

PCW/5/4/2/50



P.O.Box 71,
Hilton,
3245,
South Africa.

8th September, 1985.

Mrs. Ann Karson,
113f Country Squire Drive,
Cromwell,
CT 06416,
U.S.A.

Dear Ann,

We were delighted to get your letter. I'm not surprised you haven't had much time for letter-writing these last two years, it sounds as if you must have been working yourself to death.

We have changed your REALITY address to this one but I am afraid it will only come into operation with the September number. If you have missed any of the others, let us know and we'll send them. July, I think, is worth having, because it deals with the E.Cape situation, so I hope that has reached you.

I expect you have been seeing even worse things about South Africa on your TV than you were seeing when you wrote....almost certainly a great deal more than we have been shown here. The situation has been very bad. The Eastern Cape has been in the forefront of a state of upheaval which has now been going on since the beginning of the year. The main effect of the state of emergency has been to make it impossible to know what is happening in the areas where the emergency regulations apply. Another secondary effect seems to have been to spread the violence and the chaos to areas which were comparatively free of it before -- first Durban, and in this last fortnight, Cape Town. In Durban the event which triggered things off was the murder of a leading UDF member, Veronica Mxenge; who started it and who provoked who we will probably never know but it developed into an internecine Black/Black and Black/Indian thing, with loss of life, destruction of stores, houses, schools and, almost as a climax, the Gandhi Settlement at Phoenix. In Cape Town it seems to have been the break-up of the march on Pollsmoor prison to demand the release of Mandela which provided the flash-point, and things there still sound as if they are in a terrible state. Interesting is that these last two major upheavals have taken place in areas which are not covered by the emergency. One consequence of that is that at least one has some idea of what is going on. David Russell was one of those arrested for leading the Pollsmoor march.

The Emergency was declared on July 21st. That very day we had come back to Maritzburg from Grahamstown where we had been to a Liberal Party workshop. The Institute for Social and Economic Research at Rhodes organised a gathering of old members to look at what the Party had done, assess its importance, and consider whether the time was not overdue for the Liberal view to be more vigorously put in South Africa again. The gathering itself was a great success. I had to do a kind of history of the Party, in very potted form, and will send you off a copy of that shortly, just for your interest -- and to see if I have got anything wrong! The idea is that the full proceedings will be published sometime. The question of whether there was a role we should be playing now was passed on to a series of regional meetings to be held in the various centres,

I think it unlikely that a new LP will emerge from it all but one does have the feeling of an approaching point of stalemate between the forces available to the state and those of their opponents where there might be a mediating role of some sort to be played if solutions which were clearly non-racial and protected minority and individual interest could be produced. It may all be hopeless wishful thinking but I suspect that we will move in a fairly quiet and unassuming way to set up a kind of think-tank of people from all groups who will be free of the ideological straight-jackets of the left and the right. Sounds pretty optimistic but it might just help us to avoid the authoritarian state which both sets of ideologues seem bent on.

Otherwise, we keep well. Alan will be staying with us on Tuesday, the day of our monthly REALITY meeting. He is well and getting on with the second volume of his autobiography. Oscar Wollheim came to Grahamstown, as did Gerald Gordon, both remarkably spry for their many years, although they didn't have a great deal to say for themselves.

I hope you have got over giving up your job and moving. Let us know where you will be when you start on your travels.