

Sir Alexander Korda,
London Film Productions,
Denham.

10/11/42
Johannesburg, South Africa
P.O.Box 5399



24th. September 1948

Dear Sir Alexander,

I have been in touch with Mr. Alan Paton, the author of "Cry, the beloved country" (published by Jonathan Cape), and he tells me that you have bought the film rights of his novel.

Although 90% of the characters are natives and the sets and locations are all African, I wonder if you intend producing it on the lines of "Rhodes of Africa" - using local backgrounds for atmosphere and bringing natives to England for the main sequences.

Or was it just a routine "buy" and is now on the shelf until it may be required? However this may be - I recommend that you read the book, it will be worth while for its own sake.

The purpose of this letter is to enquire if the following suggestion will interest you.

I could produce the picture HERE in South Africa with Mr. Paton's assistance with either our own, or loaned or imported film units. It would be safe to say that a certain amount of semi-official help would be given to us. The film would retain its full authentic atmosphere. The cost could be kept RIGHT DOWN, and yet the presentation would not suffer, as its appeal lies ...

- a) in its basic human story, its emotions understandable by all
- b) in its contrast between primitive, but picturesque society and modern civilisation, the one superimposed upon the other
- c) in its larger portrayal of life in our rather unknown Dominion - native and white, country and town
- d) in its poetic language, based on the Bantu spoken word. This gives visual events a freshness and originality that continuously delights the ear
- e) its classic alteration of light and shade, humour and drama, human endeavour and shortcoming

It would consist of a social and documentary fabric, giving at the same time great aesthetic pleasure. It builds up emotions of warmth and compassion as the story of Kumalo, the native parson is unfolded against the present-day background of the African continent.

The terrific

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The terrific success of the book in the States and the world-wide interest in European -Native relationship everywhere would make the early filming of great topical interest and its adaptation to the screen - under the conditions outlined by me - would involve little financial risk.

I have not spoken to your local representative about my ideas at this stage, as he is rather friendly with the bosses of the local film company for which I am directing at the moment. I would, however, refer you to Henry Cornelius who knew me overseas and when I was a cutter. For the last 12 years I have worked in South Africa and am familiar with local conditions and problems.

Mr. Paton and I could in all probability work together on a treatment, but this is looking rather ahead. In the meantime I should like to hear your reaction to the basic principles of my proposal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Francis Grombacher-Irwin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Francis Grombacher-Irwin

FGI/MP