

PC16/5/4/24



P.O.Box 71,  
Hilton,  
3245.

9th June, 1985.

Dear Wolf,

I have been debating in my mind whether one Brown is worth only two Hamms, or three, but have decided to be generous, in the letter context anyway, and not wait for a third Hamm before stirring myself.

I had another look at the Reality leader you were referring to and think it was fair enough comment at the time. A bit optimistic, perhaps, but one has to be hopeful sometimes. One gets now the feeling that the Nats have lost the old certainties and are floundering about out of their depth, and this, however unsatisfactory, at least feels a bit better than the unyielding rigidity of the past.

Having said that let me go on to say that the township scene is, in my view, much worse than it has ever been before. Uitenhage and Crossroads were merely the high points of clashes between the police and township people. There are now incidents daily (that is no exaggeration) and usually somebody is killed. And the army is being used increasingly. There was an outcry when it was first used to seal off townships in the Vaal triangle earlier in the year but the point has now been reached where white South Africa, at least, is beginning to regard it as quite normal that this should be happening.

More serious even than the campaign of terror being waged by the powers-that-be in the townships, to my mind, are the things that the black people in them are doing to each other. Initially attacks seemed to directed exclusively at people who were accused of being "agents of the system", and they were horrible enough, but increasingly now reports are of a kind of civil war between supporters of the UDF and AZAPO, the principal black consciousness organisation. Murder is commonplace; petrol-bombing of the homes and property of people on the other side, and the more of them who get burned to death the better; there are regular reports of bodies being found after having apparently been first stoned and then burnt on a pyre of old tyres. For ordinary people in the townships it must be quite terrifying. They seem to have no protections at all, either from the police, when they throw their weight around, or the mob, whoever it claims to support, when it goes on the rampage. And one can't help feeling that many old scores are being settled which have nothing to do with political affiliations at all. Bishop Tutu has done his best to bring the two factions together and has had some success at the leadership level but one wonders how much control they have at, to use the current phrase, "grassroots", because the situation seems to continue to be as bad as ever.

From that cheerful paragraph let me move on to something not much different or more cheerful! You ask about Archie. I went to see him a couple of times when he was in the Durban gaol and have seen him twice since he has been out on bail. The gaol visits were pretty pointless because you had to shout at each other through what seemed to all intents and purposes to be a soundproof glass screen. As there were about twenty other couples shouting at each other through the same screen in the same room, it was just about impossible to talk at all. The granting of bail put an end to that farce and I have been down to see him in Pinetown twice, as much as anything to discuss his domestic affairs and try to sort them out. One of the consequences of his detention has been that his law practice had to be sold. I think this may well have been a blessing in disguise. Archie was certainly no businessman and would be much better off working for somebody else than trying to run his own business. In any even he could not have done so while the trial is on, and it would inevitably have got into difficulties. As far as the trial itself goes he seems fairly confident. I was away when they appeared in court in late May and secured an adjournment to July while the state provides the defence with "further particulars" of the charges.

He has promised to send me a copy of the charge-sheet as it relates to him personally. The State is supposed to produce the "further particulars" this week, and the Defence will then have to make what they can out of them before the court resumes in about a month's time. The Court itself looks like a military strongpoint. The Judge is good and will give a fair trial but the law, of course, won't help the accused. And we can be sure that the whole thing will drag on for a long time -- one of its main purposes being to keep as many people as possible out of circulation. In the meantime Archie, at least, is extremely worried about the township drift to violence. He feels that the only people who could stop it are those who have been detained. I have some doubts on that score myself but at least one would like to see them given the opportunity at least to try.

I forgot to ask Archie about his Johannesburg family when I saw him. Will try to remember next time. His Pinetown family isn't much help to him, I'm afraid. Their contribution towards keeping the home going seems to be precisely nil.

We haven't made any progress yet with next year's plans, so I can't tell you anything -- except that I must put in that passport application!

Unterhalters should be in England about now to assist at the birth of a grandchild. They then seem to be going on to Canada to marry off a daughter that I thought was married already. These things are not always as clear-cut nowadays as they used to be.