

PC 66/4/125

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Dear Alan

Thanks for your letter of 11 June. I was pleased to receive it since I rather feared that my response to your chapters had gone astray in the mails. I would have replied to your letter earlier but it has been a punishing end of term and I've barely surfaced until now to attend to personal letters and other matters.

Of course I understand that you have no intention to amend the chapters further and I do not write with that in mind, so you can read on without any fear!

I'm glad that you were able to make some factual corrections and that comments on these points were useful. A few final observations, though, may set the matter at rest:

1 Who knows what Shakespeare did or did not experience? And in any event, there are of course people who do seem to understand human depths, but they are exceptional. I believe it is an empirical truth that the vast majority of us, as a species, has a very limited degree of self-knowledge. It is often only through experiences of a more or less uncommon kind that we learn more of ourselves and - thus - of others. I am surprised that you react so sharply to that simple observation. I wonder why?

2 On p 7 of Chapter 27 you refer to Vigne's "revolutionary beliefs" - it was to that I was referring. I still do not know whether RV did or does regard himself as revolutionary. Anyone reading that would think that you did so regard him. Personally, I think it is an error.

3 It seems to me to be a most extraordinary belief of yours that the reason why I (and Randolph) do not think this is your best writing is because the chapters are painful. It may be a comforting way to deflect criticism, but it is profoundly wrong, speaking for myself. I must say that, overall, I found the tone of your letter in reply to be surprisingly defensive and irritated that you might yourself be criticised. You cannot possibly want to say that you (or your writings) are beyond criticism? And if you are not beyond criticism in what respects do you criticise yourself?

4 I had no intention to be 'nasty' in para 8 of my 'wider points'. As I said at the end of that para I think the point you are trying to make could be made in a different way. The whole tone of that part of the chapter (as, I think, Randolph said) comes across as if the events of 1964 were a personal affront, and maybe that is how you regard what happened. If so, it would be an error in my view. All that I was trying to suggest to you is that given the relatively unruffled comfort of your adult life in pretty turbulent political times, it might be misunderstood in this day and age that you are so free with your criticisms of others - then and now - who for good or bad have suffered for their beliefs, when you have not (at least not in the conventional sense). If what comes across is that 'their behaviour was bad for me', then critics will have rather arched eyebrows at the implications such a view entails about the person writing it. But if

you have made the point about not suffering for your beliefs then I'm sure it will help to avert possible attack.

Well, let's let that all close. I hope that they get the book out in good time and that it helps people understand the times, and your place in them. I shall be elaborating some of the points I've made here and in the comment on your chapters in an 'Open Letter' to you (part of a book) and I'll send the draft for you to comment on in return.

The news here (as there, no doubt) is pretty patchy. Dennis Worrall is not making a good show at all, for the SA Govt, though I'm not sure how any one could do that. It is hard to tell the contours of the future. Will they release Mandela and will the ANC be legalised? Sooner or later there will have to be negotiations about sharing power, at the least, and the ANC will have to be one component of the negotiations. I suppose the question is when, not if. And Inkatha - and others? The transition will be the roughest part, I suppose, while the future remains utterly shrouded, though we do have historical precedents elsewhere from the colonial world to provide hints.

Take care of yourself.

Yours