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Received
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Robben Island Gaol
Robben Island

29th June 1966.

Mr. Benjamin Pogrud
804 Dorono
van der Merwe Street
Hillbrow
JOHANNESBURG

My dear Benjie,

You will pardon me if this letter appears "official". I have discovered that whenever I write as I feel I seldom say all that I should have liked to say. Good.

First of all, then, I received three books early this week which, I was informed, had been sent by you. The bore the ff titles:-
Economics of Industrial Organisation - Beacham
Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy - Schumpeter
The Heavenly City of the 18th Century Philosophers - Carl L. Becker.

Yesterday I received a further batch which, I presume, is from Lincoln University. These are the books:-

Medieval Thought : St Augustine to Ockham - G. Leff
Essays in Economic History Vol I and II (ed) E.M. Carris-Wilson
Chartist Portraits - G.D.H. Cole
The International Economy since 1850 - W. Ashworth
The Structure of Industry in Britain - G.C. Allen.

Since the President of Lincoln said he was sending about a dozen books I suppose the rest are still being censored.

You can't imagine how happy I was to receive these books. I felt like reading them all at once. I never dreamt I would come to enjoy Economics like this.

Thank you for your telegram which I received this morning (Incidentally I have not yet received your letter which I presume accompanied the books. This is, therefore, not a reply to it). I had been afraid that by writing to you so early on the matter of the Birthday I might give you the impression that I had written July by mistake and that the great day was in fact June 27th. Your telegram set my mind at rest.

As I stated in my replyin telegram your choice of gifts suited me just fine. I know it will suit my wife too. Will use the set when we are entertaining on a grand scale at some future date.

I have written to Miliswa about this event and told her that Ntate Benjie will be consulting her. She's the most sensitive of my children, I think, and will relish being drawn into the conspiracy. To heighten the drama, therefore, I suggest that when you visit Mofolo, you call her aside, away from her mother and tell her what presents we are planning to make.

I told her that the two of you would have to get a cake (but this is really for them to eat that a "Birthday" cake with candles etc.) and that each one of them will have to present their mother with a bunch of flowers on the 27th July. If you can arrange the details for those two items with Miliswa you'll have given her the responsibility she is in such a hurry to shoulder.

As I say, I have not yet received your letter and do not know what comments you have made on the Kennedy visit. I assume that you have commented and expect your comment to be favourable seeing that you are an "ultra-liberal", to borrow a term from the eminent Prof. Logan of the Hague Case fame. By the way I have been following the discussions in the Geography Teachers' Symposium being held at Stellenbosch University and am suitably impressed by the unanimity of thought, attitude and vision exhibited by the eminent academicians who have presented papers there. The only foreigner, I think, is the eminent American Prof. Logan who, to my knowledge, has never been in this country before.

Oh yes, you remarked in an earlier letter that no African has produced a great social novel in this country. I agree with you. But I want to suggest to you, as a verifiable fact of history, that an oppressed people or class have never produced great literature or art. When we read that such and such an artist was a peasant or worker, what in fact is meant is that he was of peasant or worker origin. He himself was no longer that. It is the middle class that idealizes the worker or the peasant or that writes indignantly on his behalf. As Bernard Shaw says, "The worker is concerned with the drudgery of earning a living" and has no time to appreciate the nobility of character assigned to him. Marx spoke of the "stupidity" of the peasant. He, of course, belonged to the middle class.

Do you know that at Fort Hare we loathed "Cry the Beloved Country"? The Rev. Nxumalo typified for us the "Uncle Tom" mentality which we abhorred. In other words no one of us could ever have had such a character as a hero. And yet he is a typical missionary-school product. And Paton took him as he found him. What the oppressed produce is propaganda. If they attempt to be detached, they write superficially.

This is a subject requiring a letter by itself, Benjie. An exuberant literature is coming out of Nigeria. And in America the Complaint is that Baldwin is over-concerned with race - he feels, therefore he produces propaganda. The said was said about Richard Wright.

As for me - well, perhaps I'll take your advice. But I'll never write an autobiography, Benjie. I think this form of writing is being overdone. Yes I wrote some poems and short stories, but they were in Xhosu. Remember I asked you what I could do when the late Mosaku confiscated my manuscripts from his typist who was typing them during office hours. You wanted me to get Ernie to sue for their return. I recited some of them in jail and the natives were suitably impressed.

Love to Jennie. Will write again, soon.

Bob.

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