



Aggrey Klaaste's On the LINE

Soweto
ZS. 5.9

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Let's not let these lunatics disrupt '99 polls

THE number of people who called to comment on last week's column about the efficacy of prayer is somewhat surprising but encouraging.

Wilna Maritz of the Western Cape called to say she knew the identity of the man who drove us from Modder B Prison after the mass detention of political and business leaders in 1977.

She said he was Jan Bosman, a name which immediately rang a bell.

Bosman, a former member of the old Administration Board, drove me, Dr Nthato Mollana and Leonard Mosala from Modder B Prison on our release 20 years ago.

I got another call from a black Eastern Cape gentleman, who said he thought the story was great but incomplete. For instance, he said, I should have revealed what Bosman said in his prayer on that lonely road five kilometres from Modder B.

For those who missed the piece, I was reminded of this remarkable event by a picture given to me by Mollana, showing myself, him and Mosala. The picture was taken soon after we were released in 1978.

Interesting things

I spoke to Bosman last week. He said even more interesting things. He did not know why he was picked by the National Party to fetch us.

The directive came from minister Conle Mulder. He said he was as agitated as we were.

He said I looked frightened when he saw us in the major's office at the prison. He brought us some sandwiches and, when we were about five kilometres out of the prison, he asked us if he could pray.

He prayed for the impossible in those sad days - that we should work together, black and white: that there should be reconciliation and forgiveness. It took 20 years for the prayer to be answered.

Incidentally, we are once more entering that hair-raising pre-election period, when men of stupid, radical and violent persuasions decide they should make their point, violently.

I can never forget the dangerous, heart-stopping planned attacks before the 1994 elections.

How can we forget the faceless monsters who entered trains and sprayed innocent people with bullets? How can we forget the deliberate lighting of highly inflammable stuff in KwaZulu-Natal?

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What was shameful and, I am afraid, very hard to bear was that these murderous black thugs were working for a white Third Force. Black men were sent by white males to kill black women and children.

How Bosman and myself can even speak of reconciliation is part of the miracle of the South African story.

Some of the events of that incredible time are tentatively being told. The spectacular killing of three khaki-clad members of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) in Mmabatho is one such story.

I understand this was a conspiracy from high places for the siege of Mafikeng, more bloody than anything this country had ever seen. Arrangements had been made to store weapons at Mmabatho airport.

All the black soldiers in Lucas Mangope's army were deliberately disarmed before the event. Groups of AWB members and other Afrikaner men from surrounding areas were to drive to the airport, where they would be given the stored arms.

A war was planned, starting from Mmabatho to the rest of the country. Senior Bophuthatswana politicians and black military people were part of this planned violent takeover.

Heard of coup

Unfortunately for them, and most happily for us, some black soldiers heard of the coup. They ambushed and hit one of the whites guarding the arms at Mmabatho with a brick, disarmed him and got hold of the stored weapons at the airport.

These were distributed to black soldiers. Instead of the khaki-clad rebels finding friends and arms in Mmabatho, they met very angry, heavily armed black soldiers.

They panicked and started the indiscriminate shooting of people in the streets of Mmabatho as their convoy drove out. One group did not make it. The rest is history.

I am not saying this is the unvarnished truth of what took place. I can obviously not check nor vouch for its veracity. Time will tell.

There must be some people with very bad consciences who will take courage and reveal all one day.

In the meantime the killers and thieves who are attempting to repeat what happened then must be flushed out, and if we were not such a damned humane country, strung up from the nearest tree for the traitors they are.