

Robben Island Isot,  
Robben Island.

17th June, 1965.

My dear Benjie,

I received your letter on the 4th June i.e. after you had returned to Johannesburg. In the circumstances I could not contact you as you desired.

The exams are over Benjie and the papers on the whole were very fair. I made some very silly mistakes, however, with regard to the instructions. For one thing I did not start every question on a new page as instructed and examiners can be very petulant. If, however, they concern themselves purely with the contents then I may just make it. However, I am quite satisfied now that I can pass this exam any time <sup>I wish</sup> and whatever the results this year I am happily assured that there has not been an alarming deterioration in my mental capacities.

And I know that that is your chief fear. After I had read your letter I felt a heaviness of the soul. This is the first time I have felt sad after reading a letter from you. I ~~noticed~~ detected a wa note of despair and dejection.

lenzie, and I was deeply perturbed that my closest friends should feel this way.

As you know that in 1937 my brother and I were the only two to pass 810 Six, out of a class of thirteen, but we couldn't go to College until 1940 because our parents didn't have the cash ready? Even then the best we could aspire to was the 'Native Primary Lower Teachers Certificate' - a three-year course after Standard Six. In 1943 I was granted permission to do J.C. in one year. I topped the class in June but went down with T.B. in August and so couldn't write the exam. I had to repeat that class in 1944. But it was during my illness that I made friends with people who undertook to see me through 'Varsity'.

In 1947 then I entered Fort Hare. At the Freshers' Social held in April, speaking on behalf of the Freshers of Wesley House - my residence - I unleashed a venomous attack on the attitudes of Wesley - its aggravated spirit of "hostelism" and the un-intellectual nature of its discussions. Wesley House, of course, is arch-conservative and there were some outsiders present. The Senior students were incensed and at a subsequent "House" meeting, they decided, almost unanimously, that I be sent to Coventry for a month. We

freshers didn't have the vote, so my friends and fellow-freshers could do nothing but merely sympathize. I was placed in a private bathroom, with the tub removed to make place for my bed. It was an Isolation cell, all night. Within the precincts of Wesley House nobody was allowed to talk to me! It didn't bother me this much.

In June we were enfranchised and in the elections that were subsequently held to elect the House Committee for the ensuing year, I stood as a candidate for the Chairmanship. I won! You can't imagine the din and confusion. The elections were declared null and void and fresh elections ordered. All Senior students were fetched wherever they were to cast their vote. I lost by about six votes. The next year I became a member of the House Committee with a room to myself!

In 1949 the New 7th Avars Constitution came into being whereby the SRC and the President of the SRC were to be elected by popular vote. I was the first President of the SRC to be elected according to that Constitution, Benjie and the vote was as near unanimous as makes no difference. The moral? That I was born for better things, Benjie, than the Premiership of South Africa - Wesley House South Africa are on a par!

In assessing our position, Benjie, we must not lose sight of the fact that South Africa represents not even a thousandth-millionth of the world population. And the ruling caste represents an infinitesimal fraction in being contemptuous of racial arrogance we represent the distilled product of western intellectual thought. And the greatest minds of both East and West say it is absolute rubbish to declare: "Die list rechts: dieim volk ist alles" as young Nazis were exhorted to do on waking up every morning. Because if you are nothing, your folk is nothing either.

And even in this country, the silent courage of thousands of men and women who VOLUNTARILY stand up to be counted is astounding testimony to the depths of human courage:

Then it is the brave man chooses,  
While the coward stands aside  
Till the multitudes make virtue  
Of the faith they had denied.

Now for the mundane. I am afraid my needs grow with the years: I certainly will wish to replace the sheets and the

shirts and the pyjamas. They're all now out  
 The shirts will be size 16½ collars and please  
 make them striped or checked, beige, but NOT  
 white! No, my friend, it is not a question of  
 colour prejudice. Otherwise I'd ask for black  
 shirts, worn, as you will recall, by Mussolini's  
Fascists, while Hitler's blonde Aryans wore  
BROWN shirts!

I should also like ~~to~~ trousers I can  
 wear with my black shoes. My grey pair is giving  
 in. I do not have my measurements but a size  
 5½ will not demand much by way of alterations.

I may later need a hot-point and a  
 radiator. But do not get these yet. I'll let  
 you know later, in case permission has  
 to be obtained to acquire them.

I saw in the Press that the Chairman  
 of the Defence and Aid Fund in the Western Cape  
 has been told to leave the country within ten days.  
 Was that Mr Blandell? I haven't been getting  
 the papers regularly - it's about three weeks now  
 I've not been getting the C Times - and I have  
 missed some interesting news. I'll write to  
 you soon. I have so much to say! By the  
 way the pyjamas are size 42 as you know!  
 Love to Jimmy! Yours sincerely, Bob.

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