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Inanda Seminary  
Phoenix, Natal  
South Africa  
April 4, 1949

LETTER FROM DR. REULING - #9

22 June 1949

Dear Friends:

It is fine to be back in "the Garden Province" again. The scenery is beautiful, but the welcome of the people is even finer. Everywhere I go I find friends, former colleagues, former students, pastors, members of our churches, etc. It is often hard to get away from a place, there are so many people to see.

Yesterday we were at Groutville, the home of Chief Albert Luthuli whom many of you met during his recent visit to the United States. He returned home less than a month ago, full of his experiences and eager to try out some of the ideas that he got while abroad. Groutville is already one of the most progressive African communities that we have, and Chief Luthuli is a splendid leader.

After conference, a special tea at which the community leaders were introduced to us, a church service, an official community welcome and lunch, we drove 50 miles or so south to Durban where there was a large meeting of welcome for us, attended by many from out of town as well as by local Africans. Dr. McKeith and I each received a beautiful gift of African handcraft, addresses of welcome, and complimentary speeches, and were of course given a chance to respond. One of the most interesting features was the singing of the Inanda Centenary choir which had travelled in to Durban for the occasion.

I have been very interested to observe the cordial relations that exist between Africans and Indians. The recent riots apparently left no bitterness. Africans are unanimous in condemning the irresponsible element of their own community who took part, and Indian leaders are entirely sympathetic with the Africans, blaming the wretched housing, constant persecution, repressive laws, legal bars to advance and self-help as being the real causes of the outburst. It is apparently quite true that an insignificant incident between an Indian and an African helped to release uncontrollable forces which had gradually built up over a considerable period of time. It is also apparently true that in the early stages quite a number of whites took great delight in encouraging Africans to attack Indians and that Indians were not given proper police protection. A government commission of enquiry is now taking evidence, and everyone is anxious to hear the official report. The Natal Indian Congress has published and circulated its evidence to the commission and, as I said above, attaches most of the blame to conditions beyond the control of the African community. At any rate things are now peaceful here.

You may be interested in what happened to an African teacher in one of our schools a little while ago. He disappeared from sight completely and was not heard of for well over a month. Then he turned up on the doorstep of the missionary in charge of his school with a remarkable tale. It seems that he had found himself in the city one night with just enough money to buy a ticket to his home station a little way out. By mistake he got into an express which did not stop until some distance beyond his place. He had no money to pay the extra fare demanded by the guard, so the guard struck him, knocking his head through a train window and cutting his face. At the first stop the guard called the police and charged the teacher with assaulting him. He was locked up and tried the next day, where it was his word against that of the white train guard. Any possible Native witnesses probably just vanished, being afraid to testify. The teacher was found guilty and fined two pounds, which he did not have. Although a call to the missionary in charge of his



April 4, 1949

school would have brought the money in a hurry, he was not allowed to get in touch with him, and was sent to prison to work it off, turning up only after release. Our missionary has no cause at all to doubt his story, and from knowledge of the man says it is quite out of character for him to assault anyone.

There are a lot of opportunities for Africans in this country, and they are increasing, but the archaic system that legally makes them less than men, and that subjects them to daily indignity, still exists. There are of course many forces working to change these conditions, but so far they have only been able to lessen the evil, rather than to abolish it completely. Incidents like this, which are all too common, stress the need for the constant witness that we can give to the governing section of the South African community as well as for the direct work that we do among the Africans themselves.

Dr. McKeith leaves Natal this afternoon for Cairo and the Near East. I stay a week longer and then start home, via Johannesburg, Elizabethville, Angola, and Leopoldville. It is a very long trip indeed.

Next mail address is care Currie Institute, Dondi, Bela Vista, Angola, Portuguese West Africa. Anything sent airmail from the United States on or before May 1 should catch me there.

Cordially yours,

John A. Reuling





Elizabethville, Congo Belge  
April 22, 1949

LETTER FROM DR. REULING - #10

Dear Friends:

I have an overnight break here on the train journey from Johannesburg to Angola where I expect to attend some of the sessions of the Annual Meeting of our West Central Africa Mission.

The four-day train trip has been through an interesting variety of country -- the vast semi-desert of Bechuanaland Protectorate (part of the great Kalahari desert), the farms and ranches of Southern Rhodesia with the tremendous building and industrial development in the towns, the great empty plains of Northern Rhodesia with here and there a forlorn siding, the busy little copper mining towns in the far north of Northern Rhodesia to which most of my fellow passengers were going, the more tropical aspect of the Southern Congo, and finally the great copper smelting plant with what the Belgians proudly point to as "the second tallest smoke stack in the world" as you enter the outskirts of Elizabethville.

The trip was too bumpy and jerky to allow any reading or writing, but it didn't prevent thinking, and as we inched along I couldn't help but try to add up some of the (to me) significant items that I had read in the South African press during my last few days there. A few of these were:

1. A statement by a responsible (white) journalist that South Africa now stands where Germany stood in 1933.
2. An announcement that while the central government would continue to make a grant of ten cents a day for school lunches for white children, regardless of the economic situation of their parents, the three-cent-a-day grant for African school children would be cut off entirely.
3. A strong attempt by the government to unseat one of the three (white) Senators representing Africans.
4. Prohibition by the government of a meeting at which one of the three (white) representatives of Africans in the Lower House proposed to address some of his African constituents. This man is a member of the Communist Party, which at the moment is not illegal, but he was also elected to Parliament in accordance with the laws of the land.
5. Announcement of a government commission to investigate "Native Education." The terms of reference given by the Prime Minister seem to indicate that the commission is supposed to "prove" that Africans are basically different from the rest of the human race and require different, and inferior, education.
6. Announcement by the Transvaal Education Department that no additional African teachers or additional African schools will be authorized.
7. Continuous reports of the terrific increase in crime among the thousands of African children who throng the "locations" of the Transvaal towns, and for whom there are no school places available.



8. Move in Parliament to deprive the colored or mixed race people of their right to vote.

9. Passing of special legislation to allow South African Germans to become naturalized South Africans without having to pass test in either official language of the Union.

10. Legislation introduced by government to abolish the very limited communal representation that Africans now have. These and dozens of other items all add up to Nationalism, with a capital N, that denies the rights of all but members of the ruling race. All of this is done under the slogan of "apartheid" or "separateness," but the "separateness" is for the purpose of reserving everything good for the one group and everything bad for the other.

It all adds up to frustration, bitterness, and possibly to outbursts similar to the Durban riots, and worse.

In some African territories such as Northern Rhodesia a genuine attempt is being made to recognize the legitimate aspirations of Africans, and to advance them as rapidly as possible. But in the Union the party at present controlling the government wants all the advantages of world trade and a highly industrialized economy on the one hand and the advantages (to the rulers) of serfdom on the other. Something is bound to burst, and perhaps soon, and perhaps with tragic consequences for the whole world.

The surprising fact about it all is that there are so many Africans of education and standing who are counseling their people to act moderately, not in any spirit of docile submission but rather because of a real understanding of the fact that long-range progress cannot be based on violence. And it is most gratifying to see that Communism, which never had a more fertile field in which to work, is making very slow progress indeed -- largely because Christianity secured a firm footing first.

It is also gratifying to observe the many ways in which Missions are opposing totalitarianism, but no political action, but by strengthening the African people and by acting as a moral "yeast" in the whole structure of the country.

Many of you have read Cry, the Beloved Country. While in Johannesburg I had a little talk with Alan Paton, the author, whom I used to know, years ago, when he was a schoolmaster in Maritzburg. If any of you have missed this book, let me urge you to get it. Although in novel form, it gives an absolutely accurate picture of South Africa's greatest problem.

And while I am about it let me recommend a most readable book, Kaffirs Are Lively, by Oliver Walker, published by Victor Gollancz, 1949, London.

Walker is a well known journalist who was called in by the South African government to make a thorough study of the Native question, after South Africa had been getting a "bad press" abroad. His report was supposed to show that things were not as bad as they seem, but after he had submitted his material not a bit of it was used, so after a considerable lapse of time he has brought it out on his own.

Regards to all.

John A. Reuling

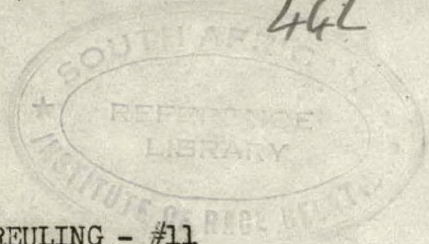


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Boston, Massachusetts  
November 16, 1949

LETTER FROM DR. REULING - #11

Dear Friends:

It has been in my mind ever since my return to this country to write you all again. I arrived back here in the middle of May after a very pleasant air trip from Angola to Boston. I was fortunate in getting back to Angola, traveling up from Johannesburg through Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo by train, in time for the joint Annual Meeting of our Mission and the Mission of the United Church of Canada. I took a stopover of about a week in Lisbon, during which I had conferences with some of our people who are there. Our work in Angola is very dependent on maintaining good contacts in the capital of the Portuguese Empire.

Since returning I have thought constantly about the situation in Africa, and particularly about our relation to it. In many parts of the continent the situation for the Africans is getting worse, politically and economically. In one country there is the threat of censorship of news sent out of the country, the highest official of that country stating that "African correspondents of overseas newspapers were writing stories in such a sensational way that they would not dare to publish them in the Union." Naturally many news stories which appear about Africa in our American press come to my attention. For my part I can say that these are distinguished not by sensationalism but by being cool, objective reports of a state of affairs which represents the height of injustice to the people in that land and which presents a genuine threat to the attainment of permanent world peace.

In one place there were recently severe riots. In the suppression of them by police some natives were killed, others were injured, and some policemen were injured. Although these riots took place in the area which contains some of the world's worst slums, and although the people involved in them have for many years felt that the weight of injustice under which they suffer is increasing, the responsible Cabinet Minister stated that he considered "these disturbances especially serious in view of the available evidence which at present indicates that no understandable motives exist except the possible exploitation of imaginary grievances by agitators." These disturbances happened after I had left the country. I don't know what the immediate spark was that set off the trouble, but I do know the area and I know that it presents one of the world's most fertile fields for agitators to exploit not "imaginary" grievances but real, deep-seated grievances of many years' standing.

On the more hopeful side I am impressed by the increasing number of European people in Africa, unfortunately still a small minority, who realize that the long-range solution to the problem must be something better than suppression and still more suppression. Our church, school, agriculture, social and medical work offer the distressed and bewildered African people a real basis for them to build on. The fact that all of these agencies are closely integrated with the Church which gives them true spiritual motivation represents the greatest hope. The danger is that the spiritual forces of Western culture will not be sufficiently reinforced in time to prevent a most serious debacle. Your representatives



November 16, 1949

there, the missionaries and the associated African staffs, together with the missionaries of many other churches which work in perfect comity with us and in areas which we do not occupy are performing a most valuable service, not only to the African people, but to the world as a whole. They well deserve your increased help and support.

Since my return I have been very busy, not only with my regular administrative work in connection with our three Africa Missions, but also with speaking on the subject of Africa to many groups. Another time-consuming task has been to arrange and classify the many Kodachrome pictures that I took. Some of you have already seen a few of these. I also took a large number of black and white pictures, using the camera equipment generously supplied by a strong supporter of our Africa work. Mr. Armstrong Hunter, our Resource Secretary, has selected twelve of these which are representative of the country and work that I saw and has had them printed on very good glossy paper in a six by nine size, each picture having brief explanatory text. This set of twelve is available, postage paid, at a cost of thirty cents. If you would like to see some of the actual scenes of which I have told you, I recommend that you order one of these sets from Rev. Armstrong Hunter, Room 508, 14 Beacon Street, Boston.

It has been a pleasure and privilege for me to travel on your behalf and to share with you through this series of report letters and now through these pictures some of the many experiences that I have had.

Very cordially yours,

*John A. Reuling*  
John A. Reuling



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