and then drive away to a secret location for the night. Of course, part of the game is to experience that Risana and Themba cannot or will not sleep before midnight, and then to get up

before 6 o'clock in the morning, put the whole razzle-dazzle back (in) the car, drive back to your own house to see if it has not been attacked or broken into during the night, and then during the day go and live there as if nothing has happened. Repeat at nightfall. Once every two months, we get the irrepressible urge to play this game for a few nights, until we are so exhausted that we decide that if the South Africans want to get us at home, they're welcome to do so, but that we are now so exhausted that we refuse to set another foot out of our house at night. After the car bomb in front of the South African Air Force headquarters, which killed 19 and wounded more than 200 on 20 May, and after the air raid against a jam factory in Matola on 23 May, supposedly in retaliation, it was decided that we should sustain this for about six weeks! Bloody hell!'

And we had to combine that with preparing our classes and teaching, hunting for food and petrol, trying to live with the water and electricity shortages... But that was the consequence of the life we chose and the risks we were willing to take.

G: A few days after our names appeared in the South African newspapers, David and I were summoned by the rector to his office. We were expecting a dressing-down in the style of, 'You were supposed to be on an academic mission for the university, and you agreed to get involved in ANC activities. That is very embarrassing and a diplomatic problem for Mozambique and for the university'. And that was indeed the discourse we got from a stern looking rector.

But immediately afterwards he said, 'But what I would really like to know is whether you still feel safe in your own house, or do you want the university to find you a safer place?' He explained that he and the Mozambican government fully understood what had happened, and that he and many of his colleagues in FRELIMO had been in similar situations in relation to the Tanzanian government during the liberation war, when FRELIMO was in exile in Tanzania.

He, rightly, called on us to be careful not to mix our academic work with other work – about which he didn't want to know anything – so as not to create additional problems for relations between Mozambique and the apartheid regime.

Later, I heard that one of the ANC cadres – an internal contact between the local underground and the units that carried out the Special Ops operations – had gotten into a brawl with his wife or girlfriend. They started shouting and hitting each other, and at one point he threatens her with a gun. She runs to the police. They come to the house and there they find this Russian gun. A Black man with a pistol, and a Soviet one on top of that! Of course, they arrest and torture him, and he gives them the name of his contact in the Special Ops unit. That was a man we knew as Victor (Johannes Mnisi), and who had a role in both the Voortrekkerhoogte mission and *Operation Blackout*. They arrest Victor, torture him and manage to turn him around and he becomes an *Askari* (ANC members who defected to the apartheid security forces). He leads them to the cars, and gives them information about Voortrekkerhoogte.

And according to the police report, one of the cars we bought, the Kombi, was also used by some operatives of the Voortrekkerhoogte project. That is how they must have made the link to David and me. It was also convenient for them to link us to Voortrekkerhoogte - as General Coetzee of the Security Branch said in that interview on radio Umtata: 'I think that the claim of the ANC that they've got support amongst the Black people at grassroots level is false; and this is very aptly demonstrated by this incident where, from the United Kingdom and from Belgium and from Canada they had - as a matter of fact I think the term would be - to import people to come and launch this conspiracy here, to attack what was obviously a status target, the headquarters of the Military. I think it demonstrates that they haven't got the support amongst the Black people which they claim they have.'

Wasn't it the responsibility of the Commander to check that the comrades had changed the papers before the operation started?

G: To answer your question in general terms, I would say, yes. However, it must have surfaced in your other interviews that the reality on the ground was often a lot more complicated. In a hierarchically structured or formally organised army, there is no doubt that the commander must be held responsible for any lapse in security or discipline. But one of the characteristics of the clandestine conditions in which Special Ops operated is precisely that you have very difficult and complicated lines of communication, that you sometimes lose contact with your people. They suddenly disappear from the radar, only to reappear later. This was the case with Victor, for instance.

It even happened a couple of times between Joe and Rashid, when Rashid was on a mission in Swaziland. I can remember at least two times when Joe had lost all contact with Rashid in Swaziland, and he sent me there to try and re-establish contact or at least find out what was going on with Rashid.

So, it was not as if Rashid could just drive to Pretoria, where his operatives were, and call them to order. And in this lies the difference between being in charge of people and being responsible for every individual action of the people you command. The SADF (South African Defence Force) had the means to control and discipline its members and hold them to account. While the ANC is obviously accountable for the actions carried out by its cadres, it's difficult to hold the movement accountable for every single action of every single MK operative, if they don't have the means to communicate properly with their units inside the country, or if those lines of communication have been disrupted. It's hard to imagine today, but back then, internet, social media, and even mobile telephones didn't exist.

Okay. To something else. When Ruth was murdered, where were you, how did you get to know, what was your response?

N: Ruth was murdered on 17 August 1982. We had just returned two days before from our trip to Europe to introduce our second son Themba to our families and friends. It was a sad homecoming, for the news was not good. Alpheus Manghezi

had a bad accident with our car and we had no transport; Micha, one of our two dogs, had disappeared; and the worst news, which Joe told us when he came by in the afternoon to say hello and see the children, was that Rashid had disappeared.

He had gone to Swaziland a few days before, but the people he was supposed to meet had not heard from him, and Joe had no news either. He thought that Rashid might have been part of a group of people who had been detained by the Swazis for not having documents, but he wasn't sure because he didn't know what name Rashid might have given to the Swazi police... The group was due to go on trial the following week.

G: Anyway, 17 August was the first time after our holiday that I went back to the university. Our suitcases were still packed in the living room. As classes hadn't started yet, Nora decided to stay at home, and I planned to come home as soon as I had finished my work. I had myself debriefed by the colleague who had replaced me as head of department during the holiday. Then I walked to the Centre for African Studies because I wanted to see Alpheus in connection with that collision with our car.

We knew you would want to talk to us about Ruth's death, so we brought the first letter we wrote to our family after the murder. I wrote that letter on 19 August, two days after Ruth's death. If that's OK with you, we will read some of it to you:

...At the Centre for African Studies I did not find Alpheus, but I ran into Ruth, who was carrying two bottles of wine. [...] She asked if I would like to stay for a glass of wine, because they were going to have a farewell drink for John Saul, a Canadian who was leaving the next day. But since the people who were expected for that glass of wine were late and just at that moment Marco Teixeira (also from the Centre) passed by, who said that he was going home and that he would give me a lift, I left, at 4.25 pm. Ruth said she would come and see the children the next day. Less than five minutes after Marco and I left, she was killed instantly while opening a letter bomb. The devastation was terrible: her whole office in ruins and full of shrapnel, the false ceiling had collapsed, the outside wall of her office blown out, an incredible chaos of course. It is a miracle that the other people who were in Ruth's office at the time did not remain in the explosion. [...] Ruth herself died instantly, and her body is in a very bad state.

Everyone is reeling from this cowardly attack. I only heard it when I got home and a Polish colleague called in a panic to check if I was still alive, because he knew that I had gone to the Centre and nobody had seen me since the attack. At that moment, a Dutch colleague also arrived at our house sobbing, because she thought something had happened to me as well. I immediately went back to the university to testify to the police and State Security about what happened in and around Ruth's office before the attack (at that time it was not yet completely clear that it was a letter bomb), who was there, etc.

Marc Wuyts was in the corridor next to Ruth's office when it happened. He saw

Bridget, Aquino and Pallo Jordan come out, covered in blood, and he helped Aquino, who was completely hysterical (because he had also received such an envelope and was just about to open it when Ruth's exploded). Marc helped Aquino to leave the building. After that, he went to fetch Joe Slovo, who came and saw his wife.

Joe is doing well, for the moment. We didn't go to his place the night before last, [...] but yesterday we went to his place twice. Each time, the house was full, [...] so Joe probably does not have too much time to think.'

N: We also expressed our personal shock in that letter:

'Dear people, we are very shocked by the assassination of Ruth, who was one of our best friends here in Mozambique. Our first reaction was to pack up and leave, but that is not what Ruth would have wanted and would have done. Now we are sad and angry, at yet another in a series of cowardly acts of terror against innocent civilians [...]. Ruth, Chris, George, Obadi and their comrades whom we did not know personally, and all the others murdered by the South Africans, must and will be avenged, and if we can contribute to this more intensively, we will not hesitate to do so!'

G: And on 22 August we add:

'The response to Ruth's murder has been tremendous. [...] The government and Joe himself have received thousands of letters and telegrams and motions from home and abroad. These things are very helpful for Joe and his family. We went several times over to Joe's place, and so far he is doing well. We also went one evening with Risana, because Joe had asked us to bring him along. He was very sweet to Joe, even gave him a kiss, and Joe and his daughters were cheered up a bit.

Thursday night, we went to the Freedom Concert that Dollar Brand and his jazz band gave in memory of Ruth. Joe and his family were there too. It was a very militant concert and it did us all good. Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) read two poems at the beginning, one by Bridget O'Laughlin, which she wrote that same morning in hospital. The refrain of Bridget's goes something like this: 'You will pay, Baas, you will pay it all. You will pay until your capital has fallen', a terribly angry poem. Abdullah Ibrahim's own poem is politically very strong, and very good: 'You are not our teacher, Baas'. 'You killed Ruth with a letter bomb. You should not be afraid, Baas, because we will not send you letter bombs. You are not our teacher, Baas. You shot our children in Soweto, Baas. But you must not be afraid; we are not coming to kill your children, because you are not our teacher, Baas...' (It is more or less compulsory for Blacks in South Africa to address Whites as 'Baas').'

N: And allow us to read the last paragraphs of that letter, because you specifically asked us what our own reaction was to the murder of Ruth:

Ruth murdered, a difficult security situation in the country, and especially here in

the South, ... Anyway, we will have to learn to live with such things; after all, it is our own choice. We are no fools, and we really do think about our own safety and that of our children, but on the other hand, we do not let ourselves be intimidated, and certainly not by a bunch of inhuman jerks in Pretoria! Ruth is the fifth person we know personally who has been assassinated, four of them in less than a year! [...] And now Ruth! But for every one they kill, two others are standing up, eager to take their place. The murder of Ruth has so shocked and angered a number of people who were hesitant and did not know what to do, that they have now resolutely decided to stay and fight the racists, each in their own way [...]. People are scared from time to time, yes. We are afraid too at times, after all we are not heroes and we have no ambitions for it, and we still feel a bit too young to die, so we are scared and nervous at times, but also increasingly more determined.'

Well, Guido, I suppose you could also have been one of the victims, if you had gone to that farewell party?...

G: If it hadn't been for the fact that home was still one big mess and that this colleague offered me a ride, I would have gone to that farewell party, I'm pretty sure, because all those people were my colleagues and friends.

Mozambique's State Security set up a working group to investigate Ruth's murder, and they invited Joe to be on it. As Joe was often out of the country and did not speak a word of Portuguese either, he asked me to replace him and represent the family on that commission.

Who was it led by, a judge?

G: No, it was not an official commission of enquiry; it was only the State Security agents on the case trying to find out exactly what had happened and liaising with the family to keep them informed of their progress. I think I went to two or three meetings. I realised then how ill-equipped they were and how limited the resources of the Mozambican state were to get to the bottom of what had happened and who was responsible.

Of course, everyone knew that the Boers had done it. But the Mozambicans did really not have the capacity to investigate it or to prove it beyond any doubt. Things only came to light years later, when Craig Williamson and the Vlakplaas people started testifying before the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

Did the Mozambicans do a report finally?

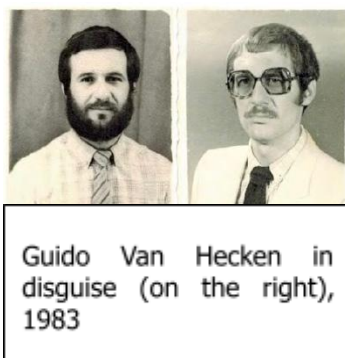
G: Not that I know. Things were quite badly organised. You can't compare it with a normal, even minimally well-functioning administration.

Do you have any idea why they targeted Ruth First? Why not Slovo or Zuma or Rashid?

G: Craig Williamson, the South African police officer responsible for organising state terrorism under the apartheid regime, himself explained to the TRC why he had Ruth murdered: 'The apartheid regime was convinced that she was a key factor in the liberation struggle, one of the top ideologists of the SACP, and her involvement in Mozambique was of great concern to the South African regime'.

But they had no idea who Rashid was, and never did, until he returned to the country in 1991 and told them himself that he was the 'notorious' Rashid. And that in itself is a compliment to Rashid and the way he operated.

N: I think Ruth was targeted because she was easy to find, and probably also because they wanted to hit Joe through her. And it was known that Joe never opened his own mail, but that it passed through ANC security first.



You mentioned Rashid's disappearance in Swaziland. What happened?

N: After 17 days in prison in Swaziland, Rashid was released on 27 August. He was fined R200 for entering Swaziland illegally, and immediately after his conviction, he was deported to Mozambique and escorted to the border crossing.

So he was lucky, and we were all very relieved that he had not been sent to South Africa and that he was safely home again. I remember that the first thing he did when he got home was to lock himself in the bathroom for almost two hours to scrub himself completely clean! I remember it, because we were having a period of severe water shortage at the time, and we had no running water between 5pm and 5am...

So each time that you had to move, you also had to move the arms hidden in your house?

G: When we had to leave our house for security reasons and spend the night elsewhere, we took nothing with us except the things we needed to take care of the children, and that was it. However, when we moved to a new address in the city, the weapons and ammunition moved with us. After we moved from our flat on Avenida Nyerere to Rua da Alegria in 1981, we started to use our attic as a kind of armoury for Special Ops.

In 1984, the situation became more complicated. In March, the Mozambican and South African governments signed the Nkomati Accord. The Accord, officially called the "Non-Aggression and Good Neighbourliness Agreement between Mozambique and South Africa" and signed in the town of Komatipoort on the border between the two countries, officially aimed to oblige Mozambique to cease its support for the ANC's armed struggle in exchange for the cessation of South African support for Renamo in Mozambique.

The Frontline States and, of course, the ANC condemned the agreement, despite understanding that Mozambique had no choice but to sign the treaty, as it was on the brink of destruction as a result of the actions of the armed bandits. Mozambique broadly honoured its commitments, while the Boers ignored the agreement and increased their already extensive support for Renamo.

For us, and for many *cooperantes*, the main problem with the Nkomati Accord was not the fact that the Mozambicans had agreed to it – after all, we knew all too well from our own experience of daily life that there was hardly any other alternative for Mozambique to avoid total destruction. What we found particularly shocking was the fact that the government and FRELIMO tried to present this agreement as a victory for their socialist model of society, when in reality it was at best a – hopefully temporary – tactical step backwards with which they hoped to gain enough breathing space to first put their house in order before moving on again towards the egalitarian and inclusive society project they envisioned for their country. To present as a victory something that was blatantly a step backward or even a defeat is utterly unbelievable and undermines society's confidence in its leaders and their authority and credibility – and ultimately in that societal project itself...

And for Special Ops, the Accord triggered a race against time to prevent the Mozambicans from confiscating our weapons, because from then on they started looking more actively for the ANC arms caches that they had previously turned a blind eye to, and we tried to stay one step ahead of them. The Accord forced most ANC cadres to leave Mozambique at very short notice and allowed only very few to stay.

I remember going at night with Bobby to houses where ANC weapons were stored – Hélène and Klaas', among others - to take all that stuff away, which was damn hard work. We were really desperate for hiding places for all that weaponry, and this time we had to be really extremely careful and make sure that Mozambican security didn't find out that we were effectively violating the terms of their Accord with the Boers...

Anyway, it was also then that, almost overnight, my role in Special Ops became more important. Joe had been forced to leave Mozambique, Rashid followed shortly after. They had hardly had time to prepare for their departure and to hand over the organisation of Special Ops in Maputo in an orderly and systematic way to the few ANC cadres who were still allowed to stay in Mozambique under Nkomati, and of whom hardly anyone was familiar with the way Special Ops was organised and prepared its operations in South Africa from Maputo. Although we had never formally been members of Special Ops, the three years that we lived and worked under the same roof with Rashid, and our very close contacts with Joe had given us a good idea of how Special Ops worked. During those three years, our house was, so to speak, an operational base for Special Ops in Maputo, and I had become Rashid's unofficial assistant, and so I knew a number of contacts in Maputo whom Special Ops used to support and prepare their projects in South Africa.

Apart from our very warm and cordial personal relationship, I suppose that the fact that Rashid and we lived in the same place for three years also facilitated his and Joe's work. There are three important aspects in which we may have played a facilitating role. First, the fact that we had a fairly important hardware arsenal stored in our house, including TNT, grenades, a fairly large number of Kalashnikovs, pistols, limpet mines, and other weapons that Special Ops used - so those things were readily available when they were needed. Moreover, as I said, over time I had gained a lot of experience in safely packing and hiding those things, so that, if necessary, Rashid and I could prepare shipments to South Africa amongst ourselves without involving others. This, of course, greatly improved the safety of the projects. And finally, we also had the necessary equipment, and I had the skill and experience to quickly prepare documents for vehicles and their drivers.

I remember an event where these three aspects came together. Sometime in early November 1982, Rashid told me that due to some unforeseen circumstances, one of his projects, on which he'd been working for a long time, was in danger of failing if we didn't manage to send the necessary hardware to South Africa immediately. We got to work right away – the limpet mines we needed were in our attic, Rashid and I packed them and hid them in the DLB in our own Renault 4, and by the end of the day I had prepared the necessary papers for the person who would take the car into the country. So the cargo could leave for South Africa the very next day.

A month later, after the spectacular attack on the Koeberg nuclear power plant (18-19 December 1982), Rashid told us what had happened and why it had been so important to get the materiel to South Africa quickly. The success of the attack depended on the person who had volunteered to carry out the operation, a contract employee (Rodney Wilkinson) of Koeberg and therefore someone who had easy access to the site. A month before the scheduled date of the operation that person suddenly received notice that his contract would be terminated at the end of the month – thus losing access to the nuclear plant. In order not to waste months of careful preparation and the chance to deal a spectacular blow to the regime, it was essential to get the weapons into South Africa before the chances of a successful operation were lost. And we succeeded thanks to that close relationship between Rashid and ourselves.

But to come back to the specific situation of Special Ops in Mozambique after Nkomati, I would like to read you a paragraph from a confidential letter I sent to Nora at the end of May 1985. She had left for Belgium in mid-April...

N: I had terminated my contract with the university at the beginning of the year to return to Belgium in the middle of the year.

G: We agreed that I would stay in Maputo with the children to pack things up and finish our work – including, and especially, my work for Special Ops. I had also terminated my contract with the university a few months earlier. In that letter of 20 May to Nora, I write:

I am not too worried about the current offensive by the armed bandits. The point is that South Africa is currently doing everything possible to get Mozambique to accept South African military 'aid'. That is why it is normal that they are giving extra support to the bandidos, who are very keen to get some publicity around this time because of the upcoming independence celebrations, and who have therefore launched for the umpteenth time their 'final offensive' against Maputo.

This time, Mozambique does not seem to be giving in so easily. I think they have a big hangover from their 'flirtation' with South Africa (the Nkomati Accord), at least it's starting to look that way in the last few days. This week is 'Solidarity Week', as part of the preparations for the tenth anniversary of independence. And the language used by Chissano (then Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Panguene (then Deputy Minister of Defence) and all the others seems again to be much more militant and unambiguously pro-ANC than what we had become used to since Nkomati: 'fight until the fall of apartheid', 'without the disappearance of the apartheid regime, there will be no real peace and independence in southern Africa'... The ANC itself, in the person of Zuma, has also taken a few steps back in the direction of Mozambique: on the 'Africa Day' of Solidarity Week (which was in fact entirely ANC Day), Zuma praised Mozambique for their achievements since independence, and for the support the ANC has received from Mozambique, and appealed to the friends of Mozambique and the ANC to come to the country's aid in its fight against the bandidos.

But that does not prevent us from being careful. After the raids in Matola (by apartheid security forces against the ANC presence in the country), our (ANC) friends have finally woken up. The work that should have been done a year ago, namely the inventory and safe storage of the material, is finally happening. Also because they are finally starting to realise that I will be gone in just over a month, and at the moment, I am the only one who knows where everything is stored. A few days ago, Farouk and Barney (Molokoane) finally went to the house of our Dutch friend, where they took away a lot of stuff. When they were done and I went to have a look, it turned out that they had left a lot of things because they just hadn't found them and also our friend didn't know what was in his house and where. Of all those who were involved in that work a year ago, after Nkomati, I am the only one left now. Anyway, the main thing is that things are starting to move now ... which is a shame, because just now when things are going so well in the country (South Africa), it is very important that the people's action is supported and that the ANC makes its presence felt by giving the Boers a few good blows where it hurts most. Better late than never, but still it annoys me! Before I leave, I'm going to fix three more cars. And in the meantime, we have also found someone who will work with me to take over the car business. I have also managed to interest our friends in the whole paper and stamp business, so that will also be taken over before I go... This evolution reconciles me somewhat with life, but of course makes it a bit harder to leave Mozambique soon...

Guido, you could have contributed to the ANC's struggle in many ways,

why did you choose the armed struggle?

G: In 1973, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning apartheid as a crime against humanity. In 1978, another resolution affirmed the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence and for liberation from colonial and foreign domination – and I quote literally – ‘by all available means, particularly armed struggle’. Secondly, of course, we all remember the words of the 1961 MK Manifesto and Mandela's words in court that ‘the time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom. The government has interpreted peacefulness of the movement as weakness; the people's non-violent policies have been taken as a green light for government violence. Refusal to resort to force has been interpreted by the government as an invitation to use armed force against the people without any fear of reprisals’. And thirdly, we were direct victims of apartheid in Mozambique. The way South Africa strangled Mozambique, the way they hampered Mozambique's development, the way they forced war on us and all the woes we experienced...

N: The direct military attacks on Mozambique created a sense of solidarity. We were by no means alone. Let's say that if the expatriate community had been asked to contribute in some way, each to their own capacity, to the overthrow of apartheid, 90% of the group would have said yes without any hesitation.

G: In the past, I had also had contacts with the opposition against fascism in Portugal, including an organisation of the armed opposition. That organisation, LUAR (League for Unity and Revolutionary Action) was a very militant organisation with a lot of guts. So, already in Portugal, I had learned a few do's and don'ts of clandestinity. Moreover, I apparently had some skills that the ANC found useful, such as forging documents, fitting DLBs in cars, and that sort of thing. And because we happened to be in close contact with a number of people who had important positions in the armed struggle, with whom we were friends and who trusted us, I would say that it was therefore natural for us to get involved in supporting the armed side of the liberation struggle.

N: We had no fundamental objections to the armed struggle. South Africa was not only a very cruel and merciless state towards its own non-White citizens, but the Boers were also a dangerous and vicious enemy of Mozambique and Angola and all the other Frontline States in southern Africa. For us, that was a strong motivation.

G: For us, helping to develop an independent and egalitarian Mozambique, the least developed, as it was said, country in the world was a natural extension of our commitment to social justice in our own country and in Portugal. Soon after our arrival in Mozambique, we discovered that it was impossible to close your eyes and say that you were going to work exclusively for Mozambique, when the country was under constant attack and destruction from apartheid South Africa. The most pressing issue, also for Mozambique's development, therefore, seemed to be ending

apartheid. The fall of apartheid was a precondition for the development opportunities of Mozambique and southern Africa – regardless of their social development model.

I want to focus a bit more on the specific role of Special Ops. Were you aware that you were taking part in activities that were part of a specific MK unit called Special Operations with a specific role in the armed struggle?

G: I would say that we became aware of the existence and specific role of Special Ops because Rashid was living in our house. As usual – and as it should be, when Joe asked us to let Rashid share our home and our lives, he did not tell us what place he exactly occupied in the structure of the ANC, nor were we aware of it. But the fact that he lived more or less underground with us, and that even other ANC members were not allowed to know, was an indication that he had a special function. We knew then already that he was a member of MK, and it was common knowledge that Joe was an MK commander. And Joe was – literally – daily visitor to our home, and other high-ranking ANC members, especially MK cadres, were also regular visitors.

This clearly meant that Rashid was also high up in the MK hierarchy. Then, when Rashid and Joe started asking for our help in the preparation of certain operations, it soon became clear that it was the Special Operations unit. So it didn't take us long to realise that Rashid was a senior figure in Special Ops. There was no need for him or Joe to tell us explicitly.

N: Also because, in a way, we could sense from the atmosphere at home and the tension we saw in Joe and Rashid from time to time that an operation was underway or imminent. A few days later, we would hear on the radio about some spectacular act of sabotage in the country, and we would immediately know why they had been so tense. And after a particularly successful operation, we would witness Joe and Rashid's emotional release – the relief and satisfaction that everything had gone well.

What did you understand to be the specific role of Special Ops?

G: As far as I am concerned, it was a very specialised unit within MK. By carrying out those very visible and daring attacks, its political role was to show the South African people and the world at large that the ANC was effectively and prominently present in the country and that there was indeed armed resistance to the apartheid state, and to give impetus to the internal struggle. It was also intended to show that the South African regime was not as invulnerable as it presented itself. In addition, the message to the international community was that there was a serious problem in South Africa, otherwise you wouldn't have this kind of actions. I think Special Ops was very effective in boosting the confidence and morale of the population and keeping apartheid on the agenda of the international community.

The Special Ops operations encouraged internal opposition to apartheid, which for us was the most important factor in defeating apartheid. Unlike the Portuguese colonies and because of the characteristics of South Africa, the armed struggle was not the main instrument to overthrow the regime. Nevertheless, it was essential to keep the South African regime in suspense and to force the Boers to engage in political discussions.

In addition, it helped to maintain international pressure on the regime. Probably the oil and sports boycott, for example, were more important in ending apartheid than the armed struggle, but one complemented the other. In this sense, I agree with Clausewitz, the Prussian general who famously said that war is the continuation of diplomacy by other means. The aim is not to kill and destroy, but to force your opponent to the negotiating table. To achieve this, you must make your opponent feel that the possible disadvantages of armed conflict outweigh the concessions he will have to make at the negotiating table. Special Operations has certainly helped to put that realisation into the heads of the Boers.

Obviously you had a limited experience of *Special Operations* attacks, but of those you know about, do you have any view which of them stands out the most and, if so, why?

G: For me, the action that stands out the most is the one that did not go entirely according to plan, and that is the car bomb attack on 20 May 1983 on the air force headquarters on Church Street in the centre of Pretoria. The action was a shock to everyone, and marked a turning point and a new phase in the struggle. It was not the first time that civilian casualties occurred, but it was the first time that the possibility – even the likelihood – of civilian casualties was factored into the planning of the operation.

I understand that the bomb went off prematurely, before the military personnel started to leave the air force headquarters, and so some of the 19 dead and most of the 220 wounded may have been civilians and not military personnel, although I also understand that at least a third of the dead and wounded were indeed military personnel.

That attack heralded an intensification, an escalation and a more dangerous phase. If you aim for installations, buildings, pylons, and not for human targets, if you go for symbolic targets and it goes wrong, then you may not hit your target, but you also have no unwanted casualties, or only very rarely. There can be collateral damage, someone who happens to be near the limpet mine when it explodes, and that is very unfortunate, but it is not part of your calculations, and fortunately it does not happen very often.

I think that the risk of civilian casualties is one of the reasons why it was decided to stop using car bombs as a weapon. Another reason may be that those attacks achieved the goal of making it clear to the regime that a military solution would be very costly, if not impossible, for them. As Mac Maharaj later explained, the

escalation of MK attacks like the one on Church Street was a major reason why the government agreed to start negotiations in the early 1990s.

Indeed, it is not inconceivable that the Church Street bomb contributed to an accelerated political resolution of the social conflict caused by the apartheid system. It is clear that the Boers were deeply shocked by this demonstration of the ANC's capacity to carry out such an attack in the centre of their capital city – after Voortrekkerhoogte this was the second time in a relatively short period. The brutality and scale of the attack meant that the regime could not hide or minimise the action from its own people. It's therefore quite possible that these bombings made a section of the Afrikaner public, and the White public in general, realise – perhaps for the first time – that a purely military-repressive response to the protests against apartheid would be very costly, if not impossible, and that the only option for finding a solution was to open a dialogue with the ANC. In this sense, too, Church Street was a turning point.

If you consider the brutality and violence of the regime and the moral and political issues related to that, do you think the civilian deaths caused by the ANC's armed activities were high?

G: No, they were not. There were relatively few civilian casualties.

What's your response to the view that the Pretoria bombing led to an unfortunate death of civilians but was a legitimate target. That it can't be seen as a questionable operation in the way maybe the Wimpy Bar attack in Benoni in 1988 was, or putting limpet mines in shopping malls as in Amanzimtoti in 1985?

G: The regime had located the headquarters of its air force – a legitimate military target under the Geneva Convention – in one of the busiest streets of its capital, in flagrant violation of Article 28 of the Fourth Convention, which prohibits the use of civilian shields to prevent attacks on military targets. I therefore agree that it was a legitimate target. That is also the verdict of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and so there should not be endless debate about this, although I understand, of course, that it's difficult for the victims and their families.

The reality is that there are no winners in this kind of situation. We are more and more convinced that anyone who has been forced into this kind of life of violent conflict, secrecy, constant vigilance, incessant nervousness and stress is being mentally destroyed by it. There are no winners. It's a whole generation that has been destroyed, and one can only hope that the next generation can return to a normal life. The use of violence, even for perfectly legitimate and morally praiseworthy purposes, creates violent societies.

N: South Africa is now a violent society – if not at the political level, then at the level of everyday crime. The ANC was compelled to use violence by the brutality, cruelty and institutional and systematic violence of the apartheid regime. So, it's in the first

place the apartheid regime that must be held responsible for the armed struggle against them, including for some of the mistakes made in the course of the ANC's military operations.

The apartheid regime escalated the violence against the population by remaining completely insensitive to fifty years of attempts at negotiation, then a highly disciplined and rather symbolic armed struggle, targeting power stations, transmission masts and other infrastructure, and taking care not to cause civilian casualties. It's the regime that forced the ANC to respond in a more violent way to their brutality and ruthlessness. To give a personal example, the bombing of Ruth First, and later of Albie Sachs, were targeted, planned, organised terrorist activities by the apartheid regime, with the explicit intention of killing civilians.

G: That was also the difference between the bomb against the air force headquarters in Pretoria and the South African retaliation three days later, when bomber planes attacked a jam factory and civilian targets in Matola near Maputo.

Compared to other progressive armed struggles you may be familiar with, do you think that overall the South African struggle as a whole had fewer civilian casualties?

G: Yes. Although we are not so familiar with the details of, for example, the Sandinista struggle in Nicaragua, we know that they too tried to avoid civilian casualties. Yet there were far more civilian casualties in Nicaragua than in South Africa, because the liberation war there was a direct military confrontation with the regime. In Nicaragua, the role of the armed struggle was different from that in



Nora Bogaert and Guido Van Hecken, in recent years

South Africa – liberation was fought in street battles against the National Guard of dictator Somoza, taking the territory street by street and neighbourhood by neighbourhood. This was a more classic civil war situation, in which there will probably always be more unwanted civilian casualties than there were in South Africa.

Perhaps because of the difference in intensity of warfare, which was presumably less in South Africa than in other armed conflicts, there were fewer casualties. This is a testament to the maturity of the ANC leadership and its confidence in the power of civil society initiatives, such as civil disobedience, boycotts, strikes and civil insurrection. The armed struggle was used as a supplement to these, not as a substitute or as a means in itself.

MK member Rocky Williams said in an article, to put it crudely, that Special Ops was too elitist and it didn't link up with mass struggles adequately and didn't necessarily have a huge impact on them. Here's what he said: "The effects of this strategy were twofold. On the one hand,

it resulted in a situation where the Special Operations Division, due to its profile, responsibilities and capabilities, began to assume a much greater responsibility for the conduct of internal military operations than it should have done. On the other, the preferential location of the Special Operations Division under the command of Tambo created a degree of resentment and mistrust amongst MK rank-and-file and strained relations between the division and the army commander, Joe Modise – a phenomenon not unusual within those armed forces, be they irregular or regular, that maintain specialist special operations capabilities.

He goes on to say ' Criticisms of these operations from the 'left', however, maintained that spectacular military operations of the Voortrekkerhoogte type were no substitute for the task of rooting the military underground in the local population. There were definite reasons for a shift to the special operations-type activities, however, and this was reflected in the fact that Special Operations, initially under the command of the late Joe Slovo, was placed under the direct command of the President of the ANC, Oliver Reginald Tambo, with the Commander of MK, Commander Joe Modise, retaining only nominal oversight over this division.' Do you have any views on this?

G: Given the nature and purpose for which the unit was set up, I think it necessarily had to be more secretive and thus less rooted in the local communities within the country than normal MK units were. To organise it otherwise would have been a contradiction in terms, and the unit would not have got very far. It is not for us to comment on whether it should have been placed under the command of the MK Commander or directly under the ANC President. I can only assume that this was a political decision and that there were good reasons for it.

What can be true is the criticism that the unit started to lead a life of its own. Due to its successes, Special Ops started conducting more, and more spectacular operations, and the unit was keen to multiply its successes. As a result, they may have over-utilised scarce financial, human and logistical resources at the expense of other MK units, which may have been under-resourced because of this and thus less effective. I mean, it's a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy – the temptation to favour the most successful part of your operation at the expense of the less spectacular, more mundane and seemingly less successful parts, is very natural and universal.

If you ask us – and many others – what the ANC has achieved militarily, the answer will very likely consist of Special Ops operations, and probably little else. On a human level, I can quite understand the frustration or resentment Williams refers to. There is always that justified or unjustified – and probably partly justified – jealousy. Some hardworking cadres will no doubt have felt that it is always the same guys who take the credit. They probably felt: 'Why should we take all those risks to build a lasting presence in the community and work our asses off when all the recognition and credit goes to those elite units who come into the country, conduct a

spectacular hit-and-run operation, and then disappear back into the comforts of exile, leaving us saddled with the aftermath and retribution of the Boers?' That may have been quite demoralising for some. It's the same kind of jealousy and criticism that you see between those who worked underground in the country and those who went into exile. Both groups feel that their group made the most sacrifices and took most risks, and that the other group was relatively privileged.

Was it necessary to keep Special Ops in place for so long, especially after the UDF (United Democratic Front) had been formed and the townships were organising an active revolt against the regime? That might have been the right moment to scale down Special Ops operations and to do everything possible to support the mass struggle, investing all financial and human resources in it.

If you look at the history of the mass movement and the elements that forced the notoriously stubborn Boers to make a significant response, I think the two things – civil disobedience and armed resistance – have always been complementary in South Africa. The balance between the two may not always have been correct, but in retrospect that's easy to say. Where's the point that you decide to limit your Special Ops activities and concentrate on more intensive support for mass action?

Special Ops begins to peter out from 1984 onwards. Do you know why?

G: Firstly, the beginning of the decline has to do with the Nkomati Accord. By 1983, the South African attacks and massive support to the armed bandits had brought Mozambique to its knees.

Mozambique had no choice then but to bow to South African pressure and sign the Accord. I remember Joe complaining that the ANC had only been informed of the terms of the Nkomati Accord at the very last moment. The ANC knew negotiations were taking place, but the Mozambicans had kept the content of the agreement secret, not only from the ANC, but also from their own people. Less than a month before the Nkomati Accord was signed, someone like Joe Slovo was clearly unaware of the implications of these negotiations for the ANC in Mozambique. So, the ANC was not at all prepared for an overnight withdrawal of its cadres from Mozambique.

And although Mozambique's sympathy for the ANC remained intact, they started expelling ANC people from the country almost immediately after the signing of the Agreement. As I said earlier, this inevitably led to a serious disruption of *Special Ops* activities, which must also have affected its effectiveness inside South Africa. For MK, Mozambique was very convenient because it was so close to South Africa. The supply and communication lines from Zambia or Tanzania to South Africa must have been much more complicated than those from Mozambique.

As explained, the Mozambican propaganda presented the Nkomati Accord as 'a victory for socialism'. This changed the mood of some people towards the ANC. It was now seen as a potential spoiler for Mozambique's renewed chance at peaceful development.

Fortunately, sympathy for the ANC remained intact among the majority of the population. Many people didn't believe the official propaganda and felt deeply humiliated by the Agreement. The government also continued to support the ANC diplomatically and to oppose apartheid. This meant that no punitive measures would have been taken against ANC cadres if it had been discovered that they were still in Maputo, but it would have made things more difficult for everyone – the ANC and Mozambique. Rashid left Mozambique at about the same time as Joe. They both still came regularly to Maputo for short visits, but after Nkomati those visits were semi-clandestine.

Secondly, I think that with the formation of the UDF and the consolidation of the internal mass struggle against apartheid, Special Ops probably became less necessary. You didn't have to encourage the masses anymore, they were already 100% mobilised, and around 1985 there was a real sense that apartheid in its current form had become untenable and that something had to be done relatively quickly.

Thirdly, I think that this observed decline was also related to a change in the nature of some of the Special Ops operations. It is easy to garner general approval for attacks on power stations or on the Koeberg nuclear reactor; it becomes less easy when there are more civilian casualties and when some of the operations go wrong.

I think that these three factors may have led to a certain reduction in the prestige of Special Ops. As I said, I am not a specialist and I am not sufficiently informed, but perhaps there was some kind of urgency to keep up the pressure on the Boers as the internal opposition began to gain strength. Did that perhaps lead to a certain laxity in the standards for recruiting and training cadres? You would have to discuss that with Rashid, but from what I have read, including in the testimonies before the TRC, it appears that some cadres sometimes acted in an undisciplined way and went off the rails, or started acting on their own.

From what you can tell, what do you think were Special Ops' strengths and weaknesses?

N: What we can talk about is the life we shared with Rashid on a daily basis for three years. Rashid was part of the family. So was Joe. It is not for nothing that Joe was Risana's godfather, and Rashid is Themba's.

There was an absolute trust between all of us. We saw Joe and Rashid at work and were – and remain - very impressed with Rashid. We got to know him as a very disciplined, determined and goal-oriented person, sometimes stubborn – he won't mind me saying that, because in certain circumstances stubbornness can be a quality.

He has a remarkably high degree of self-control. And he certainly has a sentimental side, but he didn't often show it, and almost certainly not to the people he worked

with, at least as far as we could see. But that attitude of detachment was also part of his self-preservation and self-defence.

G: I enjoyed working with Rashid. I was like his sidekick, albeit unofficial, not in terms of sharing information, but in the practical work we did and in finding creative solutions to the logistical problems we faced. Our attitudes towards the work were very similar. One of my Vietnamese students, a former Vietcong guerrilla during the war against the Americans and their South Vietnamese puppet regime, had a habit of quoting their legendary general Võ Nguyên Giáp, who first defeated the French colonisers and twenty years later the American army: 'Strike to win, and only when success is certain; if it isn't, then do not strike'. I have always thought that this could also have been Rashid's motto: the key to success and victory was detailed and careful preparation.

And if Rashid sometimes came across as lacking empathy, I think that was just a facade, it was more or less inherent to the position he held and the need to protect the people working under his command, to whom he was unconditionally loyal and for whose welfare and safety he genuinely cared.

What I think was dangerous, although understandable from a human point of view, were the social contacts of the ANC community in Maputo. These could have made Rashid vulnerable when he was part of it. Because, as I said, there were South African agents active in Maputo. That is why I found some of the ANC people in Maputo rather reckless in their social interactions.

N: But when Rashid went to social gatherings, he always had the discipline not to drink and to make sure he kept himself under control. Joe and Rashid could only relax and let their guard down when they were with people they absolutely trusted. That's also why we limited the number of people we invited to our home.

Many of our South African friends had also been through a lot. A number of them had been on Robben Island or in other prisons, had been tortured, and had been deprived of normal human social interaction for long periods. For many of them, this also affected their attitudes and behaviour towards other people, especially women.

G: The majority of ANC people who came to Maputo were not just ordinary soldiers. Many of them had significant responsibilities or they had people under their command – and one of those who best managed to respect the discipline inherent to living in clandestinity was Rashid. There were plenty of comrades who were equally disciplined, but there were also quite a few who didn't follow some basic safety rules and who potentially endangered themselves and others.

A quite complimentary profile of him in the *Mail and Guardian* echoes the things you say about him being a meticulous and very effective Commander, but it also says he's quite temperamental?

G: He couldn't stand mediocrity and sloppiness, it really pissed him off. I remember

hearing him on the phone yelling at some of his people who had not returned a car on time, and who had loaded girls into the car and been boozing. When things like that happened, he would lose his temper.

N: But we never experienced that temperament of his.

G: He was indeed a true commander, and he had the authority for it. In a military situation, even in a guerrilla-like army, you need a hierarchical line of command to be effective. That means that once a decision had been made, Rashid was often unwilling to discuss and listen to further arguments, and I can very well imagine that he sometimes took that attitude into his personal relationships.

I think part of that is due to his natural temperament, but another part is due to his job as a Commander. Like any other person, he could not just shake off his work attitude after working hours and leave it in the office locker along with his work clothes. I can vividly imagine that things occasionally boiled over and that this sometimes disrupted his relationships with other cadres – or with his life partner.

Is there anything further you want to say about Slovo?

N: I remember both Joe and Ruth as very warm people, who were very interested in our children and were always keen to see them. Joe and I didn't talk much about politics, sometimes we talked about literature. And Joe loved to tell 'politically incorrect' jokes.

G: Yes, I can confirm what Nora says. I found Joe very nice and humorous. Nobody had a bigger arsenal of jokes about communism and Jews than Joe. That may not correspond to the stereotypical image the Boers painted of Joe – their public enemy number one – as some kind of 'evil genius' and an ultra-dogmatic, almost religious and uncritical follower of official USSR ideology. But anyone who knew Joe will tell you about his sense of humour, and his sense of perspective and distance from himself and what was happening around him. Joe had the ability to see the situation from a helicopter perspective, and that included his own position within that global picture. Most of the time he was very calm, able to bring Rashid back to reality when he was overenthusiastic or overzealous, or too meticulous or perfectionist. It was clear that the two had a very warm, and complementary, relationship.



Joe certainly didn't have the same sense of detail, of meticulous organisation that Rashid had, but Joe could bring Rashid back to reality, make him accept that people are not robots and have flaws and make mistakes. Joe was very jovial, and could enjoy a good whisky, good music, good company and a pleasant time with his friends.

Didn't you feel a bit vulnerable since he could get hit by the apartheid regime at any time and you could be a collateral victim, as it were? Especially after Ruth First was killed?

G: Yes, of course you think about that sometimes. But you can't afford to be paralysed by it – you have to move on with your life. You can't hide under a big rock trying to protect yourself and your family from anything that might happen out there in the big bad world. Joe was always very concerned about our safety. Despite his relaxed, jovial appearance, when in company I never heard Joe tell anyone about his work, even after one or two whiskies.

N: And another thing is that Ruth and he were clearly soul mates, but each had their own independent and sharp mind. They could argue terribly with each other. They complemented each other, they loved each other, and you could feel that. And they were each other's sparring partners. They tried their ideas on each other and criticised each other mercilessly. But no doubt you've also heard that from the other people you've interviewed.

G: Ruth was very sharp and analytical. It's no wonder that the Boers targeted her. We said earlier that the apartheid regime probably killed her because through her they wanted to hit Joe, but I also think they wanted to target Mozambique through her. The Centre for African Studies was a real think tank, providing the Mozambican government with the data and advice it needed to make policy decisions. And the *crème de la crème* of progressive intelligentsia were there all together. Ruth and Aquino had gathered them around themselves.

Did your parents have some sense of the role you played in Mozambique?

N: Vaguely. They knew we were close to the ANC, but not that we contributed, however little, to the struggle. In our letters, we alluded to it, but we didn't mention names or details of our own role, of who we knew in the ANC or of the role of our home. But we felt we had to make them aware that we were somehow involved in the liberation struggle in South Africa and that it was not without danger.

G: But until my name appeared in the newspapers and Belgian journalists started calling my youngest brother, I don't think my parents or Nora's parents, or anyone else, were aware of the extent of our involvement in the liberation struggle.

My father was a bit adventurous. I think my parents felt that I inherited that from my father and that I might have done some foolish things. They must have thought of me as a swashbuckling adventurer, but I don't think they had any political analysis that allowed them to place and understand what we did.

You explained earlier why both, not just one, of you felt you should become involved in the struggle despite having small children to care for. But do your children, now as adults, ever question why both of you became involved in the armed struggle? Do they feel that it made them

vulnerable, that at least one of you should not have expressed your commitment in the way you did? Or do they feel both of you shouldn't have? Or do they feel both of you were right to do so?

N: One of the reasons we agreed to this interview is to tell them that part of their parents' story. When all this happened, they were too small to understand – fortunately. We have tried to educate them with the values that we ourselves have cherished and promoted throughout our lives, and we are confident that they will understand and appreciate the risks we have taken and in which we have also dragged them along without them being aware of it. And we hope that the fact that we emerged relatively unscathed from all this will be attributed not only to luck – although that was certainly there too – but also to our concern to protect them and prevent them from coming to harm, without renouncing our ideals and our commitment.

But now that they're adults, have they not asked any questions, have you not discussed this at all?

G: No, when they were smaller, they knew they should not ask questions, because we wouldn't answer them anyway.

N: We have tried to lead by example. And we hope - and secretly believe - that because of the upbringing we have given them and the circles we have moved in and continue to move in, they will see the way we have led our lives as obvious and natural, including using so-called illegal means to correct gross social injustices - so that it does not raise questions.

What are your views on where South Africa is now?

G: It is certainly not the country we dreamed of when we became involved in the armed struggle. It has not, or not yet, become what we worked for, far from it. It is not a normal country either, because, as we said earlier, it takes a whole generation for the wounds of war and violent conflict to disappear and for a country to return to 'normal', and only if nothing else happens in the meantime. South Africa has gone through the same trajectory as other countries that have waged armed struggles to free themselves from oppressive dictatorships. Some people still remain true to their ideals and live a life consistent with the beliefs they preach. But now that the racial barriers that were imposed on them have more or less fallen away, some other people will think: 'I have lost so many precious years of my life and so many opportunities, now I have to make up for all that loss and, if I can, accumulate wealth even faster than I normally would have been able to.'

But that does not discourage us, because that's what one could expect; I am convinced that – with a few exceptions – it's a natural part of human nature to try to get the best for oneself and those closest to us, sometimes even at the expense of others.

N: I can tell you that we were sometimes shocked at the lavish luxury when we visited the homes of some of our former friends in Mozambique or South Africa. Guido and I used to argue about that. He had more understanding for it than I did.

G: We focus – quite naturally and explicably – on the negative aspects of South Africa, but undeniably there has also been considerable progress, and you, as a member of parliament, know that much better than we do. I want to emphasise that for the sake of clarity, because people have a tendency to focus on what is not yet good and forget what has already been achieved...

If you had known at the time you took part in Special Ops' activities, that South Africa would be what it is today, would you still have taken part?

G: Definitely! And in fact, we should have done more, because that was the right thing to do at the time, and that has nothing to do with where the country is now.

Did you not even have one iota of regret at any time?

G: No. Look, here is my personal view on life: I am convinced that by the time I die the world will be a worse place than when I was born. That pessimism is the main driver for me to do what I do. I mean, the fact that the ship is sinking is no reason for me to jump overboard – that's what rats do, and I refuse to be a rat – and as long as the top of the last mast is still above the water, I will keep fighting to save the ship.

I can regret the pain and sorrow that some of the individual actions I was part of caused others, but neither of us felt for a single moment that what we were doing was for nothing. We don't expect any recognition or gratitude from South Africa or Mozambique or anyone else, because we already have our reward. The fact that we were able to contribute to that fight for social justice and equality and for the ideals we believe in, in the way we did, because we happened to be in the right place at the right time with probably some of the right skills, is reward enough for us. It has enriched our lives and made us who we are today.

N: We have always told anyone who cares to listen that what we learned during those years in Mozambique has completely shaped the rest of our lives. The things we did there were a very solid foundation for what we did later. Guido and I wouldn't have missed that experience for any price, and we are proud to share it with our children and grandchildren.