

11 July 1955

Dear Eve and Tony

If you remember we left Addis on a rather cool, overcast morning; and arrived at Heathrow in the evening where it was 80° - the hottest June day for X years, one of those evenings with a huge red sun sinking into an apricot haze. We walked miles and miles - Heathrow expands each month - sweat pouring down us . . . back from Africa! But got home that night.

I daresay I've told you this, but will tell you again: Going to Ethiopia was a long-term dream, a 30-year dream to see Lalabela; and it must have been twenty years ago that I proposed we should sell everything, buy a land rover and travel via France, Italy, overland, eventually arriving at Massawa and then travelling the whole length of the Rift Valley to Nairobi. He wouldn't agree - he's always so bloody practical. So our visit to you was a sort of consolation prize, with the added bonus of your company. I just said I was going, full stop, and as time went by he gradually decided to come along - whether out of concern for the hobbling 80-year-old or other motives I cannot say. But I really couldn't have managed without him. I must have mentioned what Rebecca West said about men: 'I can't really see any need for the existence of men, except that they're useful when you want to move the piano.' Well, I should not really reduce Rusty to that level, but other things apart, he is so useful in carrying the bags.

I felt I always knew Eve better than Tony, but now I feel I know Tony just as much, or more. The arthritis worked in our favour, as it kept you from busying yourself with your own affairs, although it would have been wonderful if you had been able to come to Lalabela. But talking was so good - what I enjoy most in life: travel, talk, food (or should it be food, talk?)

Eve, I thought I might get a piece on Women's Hour about the WFC Project, but the material I have is a bit thin. If you think it worthwhile, or can spare the time, perhaps you could fill it out a bit for me. For instance, how does a project of this nature start? That is, who first notices, decides? Then, apart from the ILO, who funds it, maybe something about the time spent drawing up details and estimates and conferring with the donors. And, inevitably, the human interest story or two, about a woman (giving her a name, can be any name) who was assaulted, raped, robbed, or whatever; their families? Are there husbands, children? That sort of thing. Something about the alternative work - that is, I saw weaving (from sisal?) of hats, mats, pouffes - what else? And also, something about yourself, what projects you have been involved with in the various countries - that is, projects concerned with women. How about it? I would really like to do it.

Toni's not back yet, and Ivan is working, so we have not seen him. Keith seems busy with getting his mansion in order (putting in central heating, etc) and doing mundane sort of around England work. Frances is coming to visit us soon; and Patrick is so busy building up his company (Data Factors) that he scarcely has time to play squash.

Tony, there are some good observations in Germaine Greer's Granta piece, but I really disliked her tone of swingeing superiority to everyone except herself and Ann. (They were 'packages'; too) As you read her you are compelled to think: How clever she is! How much more she knows about history, cultures, peoples, agriculture, than all these ignorant tourists. It turned me off. So at least we can find something to disagree about. I did enjoy our conversations so much because we were so often in accord. Anyone who agrees with my point of view is obviously clever.

Here's the Philip Larkin piece. What did you think about all the revelations of his personal life - a nasty, anti-semitic, racist, dirty, narrow little man? And how does it affect his poetry? I can still read it without feeling that

it makes any difference to my reactions to it. Remind me some time to tell you about Ruth Miller and her poetry (buy a copy of her poems when you are in South Africa. They are really something.) But hasn't our Winnie taught us that all these characters are more than one character, that people are more complex and contradictory than we can bear to admit?

We are sending you a couple of books you need to have. How much more I could read if we didn't have television! It is to say, once again, thank you for your welcoming, entertaining, generous and so enjoyable hospitality.

Much love

This Be The Verse

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn
BY fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were soppy-stern
And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as hearly as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself.

Eve: I'm trying to redraw the woman on your leaflet - it could be much more attractive. Will send something when I can get up the energy to finish it. Keep us informed about To's arthritis, the Jhg diagnosis, etc.

July 14 92

Old House Farm
Dorstone
Herefordshire HR3 6BL
UK

Dear Eve and Tony,

The enclosed snap - just developed - seemed as good an excuse as any to write to you. It's not very flattering to Tony, but Eve has that slightly thoughtful smile that is quite typical, while Rica's hand can be seen, also typically - reaching for a glass, and the Nutties came out nicely.

I have to tell you that you were incised, cut, mutilated, and even after that, taken out of the book. I kept you to the very end. I thought some of the things that Eve said about living in other countries were so apt. But we had to cut down in the sections, and my editor wanted you to go rather than another option. I'm really sad about it. It was such a lovely 'nomads' story (the book begins with nomads.) But the result of my profligate interviewing is that in January, when the book is to be published, it will cost £25! Nobody will be able to afford to buy it. I've told all my friends to start putting money in their piggy banks now. Even so, my editor maintains she had to fight to keep it to that price. It's a monstrous book, something like 700 pages. The kind of book, even if you could get it from the library, you can't read in bed.

Rusty spent some time preparing a document on a policy for housing, trying to get someone to think differently about the horrendous problem of housing people. He has sent a copy to Walter, and one to Alan Lipman, so if you are interested, Tony, perhaps you could get it from him. We've put our house on the market and are trying to sell it, without much hope, because people who are desperate to move cut their prices right down, otherwise nothing sells. We would try to get a place to live in Oxford. Why Oxford? London is too dear. We need to be somewhere near bookshops, galleries, CULTURE+, we're living like zombies here, and Oxford is easy access to London, and you can at least get around there wasily. I love the country, I love the scenery here, and in Spring and when we have a good summer it is so beautiful and desirable. But come winter I would rather be anywhere else. I've started painting again, and what a m I painting? Why, flowers, what else is there to paint around here? If I do enough, I'll exhibit them in a local gallery, and these are the kind of pictures that sell.

We hear the bad news - not all, some of it. We are depressed by it, but at least you people are there and in it. The truth is, that much as I'd like to be there with you all, I don't want to be fighting for the cause. And if we are to come, even for a year or so, we have to persuade Rusty that he is really needed for something. (While I can paint pcitures.)

Toni has been working madly on her Namibia film. Ivan is off to the Crimea to make a film set in Spain. Work that one out. (It's cheaper to make it in the Crimea.) The sun has shone here quite a lot this year. I can't think of anything more to tell you. Stay well, remember us, and if either of you ever come to Britain, please ring (0981-550-266) And much love

c/o ILO
P.O. Box 2788
Addis Ababa
26/3/95

Dear Hilda and Rusty,

It was good to see you last December, you both seemed in such good shape, not withstanding the hip! Pam phoned some weeks back and told us that you'd had your hip replacement op, Hilda. Do hope it went smoothly and that you weren't in much pain - and that you're now beginning to walk normally again? And do hope that you are still considering a visit to Utopia in June or July? (June if possible, July is normally very wet and it remains so right through to end September). But I should add that we'll definitely be here now until early February, so no need to rush the visit if you're still feeling a little frail in June.

We were rather relieved to get back here. Sad to leave the family, of course, but December is a wicked month, and all that shopping wore us to a frazzle. The week in Geneva was quite hectic too, and very cold, snow every day. More kgs accumulated via fondues and chocolate and apple tarts...

Not that life here has been particularly quiet. My workload varies between the frantic and the insane. Not helped by having my wallet, with all vital documents like driver's license and ID card stolen, and both my project vehicles being injured in the traffic fray, all in the first three days of this week. I thought armageddon had come. To's beginning to gather in the tasks and soon he'll probably be too busy to provide the heavenly support system I've grown accustomed to. On his agenda is surfing the internet, making a film (maybe -ed.) with someone from BBC, being a panelist at a workshop on the 1974 and 1984 famines, and telling the ECA how to improve their information services (even if it turns out they don't wanna know -ed.); all so far unpaid, but we hope this hectic activity will sooner or later lead to riches beyond the dreams of avarice; or at least a few months' well paid consultancies.

We met Aziz Pahad about a month ago, up here for an OAU conference. He invited us to a reception, where we met his Addis team - all pre-change career diplomats from Vienna and Rome etc postings, except for the Ambassador, Wilele Nhlapo, whom we knew slightly from London days. Several of these typically beefy characters, getting their wires crossed as they saw our caucasoid features, were confiding and chummy, and told us things like the ANC hadn't really won the elections (which one man confusingly described as "free but not fair")....[interpolation from ed.: Aziz greatly amused us when he said at the reception, to one of the older Foreign Affairs elements from Pretoria: "I'm from London, you know, I've seen Yes, Minister - so don't try that stuff with me"] Aziz then invited us to a party given by one of the secretaries, with all the embassy staff there (a braai, with sosaties [and potjiekos -ed.]). Strange experience, it made us realise what people in SA are having to struggle with. I can't help feeling sorry for Wilele, though he seems as though he'll be well able to cope, he's got a good sense of humour and nicely quiet self-confidence.

Mary wrote some weeks back, saying there were plans to set up a Commission for Gender Equality, asking for inputs. Up to now, my mind's a blank. I'm glad they decided against a "Women's Affairs Ministry", I wrote Mary an impassioned plea against last year, having worked with many such farces. Many African women here, by the way, are great Winnie fans, mainly on the grounds that she's the only well known African woman around at the moment, but also because she is so much the opposite of the loyal, quiet strength behind the throne.

BTO

We managed to get away from Addis for the first time last week, for a few days' camping on the shores of Lake Langano, about 180 km from here. Lovely pink tinged lake, bilharzia free because of some mineral content, so we swam several times a day, went for long walks, read good books, cooked on a log fire. We had the camping site to ourselves, woke to hear only geese honking and birds twittering. Total peace, except for one night when the tent blew down, but that's supposed to be part of the fun.

My mother's coming next week, for a couple of months. We'd hoped that Andy and Kate and sprogs would come over easter, but they've decided to spend the money on buying a house instead, found the cot of their dreams in Greenwich [well, Charlton actually, near Greenwich -ed.], so they'll no longer be east enders, best for the children. No other family visits planned so far for this year. We have some friends coming from Holland for a couple of weeks in May, but no one scheduled thereafter, so put in your bookings NOW!

Meantime, keep in touch, tell us how you both are, how Oxford's treating you, what news of Toni et al. [Message to Toni from Eve and ed.: sorry we didn't phone you while in UK, somehow a horrible family rush - are you all well? Would love to hear from you, at length, tho don't deserve it]

[and love from ^{*}-ed.]

Much love,
Eve

* T.

Dear Eve (and Tony, only it's usually the women who do the letter-writing - at least in my house, it might be different with you)

I keep telling everybody I see that I'm going to Ethiopia in June; why? they ask which I think is a silly question. I therefore hope that my visit is still on, because it would be an awful loss of face as well as a devastating blow to me if it is not convenient for you. At the back of my mind I think Rusty may come as well, but he has not committed himself, the issue is money; I'm being selfish and reckless, prepared to raid our small reserves that are for daily living on (we can scarcely be said to live on our old-age pensions) and throw myself on the mercy of our kids when the store runs out. Rusty is too moral to do anything like that. Incidentally, I can't understand why, of all our SA circle, we seem to be the only family that doesn't have money in our old age. I think perhaps the years of trials, from 1956 to 1964, always hanging on by our teeth, interruptions of jobs, then re-starting here with no capital at all, at scratch in middle age . . . well, those must be the reasons, but that was similar for many others, & they all think that one can go backwards and forwards to and from SA whenever one wants (when I moan about English winters - why don't you come to SA for the winter? they say). Oh well.

I had the hip replacement in February - it's now seven weeks ago, and I'm cross & impatient that I'm still hobbling around with one stick - I thought by now I'd be walking normally. I have made progress, but it's so slow! It was a horrible operation - never had surgery before, & I take a much more respectful view of it. Health service has deteriorated terribly under Tories, but still I had it free, plus help from Social Services afterwards with equipment, etc. But by June I know I will be fully mobile; so, Tony, I'm depending on you.

We had two very sad events - Tamara Baker dying of brain tumour, which was devastating for Julius, who could not reconcile himself to the inevitability of it, nor to the establishment treatment, believing to the end that if he had been able to arrange alternative treatment it would not have happened. Then, just before the funeral, the death of Daniel Feinberg, who threw himself from a window. A muddled story, but it seems he was in a very neurotic and depressed state. I cannot bear to contemplate Barbara's life. Her other son, Nick, has gone to SA, & has found a job there; and she is left with nothing except Adam (who is hopelessly schizophrenic) to care for, without any money - she works as a cleaner. (And I'm complaining). But we have reached an age when those of our friends who haven't returned to SA are dying or have died, and I feel that we are the ~~sort~~ sort of mess of old bits of wood, broken seaweed, etc, that you see at the edge of the sea - left behind. Sad, isn't it?

At last, after the most dismal, grey, depressing, dark, endless, wet, cold and debilitating winter, we are emerging to Spring, with daffodils, lighter evenings, and the sense that everything is beginning again. Ever read Philip Larkin? He has a wonderful poem about Spring: 'The trees are coming into leaf/ Like something ~~new~~ being said/ The recent buds relax and spread/ Their greenness is a kind of grief . . .'

Keith won the Nikon '~~press~~ press photographer of the year' prize, which was quite substantial, and also one from Sony. And he and Julie got married one day in Camden Town without telling anyone until afterwards (with two cab-drivers as witnesses.) I see Andy's name on press pix all the time.

I'm longing to start drawing and painting again, but can't find anything here that moves me. Hope Addis will give some answers.

Be well. And much love

8 or thereabouts April 1996

Dear Halls

The reason these two pix have taken so long to reach you is because: they were at the beginning of a new film in my camera which remained unused, even tho' I did some snaps of Christmas at Toni's until . . .

Beata phoned in the middle of February, during the nastiest, dullest, most depressing, desolate and dark winter imaginable to say she was making a film about Nelson, & wanted a scene where he sits around chatting with old friends about the past, and would we be prepared to come if she paid our fares? Would we! She had hardly put the phone down when I had booked our passages. So we went at the end of Feb, stayed nearly a month - frog-leaped over the last horrid days of winter, and I unspooled the rest of the film in my camera, so these two pictures emerged.

It was wonderful. We had a marvellous free holiday staying with middle class friends in beautiful homes with the obligatory swimming pools and domestic assistance. SA was just brilliant - brilliant to look at, blinding light, deep shadows, scarlet and orange bouganvillea against an ultramarine sky, gorgeous Cape Town (where we went after the filming). And brilliant in the excitement of what is happening - it's like a country fizzing with yeast, crime rates fizzing, but also good things in all sorts of places and ways. As to Beata's film, I think our contribution was about nil and hope that most of it will land on the cutting room floor. But it enabled us to have this great holiday, spend a day with Nelson and other old friends (Bizos, Ruth Mompoti, etc, Mac's house) - like winning a lottery.

When were you both back there? We were astonished at the way things are changing, of the lack of tension between whites and blacks, the easy acceptance of each other, the way young whites are beginning not to understand how apartheid could ever have existed. Of course, it's fine for the whites. Except for the crime problem (which is just the horrendous indication of the real deep problems) and the fact that they have to barricade their houses and employ armed resistance, etc, there has been no fundamental change in their standards of living. In Johannesburg we were staying with friends in Lyndhurst, next to Balfour Park, and noticed the local high school has gone 100% black; the young men and women from Alexandra shacks where elementary facilities for washing, etc, are hardly available, looking immaculate in their school uniforms with white shirts and blazers. Here the whites have obviously taken their kids elsewhere, but in other Johannesburg schools we saw the mix of pupils, and a young white (non-political) mother collecting her daughters from what was once Marist Brothers, saying: My children just don't understand what apartheid was about, and why.

We went to parliament, I had a talk to Frene (generally reviled as bossy and authoritarian, which I think she should be) and spoke to some of the bright young black MB's, so self-confident and articulate and feminist. We had lunch with Abdul Minty in Pretoria - he's now working in the Foreign Affairs Ministry - a few more like him would do the ANC a lot of good. He told us FAs is corrupt from top to bottom, to such an extent that when you want to change things none of the staff can understand why. Hair-raising stories. Tell you when we meet (by which time they will be dated)..

Now we're back, at least the bulbs are coming up and there are signs of the not-to-be-missed English Spring everywhere. Rusty is chomping away at his memoirs, determined now to finish and be done with them. And I'm messing around, half-working on another small book (not about SA any more) and occasionally drawing, but mostly wasting time, writing letters, gardening, shopping, this and that ~~and that~~ - it's extraordinary how just this (that can't be a whole day

It was terribly cold that night. Early in the morning - we had travelled the whole way without any stop except for petrol - we moved down to the docks at Cape Town. And we now knew that really we are getting down to Robben Island. We were pushed into a waiting boat. It was a bad experience in that boat, because as prisoners we were driven down, down inside the hull of the boat where people are

separate cage next to us, to watch us the whole night. door outside. There was also a warder who was locked, but in a this truck, which was eventually locked with a grille inside and carrying long rifles, guarding right up to the moment we get inside But we were heavily guarded. There were policemen, and soldiers

our captors to tell us the time. the time because now we didn't have watches, and nor could be ask stopped at a garage to fill up the fuel - you could only imagine whole night - past Vereeniging, Kroonstad, Bloemfontein. Then we know what was happening. It was around midnight. We travelled the were flickering blue lights, and another one in front. We did not There were trucks following us - these ordinary police vans which jacket and a white shirt. And we were handcuffed.

stuff. And we were given black suits - a black trouser and a black ordinary soft porridge, as soon as it get cold it becomes a hard holding water, and a third one which is holding food - that is which acts as a toilet for us; there is a similar bucket which is munn security truck. We are locked there inside. There is a bucket there, toilet soap and other things, and we are put into the maxi- what to dress up for. So we took up our little belongings we had kicking the doors, just informing you to dress up. You don't know Sizwe were just told at night to pack our things. The warders came After some time, I and the four who were members of Umkhonto we

*My typewriter ribbon has
given out & I haven't another, and writing by hand is
tedious - So! Please let me know about some help -*

so she had to go back until my lawyer made arrangements for her. told that I was not there at Leekop, I was still at Vereeniging, a third visit - she had failed previously on two occasions. She was get newspaper. We were not. My wife was able to see me only after

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