



53 CORNWALL GARDENS LONDON SW7 4BG

8 May 1986

Dear Alan

Please forgive this tatty letter, product of the word processor age.

Adrian Leftwich has surprised me by sending me a copy of your chapters on the terrible days of 1941-5. I do not know whether the words about them and I hope very much that you will not be offended by my comments. I must confess that ~~they~~ ^{they do,} they give the impression of being rather hurriedly written, and that they do not really do justice to your attitude to 'two of the greatest events' of those years.

I look forward enormously to vol 2, but hope chapters 25 and 26 will be smartened up a bit.

Is the grapevine accurate in its information that we may see you here again before too long? I do hope so.

Gillian joins me in sending our love.

Yours ever

Randys

P.S. Alan, I do hope you will not think I am trying to convert you to another view of the horrors of ARM but you realize that I am suggesting that you should allow for the fact that another view exists (if largely held by blacks).

A.

p 1: Nelson Mandela 'went underground' rather than 'into hiding' surely. He was active and moving about, establishing Umkhonto weSizwe. He certainly did not leave the country 'to evade arrest for incitement' but to lead the ANC delegation to the PAFMECSA conference in Addis Ababa and to tour other African capitals, and visit London, to promote the ANC and Umkhonto. If he was evading arrest why did he come back? When he was finally caught he was charged with leaving the country without a passport and with calling an illegal strike.

p 5: Someone else coined that Constantia slogan, which I rather disliked though I admit it was quite catchy. What I hope was more significant about that campaign was the fact that we campaigned throughout for 'one man one vote', which was also on our posters etc. It may not sound much today but was quite challenging then.

p 4: PAC in no sense 'established Poqo', which developed out of the grass roots support for PAC, when banned and leaderless, mainly in Cape Town and the W Cape country districts.

p 6: You did not actually ask me if I were engaged in illegal underground activity, I said something like: 'Randolph, we are all going to a lot of trouble on your behalf; is there anything you feel you should tell me which I should know about your activities?' It was my answer to that, for having to deceive you in that context, for which I apologized in England, not for lying as such, though I would also have apologized for the lie had it been just that. I actually gave you a rambling answer about events in the Transkei which might be used to smear the Party, which was an intentional evasion. Not an important point, but better to have the facts?

p 8: It was suggested that I bring an action against Brokensha and Knowles for defamation, but legal opinion against this included the point that the book was such manifest rubbish ('mediocre' is a very great compliment to it, surely) that one could scarcely consider oneself libelled in it. Incidentally, their account of my leaving the country is wholly fictitious, as I am sure was that of the our people 'dancing a jig' at our non-existent headquarters.

The name ARM was coined very late in the day: all who joined the NCL did so in the full knowledge that sabotage was to be undertaken and were trained accordingly, so there can have been no question of anyone being consulted about a 'switch', unless you mean to the use of the name ARM.

p 9: I don't think you have the facts right about Higgs and Harris persuading Lewin and Leftwich in that way. I doubt if either Hugh or Adrian would ever have encountered John as an NCL member. Denis Higgs was certainly a trainer but would not have discussed such a point I think. Certainly some wanted to leave, and did so, including Bob Watson.

p 10: The raid in which Adrian was caught was to find the printing equipment being used to put out Umkhonto literature (or pro-Umkhonto), not to track us down. Our security had in fact been entirely successful that far. His name was on the long list of, mainly CDD, people raided because he had recently been involved with them for some specific purpose I've forgotten. You also imply that Umkhonto was black and NCL/ARM white. Both were multiracial. The SAIRR Survey for 1964 lists known members of ARM, which bears this out. Black members were also sentenced or escaped, but the SA press being what it is, there were no reports that linked them with the white members. Umkhonto had many white members, like Bernstein, Goldberg, Goldreich and Wolpe, all caught at Rivonia.

Some records had been kept and were in a secretly stored suitcase, which should have been sent out of the country as planned, but had not been. One detained member broke under physical violence and this led to the discovery of the case by the police. It contained no names but there were references to code names and the SB
you with violence in the case of it, broke a chain in chains and relations to relations.

p 11: I can see no justification for Vorster's 'famous remark', not have I ever heard it. At ~~the~~ stage the Communists (if one classes Umkhonto as such, which Vorster certainly did) were committed to violence to property only, as we were.

p 13: That 'dangerous document' was posted because the meeting you refer to decided that the NCL must now make known its existence after maintaining total secrecy until then.

p 13: I'm sure I'm not alone in finding Gibson's facetiousness about 'ten little nigger boys' and his denigration of Eddie very distasteful. Incidentally, what upset Eddie's wonderful old mother more than almost anything that was said in court was the appalling Beyers's reference to him as a 'Super Skolly'.

CHAPTER 26

p 1: This Beyers-Gibson exchange suggests to me that you share their view that those of us who escaped somehow 'let down' those who were caught. It was laid down from the start that it was everyone's duty to escape and we had detailed plans for this. Eddie has written that he was delighted to hear that I had got away. To suggest that we should have 'faced the music' was beyond my comprehension - rather as a soldier would feel if blamed for evading capture and not being in a POW camp.

Whatever Leftwich did, do you have to revive Beyers's sneers and gibes about him? And whatever he did he was worth 100 of Beyers.

What was the fallacy Snitcher referred to and how had the trial exposed it? The whole passage reads oddly from someone like Snitcher, whose history you will know.

p 3: If you were not disturbed by Brokensha and Knowles's judgement why do you quote it? And what were the 'distinguished passages' from the court record? Gibson's? Snitcher's? I hope not Beyers's.

A tremendous ^{effort} was put into appealing for Eddie's release by many people here and in SA. Twice senior counsel at the Cape Bar (Sam Aaron and Jan Steyn) went to see him on the Island, to ask him if he would sign a statement undertaking not to commit any acts of violence if paroled. Both times he refused, saying he could not do so as he had no idea of the situation in South Africa at that time, or how it would be in the future. Spike de Keller did give some such undertaking.

p 7: Is it appropriate to refer only to one's feeling of personal affront at such a moment?

Ruth, whom I saw a lot of in the years in London, never told me this story, which rather suggests that it was for your ears only. Even if she didn't say so to you, do you think she would have wanted to see it in a book of yours (which will not only be read by thousands now but will be a source for future researchers)? The point is that if John did collapse at the outset, he died bravely. Ann Wolfe and her son David will find it difficult to understand why you had to refer to Harris as an 'abject creature', as will very many others. Alan, I do beg you to think again about this passage.

p 8-9: The extracts you quote do not seem to me to harp on Harris's hopes of saving his life, but are remarkably free of this, are they not? They also suggest the thought that there will be a crown in Heaven for his parents who gave him to believe that they 'supported him 100%' when you saw so clearly that they did not. You will recall that they and Ann saw Blackie Swart to make a final appeal for clemency.

p 10: The 'ARM' as such wrote no such 'draft letter' and one presumes some individual did, though I never heard of it. Your use of the word 'presumably' suggests that this is hearsay. If you feel you must refer to it to ridicule the ARM, should you not indicate your source?

I was struck that at John's funeral they also read the poem 'The Soldier' about Patrick Pearse, who was even more vilified than Harris in 1916 but is a national hero to the Irish today, which might just make you feel you should qualify your expression 'totally futile deed'. I too was shattered when I heard about the station bomb (in a news broadcast in mid-Atlantic), but one should compare one's own feelings with those of people like Nelson Mandela who said, after a funeral meeting in Eddie's cell 'there is a white man who died fighting against us' (Weekly Mirror 26-3-86)