

Robben Island Isal.
Robben Island

23rd November, 1966

Mr Benjamin Pogson,
804 Soomo
Van der Merwe Street,
Hillbrow,
Johannesburg.

My dear Benjie,

Three more books arrived
last week and I am writing to acquaint
you of the fact. They are:

Kroeber: Industrial and Commercial Revolutions

Allen: Political Thought in the 16th Century

Cooley: A Social and Economic History of Britain

Place University, in New York, also

sends me a couple of interesting books, -

Yes & No (African Idioms) by Alta Jaffors

The Benue Kingdom (Anthropological Work on Nigeria).

The Heart of the Hunter (novel) known in detail at

The Prehistory of Africa by H. Alimen

Elements of General Linguistics by Martinet.

I told you, didn't I, that Milisava
had written to ask whether she should

(should)

wrote to you in Sotho or English. I advised Sotho. but I wrote to her in English and hope she understood what her father said.

My mother may be visiting me next year. She writes to say that my sister-in-law will have three weeks' leave in April next year. (She's a nursing sister at Port Elizabeth Lumsden hospital - a real "bright spark") and has suggested that they visit me together. Here's hoping!

I notice that a book by a certain Mr Jacobs of Johannesburg has been banned. You know a report appeared in his magazine last year, describing the Afro-American riots in Harlem. A number of businessmen in Harlem put up notices to the effect that they were one with the rioters. One notice read "We shall overcome!" I remember thinking, as I read the article, that these businessmen had probably never bothered about anything except making profits. To morrow they would be on the side of the police. I don't think clingers on to bandwagons are contemptible; they are pathetic. I have never despised anybody who cringes, Benjie. I have felt sorry for them. I never like to see anybody humiliated - not even by himself!

(himself)

And the "summer soldiers and sunshine-patriots" of the Jackson ilk deserve pity not contempt.

If the papers are to be believed, Robert Kennedy will be in a position to challenge LBJ in 1968. I'll be sorry if he does. I like Johnson. I don't think he is devious. I don't think he is very complex either. He isn't an intellectual; but then there are very few in the political field. His touch is very deft in domestic matters and I believe that if, in Vietnam, he had followed his own bent, if he had been true to himself, he would have chosen to negotiate right from the start. He has one outstanding virtue for which I like him. He feels. Some have said he is sentimental. And that is the man for me any day: A man who can be moved. A man who can feel anger, who can feel deep compassion: But above all a man who can weep in the presence of great sorrow and suffering.

The tragedy of our day is the inability of politicians to read the signs of the times. In the 20th Century we are faced with a situation where "negotiating from strength" is

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 an outmoded maxim - if it were ever valid! It has always been true, I think, and it is more so today, that the person who can afford to lose face is the strong person - provided he does so of his own free will. "Don't crowd me" is a very vivid ~~word~~^{English} expression and it is more apt on the lips of the weak.

After Nehru's death I wrote to a friend of mine that Shastri could achieve much more than Nehru because the latter's reputed brilliance was a handicap. If he had achieved a settlement of the Kashmir problem the Pakistanis would be biting for a catch all the time. It is a pleasure to submit to persuasion but somehow it seems to be humiliating to be reduced to silence by dialectic logic.

Of course, Kennedy stands a better chance to start negotiations with China and North Vietnam. He has not committed himself as Johnson has done. He would be able to withdraw American troops from Vietnam and win American support for the action. But what Americans term the "domino theory" would remain, ^{what} we shouldn't let ourselves Cambodia, Thailand and the rest of the Archipelago would

(would)

face Communist bids for power. The most powerful state in Asia is China and she is Communist. Co-existence will be on her terms, just as co-existence in Europe will be on Russia's terms and in America on the terms of the U.S.A.

Oh I could write pages on this Benjie. But it wouldn't solve a thing. One thing however can be said about the U.S.A. and it is that she is not in Vietnam for any imperialist purpose. On that both friend and foe are agreed.

How is it with Jennie? There's a programme on Springfield Radio - an Ad. really, where a woman complains that nothing has gone right that morning and when she is complaining she hears the piano playing. "And now listen to that!" she says. "Jennie! stop that noise - my nerves just won't stand it!" she screams. And I always picture Jenny sliding off her stool with a kindly smile on her face.

Well, Benjie, look after yourself and look after the ladies.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Bob.

Wishing you and yours a blessed New Year. Bob.

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