

New

From: Benjamin Pogrud,
P.O. Box 1133,
JOHANNESBURG.

6th April, 1968.

REGISTERED

Mr Robert M. Sobukwe,
c/o Officer Commanding,
Robben Island Gaol,
ROBBEN ISLAND,
via Cape Town.

Dearest Bob,

Knowing that you are to write your exams next month, I am terribly concerned about the fact that you have not yet received any back copies of exam papers which you requested months ago. I have written to Nana about it several times, and I just do not know what has happened as I have never had a reply from him, and perhaps he has moved from the address which I have for him. In a letter of mine to you dated November 27, 1967, I asked you to let me have the details again of the papers you needed, but I have never received any answering letter from you on this point. Perhaps your reply was contained in one or other of the two letters from you which failed to reach me.*

Incidentally, on this issue, I told you in my letter of March 18 that I had written to the Officer Commanding ~~xxxx~~ about the non-arrival of letters, the delay in letters and the non-delivery of books. He has now advised me that "the matter will receive the necessary attention."

Eulalie has written to tell me that she will be glad to attend to the repair of your record player, and she awaits word from you, by telegram or letter, that it is at the docks ferry for her. Also, she is attending to the supply of two heaters for you, and I trust that by the time you read this, they will have reached you. I asked her to be good enough to arrange for a fan and a bar heater. Will you let me know if these are enough for your needs? The two new pairs of trousers, together with your old pair, should be in the post to you during the coming week, and I hope that the tailor will have made a satisfactory job of adjusting them for your girth.

I have been glancing through our correspondence over recent months, and there are a number of points which I want to raise. I want to start by attacking you: months ago I asked you to see about having a complete medical check-up, from head to foot. I am sure the authorities would cooperate in this. You ignored me! Will you please let me know about this?

I have been thinking about the question of the standard of the children's English, and wondering what we could do about it. I have today written to Miliswa's hostel teacher to ask whether she has anyone in mind who could give Miliswa -- and perhaps the boys also -- conversational classes. As I think you found, her grammar, etc is fine, but she badly needs practice in speaking and getting the feel of the language. I thought also that when they again visit you in June, it might be a good idea if you were to try to spend an hour or so each day getting them to read aloud and to practise speech. I know it won't add up to a great deal of time, but it would help. And regarding the boys' arithmetic, which you believe to be not too good, shouldn't they perhaps bring their school-books with them to you, and you can check over their work with them and try to give them some guidance? And if you have any other ideas of what I could do from up here, I would be glad to have them and to act on them.

In my letter of March 18, I told you that Norma had been ill and that I hoped to go to her for two weeks. I was given to understand that I would obtain a passport and I had an air booking for last night. At the start of the week, my passport application was refused. It was a heavy blow as I have been beset by anxiety about Norma. So I have had to use the telephone instead, and have probably spent about R90 in the past three weeks. She is somewhat better at present, but I fear for her. She lives under extraordinarily great strains.

Some while ago you sent me a translation of one of your poems. I appreciated Veronica's remark of "not nice": Now, don't misunderstand me -- I am no pride -- I was merely looking at it through her eyes! At the time, you spoke of sending further poems in Xosa which Mrs Friedman could translate. Well, where are they? And where is the English novelle which you promised to send?

I have niggling worries in my mind about our discussion last year about religion. I asked you one question which you have not yet answered: what about the many, many Africans -- and other non-Europeans (in the non-South African use of the term) who have a profound and sincere acceptance of Christianity? What of the R.C. Archbishop of Maseru who is an African, the Sinhalese Anglican Bishop, etc? Where do they fit into the view of Christianity as a religion of Europe only? They cannot simply be dismissed as "stooges" or anything like that. These are intelligent, believing and devout men. Also, I do not have all your letters with me any longer, but there is confusion in my mind as to whether you reject Christianity as such as the entire concept of G-d. Will you elaborate? And why should you show a preference for Judaism, as you say you do?

Also, in about June last year, I sent you a Press report of a speech made by the Rev. C. F. B. Haude. Did you receive it? -- and if so, what do you think about it?

One other point: has that auto bridge set reached you yet?

After my recent correspondence with the O.C., I am hopeful that there will be a quicker turn round of letters, which should be of great help. I hope it will be so.

Bob, May is nearly upon us. Throughout the year you are in my prayers, but never more so than at this time. I pray for your speedy release, for you, Veronica and the children to continue to have strength, to have the courage you have shown for all these long years.

God bless you,

With much affection,

P.S. * As time is flowing for
years, why not write to airmail
desit to london for the papers, and ask
them to ship them by airmail to you? I
am today sending off R10 to the O.C.
to be deposited to your account.

A.

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