

MC H 91-27-5-1225/3/80.

Dear Jack & Debbie,

I'm pushing aside all else to at least write to you. I'm not sure where this letter is going to lead, but a few interesting things might pop out.

First, I got back without serious problems, was delayed by a strike in Lisbon for a couple of days, and suddenly had a bit of time that wasn't programmed, and really enjoyed the luxury of it (managed to visit the Faculty of Law at Lisbon, but just to sit in on lectures, not to give any - I was amused at my own reactions, astonishment at the casualness of the students, smoking, doing some quick gambling with matches, even kissing and cooing, before the lecturer walked in, and then the Faculty, the younger ones like I had been only two and a bit years ago, combative, energetic, nervous, doing against the system in which they worked ... it was another world, a world I had once inhabited and vaguely remembered, but totally unreal now). I realised after my return that my eagerness in the US to visit more places and speak more speeches wasn't just to spread the message - though that was part of it - there was a sheer pleasure in being able to use phones and aeroplanes and book and arrange things with the certainty that they would come off.

I suffered one loss on the way back, a serious one - Demile's drawing (of a sculptor at work) which I kept loose so that it wouldn't get crushed, got separated from me somewhere along the line. I rushed to the airport for days trying to retrieve it, and then gave up. Did he come

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sound with the drawing he was preparing for you?
It was nearly finished when I saw it - a couple,
very close, very tender.

I received a ~~very~~ nice note from Stanford the
other day - part of that warm, slightly make-believe
feeling I had right through my visit to the U.S.A.
Thanks for sending on the copy of the letter from
Indiana. (Indiana? someone asked me in Harvard.
Indiana!?) What were you doing in Indiana?!?
Fiske was so way out as to be interesting, but
Indiana!.....).

The Rhodesian election results.... what a crushing
defeat for the collaborators, the opportunists, the corrupted
and yet one more defeat for the press of the Western
world, which prides itself on keeping its readers
informed so as to be able to make intelligent decisions -
any illiterate peasant in this part of the world knew
more than all the journalists and political scientists
(Botha now has a team of brilliant young academics
advising him), and, for that matter, all the diplomats.
The problems of Zimbabwe are far from being solved -
sometimes it's better not even to think about them
all - but what a great breakthrough has been made
in Zimbabwe. And how smartly Mozambique moved
when to fight, when to negotiate, when to attack
Lord Soames (a teacher friend of mine was visiting an
isolated village in the most isolated province of
Mozambique, no newspapers and a radio that didn't

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always work, and was discussing with her pleasant host the pending Rhodesian elections - 'This Lord Soames' - he told her 'he's really putting the pressure on Patriotic Front ...' and when to congratulate him (I've just seen him riding past in an official car with escort ... 'the most brilliant chapter in British de-colourisation'). The results of the elections went through this country like a pleasant electric shock - freedom-music all day on the radio, newspapers sold out early, meetings and celebrations everywhere, and always song after song and dance after dance about Zimbabwe.

And a similar current ran through South Africa, although our people have long learnt how to suppress joy. There's much excitement around. The splits inside the Nationalist Party are a secondary cause - a Bocha victory would smother up the system, not abolish it, we have a real military/industrial complex in SA, and he is right at the head of it - but they contribute to the growing sense of uncertainty amongst the rulers. It's the new confidence amongst the people, the demands for the release of Mandela, the growing coherence of the opposition, the hero's funeral given to the guerrillas in the bank siege, the knowledge that in Zimbabwe 'the terrorists' are in power.

I received some books of poetry, short stories, etc from SA. They reflect this new confidence, as well as

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Yet I find something seriously lacking. Half the poems are about Africa, being African, from the Nile to the Limpopo, the spirits of the ancestors, the poets Africanise their names, wear pseudo-African clothing. This becomes the struggle, the African poem (in English) the African being, the image of Africa, it's enough just to be African. The poem doesn't aid the struggle, it is the struggle. Cultural groups, students - doing fabulous work ~~raising~~ raising the spirits of the youth, but stuck, stuck, stuck in their dream of themselves, wrapped up in magic transformations of the past.

Here, the other day, Samora: There are people who say we Africans don't like to wear shoes, it is not natural to us, we prefer to go barefoot, we lose our African personality if we wear safari suits. They say we Africans aren't interested in flowers, and toys for our children.

Samora and the others wrote poetry, they all did, but it was poetry about the people in struggle, the changes in their hearts, the new being built in the battle against the old (Not I, not You, but We). Our poetry is about the enemy, oppression, or about the past - their poetry was about themselves, and about the future.

And then there's this strange artificiality in the midst of self-assertion, people in Africa picking up American concepts of being Afro - wearing Afro

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hairstyles invented in Chicago, putting on Afro togs
and shirts made in Harlem; converting our own
'Power to the People' salute, already decade old, into a
copy of Stokely Carmichael's Black Power salute, and
then this is re-inforced when American journalists report
that 'Students giving the Black Power salute . . .'; and
'our students read what the American journalists write
and accept that this must be so . . .'

The South African personality is deeply rooted in
the history of the African people of SA, but it forms
itself now, in the course of struggle for the future,
and extends itself to include all South Africans. It
is not the same as the Ghanaian personality or even
the Mozambican personality, let alone the Sudanese
or Moroccan personalities. Our continent has history
and geography, class divisions, heroes and traitors;
our continent is also part of the world.

I might be accommodating delegates to the
Congress of the Women's Movement here, so I've just
finished some cooking, used a number of the
spices you gave me - many thanks, a true touch
of internationalism all round! There's no Women's Movement
in ancestral Africa revived - there are no 'women' in
that land, no oppression; only Africans living together
in beautiful harmony of the spirit, just as there
are no 'women' today, just mothers of the poets,
Mama Afrika too busy musing the poet's words to
take part in the liberation struggle.

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Debbie, Jack: I had a wonderful tour of the States. You know that, you could see. And every week I get parcels of books, from this town and there, all for our library. On my first enforced break I'll read Simple Justice - I'm ready for it now, it will have a totally different meaning. And those extra dollars were very, very useful, a little bit of foreign exchange for Mozambique, a little less economic pressure on me. Your apartment wasn't just a base for me, a source of friendship and support - I was living in a part of America, overhearing your snorts and chuckles as you read through the morning papers, running with you round Central Park, participating a touch in American life. Here even time is converted to the Revolution - last year was the Year of Consolidating the Gains, now we have entered the Decade of the Struggle to Overcome Underdevelopment. And I have declared 1980 to be the Year in which I am going to enjoy life. ^(full stop) - it's already got off to a great start, so many thanks and greetings to all in the household!

- Alice,

P.S. And special greetings to all in your office, Marlene for her magnificent support, and all your colleagues for keeping me so pleasantly on my toes all the time!

P.S. I'm feeling a certain dissatisfaction with what I wrote about the new poets of regretude. I think what bugs me about them is exactly that they are fighters and they are honest and they are transforming themselves and they are inspirational to others. There might be posturing and commercialisation around the edges, but at its core it's genuine and important. What gets me is that it stops short of real transformation, it's the blackness that is the opposite of whiteness, it is still dominated by whiteness, it doesn't transcend, overcome, it is the other side of the coin, trapped in the image of its opposite. In that sense it has no real content, it is myth fighting myth. White domination is a myth, but it is not only a myth. It is a physical reality maintained by an army and growing out of an economic system. And though the degree of racism is exceptional in South Africa, South Africa is not an exceptional country - race taints everything, but doesn't create everything. It is an industrialised class-ridden society, it destroys its environment as well as its people. People who have been denied their humanity must claim their full humanity back, they must recreate themselves as full humans beings, liberated, if you like. They must use the consciousness they gain in the struggle against one acute form of oppression to ~~be~~ be sensitive to and fight against all forms of oppression. It is this that justifies all the sacrifices of the generations, not just to wipe out an evil, but to build a new society.