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9th March, 1936.



Dear Wolf,

There seem to be a few questions over from those letters you wrote before my last one to you.

First, about Archie. I was at the trial the day before the case collapsed and it was obvious that something odd was going on. We waited for what seemed hours for things to get started, which gave me a chance to talk to him at some length at least, then it started up long enough to allow the "expert witness", a not very effective (from the State's point of view) follower in the footsteps of Prof. Murray of Archie's last trial, make various admissions. It was those, I think, which caused the case to fold up. After objections to what he was saying by the Defence, there was another adjournment, and I then left. Since then I have been to see Archie a couple of times. The last time he had just had a death threat and another to burn down his house and, to cap it all, a visit from the SB asking all the questions about near relatives etc which are often the prelude to a ban. They are also often just an attempt to intimidate, so perhaps he won't be banned again. He seemed to me less cheerful than usual, which wasn't surprising. On one of my visits I remembered to ask him about your friend — was it Msweli? — that he used to stay with in JHB, but now can't remember what he told me! I am trying to make a point of going to see him about once a month so next time I remember I'll ask him again.

Time has put a new complexion on the Freedom Charter. Lots of people find it acceptable now who would have been terrified even to look at it thirty years ago. My problem with it is that I can't really forget how the whole thing was done. As far as its present support is concerned, I would say it is very wide. The UDF leadership would certainly support it but there may be some amongst its affiliates who don't, and probably quite a lot more <sup>members</sup> of those affiliates who don't know much about it. AZAPO, the main black consciousness political group is, of course, very anti-, but not for reasons you and I would approve. AZAPO seems to be quite strong in certain areas and one of the worst developments of the past year has been the murderous series of vendettas between its supporters and UDF supporters. This factionalism is now becoming quite widespread, not only between AZAPO and UDF but here in Natal between UDF and Buthelesi's Inkatha. In other parts vigilante groups have appeared. Whether they are a reaction to young radicals throwing their weight around or have been instigated by the powers-that-be, nobody knows. All one does know is that the possibilities of building a united black front have been poisoned by it and although most black anger and violence is still directed against the Government some of it has been turned inward into the black communities. It is highly likely that Archie's threats came from other blacks and that, if anything should happen to him, the police won't try very hard to find out who did it.

Next question: Van Zyl Slabbert. The one view is that he has deserted his friends and will never be of any political consequence. This would certainly be Alan's feeling — that he did something unforgivable to his Party and that, if you can do something like that, there is something flawed in you which will prevent you from ever doing anything of great consequence. I don't share that view. I think he did do something terrible to his Party, but I think it will survive it, which I also think is important. This is not to say that I think his Party is great but I do think it helps to have them in Parliament, questioning and exposing. Certainly they can find out things for us in the fight against resettlement which we would never be able to find out any other way. The indications are that they will survive his departure and perhaps not even lose much support as far as voters go as a result of it. They have held seats in two municipal elections since he went, one with an increased majority. Having said that let me say further and at once is that with Slabbert going, they may have lost the ear of Afrikanerdom. Because the Nats certainly listened to him, little though they liked what he had to say, and little though they did about it. It is said (and who knows if there is ever anything to these rumours?) that there were 20 or 30 who might have crossed to him if things had continued to go as they have been. If there are such people I think one of the reasons for his going as he did was to shock them into facing up to the desperate situation we are in. If that was one of his aims it certainly hasn't had any visible effect yet, but it might one day.

I am sure that Slabbert sees himself in a broker's role, talking to people who won't yet talk to one another and moving between them to try to establish what common ground there is between them, bringing them slowly to the point where they will talk to one another. It is some such role for Liberals that has been underdiscussion amongst the people who were in Grahamstown last year. Meetings have been held in Natal, Transvaal and the E. and W. Cape and we are due to bring people from the various centres together late in April to decide what the next step should be. Between that and Slabbert something might develop which could be of some influence and help when the inevitable time for talking one day comes. That having been said, the time for talking may still be a long way off. It would be the greatest mistake in the world to think that the Nats are on the point of capitulating. Far from it. They are quite capable of going blundering on for years and years. What one hopes is that people they can talk to, like Slabbert, may be able to give them some reassurance from the black side that there is an assured future for Afrikaners here.

Next question -- Paton: He is coming to the end of the second volume of his autobiography. He has got past the part which has been worrying him most -- the chapters on Leftwich and Harris. For Harris he has not much sympathy but the story of Leftwich and the question of betrayal has always fascinated him. Having forgiven Leftwich he has been very reluctant to hurt him and add to the terrible burden of that betrayal and so, for years, he has shied away from writing the Leftwich story. Now it is done. It certainly doesn't spare Leftwich but it is written with that strange understanding of people which Paton enjoys. This, of course, may make it even more painful for Leftwich to read. Apart from that, Paton keeps busy. He spends the night of each REALITY meeting with us, dosing himself with whisky -- or more accurately being dosed by me. Right now he is about to set off with Jonathan on a trip to the Karroo to see Halley's Comet, which he hasn't seen for some time.

16th March: Excuse the break. One sad reason for it was that we paid a rushed visit to Johannesburg this week to see Ernie Wentzel, who has cancer. He had a very big operation towards the end of last year which was said to have got rid of it all, but a few weeks ago it flared up again and there now seems no hope for him at all. We can't really do without him, either.

Last question of yours to be answered that I can remember was one about the One Party State. Isn't that what we have had ever since the Nationalists came to power, you ask? Yes, to all intents and purposes that is what we have had, and nobody who was not a Nationalist supporter has liked it. All the more reason, to my mind, for not having another one once they have been got rid of. Our own experience should have taught us that, but I think there are a lot of people around here who are in favour of it, for what I would regard as very dubious reasons. I have yet to meet a none-party-stater who doesn't ask it for granted that it is his or her party which is going to be the only one. As soon as one contemplates the possibility that it might be some other party than one's own which is the only one, the idea ~~immediately~~ starts to lose its appeal.

Enough for now.

Yours,

H.C.