

MK Special Operations Combatant Marion Sparg is Arrested

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- [ANC, This Day in History, ANC website](#)

On 7 March 1986, after the apartheid President PW Botha had lifted the state of emergency during a speech in which he claimed that there had been a discernible drop in the levels of violence in South Africa, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) Special Operations guerrilla, Marion Sparg, was arrested. Apartheid policemen arrived at Sparg's apartment, where one of the officers mentioned that they had come to arrest her in connection with the bombing of police stations. While they were conducting a thorough search of the premises, the policemen found three limpet mines, as Marion Sparg casually commented that she thought they were there because of the Hillbrow bomb. After they asked where she placed the bomb in the Hillbrow Police Station, she told them that it was inside a plastic bag in the toilets. Immediately the apartheid senior police officers sent a team to Hillbrow station, where they performed a controlled detonation of the limpet mine.

The day following the killing of the Gugulethu Seven, on 4 March 1986, at approximately 09:00, Marion Sparg applied for a gun licence at John Vorster Square Police Station in central Johannesburg. Afterwards, Sparg made a detour to the stairway between the second and third floors of the police station, where she placed a limpet mine. As the mine exploded around midday, it shattered windows up to the fourth floor, scattering glass rubble over a wide area, and blowing a ten metre hole in the wall. Two officers from the motor-vehicle theft unit, who were inside the building, were injured. Furthermore, two pedestrians who were walking outside the building also got injured.

Marion Sparg was one of the few white women to join MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) during South Africa's apartheid period. Marion Monica Sparg was born in East London as one of six children of a white middle-class English-speaking South African family in the Eastern Cape, with German and Irish origins. After completing her studies, Marion worked as a journalist for the "Sunday Times" newspaper, where alongside Arnold Geyer and Damian de Lange they fire-bombed the Progressive Federal Party's offices on 1 June 1981 in Ivy Road, Norwood suburb, Johannesburg. They did the same at Oxford Galleries at 240

Oxford Road. They maintained that as the “South African Liberation Support Cadre”, they were so outraged by the failure of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) to boycott the Republic Day celebrations.

Following this incident, Marion Sparg and Damian de Lange left South Africa in 1981 and went into exile in Botswana where they made contact with the ANC, while Arnold Geyer headed for London. From Botswana, Sparg then left for Lusaka, in Zambia, from where she was sent to Angola to receive military training at the MK’s Caxito camp. Sparg was the only white South African and sometimes the only woman in the camp. The killing of 32 ANC members and 19 civilians in the 1982 Lesotho Raid by the apartheid South African Defence Force (SADF) strengthened her resolve to fight against the apartheid racist regime. In August 1982, Sparg returned to Zambia where she edited the “Voice of Women”, an ANC Women’s Section publication.

In March 1984, Sparg met with Reg September in Lusaka, who asked her if she would be willing to partake in MK operations inside the country. After she responded positively to the question, September arranged for her to meet with Chris Hani. On 18 February 1986, Sparg who had ultimately joined MK’s Special Operations Unit entered South Africa from Lesotho, as Mary Woods, in the company of Stephen Marais. When they were stopped at a roadblock, they posed as a couple on holiday, while they had eight limpet mines and detonators hidden in the door panels of their hired car. On 19 February 1986, Marion Sparg placed two limpet mines in the toilet at Cambridge Road Police Station, in East London, which exploded, causing massive damages