

21 May 1985

PC116/5/4/2/22



Dear Peter,

As usual I do not know how much there is going to be to this letter, but single-spacing can't be a bad omen (except for the reader). Of course I do not have a recent epistole from you to reply to - for good reasons, no doubt - and therefore can feel free to let my mind roam and pepper you with the results.

I had already decided to write this letter a few days ago when the BBC told us that the current treason trial is to be held in Pietermaritzburg, but this evening's news has taken us a step further down the road of having to put some questions to you. To deal with the treason trial first - it would appear that the government in your parts of the world is hoping to get a conviction on the basis of the speeches made by various members of the UDF, and I must say that that sounds most incredible. At least in '56 they had the Freedom Charter to use as evidence of the Congress Alliance's intention to overturn the system, and even there they failed miserably. It makes one ask whether the govt. is split, with one part trying to move away from some aspects of apartheid while another part is demonstrating its determination to maintain total control. Are any of our friends in the defence team? Have you been able to see anything anything of Archie Gumede? If you see him again, give him my best wishes, though he won't remember me. I should very much like to hear what has happened to his family in Johannesburg, i.e. the Mswelis.

Last night's news was at first rather confusing, the statement being that in future blacks were to be allowed to take up residence (permanent?) in white areas, but I quickly realised that what was really meant by that was that blacks were no longer to be considered temporary in South Africa. Perhaps an indication that change is coming much faster now, and that as a result a number of contradictory or at least confusing messages are coming through. Nevertheless I still feel very suspicious about all this change, and I was a little surprised that in the most recent issue of REALITY to reach us you seemed to give a cautious welcome to one of the recent changes. Of course I can understand that, but only yesterday I was asked for a view on one of the recent changes (at an engineers' meeting, I might add) and pointed out that the Pretoria govt. had successfully managed to stall progress on Namibia for what must be ten years now. All this stuff about Cubans being the obstacle is just so much eyewash, in my view. Today's news is that the Pretoria govt. is planning to do away with the law preventing non-racial parties, and I must admit that I was not sure how to take that. Can one simply start up again where things were left 17 years ago? That seems almost impossible to me, but I shall be very interested to see what you people do about that. In many ways the passage of time is quite unbelievable, and when Celeste said to me over Easter that it happened to be the 25th anniversary of our arrival here I was sufficiently staggered to sit down and write some impressions of what has stuck in my memory over these years, relating to events here and those which we have known about down your way. One of these days I must get that text to you - it could even amuse you, if you have the stamina to work your way through it.

I have the impression that my previous letter to you was written towards the end of the miners' dispute (the union does not like to have it referred to as a strike). Since then we also seem to have moved a long way here, and just at present the govt. seems to be in a right old mess. Apparently the bookies are even offering odds on Mrs. T. being moved out by her party before the end of next year (thereafter she would presumably be impossible to remove before the next election). One of the sadder manifestations of this government's mad philosophy is the way that they are trying to run down

the universities, cutting a few per cent annually from their budgets and telling them to get more private funding. In the text to which I referred over the page I expressed the view that if Beveridge brought in the Welfare State then it could be said that Robbins (who report laid the foundations of the expansion of tertiary education in the mid-sixties) might be said to have been responsible for the Enlightened State, and this is now being dismantled. It's incredibly crazy, but of course if everything has to have a market value then you cannot afford universities. There appear to be many signs that the country at large has at last woken up to the stupidity of Thatcher philosophy, but just think what damage has been done. Will the feeling be strong enough to get rid of her at the next election? These constant polls can be very misleading.

One of these days I must pluck up courage and write to Jack and Beryl. For some reason I feel unable to sit down and write in the way I write to you - I don't know how to explain that. Perhaps Jack has been more of a headmaster, perhaps the infrequency of writing makes me more cautious and conscious of the need for structure. All this sounds like a load of rubbish, so I'll quit rather than continue in this vein.

Yours, *Wolf*

*Bishop Tutin seems to be doing
opening a very sizable profit
(modern funds). I think have
he comes across to you people?*