

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Ah, But Your Land is
Beautiful

Alan Paton

CONTENTS

About the Author

Also by Alan Paton

Dedication

Title Page

Part One: The Defiance Campaign

Part Two: The Cleft Stick

Part Three: Come Back, Africa

Part Four: Death of a Traitor

Part Five: The Holy Church of Zion

Part Six: Into the Golden Age

Author's Note

Copyright

About the Author

Alan Paton was born in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa, in 1903. After some years as a science teacher in white high schools, he became principal of Diepkloof Reformatory. The publication of *Cry, The Beloved Country* in 1948 made him famous and he planned to become a full-time writer, but was drawn into the political arena. In 1953 he became the first president of the Liberal Party of South Africa, which was forced to disband in 1968. Paton was a public figure hated by the apartheid government, but admired by many in South Africa and abroad. He received numerous awards and honorary degrees. Much of what he believed in is now enshrined in South Africa's Bill of Rights. He died in 1988.

ALSO BY ALAN PATON

Cry, The Beloved Country

Too Late the Phalarope

Tales from a Troubled Land

South African Tragedy

For You Departed

Apartheid and the Archbishop

Knocking on the Door

Towards the Mountain

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ITS FIRST FOUR READERS:

PETER BROWN OF PIETERMARITZBURG, NATAL
ABRAHAM DE VRIES OF LADISMITH, CAPE PROVINCE
ELLIOT MNGADI OF LADYSMITH, NATAL
PAT POOVALINGAM OF DURBAN, NATAL

THEY WERE ASKED TO READ IT
TO PREVENT ME FROM COMMITTING SOLECISMS.

AH, BUT YOUR LAND IS BEAUTIFUL

Alan Paton

V
V I N T A G E

PART ONE

The Defiance Campaign

Mr. Bodasingh stood in front of the big picture window in the big sitting-room of his big house in Reservoir Hills. The view is fantastic, and is admired by all their visitors. At night it can draw gasps of wonder, for you can see spread out below you the lights of the city of Durban, greatest port in the whole continent of Africa, and you can see the lights of ships riding out there in the Indian Ocean, awaiting their call to enter the harbour. For Durban Bay itself, though it is the busiest port in Africa, is a small affair compared with Sydney and San Francisco and Rio.

Mr. Bodasingh is very proud of this city, for he and his forebears helped to build it. In the broad sense he is a citizen of Durban, but in the legal sense he is not, for he has no vote and therefore no say in the government of the city. But he is not political. He has never joined the Congress, and has never made a speech except at weddings and directors' meetings and school functions. He is a rich man, although his great-grandfather came to Natal as a labourer in the 1860s and owned virtually nothing but a willing pair of hands and a mind whose real quality was revealed only in his descendants.

But he was not today thinking of the sweeping view before him or of the material success of the Bodasinghs. He was thinking of a much more personal matter, and it was clearly weighing heavily on his mind. As he looked again at his watch, his wife said to him,

- What time is it?
- Five minutes to ten.

They could both imagine the scene. Their daughter, Prem Bodasingh, their only child and the pride and joy of their lives, eighteen years of age, obedient and respectful to her parents and her elders, head-girl of Centenary High, would now be standing outside the doors of the Durban Municipal

Reference Library, waiting for them to open on an event the like of which they had never opened on before in all their history. For above the doors it was clearly stated that the library was for *Whites Only — Blankes Alleen*. At ten o'clock their daughter would enter, take a book from the shelves, and sit down at a table to read. The young white girl at the inquiry desk would almost certainly go to tell her superior that a young Indian girl was sitting at a table in the library, and the superior, who would almost certainly be an elderly lady of learning and refinement, would go to the Indian girl and tell her that the library was for the use of whites only, and she would regret that she must ask her to leave. Their daughter will say that she knows that, and that she is there to defy the law, and that therefore she cannot leave. The superior will possibly be shocked at this, and she may possibly not be shocked at all, having heard all about the Defiance Campaign, and she will know that Indian and African people are sitting in white railway waiting-rooms, and on white benches in white parks, and are refusing to pay in their employers' takings to tellers who are designated to serve 'Non-Whites Only'. Therefore it is not surprising that sooner or later someone would challenge the colour bar at the Reference Library. The superior would then go to the Chief Librarian, and Mr. Bodasingh winced at this thought, for the Chief Librarian was a very nice man who had given a very nice address to the Reservoir Hills library group not long ago, and Mr. Bodasingh had been in the chair.

To go on imagining the scene now became very painful, for the Chief Librarian would leave his important work and go to the Reference Library and ask the Indian girl to leave. Then their daughter would say that she was there to defy the law and could not leave.

Now came the most painful part of all, for what would the Chief Librarian do? There was only one thing that he could do, and that was to call the police. Mr. Bodasingh could not hold back a kind of groan.

- M.K., what's the matter?
- You see, I have been imagining it all, and I have just got to the police.

- I think faster than you. I got to the police some time ago.
- I hope they send a senior man, perhaps with a daughter like Prem. These young white constables . . . Mr. Bodasingh shuddered.

- Then what happens, M.K., when the police come?
- They take her away and charge her. Then I'm not sure where they will take her. But as soon as we know, our friend Maharaj will go there at once.

- Someone is knocking at the door.
Mr. Bodasingh winced again, but soon realised that the caller could not possibly be bringing news of their daughter. It was his old friend Jay Perumal. Both of them were in their early fifties, and had climbed up the ladder of success together. Mr. Perumal clearly looked as though something were on his mind also.

- Mrs. M.K., greetings. You both look troubled, and we all understand it. We Perumals understand it especially well, because we have troubles too.

- Your grandmother?
- Yes.
- So she agreed to carry on?
- Yes.
- Shame, said Mrs. Bodasingh. An old lady like that. How old is she?

- She's ninety-two. But the reason why the Congress wanted her is of course because she is the only one left of the first ship from India. You remember, M.K., the s.s. *Truro*. She was born on that voyage, so she is now as old as the Indian people of South Africa.

Mr. Perumal spoke more vehemently.
- M.K., I blame Dr. Monty for this. And I blame him for Prem too. The old lady should be sitting in her special chair in the sun, instead of in the white waiting-room at Berea

Road. And Prem should be working hard for her Matriculation instead of sitting in the Reference Library. You see, the old lady can't say no to Dr. Monty. She can't read and write, and he is a doctor from Edinburgh. What is more, he looks after her for nothing. He never sends an account. She thinks he is a Mahatma.

- You're lucky, said Mrs. Bodasingh. She hasn't been arrested. We don't expect to be so lucky.

- Her hair is as white as snow, and she wears a clean white sari every day, said Mr. Perumal with some pride. So she looks like, you know, some angel of purity. They have warned her twice, but now they don't warn her any more. Many of the white people greet her now when they come into the waiting-room.

He took out his wallet, and took out a picture from the wallet.

- You see what I mean. The white hair, the dark face, full of care you know, the white sari, what can they do to her? No, I don't mean full of care, she's not full of care, I mean her face is — what do they say? — careworn, eh? Her great-grandchildren think she is the most wonderful woman to have for a great-grandmother. The great-great-grandchildren are too small.

- How many great-grandchildren are there?

- Oh, between forty and fifty, we don't count any more. Perhaps it's between fifty and sixty. They had big families then, not like us with three and four. M.K., you tell me why the Congress must use old people and children. Don't they have enough grown-up people to support them? At ninety-two your life should be finished — no, I don't mean finished, I mean, you remember, M.K. and Mrs. M.K., what they said about King George the Fifth, that his life was drawing peacefully to its end. Well, the old lady's life should be drawing peacefully to its end, but not in a railway station. She should be at home, in a chair, sitting in the sun.

Mr. Perumal paused a moment to pull himself together. Then he spoke with greater vehemence than ever.

- And your daughter Prem. The cleverest girl in Durban, they say, at any high school, white, black, or Indian. A wonderful future before her but what happens today? A week suspended. So she goes again and what happens then? Two weeks not suspended plus that week no longer suspended.

- Don't talk like that, said Mr. Bodasingh with pain.

- I *do* talk like that. This is not the time for nice talk, M.K.

- Who said she would go again?

- My daughter, Lutchmee.

Mrs. Bodasingh cried out.

- Why didn't Lutchmee go to the library too?

- She is not allowed to.

- Who won't allow her? You, the clever father?

- No, not me. Prem will not allow her. Prem will not allow any of the girls to do it. They must work for their examinations. Don't you know your own daughter? She says, Do it, and you do it. She says, Don't do it, and you don't do it. She will be like Mrs. Pandit.

Mr. Bodasingh looked the picture of misery, pride struggling with dread. But Mr. Perumal was now in full cry, and either ignored his friend's misery or did not see it.

- You do nothing for your daughter, M.K., and I do nothing for my grandmother. Your daughter is very important, M.K. Her life is just beginning, but the old lady's life is drawing peacefully to its end.

- You said just now, said Mrs. Bodasingh sharply, that it was *not* drawing peacefully to its end.

- I am getting mixed, Mrs. M.K. That is because I am ashamed. I do nothing for my grandmother. You ought to be ashamed too, M.K. You do nothing for your daughter. We are a disgrace to the Indian people.

- You are very clever, Jay. What do you say we do?

We go to Dr. Monty. We say we object to the way Congress interferes in our private lives, and the way it puts heavy burdens on old women and children.

- M.K. won't go to see Dr. Monty, said Mrs. Bodasingh again sharply. He is afraid of him. You are all afraid of him, not just because of Congress, but because he went to Edinburgh.

- M.K., are you afraid of Dr. Monty?

- I don't say I am afraid of him. Look, Jay, I am not afraid of anyone in business, but Dr. Monty isn't in business. Outside business he's too clever for me.

The telephone rang and Mr. Bodasingh ran to it. He could hardly hold the receiver because his hands were trembling. Both his wife and Mr. Perumal listened for every word.

- Prem's arrested. She's in the Smith Street charge office. Bail is twenty pounds. I must go at once. Ring Maharaj and tell him to go there as soon as he can.

- M.K.!

Mr. Bodasingh turned to his wife.

- Yes.

- M.K., you mustn't pay bail.

- What, I mustn't pay bail? But I want my daughter.

- If you pay bail, you'll lose your daughter.

- Who told you that?

- She told me that.

Mr. Bodasingh looked at his wife, full of despair and frustration.

- God Almighty, he said, God Almighty. You remember, Kuniamma, when she was six years old, she would climb up on me and say, When I grow up, I'm going to marry you, daddy.

- I can pay bail and she would never know, said Mr. Perumal.

You go and pay bail for your grandmother, Jay Perumal, said Mrs. Bodasingh. You look after your family and we'll look after ours.

- This is not a time for quarrelling, said Mr. Bodasingh. Kuniamma, I must go.

So Mr. M. K. Bodasingh, director of companies, chairman of philanthropies, welcome if somewhat over-flowery speaker at weddings, now rendered inarticulate by circumstance and weighed down by woe, departed for the Smith Street charge office to inform Mr. Maharaj that on no account was bail to be paid.

This girl Prem Bodasingh, the one who keeps going to the Durban Municipal Reference Library, is causing trouble in Pietermaritzburg also. Dr. William Johnson, Director of Education for the province of Natal, doesn't want to take punitive steps against her, but the Chairman of the Natal Executive, Mr. Harry Mainwaring, member of the great Natal family, says that he must.

- Do you mean to say, Director, that this girl can go on breaking the law with impunity?

She is not doing it with impunity. She has been punished for it three times.

- And she goes on doing it. I may say I find it intolerable. So we are asking you to give her a warning, that if she does it again, all schools are closed to her.

- Mr. Chairman, I'm an educator, not a judge.

- Yes, I appreciate that, but you have the power in consultation with a school principal to expel a child from a school. You could call that a judicial function.

- Mr. Chairman, it's a power I use very sparingly, and then only in extreme cases, serious theft, or a bad sex scandal, or dangerous insubordination.

- You don't think it is dangerous insubordination to break the law of the country, openly and persistently?

Johnson did not answer immediately. He rested his chin on his hands, and looked intently at the blotter in front of him.

- You find that question difficult, said Mainwaring.

- Yes, indeed. Extremely difficult.

- I don't need to tell you, Director, that it is a very dangerous thing when an individual decides that a law is wrong, and then disobeys it. The whole fabric of law and order breaks down. You may only be going to sit in a reading-room from which the law debars you, but you are in fact challenging the authority of Government and the State.

Again Johnson said nothing. Mainwaring irritated him but he must not show it. Mainwaring was very conscious of belonging to one of the great Natal families. Although they had both been to the same exclusive school, Johnson could lay no claim to any kind of illustrious ancestry.

- Harrington came to see you about this, didn't he?

- Yes, he did.

- I happen to know this, not because I was snooping, but because he came to see me too. Thinks we would be doing a most un-British thing if we debar this girl from our schools. He makes me angry. He obviously doesn't know a thing about the history of British India. And he obviously didn't know that my grandfather was a Boer, my mother's father. Did you know that?

- Of course. I met him at your home in the Karkloof when we were schoolboys.

- I should have remembered that. Well, Harrington has some idea in his head that English-speaking South Africans know more about justice than Afrikaners. He looked a bit silly when I told him my grandfather was a Boer. He also has an idea that St. Michael's knows more about justice than all the other schools, except probably St. John's in Johannesburg and St. Andrew's in Grahamstown and Bishops in the Cape.

- I think I should make it quite clear, Mr. Chairman, that my reluctance to take action against this girl has nothing to do with British and Afrikaner ideas of justice. It's just that I cannot accept the idea of ending a girl's education because she goes to a white library. I know she's breaking the law,

but such a penalty seems to me out of all proportion to the seriousness of the offence.

- So you don't think it is a serious offence to go on persistently breaking the law?

- From your viewpoint I can see that it is. That is partly because it's *your* authority that she is flouting. But there is another point of view, equally valid. She goes to the library, she dresses quietly, she doesn't carry a gun, she doesn't threaten anyone, she takes out a book and sits down to read. The only visible instruction is to be silent, and she is silent enough. But for this offence you would bring her education to an end.

- You are in fact refusing to debar her from the schools of the province.

- I think I intend to do so.

- You realise it is a grave decision?

- Yes.

- Why don't you refuse now?

- Because I have decided to go to Durban tomorrow to see the girl's principal, and then I shall go to see the girl herself.

- In prison?

- Yes.

- I can't stop you, Director, said Mainwaring angrily, but I disapprove totally. I don't think it part of your duties. There are fifty thousand Indian children in our schools, not to mention whites and Africans. And one gets herself into trouble and you must go rushing off to see her. If someone has to go and see her, why don't you send one of your inspectors?

- The province appointed me Director, and I am its servant. But they mustn't tell me how my job must be done. And if they disapprove totally, they can get rid of me.

- Are you threatening us?

- No more than you are threatening me.

- I just don't understand you, Johnson. People like the Bodasinghs came to South Africa as coolies. The men

earned something like ten or fourteen shillings a month and a free hut and rations. Today this girl's father is a rich man. This country gave him opportunities far greater than any he would find in India. In India he would still be a coolie. And yet his daughter has the impudence to complain of the laws of the country that made them rich. It makes me fume. Let me go before I really get angry. I still think that if this girl must be seen, you could send someone else to see her.

The Director rose as his superior left. If he had spoken his thoughts, Mainwaring would have been shocked, for the Director would have said, I won't send anyone else because I want to go myself, I want to see this Indian girl, this child of a powerless race, who has challenged the majesty of the Government and the State. I want to see what kind of girl she could be.

The Durban prison is no thing of beauty. From its ramparts one does not see the blue expanse of the Indian Ocean or the stately indigenous trees of the Berea. One sees instead a waste piece of land bounded on one side by the prison itself, and on the other sides by nondescript commercial buildings. The waste land has to some extent been hallowed because on Sunday afternoons people have been gathering there to pray for the well-being of those who have been sentenced for sitting in white waiting-rooms or on white benches in the public parks and gardens, or as in the case of this girl Prem Bodasingh, for going to the white reference room of the Durban Library.

The Superintendent met Johnson with a deference due to a Director of Education and with an authority proper to the Superintendent of a prison, who has the responsibility for the health and safe custody of a few hundred souls who have broken the laws of the land but not very grievously, because in that case they would have been sent to prisons

much more formidable than this unimposing building on a piece of waste land in Durban.

- I've bent the rules for you, Director, as I am entitled to do on occasions. You can see the prisoner in a private room, and your conversation will not be listened to.

- Thank you, Superintendent.

The Director followed the Superintendent down a passage smelling of disinfectant, and into a room where a young Indian girl was sitting under guard. As they entered, the wardress said in a sharp voice, Stand up, and she and the girl stood up.

- This, Director, is prisoner Prem Bodasingh, who is at present serving a three-week sentence for contravening municipal bye-laws. Prisoner Bodasingh, this is Dr. Johnson, the Director of Education for Natal. Wardress Smith, you will not remain, but will take up your duties outside the door. You will see that no unauthorised person enters this room. You may sit down if you wish. Director, will you kindly tell Wardress Smith when your visit is ended, and I shall come to escort you. I must ask you not to move from this room unescorted.

He left the room and shut the door, and Johnson said to the girl, Sit down, Prem.

Prem Bodasingh, even in the shapeless prison dress that she was wearing, appeared to him as a creature of grace. She was slender and not very tall, and her features were what one might call aristocratic, although she was in fact the descendant of labourers. These labourers had been brought to Natal in 1860 to work on the sugar plantations, and some of their descendants had become teachers, professors, manufacturers, lawyers, doctors. Others still belonged to the very poor, and now regarded with respect those whose ancestors had been labourers like their own. All of them had once been called coolies, a word which with the passage of time has become a term of contempt, and is no longer used in polite society.

Prem not only had these aristocratic features, but her hands were aristocratic too, with fine tapered fingers. Her eyes were luminous, more like those of a young gazelle than a young revolutionary. She met his scrutiny with composure, without either boldness or embarrassment.

- Miss Ramsay sends her best wishes to you. She wants very much to have you back at school. She says that the school is not easy to control without you.

The girl gave a smile of pleasure, but she quickly suppressed it.

- Prem, you heard who I am, and you know why I am here, don't you?

Yes, I know, sir. You are here because I have broken the law, and because some people want me to be expelled.

- I am here also for quite a different reason. Do you know what *in loco parentis* means?

Yes, sir, I do.

- I have not come here to talk to you about breaking the law. I am not a policeman. I am a teacher, and I am filled with apprehension — you understand that? — I am filled with apprehension — that you may destroy your life.

She did not reply.

- You want to make the world better, and you are right to want that. But this particular world in which we live is not going to get better tomorrow. It may go on like this for ten, twenty, thirty years. Nobody knows. And you may have to live in it for those thirty years, doing what? Perhaps spending more and more of your life in prison, without matriculation, without university, without a career. You want to be a social worker, don't you?

- Yes, sir.

- Well, Prem, at this rate you will never be a social worker, unless of course you go to some other country. But it would be difficult for you to do that now. You would regard it as running away, is that not so?

- Yes, sir.

- You have to ask yourself, which is better, to serve your country and your people for thirty years as a social worker, or to go in and out of jail for thirty years. Prem, I don't want to stop you from breaking what you think is an unjust law. I want to stop you from damaging your whole life. Do you understand what I am saying?

- Yes, sir, I understand it.

- Do you understand that you may be damaging your whole life?

- I understand it.

- Are you willing to throw away education, knowledge, learning, for the sake of your cause?

She said to him in a low voice,

- Yes.

- But these are — what shall I say? — holy things.

She said with a spark of fire,

- The cause is holy too. And my promise. A promise is holy too.

- A promise to whom? To Congress?

- No. To God and myself.

- What was your promise, Prem?

She did not answer. He could see that his questions were painful to her. But having been brought up in the ways of obedience, she could hardly refuse to answer this great personage, this great white personage who was filled with apprehension that she might destroy her life.

He said to her gently,

- My child, what was your promise?

She bowed her head and said in a voice so low that he could barely hear her words,

- To the death.

- Who asked you for that?

- Nobody.

- Who heard your promise?

- Dr. Monty heard it.

- Dr. Monty Naicker?

- Yes.
- What did he say? Did he say you mustn't do that?
- No.
- What did he do?

She was silent again, till he said to her,

- Prem.
- He took out his handkerchief.
- And blew his nose?

He laughed, and the girl laughed too, the laugh transforming her face so that he thought her suddenly beautiful.

- There's one last question. What do your parents say?
- They want me to stop.
- And you are held back by your promise?
- Yes, sir.

- Well, you must think it all over carefully. I also would try to keep a promise. But I think it is possible to make too much of the sanctity of a promise. Is one entitled to hurt others? Is one even entitled to hurt oneself? Your life doesn't belong to you, Prem. It belongs to your parents and your school and your friends, and even to the country of what you call the unjust laws. I shall do everything I can to save you from total expulsion. But you must remember that I am only a servant of the Provincial Council. The final power is theirs. Goodbye, Prem.

She stood up and made him a kind of curtsey.

- If my parents were here they would thank you for your kindness.

William Johnson walked up the broad path that led to Dr. Monty's house and observed the garden with an appreciative eye. The house too was worth looking at, cool and wide-verandahed, and was situated in one of the beautiful residential streets of Durban. Dr. Monty's action in legally buying this house was known as 'penetration', and

the majority of the white citizens objected strongly to the infiltration by Indians of what they regarded as their own areas. Their first attempts to stop this kind of thing had been unsuccessful, but now the Group Areas Act of the new Nationalist Government promised relief. Dr. Monty would no longer be able to live in a white group area, but would have to take himself and his family to an Indian group area, where they could speak their own language and cherish their own culture and pursue their own social, political, religious, and economic goals in peace, unhampered by the proximity of alien races. The Group Areas Act was indeed one of the cornerstones of the great edifice of separate coexistence, and it was welcomed by the white citizens of Durban, of whom it was cynically said that they voted United Party and thanked God for the Nationalists.

Coming down the path to meet Johnson was Dr. Monty himself, a well-built man of middle height, his white teeth shining in a broad smile of welcome. Johnson had seen him on the platform, humourless and uncompromising and somewhat frightening, but the man coming to meet him was friendly and benign.

- Dr. Johnson.

- I didn't think you'd see me, doctor.

- Why is that?

- Because the Department has forbidden its teachers to take part in the Defiance Campaign.

Dr. Monty gave his famous chuckle, an endearing sound which gave his hearers the assurance that he was human, an impression they might not have got if they had heard him on a public platform.

- The reason why I see you, Director, is because of what you have done for our schools. The moment you rang, I had no hesitation in deciding to see you. We are not fanatics, Director. Come this way. We are going to have tea on the verandah.

- It's a pleasant house, doctor.

No sooner had Johnson said this than he wished that he could have recalled his words. Dr. Monty saw his embarrassment and smiled at it.

- It *is* a pleasant house. It's an oasis in the desert, but as you know, it's to the desert we must go. While we are here, we intend to enjoy it.

- And your neighbours?

Many don't want us to go, and they come to tell us so. It's handy to have a doctor next door. It has benefited them more than once. But you didn't come here to talk to me about the Group Areas Act.

- No, I didn't. I came to talk to you about Prem.

- You think I ought to stop her.

- I came to tell you that she weighs heavily on my mind, and on my conscience too. You may have heard that she may be debarred from all schools. I don't think that is likely. The Natal Executive Committee would have to find a new director, and I don't think they would be willing to go as far as that. That's not what worries me, doctor. It's the possibility that the Defiance Campaign may go on for many years. Prem has promised — to God and herself — that she will go on to the death. I am afraid that she may destroy her whole life. You know, don't you, that she won't allow any other girl in the school to join the campaign?

- Yes, I know that. I may tell you, Director, that I had nothing to do with persuading Prem to join the campaign. I did not even know her. And I certainly never expected that one of M.K. Bodasingh's family would join us. Now when a young girl like that, clever and beautiful, decides that this is what she wants to do, that this is the right thing for her to do, who am I to stop her?

- I see that. But you have a wisdom and a knowledge that are denied to her. She is serving an ideal of universal justice, and I am proud that our schools have produced such a girl. But she also owes a duty to herself. Did you know she wanted to be a social worker?

- Yes, I knew.

- And you know that if the campaign goes on for many years, and if she believes herself to be bound by this overwhelming promise made at the age of seventeen or eighteen, she will never become a social worker?

- Yes, I know that too.

- Don't you also stand to her *in loco parentis*? Her own parents are powerless, as you know. But you have a great influence over her. Do you believe that she is serving the cause better now than she possibly could in later years? Have you any reason to believe that?

- You don't understand, Director, that this is going to be our life from now on. Some of us have to be destroyed now so that freedom can come to others later. We have come to realise this only in the past few years. I am talking about Indians especially. We made big speeches about freedom, but we didn't suffer. Now many of us are ready to suffer, just as Prem is ready.

- But she is only a child.

- We were all children once. What am I to say to her, Director? Shall I say to her, You must go on living a normal life but in ten years' time I shall call on you to suffer? Couldn't we all do that? Couldn't I finish building my new clinic first, and then go out and suffer? Couldn't Lutuli first get his shop on its feet and then go out and suffer? Wouldn't it be easier for me to suffer if I could leave my partners to run a new clinic while I join the struggle? Couldn't Lutuli suffer better if his shop were giving security to his wife and family? And couldn't the girl Prem suffer better if she first qualified as a social worker? You don't change the world that way, Director.

Johnson knew that he was looking at a world different from his own, a world that he would never enter. He would proceed honourably to his pension, and would receive many praises. He and his wife would retire, in Pietermaritzburg or on the South Coast, where if he wished he could play golf

for another ten years, and perhaps after that play bowls for another ten. He could read his newspapers and all the books that he had never had the time to read. He could sit on his verandah and look at the blue waters of the Indian Ocean, and the ships on their way to Australia and the Far East, and read about the protest marches of the Lutulis and the Montys. But destiny, or history, or something else, had made it a world which he could not enter.

- The Suppression of Communism Act has left only one way open to us, Director. If you resist the laws, long enough, militantly enough, you will be silenced, you will be shut off from the world of people, of pleasure, of travel, even of education. That will happen to Lutuli soon, and it will happen to me.

The smiling Dr. Monty was gone, the other Monty was speaking, and it was evident to Johnson that under the even tenor of the words there was an almost ungovernable passion, here in the quietness of this residential street.

- The girl is beautiful, Director, and I hear she is clever too. But she has something more than beauty and cleverness, she has the courage to oppose injustice, and she has the courage to oppose the unjust laws that can silence the brave and take away the houses and the shops of decent law-abiding people, because of an accident of birth over which they had no control. But the girl is destined to suffer, Director, unless she betrays the cause that she believes in. When she came to see me I could have wept to see her courage, and her beauty. But stop her? There are some things that can't be done.

Johnson stood up.

- I did my best. I wanted to save the girl.

- It does you credit, Director. That's why we respect you and are thankful that you are in charge of our schools.

He chuckled. The benign Dr. Monty was back again.

- Politics is not the only thing in our world. There are other things too, pride in our schools and our children. And in our

houses and gardens. But in the last resort, politics is the most important of them all. That sounds terrible, Director, but it isn't, because for us politics means justice.

. . . I think, my dear aunt, that you are overestimating the importance of the Defiance Campaign. I can tell you in the strictest confidence that the Government is considering steps which will bring it to a decisive end. The unnatural alliance between Chief Lutuli of the African Congress and Dr. Naicker of the Indian Congress will be ended too. It is certain that Lutuli will be ordered to choose between his chieftainship and his presidency of the Congress. Whichever he chooses it will be the end of him.

I can also tell you that the Cabinet is angry about Africans and Indians 'cooperating' in the campaign. You will remember that only a few years ago, in 1949 to be exact, the Zulus went after the Indians because of some trouble between a Zulu boy and an Indian shopkeeper. More than 140 people lost their lives, more than half of them being Zulus, most of them killed by the police to stop them killing Indians. There was a malicious slander that the Government was encouraging the riots; on the contrary the whole intention of apartheid is to prevent them by the policy of peaceful coexistence. It is a well-known scientific fact that racial mixing leads inevitably to racial conflict. Therefore no good can come out of this 'cooperation'.

The determination of the Government has been increased by the news that Patrick Duncan has resigned his post as judicial commissioner in the British Colonial Service in Basutoland in order to join the campaign. You will remember that Duncan's father, when he was Governor-General, refused in 1939 to grant General Hertzog's request to dissolve Parliament after he had been defeated by thirteen votes on the decision to declare war on Germany. Instead Duncan asked Smuts to form a new government, and that is

why the name of Duncan is held in low esteem by all true Afrikaners. My Minister has ordered the head of Security to give him a full report on Duncan. The young man will pay heavily for his treachery.

My Minister finds one feature of the campaign extremely insolent. These Indians who have been to prison have taken to wearing the white Gandhi cap, a ridiculous headgear that perches on the top of the head like those paper hats that people wear at Christmas. Most of the Indians wearing them would now be sleeping on the pavements of Calcutta had their forefathers not come to South Africa as labourers last century. Our Durban Nationalists find this insolence quite intolerable, and have sent a deputation to the Minister asking him to consider a twelve-months' sentence for the wearing of such a cap. He was willing, but Dr. Malan said he would not make himself ridiculous by punishing people for wearing a particular kind of cap. I can tell you that the Minister was deeply offended by this remark.

However, I can promise you that an important step will soon be taken. The punishments for sitting in white waiting-rooms and in white libraries are so light that it is no hardship to go to jail for a week every few months. More than eight thousand people have done it so far and they are clogging up the jails. They think it is a kind of joke but in fact they are defying the Government and Parliament. Most shocking of all, they are defying the State, which all Christians believe to be ordained by God. Was it not Paul himself who wrote that rulers are not a terror to the good but only to the evildoers? It is true that Peter wrote that we must obey God rather than men, but he had clearly not grasped the point that those men who became rulers were in fact ordained by God. This difference of opinion has caused much trouble among the wavering kind of Christians, and has also been seized upon by those who hate any kind of authority. It has also been exploited by the communists, who are the champions of civil liberties until

they come to power, after which they destroy them all. It can also be pointed out that Paul was a scholar, while Peter (through no fault of his own, I hasten to point out) was only a fisherman. Now the Afrikaner has a profound respect for scholars, but he can hardly be expected to have the same respect for fishermen, most of whom are coloured men. Some of these coloured men still have the old Cape vote to send white M.P.s to the white Parliament, but this anomaly will soon be removed, for while it is the aim of the National Party to give civil and political rights to every man and woman in South Africa, they must achieve these rights as members of their own groups, each enjoying sovereign powers in its own sphere. This is the political doctrine of separate coexistence, a doctrine which has no parallel in any other country of the world. In any case Peter can hardly be expected to enjoy the full confidence of Afrikaners; he founded the Roman Catholic Church, which Scripture has likened to a harlot sitting on seven mountains.

You must not allow to enter your mind any thought that the Government is frightened of the Defiance Campaign. Our Prime Minister bears a name that is revered only second to that of Paul Kruger. My own Minister believes that it is his sacred duty to be a terror to evildoers. Even more unshakable than they — if I may say so without disloyalty — is the Minister of Native Affairs, our revered Dr. Hendrik, who is regarded by many as the supreme architect of the doctrine of separate coexistence. They are three great men, three of the greatest in the history of Afrikanerdom, and they are implacably determined to destroy the Defiance Campaign. They will destroy it not by the killing of the protesters, as Stalin would have done (some say Hitler also, but this allegation has been put forward mainly by Jews and liberals, and can therefore be regarded with scepticism), but by the use of the powers given to them by Parliament. My Minister says that after forty years of the spineless rule of Botha, Hertzog, and Smuts, it is the Malan Government that

has given teeth to democracy. And they mustn't cry if they get bitten, he says.

I have just come from the Minister. I have never seen him so angry about anything as he is about Duncan. He expressed his anger to me in forcible language.

'Tell me, Van Onselen, how can a white man do a thing like that? How he can join forces with Indians and Africans against his own people, I just cannot understand. I sit here at my desk and I try to understand it, but I just cannot do so.'

The Minister is waiting impatiently for the Security report on Duncan. There may be something in it that would enable him to destroy Duncan. But whatever the case, he wants to know exactly what kind of man Duncan is.

As for me, my dear aunt, I continue to live my own, what some people would call, cloistered life. I enjoy my work, I like my Minister, I read *Die Transvaler* and the *Star*, and of course I have my table tennis. I must modestly confess that I am a bit of a champion. Dear old Sophie gives me my breakfast, and stays for a couple of hours. I cannot say that I like living alone. I think of my mother every day. But life has not been unkind to me.

The mountain kingdom of Lesotho, called Basutoland by its British administrators, is austere and beautiful. The nation itself was the creation of the great Moshweshwe, the ruler who sent his enemies gifts after he had trounced them in battle. He gathered together the remnants scattered by the Mfecane, the dispersion of the tribes caused by the rise to power of Shaka, who also created a nation, and sent clan after clan fleeing over the Drakensberg. Those who fled from Shaka in their turn scattered the tribes of the interior, and it was Moshweshwe who made the remnants into a new nation, the Basuto. This new nation in its turn could have been scattered by the all-conquering Boers, but in 1868 the

British took the Basuto under their protection, so that they became, in Moshweshwe's words, 'the lice in the Queen's blanket'.

Patrick Duncan served the Basuto well in his capacity as a judicial commissioner. He was renowned for his courtesy, which was considered remarkable for a white person who had been born in South Africa, but then of course he had been educated at Winchester College, where manners make a man. He was intelligent but his greatest gift was his vitality. Out of his bluest of blue eyes shot flames that consumed any cruelty or cant within burning distance, and he had the ruddiest cheeks in the world, giving him the appearance of abounding health. He was a man of passionate beliefs, and had a veneration for Mahatma Gandhi. He believed with all his heart that *satyagraha*, the soul-force, the power of truth, was able to topple empires.

But his heart was not in the mountain kingdom. It was in the country where he was born. Great events were happening there, noble, stirring events from which his position as a British administrator excluded him. He was passionately stirred by the daily stories of men and women going to prison in protest against unjust laws. There was dear old Manilal, son of the Mahatma, sitting on park benches marked *For Whites Only*. There was this eighteen-year-old girl Prem Bodasingh who had now gone to prison for the third time in protest against the segregation of the libraries. And now the exciting news that Chief Lutuli had refused to obey the order of the formidable Dr. Hendrik to resign either his chieftainship or his presidency of the Natal branch of the African Congress. So Dr. Hendrik had deposed him from the chieftainship, and Lutuli, no longer chief, but always to be called the Chief, issued a statement of intention that will be remembered as long as any words spoken in South Africa are remembered.