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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
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CAMBRIDGE 39, MASSACHUSETTS

May 14, 1954

Professor Z. K. Matthews
University College of Fort Hare
Alice
Cape Province
Union of South Africa

Dear Z. K.:

Your letter brought both relief and a pang. Relief because I had long been wondering why I did not hear from you and wondering about the possible reasons for it and hesitating myself to write because of these uncertainties. The pang comes from the fact that as you rightly suspect, like yourself, I have been completely absorbed these last eight months and despite the most honorable intentions have not gone beyond the point reached when I last sent you the finished chapters. Actually I never did get back from you the draft of Chapter 8, but did receive Chapters 1-7.

The publisher wanted to know at one stage whether I could promise him a finished manuscript this past spring and I had to tell him that it depended on your situation and on your ability to finish up, and that I would fit my obligations in accordingly. I still stand by this and would like to know from you what your plans would be in this connection.

Oddly enough, I too have been invited to attend the Hawaii Conference, the invitation including an assignment to write a full report on the issue as it develops there. When I originally saw your name on the first list of invitees--and as the only African, at that--I wrote immediately to advise them that they were probably being overly optimistic and that in my opinion it would be absolutely necessary to insure by some other means the necessary balance in the personnel of the Conference. I believe they are making some effort in this direction. I am not entirely happy about it but will go through with the experience and see what happens.

I feel that I am in a position to appreciate all the visible and invisible ironies involved in your present assumption of the acting principalship of the College. To

me Fort Hare and your involvement in it has become a very close and vivid thing, and I have an odd sensation of knowing both Dent and Kerr somehow through your eyes and your memories. I wonder how it would be to meet them personally and have this vicarious acquaintance overlaid by contact of my own. It would be an interesting psychological experience. But how well I feel I can share at least many of the mixed feelings aroused by the present arrangements.

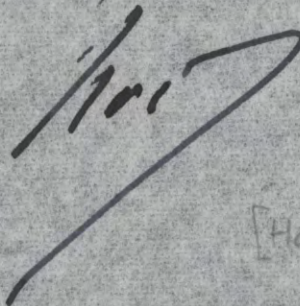
I have been only able indirectly to maintain my African interests in this past year. I have become quite deeply engaged in a study of the development and the patterns of certain American attitudes, mental images, etc. in relation to Asia and Asians and I shall be primarily engaged on this study for some time to come. I think you would be greatly interested in it and I would dearly hope some day to have the opportunity to tell you more about it.

There is naturally so much more that I would like to discuss with you--some of which you referred to in your letter--but will forego doing so. I think we can all preserve an attitude of optimism only if we narrow down to the most severe limits what we might be optimistic about. This goes very much for us here, too, in this grotesquely disquieting U.S.A.

Glad to have the news of your family. My own is happily thriving, too. I wonder how it will be when mine, like yours, are at the graduating and marrying stage. I do see Bill Brown at Boston University from time to time and will be very glad to give him your regards.

My warmest respects to Mrs. Matthews.

Yours,



[Harold R. Isaacs]

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