

PC 16/5/4/2/44

P.O.Box 71,  
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25th August, 1985.

Dear Wolf,

I don't really know why I'm starting on this letter so long before it is really due. You may think that because you have written two since my last that you are ahead, but if you measure the size of your print against the size of mine and the size of your spaces against the size of mine you will see soon enough that you have a long way to go before you catch up.

Things here are certainly no better in the townships than when I last wrote and probably a good deal worse. The worst part of the Emergency is that one just doesn't know what the hell is going on. There are grim stories coming out about the activities of the police, especially, of course, from the E.Cape. Here, in Natal, there was peace until the murder three weeks ago of the Natal treasurer of the UDF and a Durban attorney, Mrs. Mxenge. Her husband was murdered 4 years ago and nobody has ever been charged. Her murder was followed by memorial services which erupted into violence, some say instigated by outsiders, perhaps Buthelezi supporters — but whatever started it off it ended up with the schoolchildren on the rampage, in a mindless splurge of destruction and looting, followed by other explosions, often of a Black/Indian hue. The situation is much better now, in many places order having been restored by Buthelezi's Inkatha. Meantime, down in Cape Town, Boesak has announced a march on Pollsmoor Prison to demand the release of Mandela next Wednesday. That could end up in something very nasty. I don't like Boesak but he can't be accused of lacking guts.

And the Nats? You probably know that PW was billed as being due to make a memorable reformist speech in Durban two weeks ago. Instead, all he could bring himself to do was repeat the things he said in January and which then, you may remember, I found quite encouraging. It seems that you were right to pour cold water on those hopes. Now he seems hell bent on trying to shoot his way out of trouble. The whole depressing scene is one of the country lurching about, each lurch making it more and more difficult to get it back on a reasonably stable course heading towards a reasonably decent and stable society. Mandela's new commitment to violence and rejection of the idea of a new National Convention will fuel the fires of violence in the townships you can be sure.

Against this background the Liberal Party workshop in Grahamstown looks pretty irrelevant, but in fact, and to my surprise, a remarkably successful occasion. There will be something about it in the forthcoming REALITY but, unfortunately, not something very good. I thought a professor of journalism, who was there, would be a good report producer, but the report he produced is pretty poor. For your sins I will send you a copy of my contribution later this week. Its pretty heavy stuff, so it might have to go by surface mail. In the meantime we are having follow-up meetings, of those who attended Grahamstown, in the main centres, to decide what should be done next.

I haven't been able to ask Archie about his JHB family yet. The last time I planned to go and see him he had to go to a consultation about the case. I was planning to go this Tuesday but he tells me he may have to do the same this time. On Friday the attorney with whom he is supposed to do the consulting was detained, so there's another setback. I told you I thought they had as fair a judge as they could hope for. Since then he has appointed two assessors to help him, one Black and one Indian, something that has certainly never been done before here as far as I know.

Archie sent me a copy of the charges as they relate to him, as I think I told you he had promised to do. They look pretty thin to me, but I suppose the kind of laws we have could turn them into something quite substantial.

A burning issue continues to be that of "resettlement" of black freehold communities and Homelands "Consolidation". We had hoped the Nats had decided to forget about it but they announced at their Natal Congress, where PW made his terrible speech, that their plans for Natal would soon be announced. Some of us have been quite heavily engaged in this fight against official policy for quite a long time and yesterday we had a workshop here in PMB for threatened communities and people from others which had already been moved to resettlement areas. There were over 100 representatives from areas all over Natal, full of determination to stand up for their right to stay where they are. One hopes the government will have enough sense to leave these people where they are and use the money it would have spent moving them, in developing the places where they already are. Otherwise it is going to find itself faced with resistance from still another quarter. It is noticeable that even in these rural and relatively conservative communities, people have had just about all they can take of being pushed around by officialdom.

I hope you charm the Germans and the Malaysians into thinking you know what you're talking about.

Passport application half filled in !