

From: Benjamin Pogrand,
Box 1138,
JOHANNESBURG.

25th June, 1968.

Mr Robert M. Sobukwe,
c/o Officer Commanding,
Robben Island Gaol,
ROBBERN ISLAND,
via Cape Town.

Dearest Bob,

Looking at your last two letters, I am horrified at the time which has passed since I received them: your letter of April 3 which came on April 25, and your letter of April 24 which came on May 13. Do please forgive me, Bob. I just do not know how the time has passed like this. In these past few weeks, I have felt especially grieved about you, and I have made pleas for you, Veronica and the children in my prayers. I pray that you will all continue to have the strength and belief which you have had to battle to maintain for so wretchedly long a time. You know the extent of our closeness, and I need not say more. God bless you; my brother.

By the time you are reading this, I shall have made another of my public appearances. It isn't quite an applauding public, but then the appearances are against my own desires! There is so much that I wish I could ~~you~~ talk to you about. To have a brother relatively so late in life (note my sensitivity about my age), and then not to be able to talk to him freely and to share ideas and to obtain his guidance on matters on which I so badly need guidance and wise counsel...

Norma has applied to return here. It is the only hope for her, because she simply cannot go on existing in London. The children, too, show worrying signs of insecurity. She is waiting to hear now whether it will be allowed. Her divorce was heard in Pretoria last week, and will be final on July 31.

I have some lovely pictures of Jeany and am enclosing two for you. As always, we speak constantly of Uncle Bob, and you are assured of a place in her heart. She is seven on July 8 and I have promised her a budgie for her birthday.

There are several other enclosures with this letter and I had better explain them: there is a picture taken a couple of weeks ago of Ernie and me. We were at an academic function at Wits, and took great delight in dressing up. Jill was disgusted with us and screamed that we were nothing but children! But I suspect that she was cross because Ernie hadn't got her her academic dress. Anyway, I got a Mail photographer to take our picture, and here it is. Ernie asks me to tell you that he doesn't really look as rotund as the picture shows. That was worrisome because he is over-weight, and it isn't healthy for him. I keep on making nasty remarks about his girth in the hope of shaming him into keeping to a strict diet, but I don't have much ~~success~~ success.

There is also a picture of a painting which I recently bought. It is by Bill Ainslie: I already own a number of his works. This particular painting is intended as a gift for Norma. I am sorry that it is in black and white as the colouring is superb: chiefly oranges and browns with white in the top right hand side. But I hope it will give you an idea of what it looks like. Also enclosed is a picture of a bronze sculpting which I obtained from the foundry only last week. It's by Dumile, an outstanding African artist who has just left to go and study in London. The picture is not a very good one, and does not catch the essence of the piece -- and extraordinary blend, in the mother, of protectiveness, arrogance, defiance, primeval strength and all kinds of other things. But again, I hope it will give you some idea of what it looks like. I don't think I have mentioned it before, but for the past couple of years I have been doing a fair amount of buying of art works and I have quite a nice little collection. Certainly, I love all that I have bought. Most of the stuff is with Norma in London, as I shipped it over to her last year when I was due to go. She has it in her flat, but she has so many financial problems that I have told her to go ahead and try to sell the pieces if she has to. It's sad, but it cannot be helped.

And to round it off, I am enclosing the text of an article which I recently wrote. It appeared in Mail, but in much summarised form, so I am sending you the full text. In view of our discussions about Israel, it will, I know, be of especial interest to you. I was impressed by this man -- Shimon Peres -- and thoroughly enjoyed meeting him and writing him up. It's one of the few pieces of writing that I have done for some time. At the same time, and I think this comes out in the article -- it was meant to -- I was unhappy about the extent to which his cold logic took him in regard to the terrible problem of the Arab refugees. I felt at times that I was talking to an alien being, that this was not the sort of Jew to whom I was accustomed and in which I believe. /S.

Perhaps this is the metamorphosis in the modern Jew to which I referred in previous letters. Perhaps it is due to the fact that Perea and his countrymen must be like this simply to survive. But I cannot ever accept that, even in the fight for survival, there ~~has~~ can be no room for compassion. And even apart from this ~~my~~ aspect, I agree with you fully that Israel must show compassion, if only for reasons of expediency, if it is ever to live in peace with the Arabs. I might tell you that, because of you, I committed a bit of a blunder with Perea. When I first met him I was a bit vague as to exactly who he was. As we were walking along to sit Gowa, I quoted to him your last letter, which I had received very shortly before, in which you said that if I had any influence with Dayan, I should get him to display compassion towards the Arabs. I was a bit surprised at the coolness with which Perea responded. Only later, during the interview, did I understand why -- when I learned he was secretary-general of the party to which Dayan belongs and they are close friends!

I spoke to Veronica earlier today and she is well. She plans to be with you in August and I shall be seeing her soon to assist with train, etc arrangements. The children are up here at the moment and I am hoping that it will be possible for me to see them.

In a letter dated June 19 Eulalie Stott told me that she had just that day had a telegram from you advising that your record player was at the docks. She was going to attend to it immediately. She also renewed your subscriptions to the Cape Times and Cape Argus and I hope there was no break in the delivery to you. She also sent across a fan heater, a War heater with adapters and a folding chair, all of which I hope have reached you safely and are as ~~the~~ you wanted.

Exams are over now...how did they go? Will you let me have the results as soon as you get them? And will you let me know as soon as possible your book needs for your third year of study?

I haven't even started to reply to your two letters, but I shall write again in the next few days.

With much love,

PUBLISHER:

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

Location:- Johannesburg

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DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- A2618-Ba6-32

Document Title:- Letter to Robert Sobukwe (copy) two typed copies, one transcript

Author:- Benjamin Pogrund

Document Date:- 25 May 1968