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September 12, 1977.

Mr J.T. Kruger MP
The Hon. the Minister of Justice,
Police and Prisons
216 Union Buildings
Church Street
PRETORIA
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Dear Mr Kruger,

On returning from overseas on Saturday I was shocked to find that you had issued a statement the day before in which you made public the fact of Mr Robert Sobukwe's ill health.

I cannot understand why such a statement was necessary. My letter to you of August 12, in which I gave you the then known details, was confidential and indeed (as it made abundantly clear) was sent to you entirely on that basis. When my wife, acting on my instructions, telephoned your office last Tuesday to convey the new information about Mr Sobukwe's condition, she repeatedly stressed that this too was being imparted confidentially.

Mr Sobukwe's illness should surely have been his own private concern until such time as he (or his family or close friends acting on his authority) chose to disclose it.

Throughout my recent dealings with you in this matter I believe I have acted in the best of faith, observing the restraints on lack of publicity and access by people to him as set out in our telephone discussions. The issuing of your statement is therefore all the more surprising and distressing.

I feel that I must also take this opportunity to point out to you that, looking back from this stage in time, the delay during July/August in obtaining permission for Mr Sobukwe to come to Johannesburg for a medical consultation could prove to have been tragically decisive.

As you will know, his first application to come here was refused. Only when I approached you directly was permission granted and even then a further week's delay was imposed.

You will recall the additional difficulties when your Department sought to limit the nature of Mr Sobukwe's access to a doctor when he came to Johannesburg.

And underlying all this is the terrible thought that, had he not been confined to Kimberley but been free at any time to obtain the best possible medical advice, the exact nature of his condition could have been detected far earlier, with immeasurably better prospects for treatment than now exist.

It is against this background that I wish to express the hope that he will now be allowed normal freedom to obtain medical assistance. But the medical view is that the harm has already been done.

Yours faithfully,

BENJAMIN POGRUND

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- **Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location:- **Johannesburg**

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DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- **A2618-Ba11-4-6**

Document Title:- **Letter (copy) to JT Kruger MP, Minister of Justice**

Author:- **Benjamin Pogrund**

Document Date:- **12 September 1977**