

30th June, 1946.

PC/1/1/34/2/4

Thank you for your letter of 19th May which came to hand a few days ago.

As you will see from the above address we are back at Pretoria again. I arrived here after the session 10 days ago, my mother having left almost 5 weeks before me, in order to get away from the dampness of the Cape winter. I of course had to stay until the end of the session, the PM having returned just a few days before.

It was a long and strenuous, though useful and productive session, but very strenuous for me. Unhappily I had another kidney attack during the last week, which made things difficult for me as I had to carry on in spite of it.

Since coming back here, I have had myself thoroughly overhauled by the doctors, who have now given a very satisfactory report, indicating that there is nothing to worry about, but insisting on the need for a holiday with which I agree. So that my mother and I will be going down to the Natal coast in a week's time. I shall not be able to be away from office for more than three weeks in all, if only because the PM may be going away again early in August, but that should be enough. It is certainly more of a holiday than I have been able to allow myself for many years.

Meantime I have been having quite a pleasant time since I got back to Pretoria. I haven't been unduly busy in the office, just enough for a normal day's work (which is a good deal less than I usually have to do) and quite perfect weather. The winter so far has been unusually mild, and it is no exaggeration to say that during the ten days I have been here we have not lost a single minute's sunshine - and that in mid-winter.

I read with interest what you wrote about Egypt and India. As far as the former is concerned, you will doubtless have come to the conclusion - quite correctly - that our PM is by no means impressed with the way in which the matter has been handled by your Govt. As for India, well, things having developed as they have done, I find it difficult to see how they could have acted otherwise than they have done during the recent negotiations - but one can't help viewing future possibility with grave apprehension. There seems little doubt that a man like Nehru looks to Russia - and we, no less than you, would not like to see Russia getting access to the Indian Ocean. But it all adds point to your comment on SA's growing strategic importance in relation to the British Commonwealth.

At the moment you folks seem to be mainly disturbed about bread rationing. We too have found ourselves compelled to go in for the rationing of cereals and (unhappily) I am the Minister to whom the administrative responsibility has been assigned - not as Minister of Finance of course - but as the PM's deputy. It will doubtless add considerably to my troubles.