

Roux takes Angel on a prison visit

Angel and Roux waited at Air Force Base Waterkloof military airport, on the southern outskirts of Pretoria.

By 1988 those that were not blind could see that the end was in sight for minority rule in South Africa. There was now a Tricameral Parliament, not for all South Africans but Angel could now vote. Nick Roux saw it as inevitable that due to international pressure, sanctions, and simmering unrest, Mandela would be released from prison and rise to political power. Lombard and Roux realised it was their job to prepare President Botha and South Africa for that time.

“You might be interested in this,” Roux said passing Angel a note. “It comes from Reitvlei.”

In 1985 NIS had opened Reitvlei based on parkland around a dam south of Pretoria as a world class National Intelligence Academy. At ‘The Farm’ a program called ‘Hawk’s Eye’ had been developed, with cooperation on a technical level from the Italian state security machine SISMI. Roux considered the Italian Secret Service very under rated. Whatever one thought of their political masters SISMI were excellent in the field of technology, particularly the interception of satellite communications worldwide.

“It turns out your boy may be a bit of a politician. Got himself elected to President of the Students Union at... Harper Adams Agricultural College Shropshire England. Do you believe that?”

Angel smiled.

“I’ll tell Elanza.”

The note was short.

“Sounds like he’s building a squash court. Listen to this, ‘We were fortunate throughout the Spring Term to see the squash courts arise phoenix-like from the foundations that had laid like cold ashes during the winter months’.”

“Very poetic. Come on let’s go,” said Roux.

They walked towards an old HS 125 executive jet. It was operated by 21 Squadron SAAF, responsible for all the VIP & Government flights. It was a 400B Mercurius with thirsty and loud turbo jet engines. The Falcon 50, new to SAAF in 1985, had three turbo fans and a cruise speed nearly a hundred knots faster.

“I tried to get one of the new Falcon 50’s. It’ll take twenty minutes longer in this noisy old thing. Under two hours though, hopefully. You know they crashed three of these things at the same time. All three one after the other into Devils Peak while practising for a Republic Day flypast in ’71.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?”

Angel hated flying. He could never wait to jump out of them when he’d been in the army. He knew it was irrational, something from way back, something in his genes, something that told him it should be just for the birds.

“Where are we going?” he asked.

“Prison visit.”

“By jet?”

“Cape Town. Air Force Base Ysterplaat. The last bit by car of course. About forty-five minutes. Should be three hours door to door.”

Roux consulted a note pad and smirked.

“Prisoner 46664.”

Angel couldn’t speak. Like everybody, he knew who had been the 466th prisoner at Robin Island in 1964.

“Pollsmoor?”

Roux climbed the steps.

“We moved him to a house in the grounds of Victor Vester near Paarl. Had a hell of a job getting it furnished. Bloody red tape.”

“How long have we been talking to him?”

“About the last three years. Minister of Justice Coetsee met Winnie on a flight to Cape Town when she was visiting him in hospital. That was some when in '85 I think. That's when it started. He's been seeing him ever since and reporting only to the President. Nobody in the Cabinet knew.”

Roux laughed.

“The man responsible for prisons, a member of the State Security Council, would drive to Pollsmoor, pick up its highest profile prisoner, a convicted violent Communist saboteur, and take him home for his wife to cook him dinner. Can you believe it? We didn't even know about it.”

Engle was astonished.

“The Professor and I met him for the first time about six months ago. Straight away, he didn't like Lombard. Distrusted the Boer spy. Can't really blame him after nearly twenty-five years in prison. So, I suggested I came on my own. To be honest the Professor isn't at his best chit-chatting over tea and sandwiches. Do you have the package?”

Angel was carrying a wrapped-up parcel.

“What is it?” he asked.

“A suit of clothes. For a man that needs one,” said Roux.

Angel stopped. This is it, he thought, this is the end of it.