

✓

From: Benjamin Pogrand,  
304 Dorono,  
Van der Merwe Street,  
Milbrow,  
JOHANNESBURG.

1st December, 1966.

Registered.

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

My dear Bob,

Thank you for your letter of November 2 which reached me last week. Looking at your letter I can hardly credit that all these days have passed since it arrived. I have been on leave for the past three weeks, working on my thesis, and I have become very much the academic, oblivious to the passing of time and to events around me. Despite my delayed reply to your letter I have, however, been active on your account in other spheres as I shall outline later, so I hope you will forgive me.

Earlier today I posted off to you a carton of books for your leisure moments. They are:

Frankau: The devil we know  
Attenborough: Zoo quest for a dragon  
Howard: The long view  
Robertson: Of whales and men  
Walker: Harry Black  
Elery Queen's 1963 anthology  
Harris: The sleeping mountain  
Innes: The land God gave to Cain  
Maupassant: Miss Harriet and other stories  
Linklater: Jean in America  
Moliere: The Miser and other plays  
Three Restoration Comedies  
Sophocles: The Theban plays  
Two Satyr plays  
MacKenzie: The rival monster  
The Thurber carnival  
Ibsen: Three plays  
Faulkner: The unvanquished  
- do - : The sound and the fury  
Balzac: Eugenie Grandet  
Short stories from America

Smith: The night life of the gods  
Butler: The way of all flesh  
Fleming: Goldfinger  
Deighton: Funeral in Berlin  
Great English short stories  
Braine: Room at the top  
Innes: Campbell's kingdom  
Shaw: Major Barbara  
Monsarrat: Three corvettes  
Forrester: The captain from Connecticut  
Argosy short story magazine: three issues

The books come to you with best wishes from Jill, Ernie and myself. They are a pretty wide cross-section of reading and we hope will meet any mood in which you happen to be. Some of them are unlikely to be to your taste but I thought I would rather err on the side of sending books which you might not wish to read than possibly deprive you in any way. I don't know whether you have read<sup>any</sup> of Ian Fleming's James Bond books (Goldfinger is in the batch). Like the late President Kennedy, I am an avid Bond fan, and if you turn out to be the same, please let me know and I shall send other books on Bond. Also, in case you have not previously read Thurber, there is a great treat in store for you. But I must tell you that, from my own experience, Thurber has to be read at least ten to twelve times before one properly begins to savour his delicious humour. My favourite stories are "The night the bed fell" and "The day the dam broke". For best results, they should be read aloud! Deighton's "Funeral in Berlin" represents the current popularity of high-class thriller stories. Again, if it's to your taste, I'll be happy to send down some more.

Also sent to you recently, after arriving from London, were further study books:

P. Gregg: A social and economic history of Britain  
L.A.C. Knowles: Industrial and commercial revolutions in  
Great Britain:  
J.W. Allen: A history of political thought in the 16th cent.

Will you let me know when all these books reach you so that I can check that there are no postal delays? I should be sending you some more study books soon -- I am awaiting the arrival of some from the U.K.

Incidentally, I have been meaning to ask you for some while: do you have access to any library down there, either for study or reading books?

With the carton of books posted today was included a bottle of ink. In case it has reached you before this letter I hope it

did not cause you to fear that I had gone off my head. It is, in fact, part of my personal Xmas gift to you -- a Sheaffer fountain pen. I vouch for the pen: I was given one as a present some months ago and have been delighted with it after years of writing with a ball-point. I chose a medium nib for you as it seems best to suit your handwriting. I shall be sending the pen off shortly, as your name is being engraved on it at the moment. I decided to get it away early to ensure that it reaches you by Xmas. And, of course, it comes to you with my heartfelt good wishes and affectionate greetings. You know that during the Passover festival Jews wish each other the blessing: "Next year in Jerusalem", and Passover is indeed a festival of freedom, commemorating the escape from Egypt. For you my wish is simply: "Next year at home"

I have also renewed your "Cape Argos" subscription and I hope there has not been any ~~duddy~~ delay in it reaching you. During the next few days I shall be seeing your wife to make arrangements for her visit to you next month, so once more there is great joy for you to look forward to.

I haven't yet heard from Milieva but I am looking forward to getting a letter from her, in whatever language she prefers to use!

About your remarks about my getting a house-run-swimming-pool: I am afraid you are getting me mixed up with other, moneyed friends of yours. I doubt that I shall ever be able to aspire to such delights. I was simply born to be poor. I am constantly oppressed by a feeling that I am letting down the traditions of my people because I am such a lousy businessman. It's not that I don't want money, but I just don't have the slightest idea of how to go about getting it! Despite my lack of a swimming-pool, both now and in the future, I hope we can still be friends.

Actually, now that it is summer-time, I do have problems with Jenny over a hot weekend. She's an active, energetic little thing so I have to try and find a pool to take ~~xxxxx~~ her to so that she can keep amused. If the weather is unpleasant, and we retire to my flat, I ply her with paints and books and other occupational therapy -- and within the half hour I usually retire to a couch feeling limp and exhausted in trying to keep up with her. She continues, by the way, to be a glorious little girl, full of charm and warmth. She will be starting school next year. A new age restriction has just been introduced here, whereby children must be five at least six months before December 31 if they are to be allowed to start school. Jenny misses this deadline by eight days. Representations on her behalf are at present with the Education Department, because she is undoubtedly ready for school and has a tremendous desire to learn. In fact, I think the suddenness with which this departmental ruling has been sprung on

parents has been rather unfair to children, but then, what can one do? If the department won't accept her, she will start at a private school as these are unaffected by the new ruling.

To answer your query about attending the various independence celebrations: unhappily, I am passportless, but then I love my country so I don't really mind not being able to visit other strange, foreign lands.

About the three books you mentioned: I had not intended reading them. But your comments have thrown new light on them, and one of these days -- perhaps in twenty years' time -- I must rush out and buy them.

At the start of this letter I referred to being on leave. I have taken a month's leave to concentrate on my thesis, as I had been neglecting it -- which is probably the under-statement of the year. But now I have been going flat out on it and it is moving quite well, although I am constantly dismayed by the amount of work still to be done. There are hundreds of tiny points which have to be meticulously checked and followed up, and I find myself spending hour after hour <sup>after</sup> trying to track down something which I know in advance will probably only mean a single sentence in the completed book. When my leave is over I shall continue giving it every possible moment of my time, and I think that the momentum I am gaining now will carry me through to put in the required work after a day at the office. All being well, I hope to have the first few chapters in draft form by sometime in February.

I tend to be like a yo-yo about my feelings about the quality of the thesis: at times I feel that I am going to be able to turn out something of quality and significance. Most other times, however, I am filled with deep depression about my lack of ability to do this job as it should be done. Whatever happens, it won't suffer from any lack of trying on my part.

Much to my regret, Margie leaves for Cape Town on Tuesday. I shall be travelling down on December 23, remaining there until January 15. I shall be staying with my Parents in Sea Point so I shall be looking across at you.... Jenny will also be down there then and will be staying with me for a few days -- which both of us are already greatly looking forward to.

All for now, my friend. I hope you are keeping well, and that your spirit remains undaunted. Margie sends you her best wishes, and so do Jill and Ernie.

God bless you,

***PUBLISHER:***

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

*Location:-* **Johannesburg**

**©2010**

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

***DOCUMENT DETAILS:***

*Document ID:-* **A2618-Ba4-79**

*Document Title:-* **Letter (registerd) to Sobukwe, Robben Island (copy) and transcript**

*Author:-* **Benjamin Pogrund**

*Document Date:-* **1 December 1966**