

books

SOUTH AFRICAN TRAGEDY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAN HOFMEYR

By Alan Paton (Scribners, \$10)

ALAN PATON wrote me in the fall of 1963 and asked that a book on him which I was in the process of compiling be delayed until the publication of his biography of Hofmeyr. Even though my study was of Paton's fiction and not his writings in social history, I complied because of his comment, "I feel it is the best I have yet written."

Hofmeyr is now here in all of its immensity, a labor of love for over 10 years. But its writing has created something few projects could. The years of the writing of this biography have chiseled its author into a South African political leader on whose shoulders rests the responsibility for averting what could possibly be the bloodiest revolution in the world's history.

As the attitude toward racism among the South African whites polarized and then hardened during and after the Second World War, Jan Hofmeyr steadily became the hope of that vocal and militant white minority which recognized the absurdity of what later became apartheid. Their hoped-for leader was truly a genius, for Jan Hofmeyr (1894-1948) occupied every cabinet office except that of Prime Minister. He had graduated from high school at 12, received a B.A. and Rhodes scholarship at 15, graduated from Oxford with two firsts and was a full professor at 22 and administrator of the Transvaal at 29.

Hofmeyr became the protégé of General Jan Smuts, the Prime Minister, with whom he often disagreed but whom he followed with a strange fascination. But Jan Hofmeyr had a greater flaw—his mother. As long as he lived, he never clipped the apron strings which strangled him. In a lesser man, it would have been a great personal tragedy. In the case of Jan Hofmeyr, it was a national catastrophe. South Africans constantly sought him to form a liberal party and work out a peaceful integration of the oppressed, overwhelming black majority. But he stood in Smuts' shadow, perhaps because the apron strings kept him there.

Alan Paton, an outstanding penologist, who became world-renowned as a

novelist, saw Hofmeyr as the hope of South Africa. But this view was rapidly disillusioned. Paton clearly saw that Hofmeyr lacked the steel nerves requisite for the grueling task. On Hofmeyr's death, the South African white Liberals looked for a leader and found him, not in the promise of what Hofmeyr could have been had he lived, but in his future biographer. Paton did have the steel nerves necessary for the formation of the Liberal Party. He was

later to title his political manifesto *Hope for South Africa*, a phrase he had often used of Hofmeyr.

Recently harrassed by the opposition party, Paton and his wife found that someone had thrown a brick through their car's windshield. His insurance company refused to pay the claim and canceled his policy. Paton, in his quiet way, had the damage repaired without fanfare and took out a new policy with another company. In

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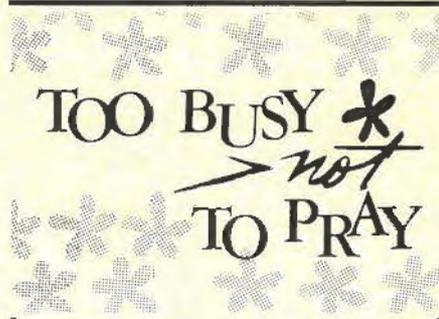
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his soul, Paton has dug in and he will see it through.

Shining through this biography is one clear ray of hope for the racial mess called South Africa today. Writing this biography has helped Paton to see himself in a new light. Although Jan Hofmeyr was a South African tragedy, his biographer is not. And unquestionably, given enough time, Jan Hofmeyr's biographer may become ten times the man and leader Jan Hofmeyr was. It is indeed South Africa's *only* hope.

David F. Marshall

THE WHOLE PERSON IN A BROKEN WORLD

By Paul Tournier, translated by John and Helen Doberstein (Harper & Row, \$3.75)

THE ENGLISH translations of this Swiss psychiatrist's works—most of them never intended for publication—continue to pour from the presses, so helpful a guide has the English-speaking world found him to be. International sales of this Christian psychiatrist's books promise soon to reach a million.

The secret of his appeal? This reviewer's opinion is that Tournier is himself so triumphantly a "whole person" in Christ, without combative distortions from either side, that the reader is not only illumined but also refreshed. No man can hope to understand fully the physical, psychic, mental, spiritual and social processes that make for health and illness in human beings. When the reviewer asked Viktor Frankl how long it would take to train "a complete healer," he said, "at least a half century." But a man can have a hopeful combination of acuity and sensitivity, and Dr. Tournier has that, along with another essential and intriguing quality: humility.

In his first meeting after arriving for his second visit to the U.S. some months ago, he said to a small group, "I often have the feeling that what I do in my consulting room anyone can do—you can even see your grocer, because he can tell you what to do."

Another factor in his writings is the luminous good news. He believes, practices and lives the gospel, and he does not indulge in "guided tours through the wastelands of our contemporary life, with running commentary on the personal dis-ease, the cultural malaise, the global peril and withal the mood of withdrawal in the church," which Lloyd J. Averill attributes to the pessimistic theologians.

Best known for *The Meaning of Persons*, a classic in the battle against the