

PC16/513/4/5



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19th February, 1983.

Dear Wolf,

I am rather worried about this typewriter. The print seems to me to be far too small. It will take an awful lot of words to fill a page. And a fellow of your age probably won't be able to separate one line from the next. Perhaps I should just stick to double-spacing.

I thought you were showing off a bit, writing two letters in December. I hope you weren't trying to seduce me into thinking that that had been your average through the year.

All those difficult questions you kept bringing up, too, Hamm. What makes you think I know the answers to any of them? You should know by now, my boy, that I am not much good at the theoretical side of things. My system, which isn't all that successful, I ~~MUST CONCEDE~~, is to try to do what seems to be the best thing at the moment, and then hope for the best. Yesterday I went to Durban to have breakfast with Eulalie Stott, who you may remember. She is now a member of the Cape Town City Council and trying, as best she can, to keep alive the kind of ideas we propagated, in the field which that position offers her. In a small way REALITY tried to do the same, but everyone who is involved with REALITY is also involved in other organisations, most of them pretty small, which are trying to expose and oppose the kind of things the government has been doing for 35 years, and keeps on doing. "Removals" of black people, mainly African these days, is something that goes on relentlessly all the time, and only very occasionally is a ~~xxxx~~ 'removal' stopped, but working to try to prevent them from happening is something that keeps quite a few people you used to know quite heavily involved. But the question which Eulalie posed yesterday was whether one didn't now need a specific organisation, political if not a political party, whose function it would be to promote and act out the implications of ~~the~~ an updated version of what the LP stood for - and I don't know the answer; or maybe old age and wear and tear makes one shy away from all the grind which would be involved in trying to start all over again. Or has, as you put it, time 'consigned us to the dustbin of history'? Was what we stood for too 'decent' and 'sensible', to use two words which don't seem to enjoy much favour amongst most people competing for political power these days - and perhaps, at bottom, never did? Scare the wits out of the opposition and shout them down instead of listening to them seem to be the tactics of the day here whether they are being employed by white nationalists of whatever degree of unpleasantness, Black Consciousness punters, or Congressites. The latter have staged an undoubted comeback since Soweto 1976, and one is thankful for their support for non-racialism at the top, but not sure how far down the ranks it goes. Eulalie told me an old story in a context slightly different from the one with which we grew up about the black cook or whoever he was who, when asked by his boss whether he would really cut his throat if the revolution came, replied that of course he wouldn't -- it would be the cook from next door who would do that. Eulalie's story was about going to some Crossroads function with some old ANC women friends of hers. During the lunch-break, to pass the time, various groups of young people entertained the gathering with songs etc.. One of these groups ~~xxxx~~ had amongst their repertoire a song, the theme of which was "Kill the Whites!" She said her friends looked a bit shamefaced when there was no mistaking what the song was saying, until one of them leant across to her and whispered "Of course, they don't mean you!" So there are no very attractive futures being offered from the more strident elements on the political scene today, and it is stridency which seems to win the day in most parts of the world today.

Last night's news told us that Nkomo had been detained by Mugabe as he was about to leave the country for some conference or other. I can't help

feeling that this will turn out to have been a ghastly mistake. As a matter of fact I can't help feeling now that Mugabe has not given nearly enough of his own personal time and influence to making reconciliation really mean something to the Ndebele people. Certainly it sounds as if terrible things are ~~going on~~ being done to the Matabele people by his Shona soldiers -- and where the hell is that going to lead to? I am coming around to the conclusion that tribal feelings are much too deep-seated in African society not to be given the most careful consideration when trying to work out what kind of constitutional system is going to work in the earlier stages of independence. One hopes of course that its influence will slowly disappear, but it does seem to be a hell of a slow process. It may be that in the terrible industrial revolution type circumstances of a place like Soweto feelings of tribal commitment can be lost within a generation or two, but back in the ~~hilly~~ countryside they seem to remain almost as strong as ever.

That seems to be about enough for you for the New Year. I hope it treats you reasonably well. Just make sure you don't answer this letter by return of post. Think about it for a few months.