

Randolph



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Dear Alan

Thanks for your letter of 10 April and the drafts of the two chapters. I was very sad to hear of Ernie's death. You say he died of cancer, What kind of cancer was it ?

Thanks too for the bits of information about your own life, I assume, though you do not say it, that you were personally never banned, banished or gaoled ever.

By the way, I have been trying to get a copy of the first volume of your autobiography, Towards The Mountain, but it is not in print here, and OUP say they are not reprinting. Is it still available in SA, or anywhere else ? I'd like to get a copy, though can of course use the library copy if necessary.

I appreciate your having asked me to read the draft chapters. It is not easy, and never has been. But I think I have more or less come to terms with the events of 1964. I think it began to happen after Eddie was released, and without going into detail here (because I'm writing about it in a different context elsewhere) I think the central point for me has been learning to take responsibility for my actions - whatever the reasons for them may have been - and living with that responsibility, knowing that it is mine and mine alone, no-one else's and not the responsibility of 'the system'. Once I shouldered that fully, in my head and in my heart, I could begin to accept myself; one cannot live if one believes oneself to be utterly worthless, yet one cannot live without knowing and accepting those areas and actions in one's life that fill one with shame, thereby hoping never to repeat them. One cannot change the past, and one must live with the consequences. And I also must say that in exploring what I did and what happened to me on that frontier I have come to understand a little more clearly some things about human beings that I did not know before. I think you have to go to that frontier to find them out, and hence to find oneself out. But it is a frontier that few people go to, and I think that, on balance, I am glad that is the case. Nonetheless, the truth about oneself is a better starting point - however harsh it is - for living in this world. But enough of that, you probably know it anyway.

I have divided my comments into two sections. The first concerns matters of fact, and the second concerns wider issues you may want to consider, but that is up to you.

A. Factual matters (or mainly factual matters !)

Chapter 25:

1. I am puzzled by your reference on p7 to Randolph as a 'revolutionary'. Only he can tell you whether he was, or is. You seem to be arguing that the use of sabotage/violent methods is a criterion of that. Is it? When peasants (in England in the 1830s or anywhere else) burnt haystacks and smashed 'threshing machines' (or the Luddites) were they engaged in 'revolutionary' activity, or engaged in violent forms of protest and opposition as a means of changing aspects of a system, or even stopping change? Is non-violent illegal action (the sit-in, for example) non-revolutionary?

2. On page 10 you discuss my arrest and refer to keeping of documents. You imply that these were distributed around my flat. There is no truth in that, though it has been said many times. Very, very stupidly (from one point of view), one document that had no connection with the ARM was 'hidden' in a book; it was nonetheless about how to identify targets, and was taken from an entirely different context. It was by chance entirely that the SB man happened to pull out that book, and he found it. There were other documents, yes; at a 'safe' flat, which in due course as the arrests took place they found. No document gave '...the names of many members...' as you say. They had code names on them, like Bill or Joe or Mary, or whatever. Bad enough, you might say from a 'professional' underground point of view. Many such organizations keep things like that, as I imagine they did at Rivonia; the point is to keep them safely. I suppose we thought that we did. But nothing is 'safe' in that sense.

3. On page 10, again, you say 'Leftwich had himself drawn up a document on solitary confinement'. This has been said in books and I admitted it. But there is no truth in it at all. It was something I admitted in order not to incriminate in any way the person who had written it, but who had no connection at all with the ARM, but who knew about the psychology of such matters. By the way, to say that 'members of the ARM had been trained how to behave in detention' (also p 10) is really something of an exaggeration. One wondered and talked about it, but 'training' is really suggesting something very different. I spent 48 hours in an experiment, once, and that's all. We had no 'training' in the genuine sense of the word. It's misleading, and even if we had any it certainly did not prepare me for what my own reactions turned out to be; I doubt whether anything could have.

4. On page 10, again, at the bottom, and over to the top of p 11. I cannot say when I 'agreed to give evidence'. The process was complicated. But it certainly was not a 'decision' that occurred in the first 96 hours. The cracking had begun, dear god; but it seemed to go on and on, as the will to resist dissolved in a hiss of fear and self-~~unmasking~~ ^{unmasking} of a sort. When they burst in at midnight after the Johannesburg station bomb and said 'You'll hang', the crack became a chasm. I think that was a more decisive point, even though we had no knowledge of John Harris, and could say nothing about him.

5. Page 12, First para. I have no recollection of the court being cleared when I was in it, but my memory on that point may be faulty. It may have been for Lyn v d Riet. But in past years Dot has mentioned that she was in court when I was there, so I think you had better check that. It's not especially important, but you asked me to mention errors of fact. That may be one.

Chapter 26:

1. Bottom of page 9, in handwriting. You say 'Daniels unfortunately had no-one to intercede for him'. I understand the point you are making, that Spike got off very lightly and that Tony Tree, Alan Brooks and Stephanie Kemp got very short sentences (2 years, in fact, was it ?) but that Eddie carried the can. You are right. But it is not true to say that he had no-one to intercede for him or imply that no intercessions were made on his behalf. There were many and Dot Cleminghaw was tireless in her efforts, as she will tell you if you ask her. Some very 'high' people (including I think a senior Judge) appealed and appealed; letters were written on Eddie's behalf. Even I wrote one to the Minister of Justice. You say find out more from Dot or from Norman Daniels, Eddie's brother. I can only tell you that Norman wrote to me on 22 December 1975 and said, amongst other things: " I do not blame anyone for acting in the way they did. I always ask myself the question, how would I have acted ? It hurts though to realize that he (Eddie) is the only one paying the price. In fairness I would want to state that had he given certain undertakings, he too would have been released. He chose not to". Check with Dot, Norman or even Eddie himself if you want the truth and full facts. I don't know them. All I know is that to say no intercessions were made on his behalf is not the truth.

2. Page 4, top paragraph. It is not true to say that I gave evidence against all people in all the trials. Evidence was given in CT and Joburg, ~~not~~ Natal, and not against all the people in CT or Joburg. A minor point, but still a point of fact.

3. Page 5, last paragraph. It is not true to say that you wrote to me and asked if you could stay here with me in 1975. I wrote to you, in a letter dated 9 January 1975, and invited you to stay if you would like to. You replied on 27 February, saying you would like to.

4. Page 7, top. You say that John Lloyd was taken to Joburg station and that it was he who told of John Harris. Hugh Lewin says, in his book, that he was taken, and also mentioned John Harris.

5. Page 10. You mention an ARM letter to Verwoerd. You may be right about that, but to the best of my memory I can remember nothing of that kind. Your comments are apt, nonetheless; but was it one person or a policy ? Was a letter ever sent ?

Those are the only points of error, or what may be error, I can spot. None are especially important, but if you want to get the truth down, then you can assimilate them easily in minor editing. I don't think that any of them alter the fundamental truth, but some are clearly wrong.

B Wider points.

1 It is not easy for me to read this stuff, nor comment on it. My judgement is the most flawed and faulty of all, or perhaps it is. So you may want to ignore all that follows, however let me make the following points in good faith.

2 I don't think it is your best writing, Alan. I'm not in the end sure of your judgement about the whole bloody thing, and all its horror at so many different levels. It's not clear to me what meaning you read in it all, or what historical significance or insignificance you attach to it, or what human understanding is revealed about people, politics and society in that country at that time. Maybe that is clearer in other chapters or when the whole book is taken into account, but those two chapters seem thin on analysis and understanding.

3 On p 7 of Chapter 25, talking about Watson, you say that he was not someone who was prepared to die for his beliefs. How do you know that? I do not know that of him, or you, or anyone. It seems to me a gratuitous and unnecessary point. On a related point, I hope you do not say or mean anywhere else that he or Randolph (or others) who did manage to flee safely did 'wrong' in some sense, implying that they should have stayed to face it. In my own view they are the only ones who acted professionally and sensibly within the terms of such activities. And actually, as I'm sure you will understand, they relieved those of us inside of further pressure by the very fact of being out of harm's way. One cannot, on the one hand, criticise the ARM for being 'unprofessional' as an underground (I think you are right on that) and then also criticise those, like Randolph, for doing what is professional in these terms by shifting out of trouble, fast.

4 On page 9 of Chapter 25, you imply that Higgs and Harris persuaded both Hugh Lewin and myself not to give up when we were wanting to. I don't know whether they did persuade Hugh; however I never knew Harris and saw him only once at an LP Congress. We never spoke and I had no knowledge that he was a member. But I did try to persuade Hugh to go abroad and leave it all behind him. I think guilt stopped him. It would have stopped me too. What a pity.,

5 Chapter 26, generally. I don't know why you give so much space to the words of the Judge in CT. I do not know what his contribution has been to liberty and equality in SA and why his moral judgements deserve such length. Your own judgements would be far better spelled out in greater detail. You seem to endorse what he says by the way you use

* On p. 11 of the 26 you say you have no more
That's nonsense! Of course you have choice. You choose to write it.
You can choose to leave it out or alter it!

him. I think that's a pity. You also seem to rely quite heavily on the Knowles/Brokensha book.

6 I have to say that I find your treatment of John Harris to be lacking, but I'm not sure in what. I think your quoting of his breakdown before Ruth Hayman ("Save me, save me") is a bit like breaking the confidence of the confessional, which is in some senses the relationship that holds between lawyer and client. No doubt it is true, but I am simply offended by such an exposition of a man's terror in such a situation where he is facing death. And while his immediate family are alive, I think it may be quite wrong for you to do so. Your judgement about the act, the consequences and all that are legitimate; it is public knowledge. But I have to say I find aspects of your treatment of the man to be offensive, however horrendous his deeds. I do not think any of us know - do we, Alan? - how we would behave if faced with certain death by hanging. That being so, we should pass over our judgements about his feelings and behaviour with a humble silence. ⁱⁿ ^{detention.}

7 Is there no more to your views on why so many young people became involved in the ARM, so many young liberals/radicals? You refer to the discussion you had with Chaskalson, or rather you give mainly HIS views. What are your own? What historical insight can you throw on it all; what moral or psychological insight? When the shabby details of our actions and betrayals, our heroisms and our cowardices, have been told, the central question surely is about why: why such a bunch of genuinely nice, kind, bright and able men and women did what they did, at that time and in that place, both the good and the bad, the brave and the weak. WHY? I suppose in the end I find the conclusions inconclusive, perhaps even agnostic from the point of view of both historical and human understanding. I'm sorry to say that, but that is what I feel as I read it.

8 I want to say that if the worst form of harrassment you have had is being photographed 50 times by Warrant Officer Hattingh, or having the window of your car broken by the SB, then it's not much by SA standards. Also, I wonder what people will make of the comment on p 7 of Chapter 26 where you say, after you and Dorrie had heard of the Joburg bomb, 'Was this the end-result of our campaign for right and justice? Had one given up eleven years of one's life to achieve this?' I see your point, of course. But will people interpret it somewhat oddly? You lived most of your life in comfort, as have most of us as white SAfricans; you were never jailed, banned, deported; you continued to live your life, while others were jailed, deported, humiliated and had their lives torn apart one way or another, by their own actions, to be sure, I just wonder whether the point you are trying to make could be made in a different way?

Well, I'll close there. I hope these comments are of some use. And I hope this letter finds you in good health and heart. It was a very kind thought to have asked me whether I would read the chapters; no-one else has ever done so, and I

* but, at least, nominally in a 'good cause', and not (except at a level) for complex neurotic selfish reasons.

hope I have not abused your kindness by saying what I think, especially in these last few comments. I have always valued deeply your kindness and thoughtfulness and the fact that you have not conveyed me to oblivion, and I still do.

By all means use anything in this letter to correct errors, but I would be glad if you did not quote it directly without first asking and showing me the context. I know how difficult it is to write the sort of book you are doing, for it is both directly personal, about yourself, yet also trying to organize the relationship of your own life, thoughts and beliefs to those of others. I wish you luck with the final stages.

Please confirm receipt of this letter, when you have a moment.

Yours ever

Admiral