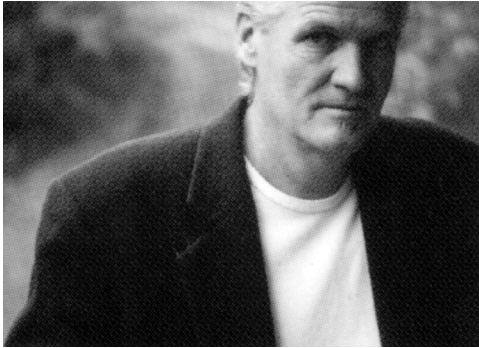


## RICK ANDREW'S "BURIED IN THE SKY"

*Having dealt with Cuito Cunavalo in "More Footprints that Shaped our World" (by Naidoo) the following account is an interesting look at Botha's Army (the other side).*



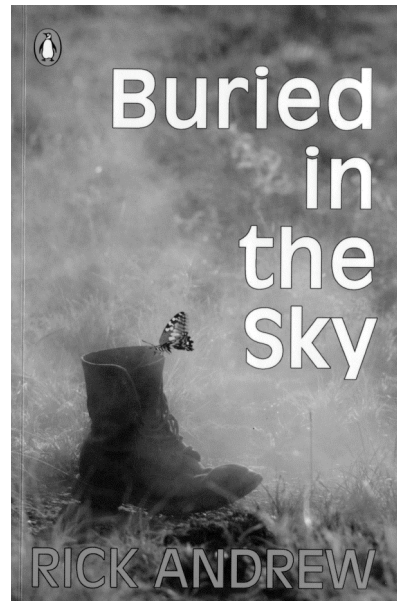
Sometime in August 2009, I met Rick with Syd Kitchen at Badger's in Davenport Centre. Syd introduced him as an author, and left. We talked for a while and I paid for a copy of his book and left. Later that morning Rick turned up at my home with a copy of his book 'Buried in the sky'.

I read through it and was staggered by the waste - both human and military hardware. The myth of the SADF being the biggest military force in Africa began to wane. I needed another view and so I asked Jackie (Sewpersad), our artist involved in our struggle, to read Rick's book and this is what she said:

### **Jackie's views:**

"Buried in the Sky is an unexpected warm and captivating book that I read in one sitting. The author, Rick Andrew, is easy to identify and empathize with "a minstrel in a green jacket"(p 2) who played the guitar and "believed that art was life itself"(p 3).

"While Andrew knows that "to go to the border with the SADF would be to side with the racist regime and to go against all that was moral and right" (p 7), he has little money and doesn't want to leave the country, to refuse would mean six years imprisonment.



## *Footprints*

"The stories told by Rick Andrew and his fellow conscripts give an idea as to what life on the border was like. I expected there to be a lot more hatred and anger towards Black people by the white army. However, it seems that in Andrew's regiment, at least, many have been forced into the army by threat of a long jail sentence and a sense of morality and guilt prevails.

"In the chapter *Manie's Secrets*, Manie Dippenaar relates how he and three others chased and killed the enemy who had fired on them. While the listeners were surprised at the sudden ending to the story, "they noticed how his tone of voice had changed from the excitement of 'we chased them', to the quiet, almost ashamed resignation of 'and we killed them' "(p 161).

"One is also informed that the 'enemy' is not to be taken for granted and stereotyped. In the chapter, *Morphine Sister*, a whole convoy is stopped for nearly two hours by heavy gunfire. Eventually an Eland arrives and silences the shooter. "Then, and you won't believe this, we check that the gun is being manned by a chick! True's God. This black chick is handling the gun like a mamba!"(p 158)

"Andrew manages to bring a balanced account of liberal and right wing views into the book. The sergeant-major thought Bob Dylan was "kak"(p 73) and had never listened to Eric Clapton.

"Andrew says of the sergeant-major in the book: "The problem, though, was that since he had no knowledge of culture outside of his own ghetto, he tended to see my cultural tastes as being semi-criminal and subversive, and I suppose they were a threat to the closed Calvinistic nationalism that gripped South Africa – that communist-hating, fag-baiting, apartheid-swallowing, self-righteous, arrogant patriotism that included only those whities that shared your tastes and fears. Brother-hoods of big biltong-eating men in short-sleeved khaki shirts. Their women, kept 'madams'. Such fear of diversity. Such repression."(p 74).

"Deon Bristow thinks that 'The Afs are like the Arabs, lazy and jealous. They want to pull things down to their own level, or steal the clothes off your back' (p 165) and that 'there are people God has chosen. Some are going to heaven and some aren't. I read my Bible.'(p 166) While Neil Carter says 'Ah, come on, Deon. Are you mad? Don't you realize that internationally South Africa's race laws are seen as a crime

against the rights of humanity? Why do you think the churches are protesting?’(p 167).”

“Buried in the Sky made me realize that belonging to any race group in South Africa is not a simple and straight forward issue. We all carry baggage and are sometimes forced to make choices that go against our being and principles by forces that are in power.” – Jackie.

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When I (Phyllis) received Rick’s book earlier, I told Beverley Naidoo (UK) about it and she ordered it immediately. Before the end of the week Nandha her husband was reading it. Both Naidoos are South Africans forced into exile by our then apartheid policies. Nandha’s initial remarks are below:

**Nandha’s remarks:**

“I started reading the book. So far the narrator tells us that he was opposed to apartheid but did want to go to jail for 6yrs so he does not disobey the demand to enter the army but smoking dagga and being found smoking dagga would have got him thrown out of the army with a likely sentence of 12 months imprisonment. What does this tell us about the narrator. You remember the two ANC members who chose the gallows to giving state evidence in exchange for their sentence being commuted to life imprisonment.

“Jews, citizens of the Austro-Hungarian empire, went to great lengths to avoid serving in the army...even to the extent of crippling themselves, which must have been painful.

*Lots of love Nandha”*

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**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ECC**

However, this year is the 25th anniversary of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). Their announcement of this momentous decision is in our “Millennium Diary” (by Naidoo) and The ANC News briefing of the 7 August 1984.



EST. 1846

# THE WITNESS

PIETERMARITZBURG, NOVEMBER 5, 2009



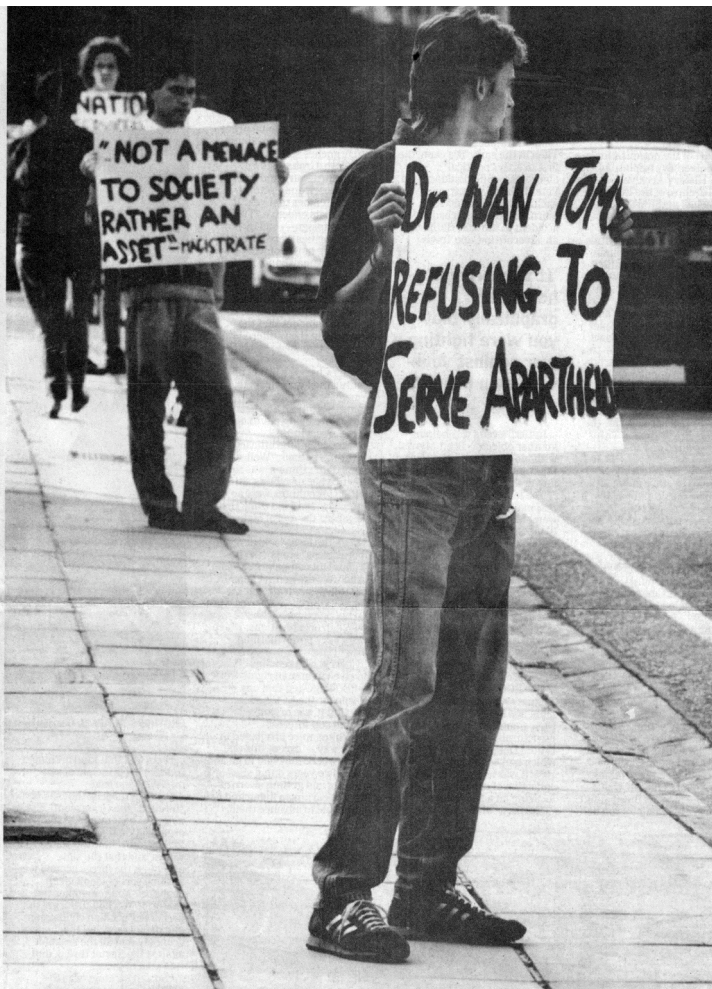
## WHAT IS PATRIOTISM?

**T**HE 25th anniversary of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), highlighted once again in this newspaper yesterday, raises important questions about the nature and meaning of patriotism. Were those young white South Africans who refused compulsory military service in the seventies and eighties unpatriotic or can it now be clearly seen that they were true patriots acting in the best interests of their country?

The debate on this will persist, depending on people's political persuasion. Former president F. W. de Klerk has said that though he understands the objectors' point of view, he still thinks they were wrong to avoid the legitimate defence of this country against a cataclysmic revolution. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, on the other hand, continues to sing the praises of those who bravely resisted a brutal apartheid regime.

Similar issues around patriotism exist for conscientious objectors to military service in contemporary Israel. Two of these, Omer Goldman and Yuval Ophir-Auron, have been in this country at the invitation of former ECC members. Their issue with the state of Israel is what they consider to be their country's illegal and immoral occupation of Palestine. They see a close resemblance between objection to military service in the apartheid state and their own in Israel today. They have said openly that while they are against the stance of the Israeli government, they are strongly in support of Israel as such. Like the members of South Africa's ECC, they see themselves essentially as loyal citizens. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies disagrees and resists the comparison between apartheid and the tensions working themselves out in the Middle East.

Whatever the differences in political judgment, the presence of a principled critique such as that evidenced by conscientious objectors in this country's recent past and in Israel today should be recognised for what it essentially is: a carefully considered and costly love for one's country and for the moral wellbeing of humanity.



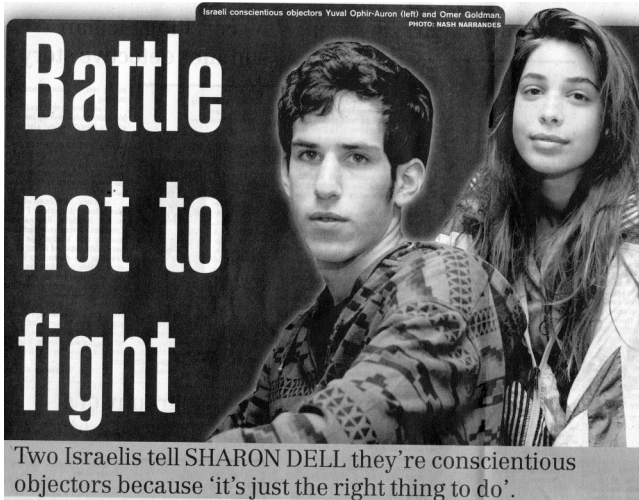
HOLDING THE LINE: An End Conscription Campaign picket in March 1988

Picture: R BOTHA

In the Natal Witness of the 4/11, Steve de Gruchy writes about how he took his 15-year-old son to the celebrations to enable him to understand the pain and penalties conscriptees faced and how they responded.

The posters of that period, the cartoons that accompanied the organisation were awe-inspiring, and their courage left you speechless.

The editor of The Witness was constrained to respond to the 25th anniversary in his editorial of the 5/11/2009: **What is Patriotism?** (see alongside).



In the same page as Sharon Dell tells of the two Israelis conscientious objectors, is the story of Michael Worsnip who commends the bravery of our conscriptees and tells how he solved his own problem.

## What were we thinking?

The End Conscription Campaign, which has just celebrated its 25th anniversary, was small but very brave

**MICHAEL WORSNIP**  
*THE WITNESS - 4 November 2009.*

I would suggest that Rick reads, **'Soweto Explodes'** by Mosala Mosegoni and other writers for a better understanding of this period of our lives under apartheid.

It is a difficult road to travel. Also remember it is easier for Rick to publish and market than it is for blacks. While we have democracy and a more open society today, the divide between rich and poor is the largest in the world.

We need to find new ways to help those who do not have the opportunity to publish to tell their stories.

**We have to stretch out and help each other and work towards a more egalitarian society. We dare not fail the thousands who died for our country.**

Phyllis Naidoo  
Durban  
6/11/2009.

