

36 Airlie Road, Brighton Beach,
Durban, April 27th, 1965.

Dear Alan,

I was an ignorant ignoramus when I wrote congratulating you on your biography of the late Minister Hofmeyer. I have now had a close look at the by me presumed 'cobble' and found myself looking at a complete barricade. How beautifully have you fitted the individual parts of the impregnable barricade; each part resilient to opposing views and opinions. What a graphic story of growing light in an Egyptian darkness, then suddenly snuffed out.

Arthur Blaxall wrote me in a letter: "I am astounded at the energy of Alan Paton." Myself, an indolent and lazy pensioner, fully underwrite Arthur's sentiment.

What, among other things, your book made abundantly clear to me, are the reasons for refusal by Mahatma Gandhi, while being a member of the Indian Congress in India, to become a member of the Indian Government. No member of parliament, nor any minister of a government, is a completely free man. I must, at the same time, point out that not one of us mortals is completely free, yet comparable greatly freeer.. Those at the top have to pander to expediency and at the same time have to silence the urgings of their conscience. Their freedom is a farce.

Reading your book impressed upon me that the several politicians (they are not statesmen, Hofmeyer was on the way of becoming one) are merely marionettes. You highlighted the strings otherwise obscured in murkyness. The puppets moved by and through events, circumstances, and were sorely hampered by a rigidity inherent within the mechanism of the puppets.

Your book is a fair example of a time bomb. One cannot now say whether the explosion, now or later, will force South Africa's whites on to a more reasonable way of life. At present I can only repeat the words of Rousseau that: "Good laws lead to the making of better ones; bad ones bring about worse. As soon as any man says of the affairs of the State 'What does it matter to me?' the State may be given up for lost." Indeed, lost in a wilderness of legislation that restricts, oppresses, and intimidates.

Reading the Hofmeyer biography and considering our country since his death then one is appalled how closely South Africa's rulers are following the beacons laid out by yester-year's dictators. What little hope is left us for compassionate sanity. After a bloody upheaval such sanity is well-nigh impossible.

How obvious it became after reading your monumental book that parliamentarians and rulers are victims of the

unreasonable and insane mass-mentality.

Wishing you all the best and strength to your pen without endangering yourself,

Yours very sincerely,

J. K. Coetzee