

23 Lynton Road,
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23rd August, 1965.

Dear Mr. Fryer,

Thank you very much for your letter about HOFMEYR which gave me a good deal of pleasure. Quite apart from that, your review was splendid. I meant the book to be the story of the times as well as the story of a fascinating life, even though the man who lived it could hardly be called fascinating.

You raised the point why I did not write that Hofmeyr either urged or did not urge Smuts to change the loading. I think that is an omission, and the reason why I wrote nothing about the matter is presumably because I had no evidence one way or the other.

I too am puzzled ^{by} ~~about~~ your story about Tom Bowker. Pirow and van den Heever would surely not have omitted from their biographies of Hertzog that the Prime Minister, if he had secured a vote for neutrality, would have gone into the war later. If it is true, then it shows that Hertzog's speech in the House was spoken out of bitter resentment rather than for any other cause. You ask if JHH had any thoughts on this. All the evidence shows that he fully supported Smuts's decision to take the country into the war - in fact, as the biography shows, Hofmeyr held the strange view that if Britain went to war, South Africa was automatically involved.

I think that HOFMEYR will be of great help to Hancock, and I am sure that he will regard the Smuts-Hofmeyr relationship as much more important than it first appeared to him. I was hoping his second volume on Smuts might come out before HOFMEYR, but he wrote and told me that his hope was the HOFMEYR would come out first. I may add that he wrote me a very complimentary letter.

I can understand that the book wrung your heart. I have had letters from South Africans leaving in Canada, the United States, St. Helena, and of course Britain itself, who found the book enthralling, largely of course because it is the story of their own lives and times.

Best regards.



IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

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HOBART

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6th July, 1965.

Dear Mr. Paton,

I hope you will forgive the opening words of this review, they were not meant as a slight upon you.

Your book wrung the heart of a South African historian-in-exile, and my concluding words were a challenge to myself, to perhaps return to my homeland and carry on; for my exile after all was self-imposed, like Denys Reitz's in 1902.

At any rate, though your publishers might collect and pass on to you reviews from abroad, here is my meed to you. For you have carried on, and no one better even if it were simply in the writing of this book.

Of the events of September 1939, I have always been puzzled by a question raised by an assurance given me by Tom Bowker, who was an M.P. then, that Hertzog prior to the vital debate on the war issue which ended in that dramatic vote, singled out men, among them himself, to assure them that if they voted for him, he would take South Africa into the war within a matter of weeks, having first proved to the Afrikaners that they had a perfect right to stay neutral in England's wars. The point, said Bowker, was a legal one with him, because he did not believe that South Africa could as a matter of practical politics remain neutral, or extract any ultimate advantage from doing so.

Apart from this one verbal statement though, I have never been able to pick up any proof that Hertzog did do this. Rather there have been assurances to the contrary. Yet why should Bowker have told me this, a young lecturer at Rhodes then, if it was not true? Did Smuts blunder? Ought he to have 'done a Roosevelt' until Russia joined in on September 17th, or even until the Nazi's invaded the Low Countries? Had JHH any thoughts on this, and on electoral reform after 1943? I thought perhaps you and Sir W.K. Hancock might be able to throw some light on this.

Best regards,
Yours sincerely,

A.K. Fryer.