

27th September, 1967.

Robben Island Gaol  
P.O. Robben Island

Mr. Benjamin Pogrud  
705 Doromo  
van der Merwe Street, Hillbrow  
Johannesburg

My dear Benjie,

It would appear that you did not receive my letter of the 5th June. In it I thanked you for the overcoat, commented on yours and Norma's relationship; recalled that I was a hesitant, timid lecturer and you a struggling, 'frequently frustrated' cub at the "Daily Mail" when we met. I remarked also that I did not wish to encourage an "incipient chauvinism". And that was before the Middle East war.

As you say, whatever the peace settlement, the war has had an immense impact on the Jewish people throughout the world. But, Benjie, you are an intellectual; and that imposes upon you the obligation not only to think but also to carry about with you an awareness of history.

You make the point which has been made frequently of late that the Jews of Europe had no excuse for allowing themselves to be led meekly to slaughter: and that the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto indicated the birth of a new spirit - the determination to assert Jewish manliness.

What you young fellows must remember is that the Jews that ~~Hitler~~ murdered were citizens of Nationalist Socialist Germany! A new Hitler with an equivalent military power could do the same thing today AND GET AWAY WITH IT !! Israel couldn't save them; nor could U.N.O. Why didn't they resist? Hardly a tenth of the population and facing the most efficient and scientific tyranny the world had ever produced!

And was the Warsaw Ghetto's resistance so unusual? It was remarkable, yes; but unusual? Jewish military strategy has always been suicidal in its recklessness, from the time of David to the Maccabees. As for resistance to the last man woman and child you have the recent excavations at Herod's 12m temple - I forget the name of the place - Harad or something.

Now for the point I made about peace. In the American Civil War it is recorded that Grant treated Lee when he came to surrender, as though he were his superior officer. When he left the hall, Grant and his men saluted. Quite recently, in a boxing championship in Britain, The Scottish champion McGowan was forced to retire because of a badly-cut eye. The defending champion, an Asian, who was defeating McGowan for the second time, went to McGowan's corner - and they say McGowan was in tears - and knelt before him. The grand gesture, Benjie!

A further illustration. Moshoeshoe 1 when attacked by the Zulus, inflicted a crushing defeat on them at Thaba Bosiu and, as they retreated, sent a large herd of cattle to "his brothers". The Zulus never again attacked

him. He cut the English forces to ribbons in 1859 (?) and while Warden, the British Commander was in a state of bewilderment and humiliation, sued for peace! I am not saying Israel should be "magnanimous". If I were Nasser I would want no magnanimity from the Jews. All I am saying is that it is Eshkol and not Nasser who can afford a diplomatic rebuff, it is "adulations" that might go to Dayan's head, not "ululations". I love the sound of the latter though!

It had been my intention ~~though~~ in 1959 to have Egypt and the "Arab north", taxed with the direction of their loyalty. Are they African or Arab? If they are Africans then the Middle East problem is not theirs except in so far as Egyptian territory is concerned. Algeria, Morocco and Tunis have no reason whatever to be involved. I have asked myself whether that would be my attitude regarding the Afro-Americans and the West Indians and I think I can honestly say "yes". As soon as Hitler saw himself as the guardian of Germans anywhere and everywhere he chose the path of war for he was bound to find it irksome that Germans anywhere should be under non-German rule.

Sorry for the lengthy sermon! Thank you for both your letters and particularly for the children's photographs. They truly came out well. But you'll have to warn Veronica that unless she counts her calories she'll soon look like the female version of the Prime Minister of a neighbouring state!

Both she and Miliswa wrote and told me about the party which they obviously enjoyed immensely. Miliswa wrote to me in English and begged that I allow her in future to write to me in English. Reading between the lines I gathered that "Ntate Benjie" was not pleased with the progress they were making in English. Times have changed, of course,, and I do not offer it as an excuse, but believe me, she writes

/much

much better English than I did when I was in Std IV. Admittedly I was much younger. I was eleven then.

It appears that I will have to make it two letters once more. I still have a lot to say.

Thank you for news about Jenny. You have every reason to be proud of her. In your photographs together she is, indeed, very much the 'young lady'. She has a relaxed, unaffected appearance.

With regard to books. I am afraid that I have not received my books that bear your name. The twenty nine books I acknowledged were straight from the booksellers - Poetry and Autobiography mostly. Continued in letter No 2.

27th September, 1967

Mr Benjamin Pogrud,

Regarding the question of clothing, Veronica has been rather remiss I fear. As I told you earlier, Clive had sent me a grey pair of trousers. Because of my diminished 'public opinion' (paunch), it required alterations particularly as regards length. I gave it to Veronica together with the khaki pair of trousers you sent and a grey pair which was to serve as a pattern. She left them with Clive she says; but I have not received them up to now and I haven't heard from Clive either. Incidentally, the slop pail hasn't arrived yet either.

Consequently I shall need additional trousers. I intend ~~to~~ sending you the brown pair as a model so that you may get me a similar brown and charcoal grey. The styling and material I leave to you.

The British Embassy have sent me a receipt for the exam fees: Thank you. Yes I am still finding it difficult to concentrate; and I expect the trouble to get worse, not better. It is unavoidable in the circumstances, I think.

You seem to be having quite a busy time. I am glad, therefore, you were able to write to Mrs Duncan. Strange as it may sound, Pat was the first man, after PAC was formed, to accuse me of racialism! Came up to the Wits to tell me I was a racist and he would fight me. I spent a whole afternoon trying to persuade him I was not a racist. He was very honest. I liked him

Thank you for the R10.00 (Ten Rands). You see, I sent R25.00 (Twenty five Rands) to my mother in April to enable her to visit me here and paid about R18.00 (eighteen) for the newspapers "Cape Times", "Cape Argus" and "Sunday Times". So my funds were ~~very~~ <sup>very</sup> low indeed. But I am all right now.

When Veronica comes we shall work out what quantities of washing powder, tooth paste, toothbrushes, blades etc. I use per year, so that these can be sent from outside to ~~en~~ enable me to use my funds on edibles only.

I have been working, on and off, on some Xhosa short stories and poems and an unambitious English novelette. I read some of these to Veronica but dammit, she's puritan! I am sending you a free translation of one Xhosa poem I read out to her. She thought it was not quite 'nice'. I ask you! Later I'll send you a translation of one of the Xhosa stories and perhaps the first two chapters of my English ~~work~~ work. Your comments, I need hardly say, will be appreciated. Here goes, then:-

They All Say So

I'm not going to keep quiet  
 I'm going to tell you what you are:  
 Oh you can beat me, to your heart's content.  
 You're very brave when it is women you face.

I've been holding my peace too long  
 I must speak or I'll burst.  
 The water in which  
 The midwife washed you at your birth,  
 Was a whore's water.

Don't promise me; hit me  
 Your scowl doesn't scare me this bit.  
 What's that? That's your mother!  
 Yes I say so; I say that's your mother.  
 I was a virgin, me, boy,  
 When I met you

"They all say so"?

I am not concerned  
 With what others say.

I.....What's that?

"My breasts had already fallen<sup>n</sup>"?

I have a high bust, that's what I have.

But as for carnal knowledge of a man

That I acquired when I met you.

What is it you say? You're insulting me!

You are going to produce the woman

Who helped me procure abortions.

"It's my mother"? You say it's my mother

Who has removed my stomachs? (procured abortions)

Oh no you've gone too far today.

My father's house is intact, you know;

The roof does not leak.

What's that? "I shouldn't come back?  
 I shouldn't come back  
 Until my manners have improved?"  
Sis! Look who's talking!  
 I beg your pardon? I don't hear:  
 Bah! That doesn't disturb me  
 You can collect all your whores  
 And accommodate them here;  
 But all this is mine  
 I am taking away with me.  
 You will lie on the bare ground  
 For you do not have a mat even;  
 O! Is that what you say!  
 "You're going to change us,  
 Trade us in like motor cars?"  
 I'm going to stay; just for that reason;  
 This gall that you have  
 I'm going to empty you of it!

There you are Benjie. The gall is what we would call  
 check, I believe. As I say, Veronica was not impressed. This  
 isn't typical of the poems I've written. I'll send you further  
 samples. My weakness is I hate revising anything I have  
 written.

I'll answer your question on religion later. But  
 religion is part of a people's culture. With the Jews, their  
 religion is, in fact, their history: their past, their present  
 and their future. Divorced from your religion, you are divorced  
 from the Israel of God.

With the very best wishes, Benjie. Love to Jenny and  
 friends.

Affectionately,

Bob

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