

Attenborough's New Film**'Cry Freedom': Is It Truth Or Propaganda?**

By GENE TARNE

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In an interview with the Washington *Post* over his recent film "biography" of South African "black consciousness" leader Steve Biko, director Richard Attenborough tells of his 1984 meeting with Winnie Mandela. Attenborough took the opportunity to meet with the wife of jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela while in South Africa for the premiere of his movie *Gandhi*.

The South African TV news account of the meeting was highly critical, amounting to, Attenborough told the *Post*, "a type of [character] assassination the likes of which you can't imagine."

Attenborough then goes on to relate that the newscaster's name was "Freek Schwatt or something like that. We've had fun with the name since — Freek Fart and so forth."

With this bit of toidy humor, Attenborough brings the current level of debate over South Africa and apartheid up to the third-grade level.

With his movie, *Cry Freedom*, he brings it up to the fourth.

Which may explain why, the day I went to see the film, a number of school buses were waiting outside the theater to pick up a group of school children who had just seen the film.

As I walked up to purchase a ticket, a black child half-sneered at me. "White man."

South Africa Portrayed In Strident Terms

Three hours later, after seeing what he had seen, I could well understand such hostility. In telling the story of the life and death of Steve Biko and his friendship with white South African newspaper editor Donald Woods, director Attenborough has portrayed South Africa in the most strident, simplistic terms possible.

All whites are either besotted, stupid brutes or shielded liberal dolts. All blacks, especially Biko, exist in a state of grace bordering on sainthood.

Even the black newspaper, the *Sowetan*, which takes its name from the black South African township of Soweto, called attention to Attenborough's ham-handed depictions, writing that "The South Africa in *Cry Freedom* is a place of cruel beauty and one-sided caricatures where all Afrikaners are vicious or unfeeling and all blacks are noble victims."

Shortly after Biko's death in 1977 at age 30, a death due to head injuries sustained while being held in detention by South African police, over 2,000 members of the anti-apartheid Progressive Federal party protested the death outside Johannesburg's City Hall and called for the ouster of Justice Minister James Kruger and the repeal of all internal security laws. These protesters were white.

There is simply no room, however, in Attenborough's South Africa for such whites—that might complicate matters. "There is little in [*Cry Freedom*] to suggest the political turmoil in both white and black communities in a search for a new direction for the country," the reviewer for the *Sowetan* points out. "This is a major flaw in the movie as a political statement, since it will leave its viewers without any idea of the strong commitment among many whites, English and Afrikaans-speaking, to finding a new direction. Nor does it convey the sharp and violent conflict between blacks."

Only whites (the film's real hero, Donald Woods, excepted) who consider blacks as subhuman find a place in this film. But then, this simplifying plot device may be Attenborough's way of dramatizing a central tenet of Biko's "black consciousness" thought—that all whites, even those looking for a way out of apartheid, share in a collective, almost mystical, guilt for the injustices suffered by blacks under apartheid.

Other simplifications amounting to distortions abound during the course of Attenborough's would-be epic.

The director strips the Soweto riots of 1976-77—an ugly episode in South African history where police fired into crowds and upwards of 700 mostly school-aged children lost their lives—down to one horrific episode of violence.

"As black school children carrying signs protesting the use of the Afrikaans language in their schools

confront an all-white police brigade, the police issue perfunctory warning shots and then turn their weapons on the crowd. At the end of this gut-wrenching sequence, the smoke clears and the screen is littered with the bodies of hundreds of school children.

But the deaths that occurred during the Soweto uprisings did not occur in one apocalyptic massacre as depicted in the movie. Rather, the unrest and the deaths that resulted from it occurred over many months. Beginning in Soweto in 1976 and spreading to other parts of the country, the unrest did not abate until well into 1977.

During this long period of unrest, the protests went far beyond the mere sign-carrying stage, with all sides engaging in violence. There were incidents of black-on-black violence, as radical black students—many of them influenced by "black consciousness" thought—tried to enforce a work stoppage by forcefully keeping black contract workers from their jobs. In turn, these workers, who could not afford to forfeit their incomes, turned violently against the students.

Whereas the police responsible for the "massacre" depicted in the movie are all white, many of those firing on the crowds during the unrest of 10 years ago were black. In fact, a large portion

of South Africa's police and armed forces were and remain non-white.

All of this is in no way meant to excuse the death toll during the uprisings. But it raises suspicions as to the bold statement proclaimed onscreen, before the movie unfolds, that all the events depicted are true and actually happened. Attenborough simply did not portray the circumstances of these tragic deaths truthfully, as they actually happened.

But this is not the result of ignorance on Attenborough's part; on the contrary, everything in this movie has been clearly calculated by its director.

In the *Post* interview, responding to the observation that he has used "larger than life imagery" to portray "South Africa as a police state," Attenborough replies, "I think that's inevitable. One must reach the unknowing, the uncaring, and even those who would advocate the furtherance of the present regime."

Historic Events Must Be Tailored and Reworked

Beneath the rhetoric, Attenborough here all but admits that his movie is a piece of political propaganda and, for it to work, it is "inevitable" that the historic events on which the film is based be tailored and reworked to achieve its propagandistic ends. Indeed, in other interviews, Attenborough himself has called the film an exercise in propaganda.

But it is not merely propaganda against apartheid—how many people, honestly, do you know who are for apartheid? Even in South Africa today there is an overwhelming conviction among most whites that apartheid must go and the government must find a way to bring blacks into the government on an equitable basis.

No, propaganda against apartheid would be justified, even laudable. But the uneasy suspicion grows that Attenborough is out for something more, that the director is hoping the viewer will leave the theater in the belief that, since South Africa is such a monolithic "police state," any means blacks are forced to use against it—including violence and terrorism—are fully justified.

Towards this end, not only must whites be portrayed as uncompromisingly evil, blacks must be seen as uncompromisingly saintly. This goal Attenborough achieves in his portrayal of "black consciousness" leader Steve Biko.

In fact, when Biko first appears in the movie, it is in a radiant envelope of light, a type of halo usually reserved for the religious depiction of God and saints. Under the circumstances, actor Denzel Washington can do little but portray Biko as the symbolic paradigm Attenborough needs to carry the burden of the film's message, even

1010 *hēc hēc oi mōnēz lōn oi tōi*
 1011 *hōi, 'ē tōc oi [cōstōcicēi] tōc*
 1012 *hōi tōi tōi tōi tōi tōi tōi*
 1013 *oi tōi tōi tōi tōi tōi tōi*

Cliff

Civil Freedom: Is It Truth Or Propaganda?

Attenborough's New Film

(2)

both SASO and the Black Peoples Con-
sciousness Movement (BPC) are
...
At times, Biko's analysis of black
and whites in South Africa is quite
similar to the Marxist analysis of
history, with the categories of race
replacing those of class. In the "black
consciousness" framework, bourgeois
exploiters become the "white race,"
blacks take the place of the proletariat
and "black consciousness" becomes
the vanguard leading to liberation.
At other times, Biko's thought seems
to be a black mirror image of white
apartheid. "Therefore, we wish ex-
plicitly to state that this country
belongs to Black people and to them
alone. Whites who live in our
country are here and that they may live
in this country, or they may leave the
country, depending on their relation-
ship with Blacks, and their acceptance
of whatever conditions Blacks in this
country shall lay [down] at a certain
time."

Needless to say, Attenborough
avoids altogether this side of Biko
in his film hagiography; it would
be justifying out of place in the
director's attempt to canonize
Biko and make his political points.
Despite Biko's obvious and ex-
pressed repugnance at cooperating
with whites, Attenborough has worked
in the movie say that "We must change
[South Africa] in partnership of blood."
Woods declares his hope that it
will be in partnership and that whites
will accept Biko's leadership in such a
partnership.

Many Doubts About
Friendship with Woods
As for Woods' and Biko's own per-
sonal partnership — a partnership
which the movie's ads, in hypocritical
characteristic of any Attenborough
project, hype as "the friendship that
shook South Africa and Awakened the
World" — leaders of the Black Con-
sciousness Movement have their
doubts.

"None of Steve's associates believes
that Woods was a true confidant. Steve
had to use him to take over the paper
page of the *Daily Dispatch* (the paper
Woods edited). But we are disgusted
that Attenborough would use Woods'
brief acquaintance with Steve as a basis
for a feature film," says Strini
Moody, a South African journalist.
Moody was one of Biko's closest
associates in the Black Consciousness
movement throughout the '60s and '70s
and was imprisoned on Robbin Island
(where Nelson Mandela is currently
imprisoned) for his activities.

Black Consciousness could only take
hold, Biko believed, if blacks kept
themselves rigidly apart from whites.
The 1971 SASO policy manifesto —
which Robert Fatton, in his detailed
and sympathetic study, *Black Con-
sciousness in South Africa* (State
University of New York Press, 1974),
calls "the single most important docu-
ment of the Black Consciousness
Movement" — states that "because of
their conditional acceptance of us
in the apartheid regime, Whites have defined
themselves as part of the problem."
That in all matters relating to the struc-
ture of the state, Whites must be excluded.

All Whites Were
To Be Held Guilty

Biko did not restrict his criticism of
whites to those who supported apart-
heid. Even those liberal white South
Africans who stood in clear opposition
to apartheid had to be excluded, for ac-
cording to Biko all whites, just because
they were white, were to be held guilty.
In fact, Biko was especially adamant in
exhorting blacks to avoid in particular
such white liberals. Even Alan Paton,
the renowned author who has spent his
life in opposition to apartheid, is re-
jected by Biko. "The liberals — Alan
Paton and so on — one would reject at
any stage, any stage be it now on up to
the revolution," Fatton cites Biko as
declaring.

And what would "the revolution"
bring? Biko did not merely want to see
the system of apartheid abolished so
blacks could rightfully share power
with whites in governing South Africa.
All structures associated with the
All-Whites must go. According to Biko, "It is
not only capitalism that is involved, it is
also the whole gamut of white values
systems which has been adopted as
standard by South Africa, both whites
and blacks so far" (Fatton, page 79).

Nkomo, a companion of
Biko in the Black Consciousness Movement,
elaborated on the point further in 1977.
"If we had tried to expiate in all
available means, the white man is not
your problem as such, your problem is
capitalism and imperialism — he
wouldn't have known what we were
talking about. Now that they are with
us — the student body and the mass of
the people — it is easier to explain the
fundamental problems of our struggle
in South Africa... that our struggle is
not really a racial struggle, that we are
more concerned with the socio-
economic structure" (Fatton, page 98).
Biko himself stated that capitalist struc-
tures must go and be replaced by
socialism.

In other words: democracy and
capitalism, along with apartheid, must
go. Although not Communist itself, the
Black Consciousness movement en-
thusiastically embraced the Marx-
ist-analyst Fatton's movement in its
struggle for power in Mozambique as
the Portuguese were preparing to give
that country its independence. In 1974,

though the historical Biko was a con-
siderably more complex, more ambigu-
ous and certainly less easily figure-
head than Steve Biko first rose to prominence in
1968 as the founder of the South
African Students Organization
(SASO), whose membership was exclu-
sively reserved for non-whites. Biko
had become a prominent figure of the
Black Peoples Convention, which was
formed in 1970. The ideology that
Consciousness," and Biko was its chief
spokesman.

Admittedly, there are many parallels
between the two movements.
Aspects to "black consciousness"
thought as articulated by Biko, particu-
larly its analysis of the psychological
and cultural position of blacks under
apartheid.

Biko believed that the most damning
aspect of apartheid was that it made
blacks psychologically weak — more
than oppressing them physically, it op-
pressed them spiritually. Under apart-
heid, blacks had come to believe they
were inferior to whites, that they were
totally dependent on whites in shaping
their own lives. This psychological feel-
ing of inferiority and dependence, as
much as any other factor, helped per-
petuate apartheid.

Culturally, blacks remained unaware
of their own African heritage. In the
schools, history began with the arrival
of the first Europeans in South Africa
while the black civilizations of the con-
tinent were virtually ignored.

Thus, the most important instrument
for blacks in opposing apartheid, ac-
cording to Biko, was their own
awareness — consciousness — that they
are the full equals of whites, with the
same rights and dignities and with their
own history and cultural riches to con-
tribute to South African society.

All this represents the best aspects of
Biko's thought, a just emphasis on en-
couraging blacks to take pride in them-
selves, in their traditions and heritage
and in what they could contribute to
South Africa.

"We are looking forward to a non-
racial, just and egalitarian society in
which color, creed and race shall form
no point of reference," Biko stated in
1976.

This is the aspect of Biko's thought
with which *Cry Freedom* almost ex-
clusively deals. Time and again
throughout the movie, the actor por-
traying Biko misses no opportunity to
express his hope for a non-racial South
Africa and his desire that this can be
achieved peacefully (given the por-
trayal of whites in the movie, however,
the viewer can only conclude that this is
an impossibility).

But there is another, more
ominous side to Biko's thought
which Attenborough, in this cen-
sured film homage, studiously
ignores.

Just where did Biko's positive em-
phasis on the worth and dignity of the
black man become a negative judgment
on the essential depravity of whites?
Biko warned on occasion that "Black
Consciousness" should not lead to
"anti-whiteism." But in the context of
his other pronouncements, this cannot
be, either, hopelessly naive or dis-

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hold, Biko believed, if blacks kept
themselves rigidly apart from whites.
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Whites must be excluded.

Peter Jones, another Biko associate and vice president of the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO), has described Woods as "a glib liberal" and biased *Cry Freedom* as "an ego trip for a runaway editor."

AZAPO is a direct descendant of Biko's Black Peoples Convention and takes Biko's life and work as its guiding spirit. It has threatened to "drive the film from the screens" should it be shown in South Africa.

In all fairness, Attenborough claims that Jones has changed his view and issued a statement calling the movie "a totally accurate representation of the times, philosophy and personality of Steve Biko, which will be invaluable in the struggle for freedom." Attenborough also claims to have received the full blessings of Biko's mother and widow in making the film, the widow having told him that Woods was "Steve's greatest friend."

What is certain, however, is that the Biko-Woods friendship, as depicted in the movie, is based entirely on Woods' own testimony. The movie's credits say "Based on the books *Biko* and *Asking for Trouble* by Donald Woods." The credits also list Woods and his wife, Wendy, as "principal consultants."

Concerning the book *Asking for Trouble*, Jones characterized it as "more a romantic ego trip than it can ever be historically or politically precise." *The Spectator* of London has called Biko "remarkable because it tells so little about Biko and so much about Woods."

Small wonder, given these sources, that the film's real hero turns out to be not Biko at all, but Woods. Biko meets his death at the hands of South African police just less than half-way through the movie; from there on in, it's all Woods.

Woods was the editor of the *East London Daily Dispatch* when he first met Biko in 1975. Later, according to Woods, he "fell under [Biko's] spell" and allowed an associate of Biko to publish a Black Consciousness column in his paper.

After Biko's death, Woods' activities on behalf of the Black Consciousness movement led to a banning order that lasted for five years. Under this order, Woods, among other things, was forbidden to write. He therefore fled South Africa for England, where he lives today as, among other things, the self-appointed keeper of the Biko flame.

The reason he must leave South Africa for England, Woods explains to his wife in the movie, is so that he can publish his book on Biko and thus prevent Biko's life and death from having been in vain. "There's simply no other white who knows Steve as well as I do," Donald earnestly tells Wendy.

In other words, the future of "black consciousness" depends on this selfless work would have been for naught. This is a strange and certainly ironic tribute to Biko, who, in warning blacks against countervailing with whites, popularized the expression "Black man, you are on your own." Biko on his own, without Woods, the movie seems to say, would have amounted to little.

At the end of the movie, Attenborough presents a list of all those anti-apartheid activists who have died in South Africa while in police detention and the official causes of their deaths. Some of the official causes listed certainly are questionable (e.g., a number are listed as having slipped in a shower). The official cause of death for Biko is given as "hunger strike."

Government Inquiry into Biko's Death

Immediately after Biko's death, Justice Minister Kruger tried to pass off the story that a hunger strike had been held an official inquiry and the death was determined to have been from "severe head injuries." The official autopsy rejected the claim that Biko had died of a hunger strike. In fact, in the movie itself, a judge reads from the official report that the cause of death was due to head injuries.

After the list of detainees who have died, the viewer is told that detainees are still being held under the country's current state of emergency and no information about them has been forthcoming.

This is the only update regarding the current state of affairs in South Africa that Attenborough chooses to give the viewer. And since it is the sole update, it only adds to the general air of mendacity in the service of propaganda that pervades this movie.

Attenborough wants viewers to believe that the South Africa of today is really no different from the South Africa of 10 years ago — as portrayed in his movie. Since in the movie South Africa is a police state run by brutal whites, then blacks are fully justified to take whatever action — violent action — is necessary for liberation.

Throughout the movie, for example, white police bully and intimidate blacks about having their passports in order. But the government has eliminated such passports and the pass laws. No update about this.

The movie opens with the government's bulldozing an illegal squatter settlement and leaving the blacks who live there, already in abject poverty, with nothing. The main reason this is used to be done was to force the resettlement of blacks to their respective "homelands."

Yet the government has stopped the forced resettlement of blacks, restored to them their South African citizenship and has been pouring millions of dollars into improving housing and social services for blacks. No update about this.

In fact, although Attenborough would have us believe that South Africa was and remains the most horrid and repressive police state on the planet, the government has permitted *Cry Freedom* to be shown in South Africa, complete and uncut. This is more than Attenborough's friends in the African National Congress (ANC) allowed. Attenborough retained the services of Ismaili Tamba, son of ANC President Oliver Tambo, as special consultant for the film. Reportedly, the ANC demanded a number of changes in the script at the very outset of the project, and Attenborough gladly obliged.

Comments on Cry Freedom

Perhaps it was on Dalindela's advice that Attenborough has the black hovel in the movie decked out with posters of Nelson Mandela. The camera lingers over one such poster as the movie opens.

But according to one writer in the *New Republic*, "In the mid-1970s, when the film takes place, Mandela, an imprisoned leader of the African National Congress, was not the popular hero he later became. At the time the villages inspiring resistance were more likely to have been those of two other figures.

Chief Buthelezi Ignored in Film

"One was Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, described by Gail M. Gerhart in her definitive *Black Power in South Africa* (University of California) as 'an outspoken anti-government Bantustan leader' with 'growing national popularity.' (I'm sorry to wreak havoc with some readers' preconceptions.)

"The other was Robert Sobukwe, a towering presence, in jail and out, in the 'black consciousness' movement and the Pan Africanist Congress. Attenborough's artistic license in substituting his own black hero of the moment for two real black heroes of real black people in real history is not unlike the airbrushing of Trotsky from the famous revolutionary painting that hangs in the Kremlin."

Of course, Buthelezi is today vilified by the likes of Attenborough and the ANC because he has condemned violence and sanctions as means to solve South Africa's problems.

Attenborough has been jettisoning around the world, reminding *nausam* anyone who will listen how courageous he has been in making this movie. (One wonders: How would Biko react to Attenborough's so gamely, so selflessly, taking up his white man's burden to rescue the black man in South Africa?)

Yes, it certainly takes courage to come out against a system so universal-ly abhorred as apartheid. No doubt Hollywood will also rise to the occasion and, in a similar show of courage, bestow on Attenborough a bagful of Oscars come Academy Award time.

Since Hollywood is also where the political sagacity of a Jane Fonda can flourish and where movies such as *Pia* soon are lauded, *Cry Freedom* deserves just that.

Lawyer collects books for South Africa, avoids politics

By Patsy V. Pressley

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

DAYTONA BEACH — Attorney Cliff Gosney's project to collect Florida textbooks for South African children has him high-stepping through a political minefield.

Gosney, in conjunction with U.S. Rep. Bill McCollum, has collected about 4,000 books donated by the Seminole County school district and is searching for more. The books, many of which are more than 10 years old, are considered obsolete by state officials but soon will be headed for South Africa's black homelands.

The idea for the project sprang from Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a controversial figure because of his opposition to U.S. trade sanctions. Buthelezi (pronounced booth-a-lei-zi) visited Central Florida at Gosney's request more than a year ago and appealed for books.

Gosney said he expects questions about the obsolete books and his political connections. But so far he has steered clear of the explosive aspects and the project remains on track.

"It's an obsession but it's a magnificent obsession," the civil trial lawyer said. "These are the poorest of the poor. Not only do they not have any books, they don't have any libraries."

The books are housed in the basement of the Daytona Beach YWCA awaiting shipment to South Africa. Meanwhile, Gosney, 59, has formed a fledgling group called Benevolence Through Education in Southern Africa to promote the booklift and other projects.

Gosney stresses he is simply the booklift's coordi-

nator. The idea sprang from McCollum, a Republican congressman from Altamonte Springs.

During a reception for Buthelezi in November 1986 at state Rep. Alzo Reddick's Orlando home, a question arose about what Floridians could do for blacks living under apartheid, McCollum recalled.

Buthelezi's answer was that the students needed books. On a per capita basis, South Africa spends \$205 for each black student compared with \$1,427 for each white, according to one study.

McCollum contacted Seminole's school superintendent about using that district's old books. State law required the Seminole school district to offer the texts to every district in the state. Because there were no takers, the books were headed for the garbage dump.

Nancy Haigh, Seminole's coordinator of books and media, said the district was happy to oblige with the project, particularly if it required no cost to taxpayers.

But she questioned how much use South African children will have for books that their American counterparts no longer need even though South African children are taught in English.

"You think yourself of changes made in just geography in the last 10 to 15 years," Haigh said.

Gosney's answer is that organizers are picking through texts searching for sociology, language, math and spelling books with timeless appeal. They are removing books on economics, history and government, wary of any political connotations.

For added emphasis, Gosney has a letter from Buthelezi that reads: "Cliff, there isn't a single [black] school who will NOT need books."

But Ken Eke, a Bethune-Cookman College professor of political science, questions the project's ties to

Buthelezi. Eke (pronounced eck-ay) attended the Orlando reception and the two exchanged sharp words.

"Among the black leaders, he's one of those willing to cooperate with the South African regime. Most black leaders are opposed to him," said Eke, who was born in Nigeria.

Buthelezi draws most of his political power from his ancestral leadership of the country's 8 million Zulus — one of the largest ethnic groups in South Africa.

Eke said Buthelezi is popular among some whites who are gambling that Buthelezi will become a major government player if apartheid is dismantled.

Gosney said he is aware of the pitfalls of his relationship with Buthelezi. He does not plan to let the chief help distribute the books.

"As painful as it is to me, that's an option that we're going to have to say no to. Chief Buthelezi may not like it, but he'd understand," Gosney said.

Gosney's solution is to distribute the books through civic groups and private universities. He added that Bethune-Cookman's black fraternities and sororities have agreed to help pack the books.

Gosney's interest in Africa dates back to his early travels, producing friendships with the former U.S. ambassador to South Africa and Buthelezi. The African continent also became the focus of Gosney's missionary work because it was there that he became a born-again Christian. He said he plans to travel to South Africa next month to set up distribution plans.

Despite the political pitfalls, Gosney is confident the book program will thrive and spread throughout the state.

"We're not supporting the government of South Africa, nor are we opposing the government of South Africa. We're only helping people," he said.



Gosney loads some of the 4,000 books he has collected to give to South African children.

South Africa's blacks want no less than equality

Question: Given the restrictions placed on the coverage of events inside South Africa by the South African government, is it fair to assume that the rest of the world is not getting a full picture of what is happening?

Answer: The world is not getting a full picture. South Africans aren't getting a full picture. And I don't believe the South African government is getting a full picture, because reliance on censorship always impoverishes the information flow to everyone, including governments.

Q: Does this mean that the main thing we're not hearing about is the violence, or are there broader political events or trends that are unreported?

A: I would say the main damage is done to understanding of the unrest, because the (state of) emergency is designed to address the question of violence and unrest. There are other inhibiting statutes and arrangements which concern reporting on other matters, but those are a constant and were there before the emergency.

Q: What happened as a result of your publishing your interview with Oliver Tambo, head of the African National Congress?

A: I published his views and was arrested and charged in court. It happened in 1985 at a time when a lot of business, academic and other interests had been discussing matters with the ANC. It struck me as rather unusual that South Africans were not given access to the ANC's views because we have laws which restrict reporting of statements deemed by the government to be subversive or about the subversive organizations. So I decided that the public had the right to know what was in Oliver Tambo's mind. It was a serious offense, because it is punishable by a prison term of up to three years.

Q: This was under the security laws?

A: Under the Internal Security Act, which used to be called the Suppression of Communism Act. But I don't think the government wanted to have a case which

to know and freedom of expression. The supshot was the government unilaterally withdrew the charges after eight months and then proceeded against the company that owned the paper, Times Media Ltd. And since you can't jail a company, the company paid a fine of about \$150,000. So the interview was pretty cheaply priced.

Q: Why were you fired from your job as editor of the Cape Times?

A: I'd been editor for 16 years, which is a long time, and the company said they wanted a change. I was politically controversial because I had been in conflict with the laws of South Africa over publication of various things. The claim was made that my dismissal was a political move, but I don't personally have any knowledge of what transpired in smoke-filled rooms. I just know that they replaced me and said it wasn't political. I'm quite happy with that.

Q: Do you think your paper was pressured by the government to get rid of you?

A: I know I was not popular with the government. But there is a tradition among the newspapers managements of not simply caving in to government pressure, so I don't make that allegation.

Q: About a year or so ago in South Africa a best-selling book titled *The Solution* described a so-called South Africa solution in which the country would be divided into self-governing federations with a rather weak central government to handle foreign affairs and a few other things. It included a constitution guaranteeing everybody's rights as the way to avoid the disasters that have happened in many black-ruled African states while answering the problem of the denial of political rights to the black majority. Is this a realistic possibility for South Africa?

A: I think that 20 or 30 years ago it would have been more realistic. Now the conflict has gone so far that it's very difficult to sell to black South Africans -- certainly to

black nationalist South Africans -- anything other than what effectively amounts to equal rights on a scale that could involve quite a lot of centralization. I understand that the main reason for this idea of cantons is really to try to allay white fears, in that having lots of cantons in which blacks predominate would not be as threatening as a unitary state dominated by blacks, but I think it is going to be very difficult to do deals of that divide-and-rule nature.

Q: Is it realistic to expect a majority of whites in South Africa to surrender power willingly to the black majority?

A: It's not realistic to expect them to do that with any enthusiasm. But it might be realistic to expect that when the blacks realize they can't win through force of arms in the short run, and whites realize they can't win in the long run, there can be an accommodation between whites and blacks.

Q: What shape might that accommodation take?

A: The only basis on which to talk to black South Africans is equal rights in a constitutional structure which provides as much security for whites as possible, but not in a form which would amount to gerrymandering things in such a way that black influence is dissipated. The only game in town to talk to black South Africans about is equal rule even with Chief Buthe, who is regarded by some people as a bit of an Uncle Tom. Whites eventually will have to come around to this view. They haven't yet. It might take 20 years.

Q: Couldn't you have semi-autonomous areas with everybody electing a central government whose authority would be very strictly limited by a constitution which guaranteed the rights of everybody and prevented domination by either whites or blacks?

A: If there were no reference to race in the constitution, and if it were done in a quick deal that they forced now, you could get a high degree of decentralization. Fortunately for white South Africans, the black patriarchs are still around. The leadership of the African National Congress is in the hands of people like Oliver Tambo

and, in a sense, Nelson Mandela, elderly gentlemen whose political views were formed in the '30s and '40s. If a deal can be struck with them quickly, I believe they would be much more mindful of white fears than, for instance, after a terrible conflict with the next generation.

Q: You have alluded to "white fears" several times. How can you possibly alleviate those fears?

Japan Is Right on South Africa

By WILLY STERN

TOKYO—As anti-apartheid activists in the U.S. Congress threaten to punish countries still trading with South Africa, Japan can serve as a catalyst for true reform there by sticking to the principles of free trade. Japan, South Africa's main trading partner, should take the lead in seeing that reform there is advanced by opening up the market and demonstrating to blacks that apartheid and not capitalism is their ultimate enemy.

Japan became South Africa's largest trading partner last year, with two-way trade of \$4.27 billion, up from \$3.59 billion in 1986. Japanese products enjoy a high profile in South Africa, with Toyota, Nissan and Mazda accounting for nearly half the auto market, and brand names such as Sony, Seiko and Nikon having become status symbols.

The increase in trade is bringing unwanted attention from abroad, and Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno has called for voluntary restraints. Yesterday, Shoichiro Toyoda, president of Toyota Motor Co. and head of the Japan Auto Manufacturers Association, said Japanese auto makers will voluntarily curb exports to South Africa. Japan already has some restrictions on trade with South Africa. Direct investment, for example, has long been outlawed and commercial loans are restricted. In 1985, Japan banned exports of computers to South African security forces, and a year later imports of South African iron and steel were forbidden.

Yet the failure of these measures, as well as the more drastic approaches taken by other nations (sanctions have resulted in only a marginal slowing of the South African economy), has led to a reappraisal of policy. It is now more widely accepted in some policy circles that nations can continue to trade with South Africa while at the same time actively aid the cause of black rights. Although this proposition might be hard to sell to a Democratic-controlled Congress in Washington, it is in the best interests of both Japan and reform-minded South Africans.

This becomes more clear when the two basic alternatives for South Africa's future are considered. The first is an open society

based on democratic foundations and incorporating Western norms of individual freedoms, a free-market economy, open elections and a just legal system. The second—which seems more likely if punitive sanctions are pursued—is a society structured on neo-Marxist principles. The features of this latter South Africa would include a totalitarian political system and an economic policy tending toward wealth redistribution rather than wealth creation. Assuming that the first alternative is the more desirable, the immediate challenge facing policy makers in Japan and the West should be to figure out how best to push for reforms that benefit the black majority.

The open-society alternative cannot be achieved without high and sustainable economic growth rates—rates that must be sufficiently high to demonstrate to South African blacks in a tangible way that a free economy benefits them. Without the foreign capital supplied by nations such as Japan, leading anti-apartheid South African economists agree that the economy cannot grow at more than 3% a year, a rate that would fall far short of the development requirements of South Africa's diverse and exploding nonwhite population. (More than half the black population is under age 16. Without foreign capital, real growth rates are sure to be inadequate to absorb the 250,000 new black job seekers coming onto the market each year.)

If Japan and the rest of the industrialized world are sincere in their stated intent to help South Africa plot a peaceful course into the future, then they must stop isolating an economy where real gross domestic fixed income has fallen 8.2% in real terms in the past five years. South Africa's reform-minded white leaders are crying out for foreign credit, foreign investment and a removal of the threat of sanctions. Although economic growth is most crucial for the black majority, in the long run the white minority's own freedoms also depend on South Africa's economic survival.

The potential for Japanese leadership in this area should not be underestimated. Now that the U.S. and Europe have largely pulled out of South Africa, Japan through its business presence can show the value of a market-oriented approach to political

reform. The alternative is to feed the siege mentality of white South Africans and allow them to close off their country to the kind of outside influences that have helped further the reform process thus far.

Punitive sanctions are intended to send a signal to Pretoria, but South Africans sadly jest that Pretoria turned off its receiving equipment long ago. But that listening equipment probably would be tuned in very quickly were talk to begin of getting into South Africa rather than getting out.

Mr. Stern, a Tokyo-based correspondent, recently finished a six-month reporting stint with *Business Day* in Johannesburg, where he was arrested by the South African government for a violation of the State of Emergency press regulations.

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Compliments of
Cliff Gosney

Christian Science Monitor.
23/02/1988.

Compliments of
Cliff Gosney

Braving prison for a principle

S. African resister rejects Army role in townships

By Lynda Schuster

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Cape Town

AT first, the prospect of prison terrified Ivan Toms. Nightmares dogged him, and he would awaken screaming in the middle of the night. By now, the specter of imprisonment has hovered over him so long that he is almost used to the idea. "You can never really prepare yourself for something like this," says Dr. Toms. "After all, what do middle-class whites know of jail in South Africa?"

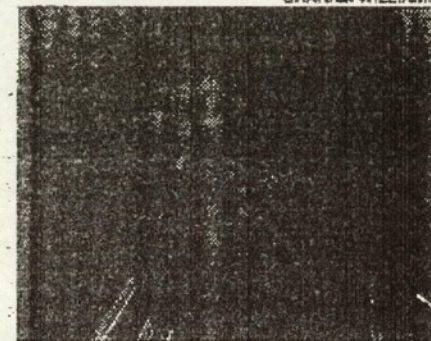
He has good reason to wonder. For

Toms — a 35-year-old physician who served two years in the South African Defense Force (SADF) as an officer — probably will be convicted next month for refusing to fulfill his remaining two years. He cannot, he says, serve in an Army that occupies black townships and defends apartheid, the white government's segregationist policies.

Toms's case is significant in that he is the first to be tried under a tough new law that could put him away for up to three years. (Although about a score of other South Africans have

Please see TOMS back page.

GRAHAM WILLIAMS



'If you become involved, there is a cost. But . . . it is a small price to pay'

— Ivan Toms

TOMS

been convicted in the past for objecting to military service, they were given only one-year jail terms or fined.) He is part of a small but noisy group called the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) that is trying to raise the collective consciousness of whites to pressure the government to provide alternatives for conscientious objectors.

His case also is important for being a relatively rare instance of white radicalism. While the experiences that led to his disillusionment are common to many South African liberals, the similarities stop there. Most disgruntled whites either leave the country or fade to the sidelines, hoping for change. Toms's tale is atypical for his decision to fight — and bear the consequences.

Of course, not everyone here is impressed. Indeed, to the numerous whites who support Pretoria's township policies and its campaigns against communist forces in Angola and leftist forces in Namibia (South-West Africa), Toms is a traitor. And to demonstrate their disapproval, some have slashed his car tires, dumped pig manure on his front porch, and made dozens of threatening telephone calls.

There is little in the background of this stocky, compact man to suggest a maverick. Politics hardly were discussed at

home, he says. His father was a municipal water-meter reader; his mother taught piano. Toms acquired two passions: rugby and science. "I was a normal kid," he explains in a voice that rasps like crushed gravel. "Growing up as a white South African then, you hardly were aware of apartheid."

Although he gradually became more politicized, his years at the University of Cape Town studying medicine were marked more by his becoming a Christian than a political activist.

Then came his internship in 1977 at Kimberley Hospital in northern Cape Province, where Toms worked and socialized with black, Indian, and Colored (mixed-race) professionals. It was a huge revelation, he says. "For the first time in my life, I went to someone's home in a colored township," Toms remembers. "Before, my only contact with nonwhites had been gardeners or servants. I suddenly realized all these people were as good, if not better, than me."

That was the turning point. Toms stopped voting in elections because his nonwhite friends were denied the vote under apartheid. He attended the highly charged funeral of a black friend who died while in police detention, and was inspired by the anger of the townships, he says. By the time he got his first call-up - a two-year stint required of all white males followed by 720 days of service over 12 years - he had serious

So serious were those doubts that he contacted the family in the United States that had housed him as an exchange high-school student to find out about emigrating. That fell through. He booked a flight to London, but canceled the day before his call-up. He even considered going to prison, "but I was too young, too scared," he recalls. Instead, Toms was inducted into the SADF in January 1978.

The experience left him more disillusioned. He served first at a hospital in Ciskei, a black homeland, then in Namibia (South-West Africa). There, even though he was granted non-combatant status - which exempted him from carrying a gun - Tom says he sensed resentment and hostility from local blacks.

"It doesn't matter if you don't carry a gun," he contends, "that uniform identifies you as part of the system. Other soldiers didn't understand. They thought I was mad. I felt very alone."

Toms left the Army after his two-year stint, determined to do work that would not be perceived as aiding "the system." He set up a clinic outside Cape Town in Crossroads, a teeming black squatter camp of corrugated iron shacks and tents. For several years Crossroads has been the scene of vicious fighting among police, residents, and different black groups over repeated government attempts to relocate the squatters.

Eventually, the Army moved in and occupied, among other things, Toms's clinic. He says the

rubber bullets, buckshot, and police dogs used against residents were the final straws. In 1983, he went public with his intent never again to wear the SADF uniform. After a number of call-ups that ultimately were canceled, Toms finally had to report last Nov. 12. Which he did, without uniform, and promptly was arrested by military police.

For Toms, this outcome was inevitable. "The time in Crossroads only confirmed my feelings about the viciousness of apartheid. To see the killings, the injuries, the inhumanity. I never could be a party to such things."

Toms says he wants to pressure the government to provide alternatives for moral objectors. He believes, for instance, the years he has been in Crossroads should count as having "served" his country. Currently, only those who are both religious objectors and universal pacifists qualify for alternative service. Everyone else either leaves the country - or faces prison.

Although Toms and the ECC claim a groundswell of support among whites, it is difficult to measure. The government does not release figures on how many recruits fail to report for call-ups, and no one else has accurate numbers. In perhaps the most visible act of support, 22 other young men joined Toms last August by publicly vowing not to respond to their call-up notices.

The government obviously

takes a dim view of all this. A Defense Ministry spokesman declines to talk about Toms's case, saying only that "it's the duty of the government to maintain law and order. Even if the method is perceived as harsh, its citizens must follow the course. You can't start making exceptions in a country that's in a state of revolutionary assault."

Tombs's trial is set for Feb. 29. The best he hopes for, he says, is a minimum jail sentence of 18 months. (The law allows for sentences of up to one-and-a-half times the time owed the military, or a maximum of six years for those who have never served.) If convicted — "and I will be," he says with a grin, "because I'm guilty" — he probably will be confined to Poll-smoor Prison. There, he would be allowed two 30-minute visits and could write and receive two 500-word letters every month.

In the meantime, he is trying to prepare himself by practicing yoga, praying, meditating, and puttering around his 90-year-old Victorian house. "Look, I love my life, I don't want to go to jail," he says, watching the late afternoon sun play across his living room wall. "But the thing about South Africa is either you live a comfortable, cushy life like most whites, or you become involved."

He stops for a moment and looks down at his hands. "And if you become involved, there is a cost," he adds. "But in the end, I think it is a small price to pay."

The Orlando Sentinel

VOLUSIA

Wednesday, October 26, 1988

Volusia books bound for South African schools

DAYTONA BEACH — Schoolchildren in the South African cities of Empangeni and Ballito soon will have thousands of textbooks no longer used in Volusia County.

A shipment of 65,000 pounds of books from the county schools went out Tuesday afternoon, said Cliff Gosney, a Daytona Beach attorney who is volunteer chairman of Benevolence Through Education in Southern Africa Inc. The 2-year-old non-profit corporation, formed by Gosney is aimed at helping black

youngsters who are the victims of apartheid, he said.

Tuesday's shipment was the group's third, bringing to about 50,000 the number of textbooks sent to South Africa in the past few months, he said. They were the first from Volusia County, said Fred Phillips, director of education materials for the district.

"It is a great thing for us to find someone who could use these books," he said. The county accumulates hundreds of books no longer in use in district schools, and that builds into a storage problem, he said.

If the used books are unwanted, they end up being dumped in a landfill. "That would be the last thing we would want to do," he said.

Gosney will give the system a map showing where the books end up, Phillips said. "It'll make it more meaningful to us," he said. The towns are

about 100 miles north of the city of Durban on the Indian Ocean.

The donated books cover the basics — language, spelling and math — and most are for kindergarten through ninth-grade students, Gosney said. Most of the 67 county school boards in the state are participating or will be, he said. "We're just getting going good," he said.

The Roundtable, a civic organization in South Africa similar to the Rotary Club, distributes the textbooks, he said.

Gosney said he is unsure when the next shipment will leave but said books are available. Benevolence, which has no paid staff members, has agreed to send 50 shipments within a year to the province of Natal, he said.

It costs about \$2,500 to have the books hauled on a tractor-trailer to Jacksonville, shipped from there to Durban, and for items such as feeding volunteers who load the books onto the truck, he said. Some 20 volunteers loaded the shipment Tuesday, Gosney said.

The idea for the project sprang from Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a controversial figure because of his opposition to U.S. trade sanctions. During a reception for Buthelezi in November 1986 at state Rep. Alzo Reddick's Orlando home, a question arose about what Floridians could do for blacks living under apartheid.

Buthelezi said the students need books, and U.S. Rep. Bill McCollum, R-Altamonte Springs, contacted Seminole County schools about using that district's old books.

Compliments of
Cliff Gosney

WALTER WILLIAMS

Reaching for their roots

The pseudo-scientific racial theory of the 18th and 19th centuries was that blacks had lower intelligence than other racial groups because of smaller cranial capacity. Decent people (non-racists) of the era argued that it was inappropriate, and indeed cruel, to hold blacks accountable to "white standards of behavior" because blacks were inferior and had only a limited experience with civilization. Today these attitudes are routinely dismissed as ignorant and racist.

But hold it! An Oct. 9, New York Times report, headlined "Boston Case Raises Questions on Misuse of Affirmative Action," told how in 1975, Philip and Paul Malone, fair-haired, fair-complexioned identical twins, took a civil service examination to qualify as Boston firefighters and bombed out. But not to worry. Their mother found a photograph of their great-grandmother, whose skin tones suggested a tint of black blood in her ancestry. Mother told Philip and Paul, who always had been considered white, that they might opt to be black.

Armed with this knowledge, the twins retook the civil service exam in 1977. Again they bombed, scoring 69 and 57 percent respectively. The Boston Fire Department's cutoff score for appointment was 82 percent. But this time, since the twins had applied as blacks, they won appointment. The city's affirmative-action program had concluded, as did the "enlightened" 18th and 19th century thinkers, that it was cruel to hold blacks accountable to white standards. Thus, it set dual standards for appointment: one for whites, and a lower one for blacks.

Last month the Malone twins' charade was discovered. They were

charged with making fraudulent applications and dismissed from the fire department. Their attorney's defense is that the only criteria for racial classification is self-description, and, given the sepia tones of their great-grandmother, they had made a "good-faith claim" to being black.

Whenever society tries to divide its opportunities and blessings by race, there's bound to be fraud and various other forms of hanky-panky.

Prudent preventative measures must be undertaken. Now, if we're going to be serious about racial quotas, there is no nation better-qualified to serve as a model of how to divide the goodies than South Africa.

South Africa's Population Registration Act empowers its secretary of the interior to classify the population in categories of: white, coloured and Bantu, thereby thwarting attempts by people, mostly coloured, many of whom are fair-complexioned, from making false claims and thus benefiting from goodies reserved for whites. The Population Registration Act says: "A white person is one who in appearance is obviously a white person who is generally not accepted as a coloured person; or is generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously not a white person."

The director of the census and statistics may change the classification of a person, and, if the person objects, he may appeal to the Racial Classification Appeal Board. The act also provides for recorded documents specifying name, sex, race, date and place of birth, and nationality. In addition, there are perjury penalties for falsifying one's race and penalties for frivolously challenging another's racial classification.

If we had a Population Registration Act as a part of our affirmative-action law, the Malone boys would simply be charged with perjury and theft of goodies intended for another race.

But let's not be too harsh on them. Back in 1960, beginning my tour of duty in Korea, I wrote in "white" as my race on a military form. When an irate warrant officer challenged this, I told him my great-great-grandfather was Irish. And, besides, I didn't want to be assigned to the worst job over there.

Compliments of
Cliff Gosney

Walter Williams, an economics professor at George Mason University, is a nationally syndicated columnist.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1988

Black South African Runs for Mayor— And Dodges Stones

Once Chased Out of Town
As Apartheid Apologist,
He Makes New Try Today

By ROGER THUROW

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Out of the windows of the cars people
shouted: Linda is back home! ...
Linda our leader is back!
—From "A Hero Returns From Abroad," by and
about Tamsanqa Linda.

PORT ELIZABETH, South Africa—He is back, all right. Tamsanqa Linda is back in this tattered port city, running for reelection as mayor of the troubled black townships. Inside the Ibhayi City Council building, a fortress-like structure surrounded by razor wire and armed guards, he plots his campaign in a spartan office with the window shades pulled down.

"The radicals, they'd like to get me again," he says. "But I can't let that stop me."

The chubby, 41-year-old self-promoter is just the sort of man the government wants running its black townships. A former railroad ticket puncher, Mr. Linda was elected mayor in 1983. Two years later, he was run out of town by angry black residents who accused him of collaborating with the apartheid government.

'I'm No Stooge'

Now, he is back, denouncing the militant foes of apartheid as "radicals." He insists he is no "government stooge" though his political philosophy sounds strikingly like that being pressed by Pretoria: He favors flush toilets over equal rights for black South Africans. "We have to remove the wrong political ideology that has been put in people's minds by the radicals," he says. "That is why I have returned."

Today, for the first time in the nation's history, South Africans of all races are going to vote—albeit at segregated polls to elect representatives to segregated city councils. The black elections are a crucial ingredient of the government's strategy to reassert authority in the black townships, following years of unrest in the mid-1980s (see page A19).

But the government may be disappointed by the turnout at the polls. Black activists are urging a boycott of the elections, which they condemn as an extension of apartheid. Until blacks obtain voting rights on the national level, activists say, voting on the local level is meaningless.

A Home in Flames

Mr. Linda was last seen in these parts in late 1985, holed up in the Holiday Inn, surrounded by bodyguards, a mayor in disgrace and on the run. Members of the city's anti-apartheid organizations had denounced him for selling out the black struggle by serving the government. After Mr. Linda purchased the home of a black family that had been evicted for not paying the rent, residents' anger turned violent. They took a torch to the mayor's house and his general store.

Similar things happened to black councilors across the country. Some were killed by angry mobs. Mr. Linda was lucky; he escaped with his life. For two months after fleeing the townships, he lived at the Holiday Inn, then left without paying the bill. "He ate breakfast here with the state president one day," the hotel manager says, "so we figured his credit was good."

Mr. Linda did, too; he says he thought the city council would pick up the entire tab, but it left a debt of roughly the equivalent of \$5,000. Under a court order, Mr. Linda recently agreed to repay the debt in monthly installments.

After checking out of the Holiday Inn, Mr. Linda returned to his tribal home in the black homeland of Transkei, where he arranged demonstrations against the anti-apartheid leader, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. From time to time, Mr. Linda also popped up in Europe and North America, speaking on behalf of his United Christian Conciliation Party, a conservative black party that Mr. Linda claims has four million members. Not coincidentally, many are members of the Reformed Independent Churches Association, headed by Bishop Isaac Mokoena, who co-founded the party with Mr. Linda.

While Mr. Linda was away, South Africa erupted. Pretoria imposed a state of emergency, detained thousands of black political opponents and banned a host of anti-apartheid organizations—including those that had forced Mr. Linda out of town. Mr. Linda, figuring it was safe to return to Port Elizabeth, came home and declared himself candidate for mayor.

"I'm fighting back to prove to the radicals that I'm one of the greatest leaders in the country," says Mr. Linda. "I'm not hiding. I'm prepared to speak out."

Mostly he does this from inside his maroon BMW, shouting through the two loudspeakers strapped to the roof of the car as he meanders through the potholed and narrow dirt roads of the townships. These streets, lined with dilapidated shacks, are teeming with tension. Port Elizabeth was one of the hottest areas of the country during the unrest of the mid-1980s, and the government fears that its 500,000 black residents could erupt again.

Mr. Linda worries, too. His BMW has been stoned, and last week the homes of several other candidates for city council were firebombed. One other candidate was shot to death. But for the most part, it seems, his campaign is being ignored. A recent rally attracted no more than 60 to a cavernous hall where 200 chairs had been set up for the anticipated crowd. Of those who came, most were elderly, unemployed women behind on their rent payments and hoping for help from Mr. Linda.

"Oooh, he's powerful," says a matronly woman named Joyce. "He'll give out food and houses and jobs to those who support him. He's a great man."

Mr. Linda's campaign literature echoes her sentiments. He wrote most of the pamphlets himself, including a poem in which he hails himself as a black hero: "Our father Linda is our leader! The people told Linda to take his seat on Oct. 26 as a mayor! and build houses for them. The leader promised."

Such patronage costs money, and the

government is ready to spend plenty here after the election in an effort to bolster the credibility of the black council and its mayor. But Mr. Linda, whose campaign is on a shoestring budget, is taking no chances on the money running out.

"Tell America to send money," Mr. Linda tells an American visitor.

"Send it to whom?" he is asked.

"To me and my party," he says. "You send money to the radicals. Why not send some to me?"

Black activists shrug off the elections as a farce. "Our people won't vote until our real leaders are released from detention and we can vote for them," says a member of the banned Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization who is in hiding in the townships. He points to a polling station recently built by the government—a one-room concrete hut surrounded by rolls of razor wire and guarded around the clock by several soldiers—and laughs at the idea of holding elections under the state of emergency.

"A vote in these elections is a vote for our continued oppression," he says. "The people see Linda's name and they know right away that the elections are illegitimate. Everyone identifies him with the system."

Mr. Linda doesn't seem to mind the association. "We must support local government, for right now that is what the government is giving us. It is a step along the way," he says. "The radicals say they won't take part in elections until all political prisoners are released. But municipal elections are not the place to call for their release. That time will come."

Mr. Linda says blacks are more interested in improving their living conditions than in equal political representation. "The radicals are introducing foreign ideas that don't fit in this country," he says. "A system of one-man, one-vote in a unitary state, which the radicals want, won't work in South Africa. The people in the townships aren't interested in living in white areas, like the radicals say. They just want to be taken care of in their townships."

Mr. Linda says he is the man to do this in Port Elizabeth. He promises to start spending the million of dollars the government has earmarked for upgrading projects in the black townships. He talks about putting a flush toilet in every house. He assures those threatened with eviction for not paying their rent that he won't turn them out. For now, the other things, like equal rights, can wait.

Compliments of
Cliff Gosney

A man of morality and conviction

JOURNEY CONTINUED: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by Alan Paton

New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
320 pp. Illustrated. \$22.50

By Merle Rubin

IN 1948, the year his first novel, "Cry, the Beloved Country," was published, Alan Paton's was a voice crying in the wilderness. The principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory for black juvenile delinquents was one of a handful of prophets calling attention to the plight of South Africa's black majority at the very moment the Afrikaner Nationalists finally came to power and started fulfilling their dream of apartheid.

By the time of his death - April 12, 1988 - his political position was significantly to the right of most of his fellow critics of apartheid: Paton was not only opposed to the idea of a violent revolutionary struggle, but also spoke out, passionately and eloquently, against the Western strategies of disinvestment and economic sanctions.

Did Paton change over those four decades, or did he stand fast while times changed around him? Perhaps a little of each. "Journey Continued," the second and final volume of his autobiography ("Towards the Mountain" appeared in 1980), covers this period in his life. To some extent, Paton himself believed he had changed:

"I must say that in 1954 I was more inclined to identify politics with morality than I am today [1987]," he reflects. As an older man, he felt less outraged by the particular injustices of his native land - perhaps because he'd lost his fervor, perhaps because he began to take a broader, almost timeless and placeless perspective on life, death, human history, and the universe. But in other respects, a certain consistency emerges: a lifelong patriotism, a

loathing of violence, and a conviction that "punishment is not the way to make people behave better," be it punishment for wayward youths or sanctions against reprobate nations.

For all that Paton's rightward drift distressed many of his former friends and allies and led a younger generation of radicalized blacks (and whites) to dismiss him out of hand, he can still convey, as few other writers can, the gross indecency of the racial injustices he fought against so long. Looking back, as he does in this strongly written book, on the years of that struggle, he becomes outraged anew by the unfairness, and his writing takes on power from his rekindled emotions.

Firmly anticommunist himself (he does a fine job of encapsulating the reasons for the natural antipathy he's observed between liberals and commu-

nists), Paton is scathing about the much-vaunted anticommunism of the South African government: "It was not the totalitarian nature of communism that was abhorrent to the Afrikaner Nationalist; he was to become a pretty good totalitarian himself. What he abhorred was the supposedly egalitarian nature of the communist State."

Paton also writes movingly of what he calls the most shameful of all acts committed in South Africa by people who have power against those who have none: the forced removal of nonwhites (Africans, Coloreds, Indians, East Asians) from land, farms, homes, and businesses they legally owned, in order to excise these "black spots" from areas the government chose to designate "white."

Morality was the keystone of Paton's parallel careers in literature and politics. As a writer, he found himself "incapable of writing a story that does not have an emotional and moral quality." It was his religious faith (he was a devout Anglican) that led him to politics. Ironically, as he must "honestly and reluctantly" confess, he was to experience "the joy of fully non-racial fellowship," not in his beloved church, but in the political party he helped found.

Much of this book is devoted to the story of the Liberal Party of South Africa, started in 1953 and disbanded in 1968, when it chose to dissolve rather than submit to a government ban on multiracial parties. Aside from the Communist Party, it had been the only multiracial party in the country. Paton elucidates the principles that held the party together - belief in democracy, tolerance, nonviolence, and the rule of law - while

vividly recounting the disputes between more radical Liberals (who believed in always taking the principled stand) and more pragmatic Liberals (who preferred to moderate their demands for goals like one man, one vote, in the hope of broadening the party's appeal to the whites-only South African electorate).

While politics and the Liberal Party are at the heart of this book, Paton also describes his involvement in the world of religion. There are intriguing accounts of ecumenical conferences he attended and insightful, if idiosyncratic, portraits of leading figures like Paton's personal hero, Reinhold Niebuhr. Paton also tells what it was like to find himself a world-famous author, plunged into the realms of theater and moviemaking with the demand for adaptations of his "Cry, the Beloved Country." Paton was a man who loved words, and in this book he reveals how much writing meant to him.

Looking ahead, Paton's vision of his country's future is clouded, even confused. The prophetic power he possessed was not of the sort that pretends to be able to predict the future, but closer to the biblical sort that sees the present for what it is and tries to warn people before it is too late. This parable about the difficulties of persuading his fellow white South Africans to change sounds a note characteristic of Paton's simplicity - and his depth:

I went to my brother and said, "Brother a man is knocking at the door."

My brother said, "Is he a friend or enemy?"

"I have asked him," I said, "but he replies that you will not know until you have opened the door."

There you are, my brother. You will never know if the man outside is a friend or an enemy until you open the door. But if you do not open the door, you can be sure what he will be.

"That was written in 1969," Paton remarks. "This is now 1987. But my brother still has not opened the door."

Merle Rubin reviews books regularly for the Monitor.

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