

A/33 #

From: Benjamin Pogrud,
P.O. Box 1153,
JOHANNESBURG.

1st June, 1967.

REGISTERED

Mr Robert M. Sobukwe,
c/o Officer Commanding,
Robben Island Gaol,
Robben Island,
VIA CAPE TOWN.

Dearest Bob,

I saw Veronica this week and was so glad to have news of you. She is very worried about your state of health, and I share her concern. She told me that you had had an X-ray taken in March but had not yet received the results. Can't you ask about these and let us know? Also, isn't it time that you had a complete medical check-up from head to toe? This is something which older people like you and we should attend to at least once a year. (see how I pull myself down in the hope of convincing you!). But in all seriousness, you should have a check-up and not just the rather cursory one which a G.P. normally does, but the whole bang shoot with blood tests, checking of lungs, heart, etc. Can't you apply for this to be done? I am sure that the authorities would react sympathetically. Please do not neglect this, Bob. We are worried about you, and would like to know that you are well.

It is June now and you are still there. What can I say to you, my brother, except that there is a terrible pain inside me. The few difficulties which I have, and of which I make so much, are so small compared with your situation. When I do pray I pray to G-d for you, to continue to give you strength and hope for the future, and I pray also for Veronica and the children.

I cannot leave South Africa without making a last attempt to see you. I have accordingly written to the Minister asking whether I may have permission to see you before I leave -- on June 13, when Jenny and I will be in Cape Town.

And speaking of Jenny, I am sharing my pleasure in her by sending you three photographs in colour which she I have just had developed. Veronica has told me about your album of pictures, and I know you will like to add these. Also, a few days before I

leave I shall be spending an afternoon with the children, and Jessy will be with us. I shall take some pictures and will send them to you. Another point: I have arranged for a professional photographer to take pictures of the children when they are at home and these will be sent down to you. And while I think of it, those pictures which Veronica brought to you are excellent ones of her, as I am sure you will agree, but my vanity insists that I tell you that I do not look like that!

Earlier today I arranged for a radio to be posted to you. I finally decided to send you a mains-operated set so you will not have to worry about batteries. As required by regulations, it is only an PM and medium-wave set and is incapable of picking up foreign stations. As I told you previously, these mains-operated sets are difficult to come by these days and I hesitated to buy this one in case of possible difficulties about spare parts. But the people from whom I bought it assured me that there should be no difficulty about this. The set carries a three months guarantee which I shall send on to you.

Your telegram inquiring about the non-arrival of pillow-cases for the sheets -- the winter ones -- reached me, and Veronica tells me you received my replying telegram, sent on May 25, reading: "Apologies: stop pillowcases en route stop why so reply my query regarding radio food regards Benjamin!" (my letter of May 11 has answered the point about the radio). In sending you the pillowcases, I sent only one of each set as I was not sure how many pillows you have. I now know you have two, and will attend to this within the next couple of days. I am just waiting for the label from Veronica to go and show the people from whom I bought the goods.

Your need of an overcoat is noted and you will be receiving one soon. In view of your strictures about choice of clothing in a recent letter, I'm a bit nervous about this one!

Sorry about the delay in getting you a new chair. I have discovered that the person to whom I wrote in Cape Town about it is away, and I shall attend to it personally when I am down there at the end of next week.

I still hope to be away on June 14 and am waiting at present for an exit permit. My London address will be: 2 Hurstwood Court, Finchley Road, London NW11, England. Before I go I shall send you a supply of air letter cards, and will also telegraph you just as I go so that you can know to re-address your letters to me. A lot of butterflies in my tummy about it all.....

I have been wanting to tell you that among my last writing jobs was a campaign, recently concluded, to raise money to provide bursaries to enable bright but needy African youngsters to complete their high school education. I was appalled at the numbers of children forced to leave school for lack of a paltry sum. So I ran an "adopt a child" scheme to ask the public to "adopt" a child for R20 a year -- which pays half to a third of the required school fees and books. It's a small enough amount, and although so much more is needed by a child I kept it at this low figure so as to be able to bring in the ordinary, middle-class person. About 1,200 people responded and we raised about R24,000 -- again pitifully little in terms of the total need, but it does at least mean that about 450 children can continue at school. With your own schoolteaching history, I know this will be of interest to you.

Some points in your recent letters about your reasons for rejecting Christianity have been worrying me. In particular, there was the one sentence: "Now, whatever its origins, Christianity today is the religion of Europe." I would have thought rather that its origins were in Europe, but that it was today no longer such. In this country, certainly yes, and I believe that Christianity is suffering (example, the rise and extraordinary growth of the African separatist churches), and if things continue in the same way, will suffer even greater inroads because of this. But surely this does not apply to the rest of the world? Even allowing for the conservatism (?) of the churches, isn't there convincing refutation of this in the existence say of an African who is R.C. Archbishop of Maseru, or in Nigeria, or a Sinhalese Bishop of the Anglican Church? While voicing these queries I must say that I do agree with the other points mentioned at the same time by you -- namely, that only Christians qualify for salvation -- and you will readily appreciate why I do agree with you! But while checking over your reference to "spiritual assimilated", I wonder whether this isn't perhaps an over-harsh label which ignores the profound and sincere acceptance of Christianity by Africans and other "non-Europeans" (used in the broad sense, of course).

Earlier today I had to condense a speech which the Rev. C.F.S. Waude -- who is incidentally an admired and good friend of mine -- gave in Cape Town at the university tonight. You will probably have already read the report of the speech in the Cape papers, but tomorrow I shall enclose the local version which contains about 50 per cent of what he said. I must confess to having been very greatly moved by what he said. Particularly at this time, it aroused echoes within me, and brought to life again all my ~~xxxxxx~~ conflicts about staying or leaving here. To return to the original point, I would be interested in your

reactions to his outlining of a pure and good Christianity. Without in any way discounting the other objections expressed by you on doctrinal grounds, what I am concerned about is that it is really Christianity as applied in this country -- and not in its natural, world-wide application -- which brings about rejection. On another level, I have the same fear about democracy. One can hardly blame people for rejecting the concept as a whole and wishing to turn elsewhere for a system of government after looking at the local variety. But that is another matter, and probably one best left alone.

Before I end off, one point has just occurred to me: you might wish to play the radio while sitting outside, as I understand you are fond of sitting in the sun and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ exchanging playful banter with those about you as to who sends you clothing. I am arranging for a longer lead with the necessary plug attached to be prepared and will send this down to you shortly.

With much love and my prayers for you,

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