

P 11/9/3/20

Pall Mall Press

RECEIVED 23 SEP 1968

COURAGEOUS LIBERALISM

Printed in The Long View

By Alan Paton. Edited by Edward Callan.

Pall Mall Press. 308 pages. 58s.

To be a Liberal or even liberal in the South Africa of today calls for particular qualities of courage, patience and faith. It is easy enough, in Europe and the United States, to believe in the brotherhood and equality of men. In South Africa a white man who actively propagates non-racial democracy, for instance, runs the risk of being accused of betrayal of his own folk.

This collection of Alan Paton's occasional pieces, the majority of which appeared in the liberal journal, *Contact*, and were comments on contemporary happenings, should be read with all this in mind. Here is the authentic voice of South African liberalism. It is an articulate voice that deserves to be heard wherever South Africa and its official race policies are condemned or discussed, for it shows that in the most repressive political atmosphere the flame of true liberalism is unquenchable. True, the flame in South Africa flickers but weakly, but threats and intimidation—and worse—have not been able to put it out.

A deal of what Paton has to say may strike western ears as obvious, even trite. But in South Africa, where these little essays were written and the few speeches made, there is a desperate need for emphasising even what is obvious elsewhere.

Like his political mentor, the late Jan Hofmeyr, Smuts's one-time deputy, Paton is a practising Christian, and this, with his militant non-racialism, constitutes the framework of his political philosophy. Here, for instance, was the advice he gave to those who, "whether out of love or duty or just plain cussedness," decided not to leave South Africa after Sharpeville: "Stand firm by what you believe; do not tax yourself beyond endurance, yet calculate clearly and coldly how much endurance you have; don't waste your breath and corrupt your character by cursing your rulers and the South African Broadcasting Corporation; don't become obsessed by them; keep your friendships alive and warm, especially those with people of other races; beware of melancholy and resist it actively if it assails you; and give thanks for the courage of others in this fear-ridden country."

His criticism was not reserved for politicians, however; the church often felt the sting of his pen, as when an Anglican church school refused to admit a Coloured boy. He called the decision a Christian scandal, which brought shame on the church. Earlier, he had warned that the Church of Christ is in danger of becoming, not the upholder of revolutionary truth, but the protector of stability. "So comes to life the tormenting problem of reconciling peace with reformation, order with justice, stability with change. Michael Scott ranged himself on the side of reformation, justice and change, and made his name a byword in white South Africa."

Paton has paid a heavy personal price for his defence of the weak and the unpopular, for his outspokenness against apartheid in general, injustice, inhumanity, and the whole gamut of discrimination. He has been denounced and