

'MI6 conspiracy' behind arrests fiasco is revealed as a bizarre web of South African intrigue



Verlaque, holding forged police documents. Right: at the fake Seychelles 'swearing-in' ceremony the plotters, Frank Larsen, John Larsen and Wheatley, are ringed

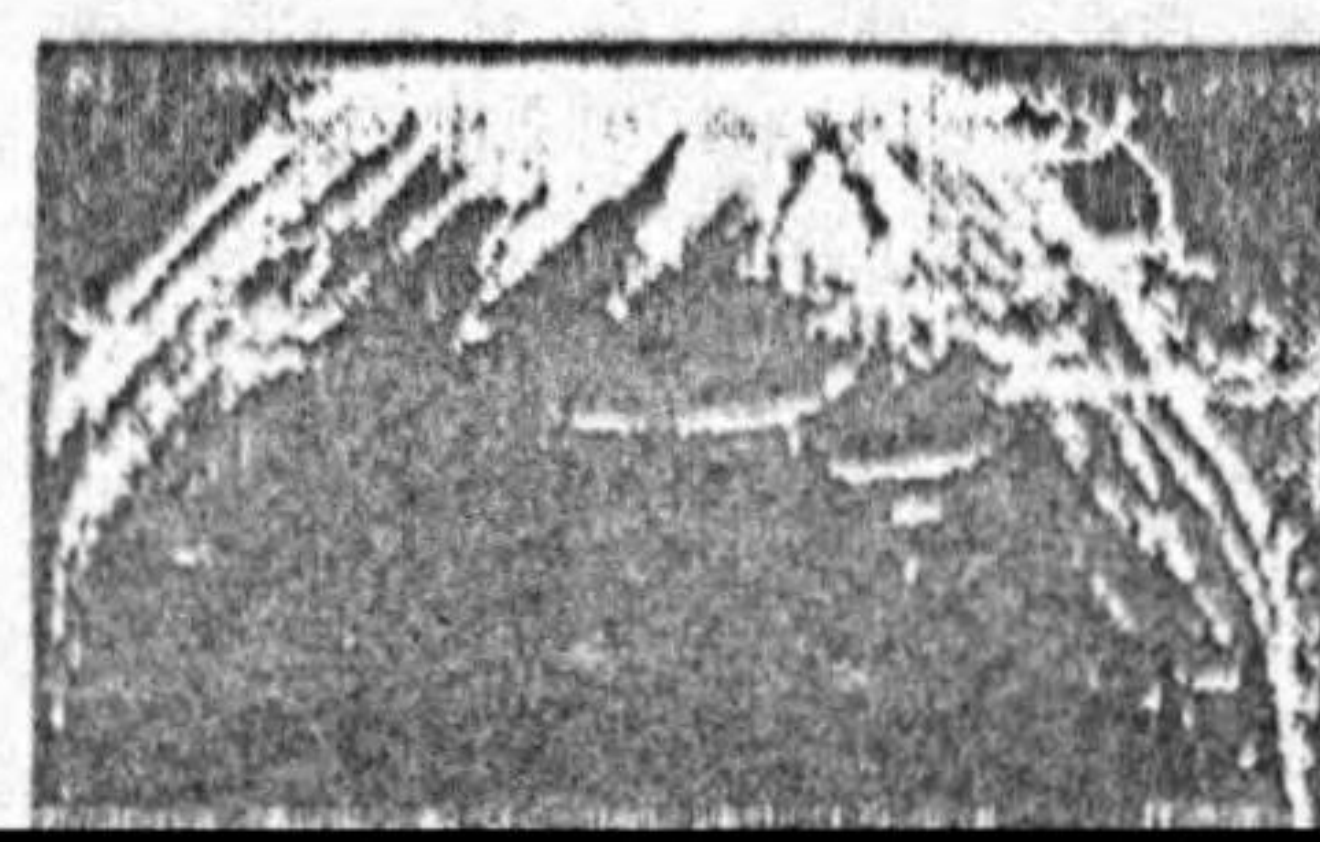
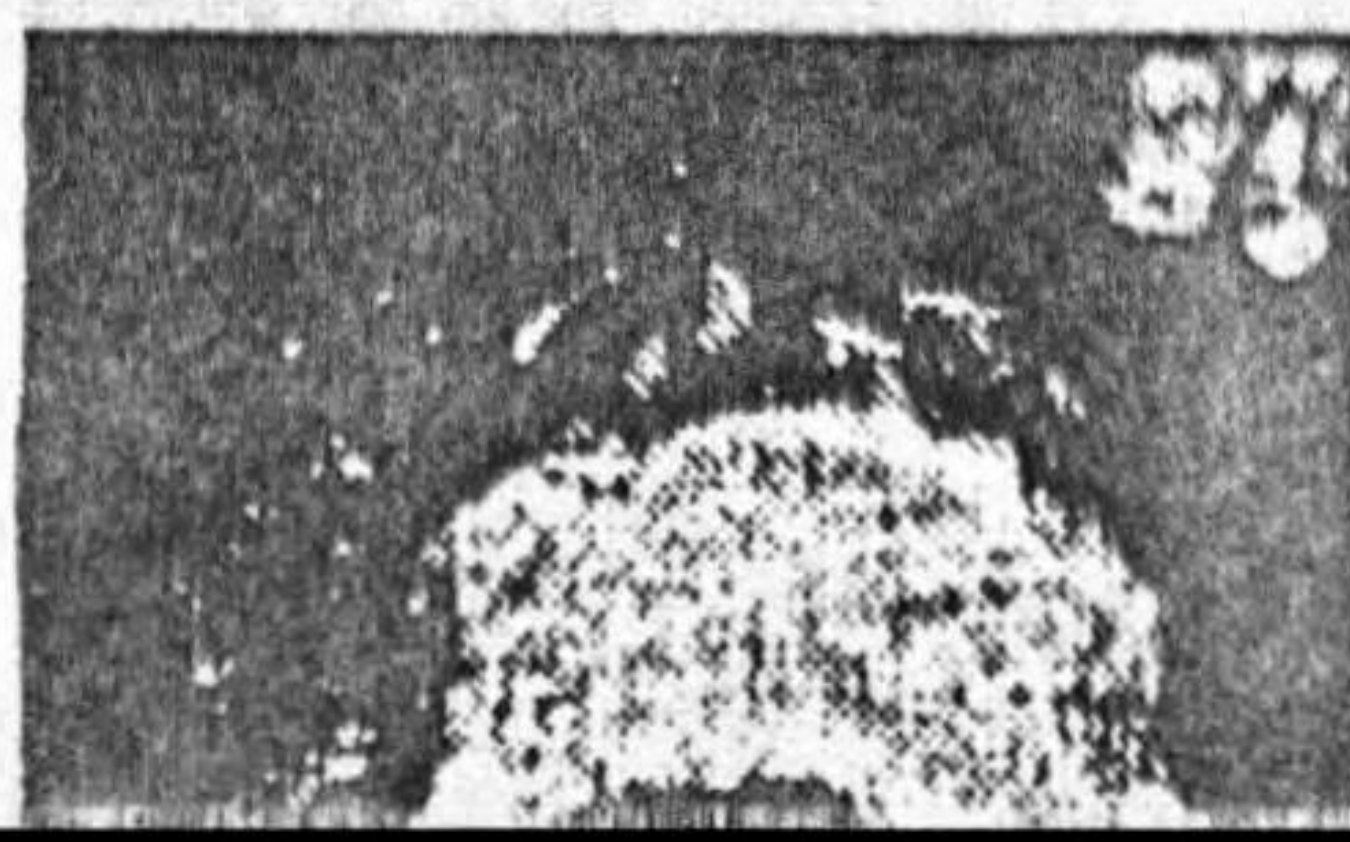


# Kidnap plan that flopped

THE SUNDAY TIMES is able to reveal the bizarre truth behind the release last week of the three men accused of a "plot" to kidnap members of the African National Congress in London. Far from being an MI6-backed conspiracy involving a cover-up by senior Tories, as was suggested in the Commons last week, it was in

criminal prominent Seychellois activists by planting guns, drugs and poisons and all the paraphernalia that would be associated with kidnapping and smuggling ANC leaders out of Britain. To do this, the South African agents pretended to the exiles that they were British MI6 officers mounting a coup in the Sey-

25/10/87  
ST, by Barrie Penrose



elaborate, authentic-looking documentation.

"Countless 'HMG' documents were shown and given to us," says Verlaque. "Larsen even held a ministerial swearing-in ceremony, wearing army uniforms, where they gave us impressive certificates setting out our portfolios in

Not long afterwards, Pierre Ferrari, 42, Joubert's party colleague and a retired British army regimental sergeant-major, discovered a box at his home in Farnham, Surrey, containing poisons, anaesthetics and hypodermic syringes.

"We now realise that the

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# Kidnap trail of Botha's spies

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A SOUTH AFRICAN strolled through London's Smithfield meat market and into the nearby fourth-floor offices of Lynx, a small British security firm, with a proposition.

'He said he was a salesman from Clansman, a company in Pietermaritzburg,' says the firm's director, Jeremy Wetherell. Lynx had some South African connections and was interested in buying bulletproof vests.

After some preliminary talk about his background as an Oxford graduate, the 'salesman' came to the point. He was interested in the firm's surveillance capacity: could it do what he described as 'covert work'?

Wetherell says: 'He was clearly a professional intelligence officer.' He says he promptly reported the contact to MI5.

That was in the middle of 1986, the earliest established date that MI5 knew for certain that Pretoria was mounting another London operation. It did nothing to stop it.

Behind the sudden dropping of kidnap charges against three men last week lay a classic South African intelligence operation. DAVID LEIGH reports.

In September last year, a second South African businessman appeared. He was Johann Niemoller, a wealthy man formerly in the South African military, who runs Adder, a clothing company in Upington, Western Cape, which supplies military equipment.

Niemoller visited Evan Evans, one of the men against whom kidnapping charges were dropped last week. Evans, a middle-aged British ex-officer, had served in the South African army but had returned in 1985 to run a post office in Anglesey.

Niemoller next went to the London house of a Seychelles exile politician, Pierre Ferrari, with whom he stayed for a week.

Accounts of this trip contradict each other. Niemoller said in South Africa that he visited Evans about an outlet for his clothing factory.

Yesterday, in interviews with South African newspapers, he agreed that plots against the ANC had been discussed. He says he refused to help. Evans, on the other hand, made a courtroom statement that Niemoller had demanded assistance with explosives 'to blow up the ANC.'

Ferrari says that he was asked to put Niemoller up for a week because he would help to overthrow the nominally Marxist Seychelles Government and install Ferrari as Minister of Defence in a new regime. Later, to his surprise, he found bottles of poisonous drugs in the room where Niemoller had stayed.

Niemoller was accommodated at the request of a peculiar figure who had befriended Ferrari and other Seychelles exiles: his name was Frank Larsen, he wore military uniforms, and had a house near Aldershot. He was eventu-

ally to appear in court with Evans, accused of ANC kidnaps.

Larsen claimed to work for British intelligence. He also produced a blueprint for a coup in the Seychelles which he said had been approved by British intelligence, and letters of support, apparently from right-wing British politicians. He also had a Ministry of Defence police pass and British MoD manuals.

Although the Seychellois did not realise it, Larsen's real name was Viggo Oerbak. He had served prison sentences in Norway for fraud and forgery and had served in the Rhodesian special forces before turning up in Britain in 1982 with an elaborate alias.

Ferrari and his colleagues also did not know that, at his Aldershot house, Larsen had another, more sinister document. It was a list of ANC members to be kidnapped or killed, with British home addresses.

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# Pretoria kidnap scandal

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The list included: Oliver Tambo, Solly Smith, Reg September, Phyllis Altman, Paphuz Paphad, Barry Gilder, Prence Grawala, Pal Jordan, Brian Bunting, Ronald Kasirira and Sean Slovo.

Between autumn 1986 and last July, Larsen continued undisturbed with his activities. His 'cover' as a friend of the Seychelles exiles continued to broaden. We have established that he was introduced to General John Singlaub, a US right-winger who presides over the 'World Anti-Communist League.'

These events in Britain fitted into a disturbing pattern. Over the past five years, South Africa had made the worldwide harassment and assassination of ANC leaders a key objective.

Using 'standard intelligence agency deniability' techniques, they use foreigners, and make attempts to leave a trail pointing at some other culprit. They have recruited Britons, Scandinavians, Pakistanis and Egyptians. Such people can travel freely and be disowned by Pretoria if caught.



agent established a 'cover' airline company in the Isle of Man. British criminals were recruited. Among those eventually tried and acquitted on burglary offences was a Swede, Bertil Wedin. A South African Embassy controller, Joseph Klue, was withdrawn, amid British Government embarrassment.

HAD any ANC men in London been kidnapped or killed this year, it is clear that suspicion would have fallen first on the Seychelles exiles, so close to 'Larsen.' They themselves, if arrested, would have believed that they were being 'run' by British intelligence.

The plans misfired when Frank Larsen was picked up by police in a London hotel lavatory last July. They were watching for homosexual misbehaviour. Searches threw up the haul of documents at Larsen's house.

The Anti-Terrorist Squad, led by Supt Alan Talbot, took some time to disentangle what was going on. It transpired that the 'M16 blueprint' for a Seychelles coup was a forgery. So, too, were the letters of support from British politicians.

But were all the MoD manuals and Foreign Office documents forged? And how had the plotters been able to assemble forged warrant cards so easily?

It is clear that the answer to could be

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