

Shcharansky's trial hits the stage

By Greg Saville

In 1973, a Soviet computer programmer was denied permission to emigrate from Russia to Israel. The 24-year-old Jew then decided to devote himself to political protest and the Krenlin soon had him pegged—"dissident".

In March, 1977 he was arrested by Soviet authorities and a Soviet prosecutor indicated that he was to be tried for treason, a crime punishable by death in front of a firing squad. The "dissident's" name was Anatoly Shcharansky.

Shcharansky was found guilty only four months ago, and was sentenced to 13 years in Soviet prisons and labour camps.

"The Trial of Anatoly Shcharansky" is a play that runs for one night only, at Convocation Hall, U. of T., next Thursday, at 8:00 p.m. The script by Evelyn Schusheim, a third-year U of T law student, is based on the first legal appeal of Anatoly Shcharansky launched by Shcharansky's wife and their attorney, McGill law professor Irwin Cotler, during a news conference in Ottawa two-and a-half

months ago.

The Scharansky case inspired 12 York students to gain national attention last year, when they staged a "water-only" hunger strike in the Central Square bearpit, to protest Soviet transgressions of the Helsinki agreement and to support Shcharansky. The strike, which lasted 11 days and was front page news in the daily press, succeeded in forcing the Trudeau government to publicly support the demands of the strike.

The strikers sent a telegram to the federal opposition parties which read in part: "The Canadian government has stood by silently too long. Grain deals continue, technology is exported and Soviet hockey teams are still invited, thereby giving tacit approval to the injustices perpetrated by the Kremlin."

The hunger strike ended on December 11, when the government said it would intervene in the Shcharansky case. A statement released by the strikers at the time maintained that the government's decision to make a direct representation "indicates that the

prime minister and his government is deeply concerned with the plight of Soviet Jews."

After the Soviets declared they would hold Shcharansky another six months, the House of Commons condemned Russian transgressions of Helsinki.

The play is directed by Cynthia Grant and uses Shcharansky's trial transcripts and documents from Russia dealing with his case.

"The Trial of Anatoly Shcharansky" is the result of Professor Cotler's approach to the Canadian bureau of the North American Jewish Student Network after he prepared a petition with the intention of making the defence that Shcharansky was not allowed to make. It is Cotler's belief that, "Shcharansky is an innocent man. It is the prosecution, not Anatoly Shcharansky, who should be on trial."

In his final speech before judgement was passed, Shcharansky said, "And I turn to you, the court, who were required to confirm a predetermined sentence: to you I have nothing to

say."

Schusheim's play, though, seems to have much to say.

Tickets for this once only performance are available from the York Jewish Student Federation.

RUTH WIFFE

Associate Professor of

YIDDISH LITERATURE, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

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CINEMA AGO autobios

By Michael Korican

The Art Gallery of Ontario, in collaboration with John Katz, Associate Professor of Film at York, is currently presenting the first major survey of autobiographical film in North America.

The program embraces documentary, experimental, diary and cinema verité forms of personal film. The sixty films being screened trace the main thrusts of major North American independents in an area of cinema increasingly recognized as a distinct genre.

The survey opened with a weekend symposium held on November 4th and 5th. It brought together noted experimentalists such as Stan Brakhage, Ed Pincus, Al Maysles and Jonas Medas, as well as critics Gerald O'Grady and Jay Ruby. A women's panel featured Amalie Rothschild, Kathleen Shannon, Sandy Wilson and Maxi Cohen.

The symposium offered a rare opportunity to analyze these filmmakers in an intellectual atmosphere. It was surprising to see how much of their personalities they revealed and the extent to which their styles emerged.

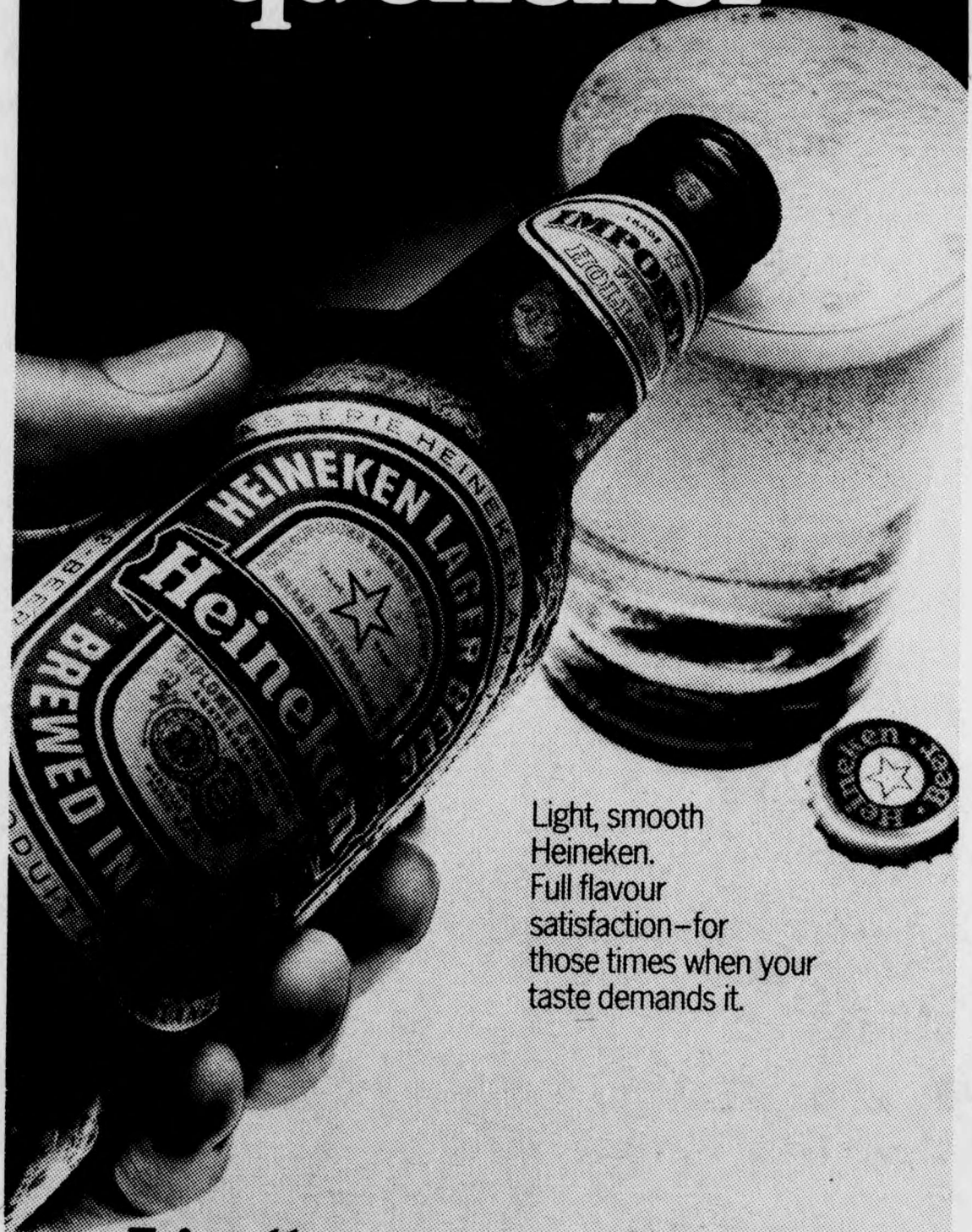
However, intriguing though their personalities may be, the success of this survey rests firmly on the selection of films and the superb series program, edited by Katz. This program includes numerous essays as well as copious filmographies and videographies of the artists whose works are on display.

The survey continues each Wednesday and Thursday evening at the Gallery until December 7th. Robert Frank will attend a screening of his films on the 22nd, as will James Kelly on the 29th, and Rick Hancox on December 6th. An on-going exhibition of autobiographical videoworks and live performances is concurrently running.

Besides the unusual availability and number of famous if seldom screened films, many never seen in Toronto before, York film enthusiasts must thank Maxi Cohen and Sandy Wilson for personal appearances and screenings of their films on campus.

Screenings are free although tickets must be secured earlier in the day at the Gallery. For more information: 361-0414.

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