

# SPY SHOCK FOR BE

## Security Police chief

# says Higgs and Watson wouldn't have escaped

By PETER HAZELHURST

BRIGADIER H. J. VAN DEN BERGH, chief of the Security Police, said yesterday, that if his department had known of the information which Secret Agent David Plotz had obtained about the existence of the African Resistance Movement two years ago would have prevented all sabotage from that time onwards.

"We would have arrested A.R.M. leaders such as Watson and Higgs who escaped this year," said the brigadier.

In an official statement to the SUNDAY TIMES, Brigadier Van den Bergh, said:

"Had we been in possession of the facts known by Mr. Plotz at that time (February, 1963) we would have prevented all the sabotage committed by the A.R.M. from that period and apprehended leaders such

as Watson and Higgs who escaped this year.

"When I first read the statements in the SUNDAY TIMES last week I thought the man was suffering from hallucinations.

"It was the first time I had heard of Mr. Plotz. His story was complete news to me. I can categorically say that no information reached us and that the African Resistance Movement was smashed without the help of anyone or any other department outside the Security Branch.

"However, we are now in full possession of the facts and are carrying out an investigation."

Security Police, who worked day and night to smash the A.R.M. in July this year, discovered this week that Military Intelligence officers had possessed information on the identity of one of the A.R.M. leaders for two years.

The first report was handed to Military Intelligence by Mr. Plotz in December, 1962, and later reports in 1963.

### Code letters

According to procedure, any suspicions, reports or knowledge of subversive activity in South Africa should immediately be handed to the Security Police, who handle all internal civil security.

If the information had been passed on immediately to the police sabotage committed by the A.R.M. in the last 18 months — including the Johannesburg station bomb blast — would have been prevented.

Ringleaders such as Higgs, Vigne, Watson and Schneider, who escaped from South Africa this year, could have been arrested.

It is believed that Security Police would have thoroughly investigated Robert Watson and his colleagues if their names had been

## M.I. chief silent

SUNDAY TIMES CHIEF REPORTER

BRIGADIER PIERRE RETIEF, Chief of the Military Intelligence division of the General Staff, was told about Brigadier Van den Bergh's statement shortly after returning from an official assignment by air late yesterday.

He told me: "My comment is — no comment. We are not going to get involved in any controversy with the Press, or about anything in the Press, and we don't like

anything being said that might damage the organisation of security in this country. But you are welcome to go ahead and publish the Plotz story."

I have learnt, however, that Military Intelligence is to conduct a "full-scale" investigation on why Mr. Plotz's information was not passed on to the Security Branch.

It is now known that the information was not passed on.

December, 1962, the report on coded letters which was given to Military Intelligence by Mr. Plotz at the time.

Last week the SUNDAY TIMES published the story of how Mr. Plotz, a young Rhodesian who was travelling in Europe in 1962, stumbled across suspicious moves by Watson.

Watson's former girl friend, Sheila Jo Glover, an American, had written to Mr. Plotz saying that Watson had wanted her to act as a "secret postbox" in the United States and redirect coded letters to Cape Town.

Mr. Plotz immediately sent a letter to the South African Embassy in London informing officials of his suspicions.

### Infiltration

He was met in France on February 18, 1963, by a Military Intelligence officer who asked him to write to Watson's girl friend and obtain the names of Watson's clique in Cape Town.

These letters were sent to the South African Embassy in Paris in February, 1963. In April, 1963, Mr. Plotz was asked to act for Military Intelligence and to return to Cape Town and infiltrate into Watson's clique. He was told that there was "some-

Last week the SUNDAY TIMES — after a three-month investigation which corroborated Mr. Plotz's story — published the fact that Mr. P was probably responsible for the discovery and smashing of the A.R.M.

Later this week when police, for the first time, covered that Mr. Plotz had actually been working for Military Intelligence, they called him for questioning.

A report on the affair, in an eight-page statement from Mr. Plotz, was sent urgently to Brigadier Van den Bergh Friday afternoon.

Senior officers believe that Mr. Plotz's information had been exploited and that if he had been given more help when he arrived at Cape Town in 1963, the A.R.M. could have been smashed a year before police details members and before leaders escaped.

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# Margaret Smith no charge inst her

SUNDAY TIMES REPORTER

Margaret Smith, a SUNDAY TIMES reporter, was released yesterday from 90-day detention. She was held at the Jeppe Police Station, Johannesburg,

where she was treated with consideration and courtesy by both the uniformed staff at Jeppe and by Security Police during frequent interrogations.

"Just what solitary confinement means, however, cannot be imagined by anyone who has not experienced it," she said.

Lengthy interrogations by as many as six Security Police detectives at a time was also "not an easy thing."

Asked if she thought she had been unjustly detained, Margaret Smith said she personally felt that nothing could justify the 90-day law.

days

she said she was arrested at the head-