

4<sup>th</sup> January, 1995

Dear All,

Happy New Year! - This is primarily to thank you all for your very great generosity this Christmas, and also to all of you who sent personal cards and greetings. Very kind and much appreciated.

I can also honestly say that I wish each of you could come here, if only for an hour or two, to see the Master. It seems unfair that we should have so much of him ~~and~~ <sup>whilst</sup> ~~if~~ so many are deprived of his presence and influence.

On Boxing Day Ercin, Elie, Maureen and Ray came up for a small party. Apart from Ray none of the others had seen the Master since, almost, last January. It was a fantastic, wonderful boost for the others just to see the Master and share his company for a while. There is nobody who can or does have the effect upon us which he has. - I wish I could have some of this influence but I cannot, not really. He is such a monumental figure, even now.

As ever, it is hard to say how he is doing. He is "eking" his life out. A Master Strategist right to the end. If I have learned anything about the Master since I had the opportunity to become so close to him, I think it would be how little I really know him. In one sense one knows him, in another he is a total stranger; a man one once barely glimpsed in a crowd somewhere. He is, I suppose above all, a mystery.

Health-wise, toss a coin. Either way he's almost always in pain but each day he goes on.

As for us guys (guys) I'd say we're pretty much fine. Life has become a routine to which we are now well accustomed. I know all of our lives are fairly routine, but elsewhere it is more a weekly routine. Here it is a daily routine. But I guess routine is routine. For my part I have at last accepted it. - As Dickie says, clip a bird's wings - no, correction, keep a bird long enough in a cage and then, when you open its gate, it no longer has the will to escape. Or something like that! But that is not to say that I (or any of the others - they're "old hands") have lost my worldly desires through this experience, through this virtual captivity, but they have become very remote. Or, at least, the lesser ones have.

What more can I say? - I can tell you that it's rained a lot this past couple of days - which is good - and that Christmas & New Year came and went with a minimum of fuss and yet enough of the festive spirit to pay honour to each. Lady Maupre was here for Christmas but not New Year. Richard (Lawrence) was here for a couple of nights in between. It was, as always, very nice to see him, and doubtless he shall be back up again soon.

I am reading (we do lots of reading here) a biography of C.S. Lewis (which I'm very much enjoying) yet I cannot help but feel that here is a man, like Tolkien, who, for all their learning and powers, would have given everything for a glimpse of what we have in the A.S. We are a most privileged few. And on that note I take my leave and go on into tomorrow and the next day.

With very best wishes to you all,

Paul.

P.S. - And well done on the publicity front! Such news does reach us here.