

# OUT CRY CRY OUT



PHOTO: ALEXANDER JOE

## ANC — South African Support Group, Dalhousie University.

The impact of the appearance of *Cry Freedom* was quite swift. For one thing, it enjoyed the directorship of the Academy Award-winning team that produced the masterpiece *Gandhi*. In the Halifax area, the movie was first shown commercially at the Hyland Theatre on February 19th. Happily, the proceeds of that day were specifically commissioned to the struggle against apartheid via the International Defence Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAFSA).

The "true story of a friendship that shook South Africa and awakened the world" is fundamentally about the well-known South African "liberal dilemma." However, the story uses the upsurge of the Black Consciousness Movement (B.C.M.) in the late 1960s, especially the short-lived career of Steven Biko, as a backdrop to the liberal dilemma. Unfortunately, this aspect of the story is overused to the point of actually being abused. For instance, the African National Congress (A.N.C.) is not given the emphasis it deserves within the backdrop. This omission is most serious because the upsurge of the Black Power Movement in the U.S. and among other Blacks in the diaspora resembled the B.C.M. and therefore could cement the necessary solidarity between Blacks in the diaspora and their South African brothers and sisters. However, the post-Biko decline of the B.C.M. and the propaganda they, without the A.N.C., have put up the sole effective resistance against Apartheid, could have been corrected if more faith was given to the historical evidence. This is important for the solidarity of all the South African democratic resistance movements at large — especially now that they have all been driven underground — and for united external solidarity as well.

Most of the rest of the story is excellent. The liberal star, Donald Woods, a journalist by profession, becomes impressed

with Steve Biko's charm, intelligence, and, ultimately, cause. After Biko's tragic death by torture in the apartheid jails, Don Wood's liberal dilemma becomes most intense. Finally, he resolves to commit both class and national suicide by disowning his liberal middle-class status in South African and by leaving the country with a vow to write the truth about Steve Biko. All these are well executed with the necessary suspense and the fullest exposure of bizarre and unexpected scenarios as they relate to apartheid.

What solution does the movie suggest for South Africa? This

question must be taken seriously if only because the reputation of those who directed and produced *Cry Freedom* was good enough to persuade a wide range of people to watch something on South Africa, maybe for the first time in their lives. It was terribly disappointing that nothing was suggested by way of solution. Is it little wonder the movie has not in fact been banned or restricted in South Africa itself?

Academics and journalists can make a contribution to the liberation of South Africa by expos-

ing the atrocities of that regime to the international community. As *Cry Freedom* suggests, sometimes such efforts are serious enough "to make Botha (and the birds) shit out of fear!" However, these efforts are ultimately secondary to the tactics required to seize power and restore wealth to the oppressed millions of South Africa. And it is this task which the A.N.C. (almost totally excluded from the movie) is currently championing in conjunction with the now virtually banned democratic movements inside South Africa.

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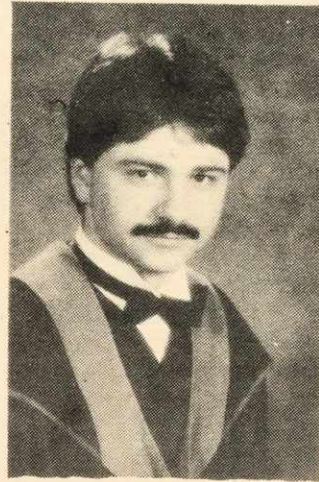
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