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Book Reviews

Books Critical of South African Policies Threaten Author's Freedom in Homeland

INSTRUMENT OF THY PEACE. By Alan Paton. **Seabury Press.** \$3.50.

THE LONG VIEW. By Alan Paton. **Praeger.** \$6.95.

ALAN PATON is one of South Africa's eloquent dissenters. His government watches him warily, but — at least of this writing — allows him to work and speak with more or less freedom as long as he stays in the republic. His passport has been lifted, so if he chooses to leave the "beloved country" about which he wrote in the great 1944 novel, he can't return. Meanwhile, South Africans demonstrate their tolerance by permitting that book to be sold and to be included on the reading lists of certain schools.

One wonders, however, with publication of these two books, how long Paton will continue to enjoy not only the tolerance but also the freedom in the land of apartheid.

Neither "The Long View" nor "Instrument of Thy Peace" represents a fresh assault on the race policies of his country's government, policies that have brought bitter criticism of South Africa from many other countries, including the United States. Although different kinds of books, each nevertheless sort of sums up Paton's familiar and long-held opinions.

But South Africa has grown restive about people like Paton. Only a few weeks ago, the government finally got around to doing what it had threatened to do for years. It outlawed the multiracial party, of which Paton was a founder and president. With a measure called "the improper interference act," Parliament eliminated the single remaining political organization whose membership was open to black, colored (persons of mixed racial origin), and Asiatic people as well as whites.

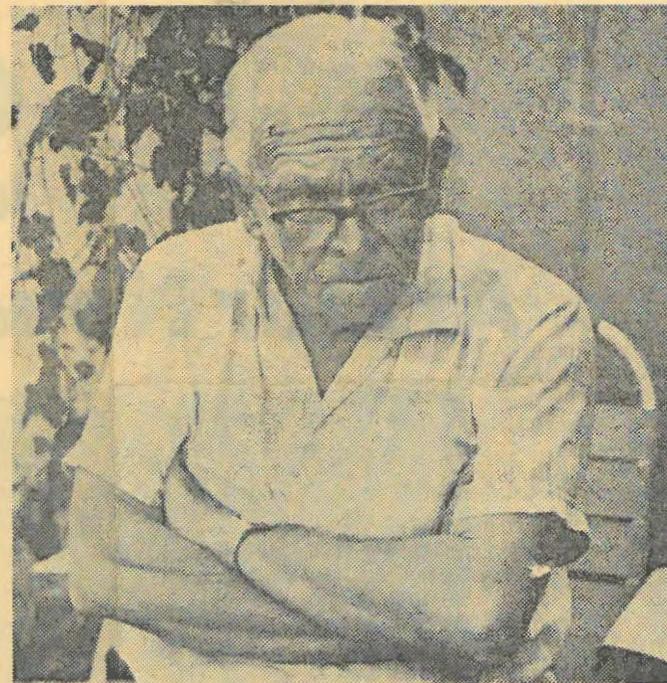
So the party, which was comparatively ineffectual to begin with, and with no representation in Parliament, has been forced to disband. We have heard no comment as yet from its leader.

THE IMPRESSION is obvious that the government tolerated Paton, the writer, with a certain pride — one of the "pet liberals." But it merely suffered him as the political person he also is; suffered him long enough, as it runs out.

Thus, one praises these new books — and one must praise them — with apprehension. Particularly with "The Long View," the impact of Paton's total critical opinion of his country, its leaders and their policies — will be felt for the first time. The publisher tells us it won't be published in South Africa, but this can't prevent South Africans from knowing what Paton has been up to during the past 10 years — some South Africans, anyway. We only hope he will not suddenly have become a "dangerous person" and subject to one of the ultrasecurity laws that suggest to many that the republic is a totalitarian state.

"The Long View" is a collection of speeches, essays and articles done by Paton from 1958 to 1967, incisively edited and effectively annotated by Edward Callan of Western Michigan University. It opens with a series of pieces under the heading, "The Nonracial Spirit," and closes with an essay on the death of Prime Minister Verwoerd. The book is a portrait of the liberal sensibility confronted by a rigid ideology, and the story of a brave and sometimes tragic struggle to bring about change in a single-minded regime.

The title of the other book is taken from a prayer by



ALAN PATON

Photo by James Idema

St. Francis of Assisi, beginning, "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace." It is a series of brief commentaries on modern life suggested by Christian prayers and from the Gospels. Many, but not all, concern South Africa. Most illuminate the central agony of Paton's life and mission. They make an inspired and an inspiring book.

—JAMES IDEMA