

PC 1/1/7/14/6
P. O. Box 278,
Hillcrest,
Natal.

February 10th. 1970



(Hofmeyr)
Colonel A. C. Martin,
Roslyn,
Musgrave Road,
Durban.

Dear Colonel Martin,

It was a great pleasure to receive your New Year letter. I remember that when you first read "Hofmeyr" you said it would be in demand in forty years time, and necessary for any real study of the history of our times. It is a strange thing that Hofmeyr's life tells the story of South Africa - at least as seen by people like ourselves - better than the lives of Smuts, Hertzog, Malen and all the rest of them. In his life was seen the conflict between the laws and customs of our race-bound society, and the ideals and beliefs which are learnt, sometimes strangely enough, from the same source as the other. That of course, is what South Africa is like, and I presume for that matter, life everywhere, but the truce between ideal and practice is more clearly seen here than anywhere else.

I am very appreciative of your compliments; you have chosen to mention the very things that I tried to do, to write of Hofmeyr with a warm heart and a cold head, and to show as great as well as his bad qualities. The last person to write a biography is the one who dislikes his subject, because he will inevitably distort the character of the man he is writing about.

The truth was that I could not make up my mind how far Smuts used Hofmeyr and how far he valued him, and I took this to be yet another illustration of the South African paradox. Smuts shared all Hofmeyr's ideals and principles, but what he did not share was Hofmeyr's willingness to suffer for them.

I did not make any great effort to omit myself from the biography. If I had put more of myself in, I would have found it inexcusable if it had not made the picture of Hofmeyr clearer, but there was no need to do this because his relationship with me was so like his relationship with so many others; a curious mixture of restrained warmth and excessive formality, which was partly due of course not to his coldness of character, but because he did not wish to be seen too clearly by any person. That is where I was so fortunate. I had a gift, which I

did not make myself, that was being able to interpret those efforts at concealment and to make them tell the very things that they were trying to keep hidden.

I have not yet received your book.

I am writing this from Peter Brown's cottage in the Drakensberg, where we are on two weeks' holiday.

I close with warm wishes to you and Mrs. Martin,

Yours sincerely,

Alan Paton.