

A soldier for South Africa's political revolution

Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, undated

Known for being the first white woman to be convicted as an operative of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Marion Sparg grew up in the Eastern Cape, graduating from Rhodes University with a degree in Journalism in the late 1970s.

While working for the Sunday Times she, alongside two colleagues, was outraged by the failure of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) to boycott Republic Day celebrations and firebombed the party's offices on 31 May 1981. This led to her going into exile in Botswana, where she made contact with the ANC, eventually receiving military training at the ANC's Caxito camp.

The Lesotho Raid by the SADF, which took place in 1982 and which was condemned by the United Nations Security Council via resolution 527, strengthened her resolve to fight against the apartheid government with force. Returning to Zambia she worked on the *Voice of Women*, the only regular publication affiliated with the ANC that was produced by women, and joined the Special Operations Division of uMKhonto weSizwe.

In 1981 she placed limpet bombs in three South African police stations, two of which exploded causing damage, and the third of which exploded while being disposed of by police. Sparg was detained under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act and admitted to planting and exploding the mines. She was sentenced to 25 years in prison, five years for the 1981 arson attacks and 20 years for treason.

On her release from prison in 1991, Sparg was nominated as a member of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) and was appointed as deputy executive director of the Constitutional Assembly working on South Africa's first national democratic constitution. After the 1994 election she served in various capacities under the new government, becoming Secretary of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). In 2000 she was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), a position that she served in until her resignation in 2007.

Thereafter she worked as a specialist in social marketing at DraftFCB, a division of DraftFCB SA. In 2022 her book, *Bulelani Ngcuka – The Sting in the Tale*, was released: it is described as a first-hand account of our most recent legal and political history. Also in 2022, the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies honoured Sparg with a JMS50 Alumni Award, for her fierce battle against apartheid and corruption during the last two decades of the apartheid regime.