

pating characters. The enemy of Afrikaner society is shown to be influences emanating from outside that society, rather than attributable to sources within Afrikaner society. The group remains closed and is symbolically cemented in a military ceremony honouring the dead lieutenant and his comrades.

**40 Days** is frivolous, fast moving and humorous. Its surface structure camouflages a deeper ideological tension. The dialectic is quite blatant: police (good) versus disco sub-culture (bad); Defence Force (good) versus personal chaos (bad) which in a broader context can be seen as Institutionalism (good) versus Individualism (bad).

The police are portrayed as charming, friendly fellows, always ready to help and paternalistically guide young men in danger of falling into bad ways. It is significant that scriptwriter Pieter Dirk Uys and director Franz Marx should have chosen the disco scene to characterize civilian life, which is, after all, a highly atypical experience for a returning trooper. In this case the disco represents the shady and sinister activities of the underworld.

The film reveals a social dependence on the Defence Force and Police as the only viable agents of stability, law and order. Throughout the film is the insistence and reiteration of the help and guidance offered by the Defence Force which is contrasted with a demonstration of the pitfalls of going it alone: "I don't need the army — they ran my life for two years" is shown to be wilful and counter-productive. Predictably, it is police who save the two ex-soldiers from their own determined obstinacy.

A recurring thematic element of the film is the socially condoned submerged violence. The most obvious example of this is where the hero attacks and robs a homosexual who solicits him in a bar. In a later scene the attacker

is remorseful only over the fact that he is guilty of robbery; it is almost as if violence against homosexuals is justified.

**40 Days** marks a departure from the films hitherto in that it attempts, albeit in an incomplete way, to account for the difficulties experienced by young men in a war situation and separated from their families for two years. However, despite the two nightmare sequences, the effects of the traumatic experiences are not adequately dealt with, nor is the adjustment to ordinary civilian life for which the two characters and thousands like them are completely unprepared. These should be the primary themes of the film, but are submerged in the drawn out disco sequences and the strident upbeat soundtrack which consistently works against the picture.

Whereas America's post-Vietnam war films provide an almost painful self-examination of both the reasons for the war and the effects of that war on American society as a whole, and particularly on the men involved in it, South African films are more superficial and even glib. In both **Grensbasis** and **40 Days**, the war is there — a fact of life, not discussed or rationalized — simply accepted. In both films the police who represent Institutionalized South Africa are lauded and made out to be pillars of society. Both portray the population back home as uncaring, uninterested and unable to comprehend the rigours of Border Life. These issues are best left to those who know — the Defence Force and Police Force.

In the same way as American film ignored Vietnam during the war itself, South African film is still at a stage where it shies away from an honest examination of conscience. The salient question is, however, is this a stage in the development of our film, or is it more symptomatic of the general malaise afflicting South African society? □

## DIALOGUE by Vortex

We're rather proud  
of our racial plan:  
it's a way of dividing  
man from man.

The blacks are with us  
but we say they're not:  
we give each nation  
a barren plot.

It's all quite just,  
it's all quite fair:  
each tribe has its own  
little volume of air.

It's a bit of a ruse,  
but who would guess?  
The blacks, you say?  
We couldn't care less.

The outside world  
makes a bit of trouble?  
We don't count **them**:  
their standards are double.

By our fine scheme  
we've proved we're right,  
we've shown that — well —  
we're bright, and white.

Ah no, my friends,  
you've got it wrong:  
you've shown something else  
in your little song.

You've shown quite well  
by your strong intent  
that you don't belong  
in this continent.

How can you claim  
this is your home  
when you send black people  
out to roam?

Your very acts  
define your fate:  
you've said 'separation'  
and that you'll get.

Some will leave  
for other lands,  
bemoaning the work  
of their own hands.

Others will stay  
and fight till they're dust, proclaiming (no doubt)  
that life's unjust. □