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11 December 1988

My Dear Magnus,

My fulsome apologies for not writing before now, and for putting you to the trouble of having to send a second copy of your letter of October 31. As you know, it's not like me to dally over correspondence. I'm afraid that I've just been too much distracted by my various other worries and activities to summon up the determination that's required to settle down at the machine and write.

The fault is, of course, the more grievous because my last letter was obviously a cause of some concern - on a matter that is of great importance to you. The apology should thus be more elaborate. I hope that you will forgive me, and that I shall be able to make it up to you some time.

There's not really too much I can add to what I said in my last letter about the ARM. If it sounded negative, it was simply reflecting my very genuine doubts as to the possibility of accomplishing a complete piece of research. There's no doubt in my mind that some attempt should be made to cover the ground and to write honestly about it, putting it in context and giving it some of the attention and recognition that is its due; the more so because it has been given such shoddy treatment by Paton recently, and, much more serious, in the long run, is likely to be smothered or glossed over by the revisionists who are busily reconstructing the events of the '50s and '60s and falsifying history in the grand manner of the Soviet Encyclopaedia of yore.

The fact remains, however, that there is no-one who really does know enough about the movement to be able to give anything like a satisfactory account of it - warts and all. Piecing together the story will be much more difficult than you think, because there are so many divergent views and experiences about its origin and its functioning. It was such a strange patchwork of people from disparate political and ideological backgrounds. Take, for instance, Hirson, Eisenstein, John Lang, Randolph, the late Alex Cox, David Evans, John Laredo, the Pragers, Flip Green, Rosemary Ventzel, the Bernans, Yusuf Omar, not to mention the whole contingent of dissident ANC people, Dennis Higgs, Alan Brooks, Bronberger, Harry Cohen et. al. I've not even mentioned a dozen others that I know of, some at the centre some at the periphery; some still in SA, some abroad. More problematical still will be getting an honest account from some of them of their involvement, and trying to piece together the relationships not just of individuals but of activities and outlook. Too many people have too much to hide, or to be kept secret for a longer time. Getting Lang alone to come clean would be a major feat; verifying what he has to say, a near impossibility and comparing it with other versions of the same story(ies) a huge - I would think, almost an insuperable - problem.

And it's not just the dramatis personae that present the difficulties. The plot isn't too damn clear either. We would need hours of talk to try and get the synopsis straight, and to work on an approach that might be viable.

There's an immense risk in all this that what will emerge is something well-intentioned but half-baked, capable of indicating that there is something to be said and written but leaving too much unsaid and too many threads loose. It is that which worries me and

which makes me seem more negative than I probably am.

For the rest: Muriel's treatment continues to go well. She's in London for the last of her chemotherapy treatments, and the doctors at the Royal Marsden hospital are very satisfied with the progress she's made. The radiotherapy will start in January, and continue for about six weeks. That too will take place in London, and I hope to be able to spend at least half the time with Muriel, doing some of my work there.

My problems within the ILO will continue as long as SACTU and its acolytes retain their insistence on bashing me, and will no doubt become more difficult to deal with as our June Conference approaches and they are more in evidence. There is a great danger that the result of their campaign will be not only to cause permanent injury to me and my reputation, but will severely affect the ILO's capacity to do anything useful in relation to southern Africa. At the moment, I must be thankful for the support I'm getting from SWAPO. But I fear that, quite soon, I shall be made to abandon my professional involvement with the ILO programme if I want to stay on in the Office at all. To be honest, there are times when I'm so overwhelmingly depressed by the whole sordid business that I'm tempted to quit of my own accord. I'm restrained by my unwillingness to give my antagonists the satisfaction of winning. And since July of this year, I've also not been prepared to do anything which will upset Muriel or introduce an element of instability into our existence. Who knows, I might yet turn up on your doorstep looking for something to do - and might even end up working with you on the ARM thing, not carping from a distance?

If you're in touch with Liz, please thank her for her letter. It looks as if we won't be able to meet up next summer as June is the one month during which it is virtually impossible for me to get away from Geneva. But both of my parents turn 80 next year, and if Muriel is well enough, I must try to see them and that may give us the opportunity of getting together in North America - all of us, I mean.

Yours,

