

Wed 6th Sep 78

My dear Ngudu V W

Such a lot to write about, dont know where to begin, and time so limited these days. Begin at beginning: First, many thanks for letters and cuttings. I had eventually received your letter of 1st July with Lillians, but hadnt told you. Glad about print sale. Will deal with that in a moment. First, when you send 'Dear Friends' to others and not to me, would you please add a special note to one of them to see that it is 'passed on to Hilda.'. With our disparate lives here these things dont get done as a matter of course. I find your serial fascinating, and I am absolutely serious when I say that you should one day (soon) take them all and prepare an edited edition for publication. What do you think?

Rica had left before your letter arrived . . . I thought the report of your evidence was excellent and most moving. Perhaps some people will begin to see you as Violet Weinberg instead of Eli's wife who has arrived from SA. Or am I being too harsh? Maggie Smith tells me Lilian has a driving license and (or is getting) a car. Her letter made me want to write to her, which I refrained from doing all these years believing that it might only cause more trouble. I daresay that was wrong, but whatever we in England did was wrong - if we wrote it was wrong and if we didnt, we were accused of indifference and neglect - but that's another thing, another story . . .

I suppose I must get onto the print business. 1) I have tried and tried to get someone to take them, people dont contact you when they promise and so on. Now I have at last parcelled a few and am posting them by air this morning. I might even register them. I am enclosing an invoice with (retail selling) prices in pounds and Tanz shillings - you might work it out differently, or the rate might have changed. Always round out figures upwards, not down, as we have postage and other expenses to consider. I have sent two copies of Migration, one is a gift to you, the colours differ slightly, choose the one you prefer. Have it framed unmounted in simple plain wood frame, if possible. I put in the Italian village thinking one of the Embassy people might like it. Have coloured print of our own village, Apricale, if anyone is interested. Let me know if prints come through OK, and what customs problems there may be. Regarding exhibition, perhaps the women's committee would discuss where to hold it and how to publicise it. If you decide to go ahead, you need to get some bigwig to open it to draw attention, invite radio, etc. If you do decide to try and organise it, then I will send more prints. The alternative is to have a sort of 'at home' affair in the house of someone who has a largish room. A friend of Yvonne's did this in Lusaka, invited all her friends and I sold lots and lots and had meringues with cream and other goodies thrown in. We simply laid the prints out on sofas and chairs around the room and took orders. The point is, you have to do the work entailed, because if you bring in a gallery, with all their facilities, then they will take the commission.

On Aug 9th here Ruth made (as usual) a brilliant speech, but what delighted me most of all was her confession of being a 'late convert' to the women's cause. She and I argued often on this question, which she like so many super-intelligent women who have always made their way tended to shrug off. She said things I've been saying for years and years, and I was slightly nose-out-of-joint that these remarks were greeted as new revelations of truth. One point (I've also been hammering it) concerned the way in which women function in the movement, and how they keep on and on accepting the minor roles. I thought with real satisfaction of Lindsay's (or is it Linzi's?) proposed study prospectus, and would like to know how things are going. The thing about Kate and Florence, and all the older women there at the top (or more or less) is that they have not changed with the changing years, and perpetuate the stereotypes in the way in which they approach the women's work. They hve rejected the women's lib movement as a whole, which is a huge mistake, and never see the necessity for special training etc



so that women, like those in colonial countries, can be pushed up to leadership positions. Women hold up half the sky, I read in an article. Yes, and sweep up 90% of the dirt on the ground.

By the way, 'For Their Triumphs' has been brought out in a new edition, brought as up-to-date as we could make it. It sold 10,000 copies in the first edition! I'm appy that you read my other book. I still think it is good, and where else have we an account of the Rivonia trial? Ask Eli if the chap who said he would order some of the Biko books would take some of the women's one as well.

Did you get my second letter enquiring about Frances and Masimbu? The article I wrote evidently was published in the Chicago paper to which I sent it (tho rejected by the Guardian here, but I am trying other papers), although I havent seen a copy, but I received a letter from a man who read it, and who is 'really excited', and wants to assist. He is a Master of Arts in Teaching Program in Illinois, and a 'student of African affairs.' I dont know what is the best thing for him to do - to write to Dennis, or to Lusaka, or what. I may get other enquiries. When I get the article I'll send you a photostat of it. The Tanz. radio lady said she would make a tape of the radio interviews for me. I wonder if she did, and if she would send it?

I had a letter from Ray Simons, and she says the burglary situation is not as bad now, they have a new police chief who seems to have taken action. About time, too. ~~xxxx~~ Next time you write, tell me news of Sheila and Mark.

Love to all the neighbours - glad that Florida's garden is still producing so well. Did I mention that I eventually went to Mombasa for a couple of days, and stayed in a hotel in town. I loved the sights, but hated being by myself in a hotel in a strange town. I thought at my age I was immune from 'advances' but my African journey proved otherwise. I never mentioned the man who arrived at my compartment while on Tazara in his pyjama shorts at 6 on the second morning, to tell me we wouldnt be passing through the game reserve for another two hours? However, foiled again, I had been awake since 5, and was already dressed! In Mombasa, a character who had spoken to me in the lounge arrived at my bedroom door, and when I opened it, said 'Am I welcome?' 'No', I replied, and closed the door. Ah well, lost opportunities! The result of Mombasa is a lovely drawing of a baobab, which I am incorporating in a new print. Jane's sister might like it. . .

Had some news of friends, but I've forgotten what it is. I'll remember when this has gone. Much love to Eli. Keith has a fine article and photos in the British Journal of Photography, and is to write a monthly page of another magazine called Photo Techniques. Toni & Ivan went to Italy and came back very brown. Rusty is still not working.

Much love



# NEW STATESMAN

Registered Office:

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01-405 8471 Telex 28449  
Cables: Newstat, London WC1

15 January 1980

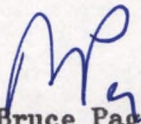
Hilda Bernstein  
5 Rothwell Street  
London NW1

Dear Hilda Bernstein,

Thank you very much for writing! We get on the whole too many letters saying (even in kindly fashion) that we must stop being so harsh, so left-wing, so uncompromising, or whatever. Glad to know someone thinks we err the other way!

Actually, we think we are getting quite a goodish response to Edward's demarche, and we hope to build the issue and keep it alive. I should be interested to know your response to the leader in last week's paper, which argued that dismantling of the superpower system could only begin in the West - precisely because the US, though bad, isn't quite as bad as the Kremlin mob. A dangerous argument, but is there any other?

Yours sincerely,

  
Bruce Page  
Editor

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Bruce Page, E. F. Peacock, Anthony Sampson, Peter Townsend, Neville Vincent

7.50



6th June 1985

Dear John,

It is so painful to write a letter like this; Rusty and I cannot stop thinking about you, and the tragedy of the murder of your son. We did not know him, but it is evident that he had followed in your footsteps. What can one say? I do not think there is anything that can compare with the loss of a child, and I know it is a pain you will have to take with you everywhere for the rest of your life.

But it is our loss too, although we cannot feel it in the way that you do. We are part of your family, of the family of all of us who struggle for the liberation of South Africa. I hope you will draw some small comfort from the thought of all your comrades who share with you, in a smaller measure, both the personal pain and loss, and the larger one, the loss to our people and our struggle.

With love

*Mkademung*

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01-303 6688

34 Garden Avenue,  
Besley Heath,  
Kent DA7 4LF

1/1/86

Dear Hilda Bernstein,

I enclose a print and copies of it which I came across in going through Hilary's papers. I know that he and William Topling were friends of yours. I had seen you on T.V. and seen drawings of yours too. Hilary became ill with cancer of the liver. He knew he hadn't long to live - which he accepted and he died on 30th October 1985 at nearly 75. You may have seen about this in the "Morning Star" or the BSFS Journal. We requested no flowers, and Cancer Research, Marie Curie Foundation, CND and "I.S." all benefited. The Chairman & Sec. of the local Labour Party organised an excellent Memorial mtg. 50 people turned up on a Sunday afternoon. Of these, 16 spoke, all appreciatively, of his many interests and activities. He would have been flattered. With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs.) Letty Norwood (Hilary's widow)

34 Garden Avenue,  
Bexleyheath,  
Kent DA7 4LF  
2/9/86

Dear Hilda Bernstein,

I sent the enclosed letter to your Chalk Farm address but it came back marked "gone away". William Topling sent me the Guardian's interview with you which said you now live in Wales so I tracked you down (I hope!) in the telephone directory and am trying again.

Hilary's good friend <sup>Dr.</sup> William Topling remembers you and Olga in the days of the parties at Barlass, and he thinks he corresponded with Lionel when you were in Johannesburg and William was working in Southern Rhodesia.

Hilary's sister Gita née Nusbaum now Mrs. Thornton (widow) remembers



you too.

Having read your book  
we are looking forward to seeing  
the film later this month.

We all send you our  
best wishes.

yours sincerely,

Letty Howwood.

I was glad to see the  
review by you in "Liberation".

We have a Bexley & District Branch  
of the British-Soviet Friendship  
Society which Hilary started.  
I expect you know that Hilary had  
been a schoolteacher - chemistry.

12/6/87

Dear Matthew,

I have, and have ALWAYS had, the most appalling memory, not just because of the deterioration of old age, but because of some chemical fault, I'm convinced.

However, for some unexplained reason, I do remember the meeting with you in the mid-fifties - what happened to the book you were going to write? My draft copy ended up in The Grays, and I lost heart to try and do it all again.

I don't know whether I will be able to help you with your queries. Despite the book, I was never a member of Umkhonto myself, although the incidents in the book are true, and actually happened - the characters being wholly fictional.

Visiting me here is time-consuming. It is three hours on the train to Hereford, then a 14-mile bus ride to the village outside which we are at present living. If you have a car, it is three-hours plus from London.

I am planning to come to London, probably at the end of the month. If you can wait until then, we could perhaps arrange a meeting.

Best wishes



69, Olinda Road  
London N16 6TR  
3rd June 1987


Dear Hilda

No doubt you have forgotten ever meeting me in your life, although you may have come across my name in print or gossip again since then. It was the only time I have ever met you, and it was way back in the mid-Fifties, about 1954, when you came to see me in connection with a serialised narrative appearing in the then Bantu World telling the story of the squatter movement in Johannesburg's Black townships. It was called "A Space to Live", and you came to ask for permission to use the material contained in it. Unfortunately, I had a plan to use it myself in the future. I knew you then as Hilda Watt.

I am now writing to you because I am doing some research into the sabotage movement of the early Sixties, and I have a feeling you may be able to throw some light on a number of queries about it. I read with great interest your book Death is Part of the Process, but missed its television version with regret. I propose a meeting at your earliest possible convenience, in London if possible or in Wales if necessary. About two weeks ago I left a message at the ANC office here with a request for such a meeting in London because I was told you were expected here at the end of the month (May).

The matter is rather urgent and I should esteem it a great favour if you let me know as soon as possible whether and when such a meeting can be arranged. Please pass on my greetings to your family.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Nkoana

cc Ms Hilda Bernstein  
Old House Farm  
Dorstone  
Hereford HR3 6AL



30 March 1988

Secretary,  
The National Union of Journalists.

I am writing to you in connection with a South African journalist, Zwelakhe Sisulu, in the hope and the belief that your Union could help to obtain his freedom.

I enclose information about him, and the way he has been treated by the authorities.

I do believe very strongly in the power of political protest. I have seen it working in the most extraordinary ways. I believe that journalists in the Western world could mount a campaign that would influence the authorities in South Africa to release Sisulu.

The Sisulu family is known to me personally, and it seems to me that there should be a point reached in persecution and suffering for individuals and families beyond which no one may keep silence.

Yours sincerely,

Hilda Bernstein.

*Copy & letter sent to Paul Foot*



# Sisulu case: NECC 'used' children's gripes — judge

Weekly Mail 20/11/87

By JO-ANN BEKKER

A RAND Supreme Court judge this week said the National Education Crisis Committee could be viewed as aiming to overthrow the state by using school children and exploiting grievances around black education.

Mr Justice LTC Harms made this comment during his judgement which rejected *New Nation* editor Zwelakhe Sisulu's urgent application for his release from detention.

His remark came shortly after government officials had apparently given the NECC some legitimacy by approaching it for comment on a new black education Bill.

Justice Harms said the official reasons provided for Sisulu's 11-month detention were his alleged involvement in the executive of the NECC.

In a lengthy memorandum which Sisulu prepared for the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, Sisulu denied that he belonged to the NECC executive. He stressed that his involvement in the education body formed after unrest had disrupted schooling was minimal.

However, Justice Harms said Sisulu had admitted that he gave the keynote address at an NECC conference in April 1986.

The judge said it was clear from Sisulu's speech that "some of the NECC's aims were laudable while others were, to say the least, legitimate" — especially considering the complexities of the education crisis.

But, Justice Harms added, "the



Adriaan Vlok

speech as a whole does evince an intention to overthrow the state by using black children and exploiting the conditions and grievances surrounding black education".

The judge criticised the fact that Sisulu's memorandum had not been handed to Vlok.

He said Sisulu could have had a legitimate expectation that his representations would be heard. But, the judge added, Sisulu had the "insuperable difficulty" that the Appeal Court had ruled this year that the minister of law and order's failure to consider a detainee's representation would have no legal consequence.

The judge rejected all the legal arguments Sisulu's lawyers advanced for his release, including what he called a "semantic quibble" about the phrasing of PW Botha's order promulgating the June 1987 Emergency.

●An application for the release of United Democratic Front leaders Murphy Morobe and Mohammed Valli is expected to be heard by the Rand Supreme Court on Tuesday.

## Euro-parliament d

THE European parliament in Strasbourg is to debate a resolution calling for the release of children detained in South Africa and urging joint European Community action to press for their release by Christmas.

The resolution, initiated by British representative Janey Buchan, who was at the Harare conference two months ago on children in detention, was submitted by a number of women from different countries.

The issue of children in detention in South Africa is also likely to come under the spotlight in Britain this week. Labour Party MP Joan Lester has put forward a motion in the House of Commons calling on UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to seek collective EC action to secure the release of child detainees.

"I am hoping women on the other





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22nd October 1987

Hilda Bernstein  
Old House Farm  
DORSTONE  
Herefordshire  
HR3 6BL

Dear Hilda Bernstein,

Thank you very much for your letter about Sisulu. I was very moved by it, and I will keep the letter with its excellent and comprehensive information for future reference.

I will try to come back to this colleague's fate. Meanwhile, as you may have seen, Mr Trelford referred to the fate of Sisulu when he was in Johannesburg last week, and he wrote an article about this on the Media page of last Sunday's Observer.

Yours sincerely,

*Neville Ashmore*

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12th October 1986

Dear Neal Ascherson,

My purpose in writing to you is to ask for your assistance in respect of a fellow-journalist, Zwelakhe Sisulu.

I have decided to write to you because it seemed to me that through your standing as a journalist, either as an individual or through the NUJ, you may be able to bring influence to bear for his release from prolonged detention - more than ten months in this latest detention - without charge or trial, in South Africa. I read your column in the Observer, usually like what you write, sometimes disagree profoundly, but always respect you as a serious journalist.

Zwelakhe Sisulu is the editor of New Nation, a newspaper owned by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. This paper is now under considerable attack from the authorities, and likely to be suspended. As editor, Sisulu worked with a group of young journalists to provide news that other papers were either afraid to, or uninterested in publishing.

He was a founder of the Media Workers' Union of South Africa before being banned for three years in 1980 and placed under house arrest. In 1975 he was among the first blacks to be admitted to the SA Associated Newspapers' journalism cadet course; he then joined the staff of the now defunct Rand Daily Mail, which he left when he was appointed editor of the Sunday Post. He was active in forming the Union of Black Journalists, which was banned in 1977; and he was elected first president of the Writers' Association of South Africa after the banning of the UBJ. This Association was later widened to become the Media Workers' Association of South Africa.

It was under his leadership in this organisation that black journalists began to challenge the format of black newspapers - consisting mainly of township crime and pages of sport, and to present news of the political struggle of the black people. While declaring his open commitment to the aspirations of his people, Sisulu as President of Mwasu never imposed his own views and was very popular and respected among fellow-journalists.

In August 1979 he was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment for refusing to answer questions in a trial of a Post reporter, Thami Mkhwanazi (who was sentenced to 7 years). In 1980, however, two Pretoria Supreme Court judges set aside the sentence and ordered a re-trial. In that year Sisulu played a leading role in a lengthy strike by black ~~black~~ journalists and other media employees. As a result of the way he led this struggle, Mwasu won management recognition as a new union. When he was banned in 1980 the managing directors of S.A. Associated Newspapers and Argus called for the lifting of his ban, and that on other journalists.

He was again detained in July 1981, and released in February 1982 after spending 251 days in detention (no charge or trial). The same year he was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for refusing to testify in a case against two members of the SA REVolutionary Youth Council. He successfully appealed against conviction and sentence. His banning order was unexpectedly lifted in 1982..

He was awarded a medal for 'commitment to truth and freedom' by the Rothko Chapel, a Texas-based organisation, and he was also nominated as prisoner of conscience by Time magazine. In 1984, with intervention from the Neimann Foundation and the US Embassy he was allowed to leave for Harvard University



for a year's study as a Neimann Fellow.

At the beginning of 1986, Sisulu delivered the keynote address at the National Education Crisis Committee meeting in Durban, a speech which was influential in obtaining agreement that students return to school.

The New Nation has continued publication - so far - with reminders in each issue of the length of its editor's imprisonment.

As reported in yesterday's Observer, your editor Donald Trelford was present when South Africa's chief censor, Stoffel Botha, denied knowing why Sisulu had been held for 10 months, mostly in solitary confinement; but told Donald Trelford 'I want to reply with the fullest sincerity. I want to say the Minister who decided it must have decided that Mr Sisulu is not conducive to the kind of society we wish to create.'

I do believe very strongly in the power of public protest. I have seen it working in the most extraordinary ways. The Sisulu family is known to me personally, but apart from that I find the prolonged persecution and detention of Zwelakhe Sisulu very painful, and think often of the suffering and pride of his father, Water Sisulu, in jail since 1964 with Nelson Mandela.

I do believe that journalists in the Western world could mount a campaign that would influence the authorities in South Africa to release Zwelakhe Sisulu.

Please let me know if you require any more information.

Yours sincerely

Hilda Bernstein



Sent to NUJ  
Paul Foot  
2/4/88

Zwelakhe Sisulu is the editor of New Nation, a newspaper owned by the Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference. This paper, long under attack from the authorities, has now been suspended for four months. As editor Sisulu worked with a group of young journalists to provide news that other papers were either afraid to, or uninterested in publishing.

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He was active in forming the Union of Black Journalists, which was banned in 1977; and he was elected first president of the Writers' Association of South Africa after the banning of the UBJ. This association was later widened to become the Media Workers' Association of South Africa.

It was under his leadership in this organisation that black journalists began to challenge the format of black newspapers - consisting mainly of township crime and pages of sport; and to present news of the political struggle of the black people. While declaring his open commitment to the aspirations of his people, as President of MWASA Sisulu never imposed his own views and was very popular and respected among fellow journalists.

In August 1979 he was sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment for refusing to answer questions in a trial of a Post reporter, Thami Mkhwanazi, (who was sentenced to 7 years). In 1980, however, two Pretoria Supreme Court judges set aside Sisulu's sentence and ordered a re-trial. In that year, Sisulu played a leading role in a lengthy strike by black journalists and other media employees. As a result of the way he led this struggle, MWASA won management recognition as a new union. When he was banned in 1980 the managing directors of S.A. Associated Newspapers and Argus called for the lifting of his ban, and that on other journalists.

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He was awarded a medal for 'commitment to truth and freedom' by the Rothko Chapel, a Texas-based organisation, and he was also nominated as prisoner of conscience by Time magazine. In 1984, with intervention from the Neimann Foundation and the US Embassy he was allowed to leave for Harvard University for a year's study as a Neimann Fellow.

At the beginning of 1986, Sisulu delivered the keynote address at the National Education Crisis Committee meeting in Durban and it is this address that has been cited as the cause of his detention. In fact, it was this speech which was influential in obtaining agreement that the students should return to school after a long boycott. However, when an urgent application for Sisulu's release was made in November of last year (after he had been detained for 11 months) Justice Harms of the Rand Supreme Court used this speech to reject the application. Harms said it was clear



from Sisulu's speech that "some of the aims of the NECC were laudable while others were legitimate", but, he added, "the speech as a whole does evince an intention to overthrow the state by using black children and exploiting the conditions and grievances surrounding black education." He also added that Sisulu had the "insuperable difficulty" that the Appeal Court had ruled that the minister of law and order's failure to consider a detainee's representation would have no legal consequence.

In the Observer of the 11th October 1987, Donald Trelford was present when South Africa's chief censor, Stoffel Botha, denied knowing by Sisulu had then been held for 10 months, mostly in solitary confinement; but told Trelford "I want to reply with the fullest sincerity. I want to say that the Minister who decided it must have decided that Mr Sisulu is not conducive to the kind of society we wish to create."

It is now about 15 months that Sisulu has had to endure detention - there are no charges, there has been no trial; they can keep him for as long as they wish, as they are keeping his father, Walter Sisulu, who has been in jail with Mandela since 1964. Zwelakhe's mother, Albertina, a President of the now banned United Democratic Front, has also been put under restrictions amounting to virtual house arrest.

Zwelakhe Sisulu is obviously a very tough, politically aware and courageous individual. But it has been proved time and time again that the intelligence, strength and resilience of people who have been detained for prolonged periods in solitary confinement cannot save them from psychological and personality changes of a severe nature. Who could endure prolonged, endless incarceration under such conditions without suffering Lifetime effects?



# NUJ

## NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS

Acorn House, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP Tel: 01-278 7916

Our ref: FRP/G.

1st June, 1988.

Ms. Hilda Bernstein,  
Old House Farm,  
DORSTONE,  
Herefordshire HR3 6BL.

Dear Ms. Bernstein,

Thank you for your letter of 30th March 1988. I apologise most sincerely for the delay in responding.

I can assure you that the NUJ has been concerned for many years about the South African apartheid regime and has campaigned strongly against it. In particular, the Union has campaigned against the restrictions placed upon the Press in South Africa, particularly the "alternative" press, and the harassment and persecution of black journalists. We have protested vigorously to the South African authorities about Zwelakhe Sisulu's detention in particular.

You will know that the newspaper of which Sisulu is Editor - "New Nation" - is currently under suspension of publication, as are a number of other newspapers, including "South" which was banned about a month ago. We watch the situation closely.

The NUJ is in constant touch with the trade union movement and other organisations in South Africa. We will continue to press the South African authorities for the release of Sisulu and other journalists, and for an end to the harassment of black journalists.

The NUJ will not stay silent in the face of persecutions against our black brothers and sisters there.

Yours sincerely,

H. Conroy  
  
HARRY CONROY  
General Secretary.

rs.





WI PETERCHURCH 9 DISTRICT  
 Address 'WESLEY PLACE' PETERCHURCH.  
 Telephone 550-609. Date 4.12.90.

Dear Lrs. Bernstein -  
 We are making up our Programme for 19 91 and would like to invite you to give us a 45-60 minutes ~~Demonstration/Lecture~~ Talk on ART - SUBJECT TO BE CHOSEN BY YOU. (subject)  
 We meet in GOLDEN VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE. (place)  
PETERCHURCH.  
 and would be ready for you to speak at 8 p.m. (time)

The dates we have available are: -  
APRIL 9<sup>th</sup> 1991.

Please note that any items you wish to sell (unless you represent a British based Marketing Board) should be placed on the WI Sales Table where the usual WI commission of \_\_\_\_\_% will be deducted

Would you please complete the attached Reply Form and return it in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Yours sincerely,  
(Lrs.) Dorothy Hillman.  
Correspondence Secretary.

Reply Form

Name (with titles etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Details of interest \_\_\_\_\_

Fee \_\_\_\_\_ Expenses \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment required \_\_\_\_\_

Other requirements \_\_\_\_\_

To be handed to Treasurer on arrival at meeting

Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

Fee \_\_\_\_\_

Expenses \_\_\_\_\_

Received \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



28/9/91

Trinity College  
Oxford  
OX1 3BH  
23 September

Dear Mrs Bernstein

My name is Sarah Nuttall and I am South African and I am working on a D.Phil at Oxford.

I am writing on South African women's writing and I recently read *The World That Was Ours*. It is one of the many books by South Africans that, paradoxically, I have only heard of and read since I have been out of the country. It meant a great deal to me to read it, not least for all that it taught me about a place, Johannesburg, where I lived but.



I see increasingly, knew so little of.  
I was visiting Mary Benson in  
London recently and I learned  
from her that you live not  
too far from Oxford. I wonder-  
ed, when I heard that, whether  
I could visit you one day.  
I would so like to talk to  
you and perhaps ask you  
for your thoughts on some of  
the themes I'm working on  
— the role of stories in women's  
lives, in particular. Please  
do tell me if this would be  
inconvenient in any way.

I look forward to hearing from  
you.

Yours sincerely,  
Sarah Nuttall.



September 14, 2004.

Dear Hilda Bernstein,

I want to thank warmly for having written The World that was Ours, but, even more, for having lived it all in such a brave and compassionate way. Reading it has been a powerful experience.

Of course I knew about the situation in South Africa in the sixties - that is I had read some of the current books and heard people speak on the radio and had even felt, 'yes, this is insupportably terrible', - but it was not until I read your meticulous week-by-week account that the monstrous reality struck home, at last. All the mean humiliating details, the deliberate cruelties, and the endlessness (as it must have seemed). If at times you felt hopeless you have not let that show. I especially felt for your black friends with their amazing patience & resilience.

The only part of the book that puzzled me was the final section in Botswana. (Incidentally chapters 21



to the end would make a wonderful film - tense, exciting, but also comic.) I worked in Ciabalone for four months in 1986 and did not at all recognise the place you describe, but no doubt time has altered everything there, as it has in South Africa. No doubt too the charges will continue, and subsequent history turn out as surprising as the past.

That is a digression. This letter is to thank you; and to praise you & your husband for your faithfulness.

Yours sincerely,

Grillian Nelson.



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