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FROM: Benjamin Pagnoni,
213 Diamond Exchange Building,
De Villiers Street,
JOHANNESBURG,
22nd September, 1965.

TO: Mr. R. M. Sebokwe,
c/o The Officer Commanding,
Robben Island Gaol,
ROBBER ISLAND.

My dear Bob,

You've given me a real treat - four letters within a fortnight, three of them arriving on one day! Apart from the talk about serious things - I'll return to these later - I am delighted just to have so much news of you, and to know that your spirits are high. Your letters reached me in full. Also, as a welcome change, it was nice to receive your letters a reasonable time after the writing of them. I must apologise for my delay in replying. I have wanted to give thought to what I write, and I have had to wait until enough quiet time was available.

Your wife came to see me recently, but missed me. She left a letter for me in connection with the children's schooling and her next visit to you. All this is O.K., and by the time you read this I shall have contacted her. So you can start looking forward to seeing her again before not too long. This will be possible because your friends have again given solid support.

Before I forget, I should mention that Mrs. Taylor will probably soon be writing to you again. The week before last I arranged for another parcel to be posted to you, consisting of:

1 pair brown shoes (very good ones to be used when receiving International Red Cross and "Sunday Tribune" representatives)

1 pair "hankies" for leisurewear (I overcame my religious scruples and bought shoes with pigskin uppers)

1 dacron/cotton shirt

1 light-weight jersey

(note that, to maintain my image in your mind of a "cultured mind", I made sure that shirt and jersey are matching colours).

I was happy to know that the last parcels of clothing reached you safely and were to your taste. I hope the same will apply to this batch - which is, by the way, a gift from an articulate lady.

By the time you read this, the announcement will have been made that I am suing Tutar for defamation. Two prominent advocates (one a "C.") have unanimously recommended the action. There are a couple of other defamation actions which the Editor and I will be instituting shortly in addition to this one. In fact, we have submitted a large number of "possibles" to counsel, in each case stipulating that we want as much of a 100% guarantee of success as possible, otherwise we are not interested. The Tutar action falls into this category.

I need not conceal from you that Tutar's remarks in court hurt me deeply. It is one level - the integrity with which I try to approach my work - at which I never thought to be attacked in such a vicious way. Perhaps I was naive in this respect. I had, of course, fully anticipated a smear campaign against me - what an easy way to try and answer what I wrote! - but still, this particular attack threw me off balance, at least for a while. But I sat down, looked at what was behind the attack, and forced it into perspective. My initial dismay has become transformed into a cold determination to expose the lies - and the defamation action (plus a couple of other things which are on the go) will meet this aim.

But, my friend, in the meantime, your words of support have meant a great, great deal to me.

Your perceptiveness about what I should watch out for has been well-grounded: even before your letters came, I had already been the target of large numbers of abusive and threatening phone-calls, as well as a few letters. A rather amusing (sigh-amusing, that is) side-issue is that the bulk of the phone-calls have been received by Astrid because her telephone is still registered under my name. Apparently, crazy characters have phoned her until late at night, demanding to know where I am, saying they want to kill me; that they are coming to blow up her flat, etc. etc. Last week she was in a distraught state about all this, and finally accepted my advice that she should complain to the police. I have naturally taken proper precautions to protect myself, one of these being that a Karate expert on the "Mail" acts as my bodyguard whenever necessary!

I have also been the recipient of a particularly nasty and scurrilous circular letter (in duplicated form). You refer to the Swaziland letter - well, how right you were, because it features in this latest effort. I didn't broadcast the news of the Swaziland letter at the time, but I did lodge complaints and handed copies of the letter to both the South African and Swaziland Security police. I wonder who is responsible for this latest scurrilous piece? Please be assured, Bob, that none of this bothers me. It is what I anticipated, and it has not, and will not, deter me in the slightest from going on. If anything, the feeling of sickness I get that people should descend to this low level, serves to spur me on.

At times in these past couple of months, I have come close to despairing of my basic belief in the ultimate triumph of the truth. There have been occasions when I have felt depressed, and have thought that the forces against us were too well-organized, too determined to conceal and to cover-up, whatever lengths they had to go to. But these moods of depression do not last long, and I can only tell you that, whether I am being naive or not, I believe firmly that the truth here will prevail. It is too big a truth and has been going on for too long and in too many places, for attempts at concealment to have any hope of final success. I am not being starry-eyed in this because I know and accept that difficult and even perhaps terrible days are still ahead. But as the Editor wrote, we have opened a chink in the curtain of secrecy - and we are determined to bust it wide open.

I am sorry that you have not been receiving the newspapers regularly. I suppose you have taken up the matter with the officials immediate to you. If so, hasn't any explanation been given? So much has been appearing on the jails issue that non-delivery of those copies containing news of it would mean that you are receiving hardly any newspapers at all!

I would like to send you another batch of the original reports. Unfortunately, because of Strachan's banning, I cannot do this.

I am just rereading your letters as I write, and I'll deal with points serialim as they arise.

Jenny continues as lovely and joyful as ever - and to prove it, I am enclosing pictures I took of her over the weekend. I still see as much of her as I possibly can, between four and five times a week.

Astrid is still staying in the flat which we occupied last year. Didn't I tell you that she remarried last December? Communication between us is virtually non-existent, and is confined to formalities about when I can fetch Jenny. As I have indicated to you previously, it is not a particularly pleasant story and the details can wait until we next see each other.

I am sorry, Bob, but in ordering the shoes I overlooked your request for Meltonian. I shall attend to this without delay, and it will be posted to you this week.

The postage stamps you need are enclosed herewith. It worth should keep your letters flowing for a while - and please let us know when the supply starts running low.

I have taken too long already to get this letter off to you. So let me end now and I shall write again in a couple of days,

In the hope that this letter will be handed to you before my New Year starts on September 27, let us wish you security of spirit, greater happiness, freedom and reunion with your loved family and the friends who cherish you, in the year ahead.

My prayers, as always, are with you and for you.

Sincerely,

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