

Moscow,

15th April, 1990

Dear Benjie,

Out of the most tedious situations a silver lining can be found - if one looks hard enough! I have been dumped in Moscow for a couple of weeks while the Bureau Chief is on holiday. You may say Moscow cannot be dull at a time like this. And it isn't, professionally. But having lived here for three years, the extra-curricular attractions are limited and, glasnost or not, the 25-mile zone around the city still is in force on foreigners.

The silver lining is that I had the presence of mind to pick up the proof copy of your book before I left London, and to bring it with me. I'm very glad I did. It has been absorbing reading and has made me grateful that you persevered with the project.

Obviously it's a very personal book and it has helped me that I know you as I do. Sobukwe was before my time, and I have always found the PAC a shadowy organization in more ways than one. So I have learnt a lot as well. One puts the book down feeling a sense of loss and waste. It would be fascinating to see Sobukwe in action now. No one can doubt his strong principles, which makes me wonder what approach he would be adopting to the ANC, and Buthelezi. His anti-Communism, of course, is being vindicated by events, but Africanism (if that is the correct word) looks more dubious. I may have missed it, but I didn't see any reference in his letters to the "one party state" either. It's hard to believe he would approve - and since his time South Africa has become still more diverse.

I understand you better, too! I wonder if you feel, now, that it would have been better if that exit permit had been allowed? My reasons for thinking not are not entirely selfish; in the end you left anyway, and before you did go you achieved very much more.



Most of all, though, I'm glad you stuck with it and finished the book. It will have a better reception in the current climate in South Africa and it will serve as a constant reminder of the cost of reaching this point which has been paid by so many people. And, of course, it is a warning of the repression which still lies close to the surface and could be unleashed again should circumstances change for the worse.

I wish someone would ask me to do a review! Unfortunately book reviews are not considered 'news you can use' at my utilitarian publication.

I hope this reaches you before too long. By the time it does I will be back in the West (Jean and I are going to Amsterdam for a few days' break) or in Romania and Bulgaria which aren't quite in the West yet!

With best wishes,

Robin



Robert Sobukwe Papers

***PUBLISHER:***

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

*Location:- Johannesburg*

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***DOCUMENT DETAILS:***

*Document ID:- A2618-Da1*

*Document Title:- Letter to 'Benjie' Pogrund from 'Robin', Moscow (original, handwritten)*

*Document Date:- 15 April 1990*