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From: Benjamin Pogrud,
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JOHANNESBURG.

21st October, 1965.

To: Mr R.N. Sobukwe,
c/o Officer Commanding,
Robben Island Gaol,
ROBBEN ISLAND.

My dear Bob,

I arrived back in Johannesburg the night before last, after an absence of a week or so, to find your letter of September 30 waiting for me. From your letter I see that you had not yet received the letter I sent to you some weeks ago in which I enclosed some photographs of Jenny. I hope you have it by now.

I saw your wife just before I went away and can report that she is looking well. She assured me that she is not in need of anything, and as usual, I extracted a promise from her that she would contact me without delay should she require anything at all. I discussed with her the arrangements for her travelling to see you and she told me she proposes to go down on about December 30, taking the four children with her. Not so long for you to wait for this! I have, in the meantime, also made arrangements for a friend in Cape Town to give her assistance if required while she is there.

Immediately after learning about your examination success I sent a telegram to you and I hope this arrived safely. I was truly delighted with the news -- not that I had really had any fears about the outcome. Will you let me know the exact details of your passes? And what now? Are you going to treat yourself to the normal university three month summer vacation, doing some quiet sunbathing and swimming on the beach near your bungalow, or do you want to start the next year's work immediately? As before, you need not worry about your tuition fees or your books. Please merely let me know what the fees are, and send me a list of the books.

I have noted what you want in the way of both serious and light reading and will start collecting these straight away. It will take me a while to get together a good assortment, but I promise it will be reaching you long before next year.

Thanks for letting me have the details about the fruit. But what you haven't told me is who has been paying for it. If you are paying yourself, please let me know as I have had an offer from some people to take over on a regular basis. Just let me have the amount needed and who must receive it. I am surprised that Stuttafords has been sending it in an unsealed carton. From what I was told when I last visited the Island last year, I would have thought that, for obvious reasons, the prison authorities would have been the first to insist on a sealed package. But I do not think this presents any great problem and I am sure Stuttafords will rectify the position once it is drawn to their attention. I will take up the matter also from this end.

I said earlier I had just returned to Johannesburg. I was in Durban -- I have been there on and off for the Strachan case -- and on my latest trip, also found myself in Cape Town for a day. That was on Tuesday this week. My thoughts were particularly were you on that day; each time I looked across the bay towards the Island, I wished we could see each other again. We must wait for happier, freer, times.....

Half my clothing is still in Durban as I shall be returning there sometime next week. Also there is the batch of letters received from you -- the ones, to use your phrase (which needless to say, I reject outright), of "questionable erudition". I want to continue the dialogue with you but I want to have the letters in front of me as I write. So I'll have to delay answering until I go back to Durban.

The Strachan trial, by the way, is going well. For reasons of tact and good manners, you will forgive me if I do not write frankly about my feelings regarding the conduct of the trial. That too will have to wait for another day. Let me merely say that I have yet to see any evidence produced which disproves what I wrote. I would like to be able to send you the "Mail" for the period of the trial as we are carrying tremendously full reports -- six to eight columns each day. This is probably the most well-reported case this country has ever had. But I fear that it would be pointless sending you the papers as, judging from past experience, they would not be allowed through to you. But perhaps you could check this point with the officials. If they say it is O.K., I will gladly post the full set of reports to you.

All for now. I regularly give Jenny greetings from "Uncle Bob", whom she knows to be a good friend who stays far away. I must tell you, by the way, that on the New Year, I took her to a synagogue for the first time. Previously, she had only been to a synagogue for a wedding. But when we walked in and sat down, she looked with awe at the chazan (cantor), who dressed in his white robes, stood in the middle of the congregation leading the xxx prayers. After a few minutes intent gazing, all four years of her turned to me and whispered: "Daddy, is that God?" When I told her it wasn't she promptly lost interest in /3.

the proceedings and soon began clamouring to be taken home! When I asked her the next day whether she had liked going to "shul" with me, she pulled a face and said she far preferred a "bride's shul". So I am afraid my little daughter is not taking well to the religion of her forefathers. Jewish religious services can of course be somewhat arduous, and to one who does not know what is happening, I suppose they must be boring in the extreme. Thinking back to my own childhood, I grew up in a highly orthodox home where religion was part and parcel of growing up. There was the regular lighting of the Sabbath candles, and on the Festivals, the saying of prayers on Fridays and on Festivals, and the fact that from my very earliest years, my sister and I went with my Parents to "shul" as a matter of course. It is true that, at a later age, I rebelled against this. I rejected it simply because I felt I had merely been dragged into it all, and it was something I was observing because it was customary and not because I really knew what it was all about. But then I went back again, when within myself I decided this was something I wanted and I knew what it was about. So the process of rejection was, in the long run, a positive phenomenon, and I cannot really say that the childhood years' experience was a bad thing. In fact, if anything, I would regret the fact that I was not given a more positive guidance than I was given -- that I received religion just as an everyday thing, without more meaning being imparted to it.

The relevance of all this is that I am worried about Jenny on this score because she has no religion in her background at present. Astrid and I never really saw eye to eye on this point: I believe in children getting a religious background in the home. I think it gives them a sheet anchor, and when they reach the age of maturity, they can decide themselves what they wish to do with their religion. But the background must be imparted to them, otherwise they can prove to be rudderless, with no basis for morality or for their attitude towards their fellows. As I say, with me no longer in the home, there is none of this for Jenny and it worries me and perplexes me because I do not know how to fill the gap. Jenny knows herself as a "shul girl", and gradually I suppose, as she grows up, she will learn that this means she has a particular religion. But I wonder whether this will go any further within her. Whether, in fact, it can go any further because what I most fear is that she will grow up to have her mother's somewhat mocking, somewhat contemptuous view of those who do try and believe.

A page ago I wrote "All for now", and then rambled into this discussion. Hope it's been of some interest to you.

With great affection,

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